A Narrative of African American Males Taught Mostly by White, Female Educators

A Dissertation submitted
To the Graduate School
Valdosta State University

in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in Curriculum and Instruction

in the Department of Leadership, Technology, and Workforce Development
of the James L. and Dorothy H. Dewar College of Education and Human Services

March 2021

Joanna L. Conner

Ed.S., Lincoln Memorial University, 2007
M.Ed., Kennesaw State University, 2003
B.S., Kennesaw State University, 1997

This dissertation, "A Narrative of African American Males Taught Mostly by White, Female Educators," by Joanna L. Conner, is approved by:

Dissertation Committee Chair	_____ Richard W. Schmertzing, Ed.D. Professor of Leadership, Technology, and Workforce Development
Dissertation Research Member	_____ Lorraine Schmertzing, Ed.D. Professor of Leadership, Technology, and Workforce Development
Committee Member	_____ Christine James, Ph.D. Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies and Interim Program Coordinator for Women's and Gender Studies
Associate Provost for Graduate Studies and Research	_____ Becky K. da Cruz, Ph.D., J.D. Professor of Criminal Justice
Defense Date	_____

FAIR USE

DUPLICATION

I authorize the Head of Interlibrary Loan or the Head of Archives at the Odum Library at Valdosta State University to arrange for duplication of this dissertation for educational or scholarly purposes when so requested by a library user. The duplication shall be at the user's expense.

Signature _____

I refuse permission for this dissertation to be duplicated in whole or in part.

Signature _____

Abstract

This narrative inquiry was designed to understand how Black male students made sense of experiences with White female teachers, to expose educational hindrances, and to provide White female teachers ideas to better educate Black males. Three interviews were conducted with each of five Black males in an urban metro area. One interview was conducted with each of three White female teachers to add context. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Data was presented as a narrative profile of each Black male participant. Findings, reported as themes after in vivo and focused coding, included building positive relationships, embracing cultural responsiveness, learning from others, and working to reach ALL students. A discussion of each theme concluded the study to help teachers provide a classroom environment suited to more effectively educate Black males.

Keywords: narrative profile, in vivo coding, focused coding, cultural responsiveness

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I love people, I love stories, and I love to talk. Hearing stories of places people have been and how they got to where they are now is simply amazing. People are all so different, yet we all experience happiness, sadness, loss, difficulties, etc. Hearing other's stories brings just a little value to lives filled with busyness. I love sharing my story-my travels, my heartaches, my accomplishments. With my story comes several people who have helped make me who I am.

My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
Thank you! I love you!

My Parents–Bobby and Della Conner
With all my heart, I wish you were here, Daddy, to see me now, but I know you are looking down with a big smirk of proudness for Ol' Jo. The work ethnic you instilled in me never faded. To my mom, the strongest woman I could ever imagine. You are that shoulder I needed to cry on, that hug I needed went frustrated, and that smile I needed when I made you proud. You never stopped pushing me to do my best in whatever I do. Even though I say you are too positive, I would not want it any other way. To both of you, thank you for providing a Christian home and being a true example of how to live with integrity and love with everything. I love you!

My Siblings–Beth, Jennifer, and Toby
Beth and Jennifer, thank you for everything–helping me at work, running errands that my absent mind forgot, Friday night dinners, cleaning the pool, nursing me when sick, and, most importantly, taking care of sweet Mom. You did all the extras so I could "study." I could not ask for better sisters. I know that I can always depend on you. Toby, you always gave me that little nudge I needed. You are purrfect! I love you all so very much!

Mu
My specialist degree was my limit . . . then I met you. Assigned your mentor your first-year teaching, we really mentored each other. You pushed me to keep going until I reached the top. Seven years later here we are, best friends! My annoying bestie . . . I wouldn't want you any other way. I remain thankful for you.

My Participants
Thank you for trusting me with your stories. Your impact on me and others will forever live on through your words. You are truly great.

My Committee
Dr. Richard Schmertzing, Dr. Lorraine Schmertzing, and Dr. Christine James, thank you for the many hours you spent working with me and expecting nothing but the best. You made me better. You guys are true teachers, and your impact on education is immeasurable. From that first class sitting in the back constantly whispering and talking to Mu, we both knew we wanted to be on Team Schmertzing–so many thanks!

Dedication

"The House" on First Street

For 45 years, so many good things have happened in this house built by two sets of the gentlest and most loving hands, Mom and Dad. It's special. This is where I grew up, where my blood family gathers, where friends come for peace, and where I can always return knowing I am loved. So many great things have happened here, and so many great things will continue to happen here. Dedicating my dissertation to this address allows me to dedicate it to everyone who has passed through its doors and influenced me in any way. I love you all! See you at "the house!"

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Raised, living, and teaching in a specific community in the Metro area of a large urban city in the south, I experienced its transformation from a predominantly White population to a predominantly Black population. As a student and a young White female beginning my teaching career, I was completely ignorant of Black culture. Being raised to love everyone and treat everyone equally because we are all created in the image of God, I did not avoid people of other races or cultures; however, that does not mean I did not possess stereotypes ingrained throughout my life. In fact, I am sure I still unintentionally commit stereotype sins, but I am more aware of my own progression in thinking and of White cultural norms that remain dominant in society. Graduating college and beginning my career in education, I, meaning well, had the *White Savior* mentality (Matias, 2013) thinking I was meant to teach in this community where I could help my poor Black students who had such a rough life. That was my calling. Unbeknownst to me, they did not need me to save them; they needed me to understand them deeply, care about them unconditionally, teach them effectively, and accept them equally. When I realized my role after a few years of teaching, I became passionate about advocating for the education of Black males in my immediate area. From experiences, observations, and interactions, I realized the disconnect between students and teachers because of racial and cultural differences was an area of concern related to

providing the best educational experience possible. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study focused on the educational experiences of Black males taught predominantly by White females. The first section in Chapter I titled *Statement of the Problem* explains why Black males' experiences with White females were important to study. The last section, *Goals of the Study*, explains the personal, practical, and intellectual goals hoped to be achieved from the stories of Black males.

Statement of the Problem

Black male students and White female teachers have different educational experiences. In addition to over 10% more White students graduating than Black students as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (2018a), Siwatu's (2011) mixed methods study indicated three White preservice teachers were more comfortable with general teaching practices like they experienced, for example making students feel important in the classroom, rather than integrating cultural background. In White female teachers of all experience levels, I have personally observed attitudes of them being better than their students who were different both visually and culturally, as found in the three White preservice teachers' culturally responsive readiness studied by Siwatu (2011). From my observances over the past 24 years, most White female teachers beginning their career in a minority Title I school possess at least one of three characteristics Matias (2013) described in her work with White female preservice educators in a college course on culturally responsive teaching: White Savior mentality, ignorance, or temporary imprisonment. As introduced when describing my own experience, White Savior thought suggests the White female teacher believes she can save kids from their current inadequate life (Matias, 2013). Counterstories from Matias'

(2013) research helped her understand that her White female teacher participants did not realize cultural differences create classroom issues when teachers expect students to function within cultural norms from which she came and behave the same way she did in school. Like me beginning my teaching career, I believe many White female teachers are ignorant, or uninformed, because they honestly do not know how to work with students who look different and are different from themselves, and some do not realize that the differences matter and should be addressed. In the region where this research was done, the issue was compounded because many White female teachers accept a position in the southern, mostly minority-inhabited part of the county to merely, as I have heard described many times, "get a foot in the door" of this large metro area district and transfer to the more affluent eastern area of the district after "serving my 2 years down here." Temporary imprisonment, as described by Matias (2013), is endured until White teachers can transfer to a "better" school. With that thought at the forefront of my mind, many teachers leaving the southern part of the county seem to liken teaching there to a prison sentence spent with so many Black students. From my observations teaching in this specific geographic area, the transience of teachers and the mentality associated with "doing their time" negatively impact the education of students.

Loving the community from which my participants came and desiring a positive reputation for the educational opportunities in that geographic area, I became passionate about the lingering problem I observed of White female teachers educating (or not educating) Black males when a former student, only 6 years after being in my fourth-grade class, received a life sentence for the murder of a fellow classmate and alleged rival gang member. I was a second-year young White female teacher who knew nothing about

Black culture when Jack, a pseudonym, appeared on my class list. For the past several years I wondered, "What if? What if I had formed a better relationship with him? What if I had known him better to help develop an interest besides gangs? What if I had included more of his culture in the classroom? What if I had truly listened to him verbally, physically, and academically? What if I had been a more effective teacher?" At the conclusion of this study, I hoped to understand from Black males' experiences and perspectives how some of their White teachers were effective and made a difference in their education while others did not. I suspected relationships and cultural understandings would arise as topics of conversations when Black male students taught by White female teachers were given the opportunity to talk about their experiences.

Because I had long since seen the Black male student/White female teacher construction as a problem in the local community when I began my doctoral studies in curriculum and instruction, I knew I wanted to study the topic of race and specifically focus on Black males who attended schools in the community in which I teach. I, therefore, chose an elective class on race and culture that introduced me to the idea of *White privilege* and schools operating according to White cultural norms—a concept prominently discussed in critical race theory (CRT) literature (Chapman, 2013; Delgado, Stefancic, & Liendo, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Lynn, Benigno, Williams, Park, & Mitchell, 2006; Taylor, 2016). After reading and reflecting on CRT and its application in education, I understood that many White teachers like me expect Black males to abide by White cultural expectations. I realized I needed to find a way to learn more about how White female teachers in communities like mine could be more successful at teaching Black male students. While the literature was rich with majoritarian stories of Black

males failing in school (Kunjufu, 2010; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Puchner & Markowitz, 2015; Tyler & Boelter, 2008) and schools being a pipeline to prison (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Delpit, 1995; Forman, 2017), I found literature on Black male students' thoughts on and experiences with White female teachers in public schools to be lacking. I, therefore, decided to seek out former Black male students and learn from them. My goal was to use their storied experiences in their voices to help understand how White females could increase their effectiveness when teaching Black male students.

Goals of the Study

In *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach,* Maxwell (2013) provided guidance for describing the personal, practical, and intellectual goals of a qualitative study. Specifically, Maxwell (2013) suggested justifying the worth of the study, clarifying the issues and practices to be influenced, and presenting reasons for conducting the study that include why others should care. The overarching purpose of my study was to learn more about the education of Black male students who had White female teachers a majority of the time from the students themselves.

My initial desire to conduct the study stemmed from my own difficult experiences teaching Black males. Therefore, my personal goal was to hear stories of Black males' school experiences with White female teachers like myself. The practical goal was to use these experiences and stories to influence instructional practices of White female teachers teaching Black males, which I hoped would lead to a change in the negative stories about the students and educational institutions from which they came. The intellectual goal was to understand how Black males perceived their experiences and how those experiences influenced their lives after they left public school. I realize most teachers will not read

this study to find instructional strategies to help Black males and the few stories I retell cannot change a lifetime of majoritarian stories, but I can hope and perhaps inspire a few White female teachers or Black male students in my circle of influence.

In this qualitative study, narratives, as used by Henfield (2011) to present themes in his study of Black males handling microaggressions in predominantly White schools, were used to tell stories these young men remembered about school. Kim (2016) explained narratives as stories that are a "basic aspect of human life and an essential strategy of human expression" (p. 28) used to understand human actions and experiences. He further differentiated narratives from stories by describing narratives as sequenced events that make up a story with a beginning, middle, and end. These constructed stories incorporate the "feelings, goals, perceptions, and values of the people whom we want to understand, and thus also leads to ambiguity and complexity" (Kim, 2016, p. 37). I ascribed to Kim's explanation of the relationship between stories and consequently gathered narratives through interviews, and after data analysis created each participants' story. By using narrative inquiry, I hoped to find strategies the young men thought White female teachers could use to better educate Black males and possibly help educators keep from failing these young men. Their stories were written in an accessible format intended to inform and inspire teachers on how to more effectively teach Black male students. Ultimately, I hope this study provides information that can help transform schools in metro areas into institutions where Black males and other marginalized students receive a quality education that changes the all-to-often expected path and increases achievement of this sub-group. To achieve these goals, narratives about school-related experiences of post public-school Black males taught by White females and their

perspectives of how these experiences influenced their lives were gathered using Seidman's (2006) three-phase interview approach. Profiles using the exact words of participants were created from interview data and used to give voice to Black male students whose experiences and perceptions are least often heard but most important.

From my own teaching career, the problem I studied was easy to determine because I constantly reflect upon the struggles and experiences of Black males in my own classroom. While I had global aspirations of finding a fix to the problem Black males face in classrooms with mostly White teachers, I realize I do not have that kind of impact. Therefore, I set my goals to be more achievable and realistic yet provide as much context as possible so others can apply the lessons learned in this research to their own contexts as is appropriate.

Conclusion

Being a White female teacher of predominantly Black students, I, like many other White female teachers, struggled to provide my Black male students with effective and quality educational experiences beneficial to them. Therefore, in this study, Black male students themselves had the opportunity to describe their experiences and provide information to help White female teachers increase classroom effectiveness. Black male experiences with White female teachers were important to hear and study because the overall goal was to understand their stories and use them to influence classroom practices. Chapter 2 describes the conceptual framework developed to maintain focus throughout the study.

Chapter II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Often confused with the literature review, the conceptual framework is an important aspect of a research design (Maxwell, 2013). With various definitions available, I subscribed to Ravitch and Riggan's (2017) thoughts on the composition of a conceptual framework as containing the personal experiences, theoretical framework, literature review, and findings from preliminary research. Ravitch and Riggan (2017) described the importance of a conceptual framework as "an argument about why the topic one wishes to study matters, and why the means proposed to study it are appropriate and rigorous" (p. 5). They explained the idea of *rigorous and appropriate* meant all parts of the study mattered and were relevant. This conceptual framework is composed of my personal experiences and thoughts, theoretical framework, and literature review. Each of those components is further detailed in the following sections. Other than my own experiences, no preliminary research was completed.

Personal Experiences and Thoughts

My dissertation topic evolved from personal experiences early in my teaching career. In my undergraduate teacher preparation program, my field experiences were in classrooms with White students from money. Of course, I read the textbook in the multicultural class, but I understood little about student demographics in the area in which most new teachers, including me, obtained jobs. Graduating college, my

teaching career began at an elementary school on a large urban city's borderline. I was not prepared.

The day after Labor Day in 1998, a clueless, scared 23-year-old White female walked into the only trailer at the school to face 27 students. During preplanning, I was warned not to stay in the trailer by myself before and after school hours because people roamed the playground area where the trailer was located. Often, used drug and sex paraphernalia was found on the playground and around the trailer. During the school day, a two-way radio was provided to call the office and report non-school people loitering. Needless to say, the trailer doors stayed locked. Looking out across my first class, I saw 3 White faces, 20 Black faces, and 4 Hispanic faces staring back from desks packed so close together students could not freely move.

After a few days, students Kenneth and Antonio (pseudonyms), both Black males, made their presence known. Kenneth tried to jump out of the window, stumbled around hitting other students, and attempted no work. After a while, Kenneth was required to sit at my feet and follow me around as I moved. He would not do work anyway and was frequently trying to escape. Then, there was Antonio. He was doing well until he had a meltdown one day. Audio equipment was kicked. Desks were turned over. He screamed at and threatened me. The trailer had to be evacuated too often. Every day, I went home and sat in the corner of the shower floor crying as the hot water beat down. I had no idea what to do with *those* children!

I hate to admit it, but that was the way my teaching career began. I was never yelled at, not even by my parents. I had never been in a classroom where students did not sit in their desk, do their work, and follow directions. This was not school as I

knew it. I certainly did not learn in my college undergraduate program how to handle those types of situations alone in a trailer. Some years later, I realized my expectations were based on my experiences throughout a life that reflected the actions and characteristics of my White privilege, the benefits of White people over non-White people. Even though I did not know to call it White privilege, that was all I knew. To be clear, I was not privileged economically, but I was privileged with opportunity.

One day, my mother came to the bathroom door and said, "Joanna, you have to either quit or find a way to deal with what you have been given." I was not a quitter, I love children, and I wanted to help them. "I can change these kids and show them how they should act and perform in school," I thought. Therefore, I did what any good teacher would do. I referred them to special education. After all, there had to be something wrong with them. As I began to get to know them, I found out more.

Kenneth came from an inner-city school during a well-publicized cheating scandal and had pretty good test scores. I was shocked after observing him in the classroom; then, he completed a psychological evaluation showing his IQ was 62. The psychologist asked him to name one of the five types of coins, and Kenneth thought with his finger on his cheek responding, "Coin on the cob." Kenneth did not qualify for services because he was achieving higher than his ability. What did I do? I made him continue to follow me around the room. Looking back, that was so unfair and embarrassing to Kenneth. He needed a teacher prepared to teach him based on his academic and behavioral needs or at least a teacher who knew where to ask for help. Still, I had no idea what to do in that classroom.

Antonio was the oldest of five kids. He woke up his siblings, got them ready for school, and walked them to the bus stop in the dark every morning. One night, his dad broke into their apartment, beat up his mother, and ran into the woods. Antonio did not sleep all night and was scared walking everyone to the bus stop the next morning. Never having to face those problems, I was barely out of college and still halfway afraid of the dark myself. I was shocked. I had not taken the time to know his story before his meltdown. Throughout the year, Antonio was suspended multiple times for behavior because I kept pushing him to work when he emotionally could not. Still, I had no idea what to do in that classroom.

Kenneth and Antonio are two Black male students I failed as a young White female teacher who did not understand the lives of the students I was teaching. To this day, I feel bad. Fast forward three years. I had Jack. Jack had a reputation that followed him, but I had more experience building relationships with students by then. One day, he was standing in the hallway outside of the office with his head bowed crying because he was in trouble. He kept saying, "I just want to go back to my class." The administrators, both White females new to the school, would not let me talk to him—my own student! I was heartbroken. Knowing his reputation and knowing I needed to be ready for what could happen next, I always favored Jack, but that day I failed to stand up for him. Six years later, Jack was sentenced to life in prison for a gang related murder. I realized how badly I was failing Black males in my classroom.

Throughout my career, I have noticed many White females experience these same difficulties. My involvement in the schools in this minority area provided insight into and experiences with institutional racism and the continued oppression of Black

males in schools. For equality in the access and outcomes of education, I believe White female teachers, like others, should become practitioners and advocates of social justice and be ready and willing to teach all students. As I conducted literature searches about Black males' experiences in the classrooms of White teachers, I found critical race theory, which I learned about in one of my doctoral classes, was often used to explain the current state of education for Black males. Critical race theory, described in the next section, provides the theoretical framework for my study.

Theoretical Framework

Maxwell (2013) explained a theoretical framework describes the theory or ideas used to help guide and inform research. He indicated the theory used helps to broaden understanding of the phenomenon that is central to the work. CRT was the theory I used to help explain and understand Black males' experiences in the classrooms of White female teachers and how White female teachers can more effectively educate Black males. Understanding critical race theory is important to understanding my dissertation as it provides a glimpse into my beliefs, which were a factor in my role as data gatherer, data analyzer, and story writer.

While research regarding the educational struggles of Black males and the disconnect between Black male students and White female teachers was easy to locate (Allen, 2010; Allen, Scott, & Lewis, 2013; Battey, 2013; Chapman, 2013; Diette, 2012; Emdin, 2017; Garrett, Barr, & Rothman, 2009; Henfield, 2011; Love, 2014; Matias, 2013; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Miller & Harris, 2018; Puchner & Markowitz, 2015; Saffold & Longwell-Grice, 2008; Siwatu, 2011; Takei & Shouse, 2007; Tyler & Boelter, 2008), literature describing effective White female teachers

from the experiences and perspectives of Black males was difficult to find. Racism may not be as blatant or as explicitly oppressive or as clearly visible as it was in the Jim Crow Law Days and during the Civil Rights Movement, but it is still present and active and takes the form of institutional racism where one group regards itself superior to others (Bell, 1992; Taylor, 2016). The superior group has power and benefits from being a member of the group often because of nothing they control but simply by the way they look (Bell, 1992; Taylor, 2016). This view of racism contributed to the background of CRT, which helped spark my dissertation.

Critical race theory originated in the legal field with Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and Kimberle Crenshaw connecting power, race, and racism to address the practices of colorblindness, imbalance of power, and continued systemic racism (Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). Then, Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate IV (1995) introduced CRT into education. The underlying principles of CRT described by Taylor (2016) and Ladson-Billings (2016) are as follows: racism is present and permanent in American society; the intersectionality of race, class, and gender should be central to the analysis of inequalities; experiential stories of marginalized populations that run counter to the majoritarian negative stereotypes need to be told; and Whiteness represents the norm of society. The ultimate goal of critical race theorists is social justice (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016).

According to CRT, racism must be considered in a contemporary and historical context (Bell, 1992; Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). CRT holds that racism is the result of social thought and relations rather than being

biologically or genetically produced (Delgado et al., 2012). This social thought took root in the founding of America (Taylor, 2016). Early in American history, racism grew when White Americans were guaranteed unalienable rights including land and labor provided by minority groups (Taylor, 2016). With that precedence set, racism continued throughout the making of America (Taylor, 2016). However, White people supported social justice when they benefitted from it; this convergence of a dominant group of people's interests and the interests of a marginalized group of people was termed *interest convergence* and became a recognized part of CRT (Bell, 1992; Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016).

The principles of CRT and their relationship to my study are described throughout the remainder of this section. First, CRT asserts that racism is a permanent part of society as the early theorists observed the presence of racism everywhere (Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). The foundation of schools was grounded in White norms (Stacy, 2010) and has changed little throughout the years. Educational institutions house a representative segment of society where racism is practiced and is often used in decision making to this day even if it is an unconscious influence (Ladson-Billings, 2016). Critical race theorists see racism as a normal part of society that is difficult to address or fix because it is not readily acknowledged (Delgado et al., 2012). Because Whites have been the majority population in the United States, their expectations and experiences drive the decisions made in most systems; yet, generally they have difficulty understanding the experiences of non-Whites and believe the claim to be colorblind or to not see students' color, which they equate to

everyone being seen as equal, is a good thing (Bell, 1992; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). Critical race theorists believe claiming to be colorblind is unjust and minimizes experiences of the marginalized. Therefore, without understanding the experiences of Black males in schools, it would be difficult to know how to change policies that maintain Whites' privilege to sustain the permanence of racism and claim colorblindness much less to do something about it that could improve learning environments (Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016). While challenging White teachers' claims of colorblindness, CRT asserts that schools operate using White privilege, or White norms, and Black male students are expected to adhere to these norms (Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). In explaining colorblindness, Delpit (1995) wrote, "If one does not see color, one does not really see children" (p. 77). Not seeing color is denying who students really are and overlooking the most common type of racism today, which is unintentional racism or *microaggressions* that occur as sudden demoralizing events due to the differences in skin color (Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016). Acknowledgement of one's own beliefs is important to recognize actions and beliefs that may be unintentionally racist (Bell, 1992; Chapman, 2013; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). These unintentional beliefs and actions represent microaggressions that occur in the classroom and are often unrecognizable to the White teacher (Bell, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). For example, microaggressions may include showing and expressing surprise that

a Black student earned honor roll, having lower expectations for Black male students, and commenting on hoodies or language characteristics like phrasing and volume. At the core of my being, I believe racism is systemic, colorblindness is detrimental to students, and microaggressions are demoralizing to all marginalized groups.

Another important aspect of CRT is the use of narratives and counter-narratives, or personal accounts, to challenge majoritarian stories relaying stereotypes (Bell, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). As mentioned, the experiences and stories of non-Whites need to be heard by White leadership to help them realize the continued existence of racism and begin taking steps to decrease its influence on school practices (Bell, 1992; Chapman, 2013; Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). The ways marginalized people understand and interpret their experiences are important for the non-marginal to know in order to recognize microaggressions they make, whether intentional or unintentional (Chapman, 2013; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). Without the experiences of Black males provided as stories, there is little hope everyday racism will be acknowledged and exposed (Delgado et al., 2012). Data from my study are presented as stories constructed from each participants' descriptive narrative of experiences and created to give voice to the under-heard Black male students to help White female teachers understand how they experienced and perceived school in hopes that teachers use the information to more effectively educate their Black male students. Using the stories of Black males educated by White female teachers gives Black males a voice that is so often kept silent in educational institutions (Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings,

1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). Through their voices, I hope to promote positive progress toward social justice by increasing awareness.

Interest convergence is another principle of CRT and highlights the relationship of one group's interests to that of another group (Bell, 1992; Taylor, 2016). When White upper and middle class realize a change in behavior toward Black people helps their own interests, social justice increases because both groups benefit (Bell, 1992; Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). For example, I connected interest convergence to the Civil War and Reconstruction in history and Black athletes today. After the Civil War, plantation owners needed laborers for their fields because slaves were freed; therefore, sharecropping became a way to provide freed slaves their own small piece of land yet keep the free labor for the landowner. With some White coaches and team owners merely wanting a winning team that makes money, some Black males who are good athletes are pushed through school solely because of athletic abilities with no regards to academics. A well-known example is Dexter Manley who attended college and played professional football without being able to read (Friend, 1989). Even more recently according to CNN, a learning specialist, whose job was to help athletes with academics, conducted research as a graduate student on the reading levels of 183 football and basketball student athletes from 2004 to 2010 at the University of North Carolina (Ganim, 2014). The learning specialist found 60% of the student athletes read between a fourth- and an eighth-grade level and between 8% and 10% read below a third-grade level (Ganim, 2014). Those students were needed in the sports programs (Ganim, 2014). Interest convergence, while seemingly decreasing racism, still promotes White

dominance (Bell, 1992; Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016).

Finally, the idea of intersectionality present in CRT suggests that gender, race, and religious factors, to name a few, are interrelated (Bell, 1992; Delgado et al., 2012; Taylor, 2016). My study specifically looked at Black male students because they are the ones disenfranchised from educational environments (Patterson, 2014). Rather than merely being Black, being Black and being male together increased the likelihood of being stereotyped with, the often publicized, Black males showing low achievement and a high rate of incarceration (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Delgado et al., 2012; Garrett, Barr, & Rothman, 2009; Payne & Brown, 2017). Critical race theorists ultimately seek social justice, and in relation to the application of CRT in education, Taylor (2016) described the first step toward change as recognizing the microaggressions, unintentional racism, and White privilege present in educational institutions (Bell, 1992; Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). I believe my study will shed light on the presence of these three constructs and how they were at play in the lives of my Black male participants. The literature also highlights these and several other influences related to the education of Black males.

Literature Review

According to Maxwell (2013), prior research is used to justify a study and "address an important need" (p. 227). Additionally, prior research helps inform decisions about methods to use (Maxwell, 2013). This literature review does both. Statistical data, detailed later in the review of literature, supported the idea of studying the experiences of Black males taught by mostly White female teachers to understand how to better educate

them in educational institutions. Additionally, as one goal of the study was to give voice to marginalized Black males in education, the related research provided in the upcoming section showed the need to hear their voice, and the lack of literature reflecting Black males' experiences and perspectives exposed a hole in current literature; thus, the qualitative narrative inquiry design was supported by the literature.

When considering the overall topic of White female teachers successfully teaching Black male students, there were several areas where previously published research was informative in the construction of the conceptualization of my study. Consistently relating the literature to CRT, a brief history of Black students in public schools is first provided. Next, a focused overview including statistical data of public schooling over the past decade provides a glimpse of the inequalities in American schools. In this literature review, using CRT as the theoretical framework, the persistence of stereotypes, continued Whiteness of school operations, and unintentional microaggressions are described. Additionally, characteristics of Black culture are provided and compared to the traditional expectations in White-operated schools with common stereotypes held by White teachers. Finally, research regarding the best strategies and practices to more effectively teach Black males is offered.

According to Delgado et al.'s (2012) review of literature on CRT, the United States has a history of promoting White privilege in schools. Tracing the history of New York's public schools, Stacy (2010), a history professor and researcher with expertise in 19th century American history, explained early public schools created for poor White kids were originally funded by rich factory owners to stress discipline and obedience needed for a compliant and efficient workforce in the White owned factories. Schools

continued to make rules based on this foundational idea that creating compliant young people was what was needed from schools, and according to Diette (2012), schools still demand compliance based on the expectations related to underlying values and assumptions of the originating school founders who were White-, middle- and upper-class men. Oppressive schooling and historical racism, against Black males especially, began when slaves were forbidden from learning to read (Byrd, 2016). With the collapse of slavery, yet rise in racism, Jim Crow laws were passed to preserve the oppression of the formerly enslaved Black population, and *Plessy V. Ferguson* upheld the *separate but equal* policy segregating White and Black people (Cates & Armstrong, 2013). Later, as part of the Civil Rights Movement and as a result of *Brown V. the Board of Education in 1954*, schools were forced to integrate; however, racism and acts of racism persisted (Bell, 1992; Delgado et al., 2012; Taylor, 2016). As schools integrated, teachers and staff continued to be predominantly White females, maintaining the historical White leadership and operation of public schools (Walker, 2018).

In the 2015-16a report from the National Center for Education Statistics, the United States' 3.8 million teachers in the teaching force consisted of 77% female teachers with an estimated 80% of America's teachers being White and only 7% being Black (Walker, 2018). Allen and White-Smith (2014), in a study framed by CRT and using counter-stories of teacher and staff experiences throughout the authors' teaching careers, reported their observation that American educators comprised mostly "White middle-class women from suburban upbringings" (p. 447). Saffold and Longwell-Grice (2008), in a study to identify good urban teaching conducted a multi-case study of three young White females studying in an urban education program, found that two thirds of the

teachers were White in schools where most of the enrollment was minority. Therefore, the studies by Saffold and Longwell-Grice (2008) and Allen and White-Smith (2014) support the article by Walker (2018) and the 2015-16 report of United States public-school teacher characteristics released by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2018 showing predominantly White female teachers are and have been educating all racial groups in the United States. Further statistics are provided to describe the current realities of schools.

Statistical presence in education. Kunjufu (2010), a scholar on issues related to the education of Black males, pointed out a decade ago the connections among discipline, prison, and school dropout rates while other scholars more recently helped demonstrate the connections statistically. Using conceptual narrative and critical race theory as theoretical lenses in her article examining the "racial hostile environment of U.S. public schooling towards Black males" (p. 1), Love (2014), combining her own experiences with literature and prompted by the shooting of Trayvon Martin, suggested thousands of Black boys experience *spirit-murder,* psychological and spirit damage to a marginalized person due to racism, sitting in classrooms of teachers who view Black males as "criminals and unteachable students" (p. 12) and in schools where long held policies eject Black males from school and into the criminal justice system. According to Forman (2017), the 2016 rate of imprisonment per 100,000 for Black men was 2,415 and for White men it was 400. The likelihood of imprisonment for a male born in 2001 was one Black male in prison for every three Black males and one White male in prison for every 17 White males. Even while promoting education to help change the school to prison pipeline, Allen and White-Smith (2014) noted American schools' close resemblance to

prison with the physical school environment often having beige cinderblock walls, metal detectors, and campus patrols. Built and managed by predominantly White staff, the school environment reflects stereotypes and racist views critical race theorists suggested are a permanent part of society (Taylor, 2016).

Not only do schools often look like prisons but also Kunjufu (2010) noted most Black males in prison were school dropouts and were considered discipline problems when they were in school. According to The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (n.d.a), 60% of the referred discipline occurrences at all educational levels throughout the state of Georgia were Black students and 25% were White students in 2019. Also in Georgia in 2019, Black students made up 39% of the overall student population (N = 1,777,641) but were 56% of the students with discipline incidents (N = 250,771); on the other hand, White students made up 37% of the overall student population (N = 1,777,641) and 27% of the student disciplined population (N = 250, 771) (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, n.d.a). With 40% of Black males nationwide not graduating high school, Kunjufu (2010) realized, "Boys don't drop out in the 12th grade. They physically drop out in ninth grade, but they emotionally and academically drop out in fourth grade" (p. 9). Very little changed throughout the years. In 2011-12 in the state of Georgia there were 18,936 Black male high school seniors and 22,518 White male high school seniors (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.a.), the Schott Foundation for Public Education (n.d.) indicated only 55% of Black males graduated high school in 2011-12 compared to 71% of White males. In his work, *Reducing Black Male Drop Out Rate*, Kunjufu (2010) provided several reasons Black boys drop out of school with one of the most influential being when teachers "break their spirits" (p. 10). In this

same book, Kunjufu penned the story of one Black male elementary student excited when he knew the answer to a question, so he waved his hand in the air for the teacher's attention. Gruffly, his White female teacher told him to put his hand down because he did not know the answer. Kunjufu (2010) concluded microaggressions due to cultural differences, among other types of microaggressions, frequently break the spirit of minority students and suggested educators, mostly White females (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018b) not experiencing life as Black males, learn and appreciate students' culture and ideas as just one small way to help reduce dropout rates. In addition to statistics, there are other characteristics that define the current reality of Black males in America's public schools.

Beyond the numbers. Henfield (2011) and Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade (2008) conducted studies relating to Black males' perceptions of White female teachers. Using data from interviews with five Black male middle school students in a predominantly White midwestern state, Black male students at the middle school reported being highly marginalized while experiencing microaggressions in the classroom where White culture was valued over Black culture and described their belief that staff assumed wrongdoing by Black male students (Henfield, 2011). Understanding that Black males are known to exhibit low achievement and high rates of suspensions in an educational system with mostly White female teachers, Douglas et al. (2008) interviewed eight Black male high school students focusing on their perceptions of their White teachers in a single Colorado school. In experiences gathered from the interviews, Black male students at that school observed mostly Black students sitting in the office, being threatened by the teacher with grades, being subjected to assumptions of bad

behavior, hearing claims of loving Black people, and being searched for gang activity because of a doo-rag (Douglas et al., 2008). Describing how the experiences gathered from the interviews helped shape the students' perceptions of White teachers, Douglas et al. (2008) concluded, "These perceptions that Black students have about White teachers may get in the way of their academic achievement, especially if they believe that the White teacher is a racist" (p. 57). Likewise, White female teacher relationships with Black students have historically been strained (Battey, 2013). Battey (2013) conducted a study with one 4th-grade White female teacher and her 25 students of color looking for "good" mathematical teaching in terms of teacher knowledge and instructional practices that promote deeper understanding. In the study, Battey (2013) found the use of reform-minded instructional strategies beneficial, but he noticed relational interactions between students and the teacher influenced understanding. While straying from the intended focus on "good" teaching, Battey (2013) found eight student and teacher interactions were positive and 14 interactions were negative. Negative relational interactions when addressing behavior, acknowledging students' participation, questioning mathematical abilities, and attending to language and culture negatively influenced mathematical attainment in that classroom leading Battey (2013) to reflect upon the need to revisit characteristics of "good" mathematical teaching to include interactions with students and suggest further research on relational interactions. Similarly, a panelist in Patterson's (2014) study of four Black educators, of which three were male, discussing the stories of Black males taught by White middle-class females contended he had never met a Black male who did not want to learn; however, students with whom he interacted were not interested in the content being taught or the methods of teaching being used. The

information provided by Battey (2013), Douglas et al. (2008), Henfield (2011), and Patterson (2014) illustrated the teacher workforce in their studies did not reflect the student population, and the teachers had negative perceptions, which impacted student achievement. According to the United States Census Bureau (2018), there were 74.6 million students nationwide in 2017, not significantly different than a few years earlier in 2007, enrolled in school. In 2007, 56.7% of the students in kindergarten through grade 8 were White and 66.1% of college students were White. In 2017, White students in kindergarten through grade 8 decreased to 49.9%, and White college students decreased to 51.9% of all students enrolled. While minority students increased (United States Census Bureau, 2018), the average American teacher remained predominantly White and female (Walker, 2018). At present, the future of Black America is in the hands of White teachers. With most teachers of Black male students being White females, an understanding of previous research inspired by critical race theory, of the Whiteness of schools, and of Black male culture is needed.

Critical race theory-informed research. Using CRT as the theoretical framework for my study, several tenants of CRT were found in previous research. These tenants were directly connected to previous research relating to Black male students' experiences in the classrooms of White female teachers. The persistence of stereotypes, continued Whiteness of school operations, and unintentional microaggressions are the specific tenants of CRT described in this section that relate to my study.

***Permanence of racism*.** Critical race theorists claim the permanence of racism and the need to understand it both historically and currently (Taylor, 2016). Stereotypes, or preconceived beliefs, of Black males previously described developed and evolved over

years of racist beliefs and actions (Matias, 2013), and racism still exists in daily school life. In a qualitative study by Puchner and Markowitz (2015), two preservice and four in-service White female teachers were interviewed in an attempt to understand the evolution of beliefs about race. One teacher stated Black students have more behavior problems and "those kids tend to struggle more and it's harder to get hold of parents" (Puchner & Markowitz, 2015, p. 11). All six teachers believed negative behaviors increased because Black families did not highly value education, were more violent, and showed fewer caring behaviors (Puchner & Markowitz, 2015). After analyzing data from 44 interviews of Black parents in three public middle schools in Baltimore, Murray, Finigan-Carr, Jones, Copeland-Linder, Haynie, and Cheng (2014) used parents' statements about work issues and transportation barriers to support reasons for lack of school involvement, which many White teachers misinterpreted as apathy and lack of educational value (Puchner & Markowitz, 2015). As a result, educational struggles, as explained by CRT, are impacted by cultural differences from White norm and low expectations for Black males (Taylor, 2016).

From Henfield's (2011) interviews with five Black male middle school students, the most prevailing theme was the assumption of deviance and wrongdoing by their White teachers. Other themes included the assumption of stereotypical Black male behavior such as being rappers or gangbangers and assumed superiority of White values such as only playing country music at the school (Henfield, 2011). Throughout history, inequalities caused Black male achievement to lag White achievement (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018a; Puchner & Markowitz, 2015). Supported by the provided

research, critical race theorists' thoughts regarding the permanence of racism are valid (Taylor, 2016) and "as American as apple pie" (Love, 2014, p. 298).

Persistence of stereotypes. Continued stereotypes, as suggested by critical race theorists, keep racism a very real part of the school environment (Ladson-Billings, 2016). One example noted in Allen and White-Smith's (2014) study using their own experiences in minority schools pointed to the notion that standardized tests, created in ways that privilege White culture and experiences, promoted deficit views of Black males as intellectually inferior because of low scores on those tests. In his book *Dismantling Cultural Deficit Theory*, Valencia (2010) described characteristics of deficit thinking and indicated the popular phrase *at-risk* was used to render schools as blameless when they held to deficit thinking that enveloped the idea low academic performance of Black males was a result of genetic, cultural, and environmental deficiencies they and their families carried (Valencia, 2010). Additionally, low test scores, from their experiences, were correlated with "bad" behavior (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). According to critical race theorists (Taylor, 2016), the well-known stereotype that Black males are not smart and exhibit bad behavior has been established by the differences in White norm culture that operates schools. This thought was supported by the data and discussion in Allen and White-Smith's (2014) study.

Unlike Black males, White middle-class students are expected to excel (Kunjufu, 2010). In a study of 262 Black male middle school students designed by Tyler and Boelter (2008) to determine whether teacher expectations predicted student engagement and efficacy, student perceptions of teacher expectations on an engagement and efficacy scale accurately predicted academic engagement and success of Black male students

taught by White females. Like anyone, Black males did not perform well in the absence of high expectations (Love, 2014). A student with a 3.0 GPA out of a possible 4.0 GPA in Allen's (2010) study visited the school counselor to inquire about college, was told his GPA was too low for scholarships compared to his White peers, and was given a brochure about technical school. As a part of their later study, Allen and White-Smith (2014) suggested schools were "ideal sites for social transformation" (p. 456), and education preparation programs could help with understanding Black male culture, raising expectations, and reversing stereotypes. As suggested by CRT and supported in previous literature, throughout history and even today Black Americans have been the center of negative beliefs and microaggressions, both conscious and unconscious (Allen, 2010; Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Puchner & Markowitz, 2015; Taylor, 2016).

Whiteness of America's schools. Miller and Harris (2018) synthesized research in an article exploring how White privilege and White supremacy "manifests in the teaching force" (p. 2). Miller, a White female, taught in four different all minority schools in Los Angeles. The aforementioned article combined Miller's classroom experiences with research by Harris to expose White privilege and reflect upon racial attitudes and beliefs in those schools (Miller & Harris, 2018). In Miller's teaching experiences, she found White middle-class teachers felt they were not racist because they taught in an urban school, held the common belief they were colorblind, and were hesitant to discuss race (Miller & Harris, 2018). In the article, Miller and Harris (2018) called for teachers of minorities to become a "White ally" (p. 9) by identifying and condemning acts of racism in their classroom and consistently using self-reflection to acknowledge their own biases rather than blame students and their environments. One

suggestion from Miller and Harris' (2018) article proposed the use of culturally responsive teaching where educators move beyond celebrating culture with food and dance to readily discussing race in the classroom as opposed to avoiding it.

Peggy McIntosh (1988), an author on White privilege, indicated her belief that Whites are taught not to recognize White privilege. Through her observations and experiences in schools and in the community, McIntosh detailed examples of White privilege and microaggressions present in schools and commonly used when attempting to make Black males more like White people (McIntosh, 1988). Even though she listed 47 privileges White people enjoy compared to Black citizens, the following were directly related to my study:

- White people can avoid the people they have been trained to mistrust and who have been trained to mistrust them; however, having predominantly White teachers, Black students do not have that opportunity.
- White people can turn the pages of books and magazines and see themselves represented; often, that is not an option for Black students.
- White people have their voice heard no matter the race of the group of people; on the other hand, voices of Black people are rarely acknowledged.
- White people do not have to teach their children to be aware of systemic racism for physical safety purposes nor worry about other peoples' attitudes toward their race; in contrast, Black parents do.
- White people do not have to worry about negative attitudes or responses blaming illiteracy for language or cultural differences; consistently, Black males must be aware their language and behavior are considered deficits.

- White people are free from worry that race is the reason for inequality; continuously, race is a cause of inequalities for Black people. (McIntosh, 1988)

According to McIntosh (1988), these privileges promote dominance over minority groups, remain invisible to White people, and are enculturated in American society.

As described, public schools were developed by White men according to their cultural norms (Stacy, 2010), and these norms are still evident in schools today. Contrary to the *Pentecostal pedagogy* of call and response in Black churches described in Emdin's (2017) bestselling book, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood . . . and the Rest of Y'all Too*, students are expected to sit silently with no verbal interaction during lessons, favoring White cultural expectations over Black cultural characteristics. In classroom readings, many Black students struggled with most texts throughout the years having no relevance to their lives, especially Black males (Douglas et al., 2008; Sharma & Christ, 2017). After acknowledging White norms, teachers can begin to understand and embrace the culture of their Black students to build positive relationships. Learning about Whiteness and embracing other cultures represented in schools helps to reduce microaggressions found the classroom (Allen, 2010; Emdin, 2017). Schools are institutions where microaggressions are observed daily, and teachers need awareness of these instances in order for change to occur (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016).

Microaggressions. Microaggressions are common, unintentional, and hurtful discriminatory behaviors, which spread feelings of inferiority, that may be verbal, behavioral, and/or environmental in nature (Allen, 2010). Common examples of verbal and behavioral microaggressions articulated by Allen (2010) after analyzing results from

interviews and surveys with five middle class Black males in high school included lack of praise for Black students, verbal remarks about places of residence (e.g., the projects, the hood), correcting language (e.g., scolding for remarks that are inappropriate according to White culture, being told to talk correctly or use correct English), sarcastic remarks (e.g., he's so articulate, you're not like the others), and moving items of value like a purse or cellphone when a Black student came near. In Allen, Scott, and Lewis' (2013) conceptual paper using literature to explore racial microaggressions, more examples of microaggressions were provided in their words: zero tolerance policies beginning with weapons and increasing to other forms of school behaviors, academic tracking when educational access was not equal, curriculum based on interests of White culture, and teacher stereotypical behaviors. Henfield (2011), after analyzing documents and interview data from five Black males in middle school to understand their perceptions of racial microaggressions, found an environmental microaggression occurred when a student had a large sum of money with him, and the teacher asked, "Do you sell drugs?" (p.150). Henfield (2011) suggested teachers, counselors, and administrators address the presence of microaggressions, which negatively impacts achievement. Microaggressions may be unintentional and unconsciously done by White teachers; however, they are very noticeable to Black students who have accepted them as normal (Taylor, 2016). Decreasing microaggressions by recognizing them and changing them could make for a more effective classroom environment for Black males. Developing an understanding on Black culture may help decrease microaggressions (Emdin, 2017).

Black culture. With schools being operated both historically and currently according to White cultural norms, White culture in education is all that most White

female teachers have known and experienced (Miller & Harris, 2018). Several years ago, a conceptual paper by Allen et al. (2013) that explored microaggressions and their effects on Black students described the need to understand and embrace Black culture in hopes of decreasing microaggressions. Kunjufu (2013), an educational consultant and activist for educational equality for Black males, described many differences between school culture and Black male culture. Specifically, he described school culture as encouraging academics, striving for long-term satisfaction, asking for help, pleasing the teacher, and telling authority when problems arise. On the contrary, Black male culture embraces handling problems aggressively, short-term satisfaction, rap and hip hop music, sports, not asking for help, and not snitching (Kunjufu, 2013). Kunjufu (2013) gave the example that Black families and the streets both teach that if someone hits you then you hit them back; whereas, school culture requires students to tell the teacher. Additionally, he reported Black males, to avoid fights and determine peer group leadership, have mastered the game of dozens, a verbal game to determine who can withstand the harshest words about each other's mother (Kunjufu, 2013). He recognized White female teachers often see these actions as aggressive.

In addition to actions, spoken language and the use of words are different between White and Black culture. Often the words or phrases of Black males do not reflect the accepted meaning in White society (Kunjufu, 2013). Words in White culture tend to be taken literally while words in Black culture are used as figures of speech (Kunjufu, 2013). For example, I was reminded of the use of the word *crib* to describe a person's dwelling in Black culture; whereas, White culture says *house*. As an example of culturally responsive teaching, Viadero, in an article about clashing cultures, (1996)

described a teacher posting a chart on the board with two columns labeled "Cultural Language" and "Standard English" to record meanings of words and phrases used in the different cultures as one way to acknowledge the importance of Black vernacular. Additionally, in Black culture, questions are posed when an answer is genuinely sought (Viadero, 1996). On the contrary, White families ask questions when making a request (Viadero, 1996); for example, the question "Don't you think it is time for your bath?" requires the inference that it is bedtime, so the child needs to prepare for bed. In a Black family, the child may have seriously responded, "No." Also, in White families, questions are repeatedly asked as an early learning strategy. White adults continually quiz children by asking, for example, the color of different objects (Viadero, 1996). This type of questioning is not as prevalent in Black culture (Viadero, 1996). With these differences, lack of classroom participation did not necessarily mean Black males do not understand the material, a common conclusion drawn by White teachers (Viadero, 1996). Rather than read or write, Black males prefer rap (Kunjufu, 2013). While rap music is seen as negative by many in the White population, the stories and meanings of rap songs actually reflect fluent writers with deep ideas (Kunjufu, 2013). Kunjufu continued contrasting Black males to school culture by describing Black males finding no need for school or to please the teacher and having a higher street IQ than school IQ. When Black male students did not understand the need for school, they were disconnected from the entire institution (Kunjufu, 2013). In addition to school viewpoints, Black culture holds family beliefs that contrast White culture.

In family life, Black culture is different from the dominant White culture. Black families are communal with aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends' children often living

together, and adults taking responsibility for the care of all children (Hill, 1992). Additionally, Hill (1992), studying and detailing Black cultural characteristics, described eye contact as only being made when the person was respected by the Black male. Regarding appearance, Black males were known to wear hoodies and toboggans (Hill, 1992). Wearing a toboggan is characteristic of Black men and no disrespect is intended; whereas, White culture sees wearing the head covering as trying to get away with something (Hill, 1992). Also, in Black homes lots of stimulation is present with the television and music constantly playing; in contrast, the atmosphere in traditional classrooms is quiet and controlled with routine activities (Viadero, 1996). As presented in the research, when Black males enter school, they must exist in a culture different from what they experience.

Finally, there are cultural differences in behaviors of Black males that have led to schools being a pipeline to prison (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). With negative publicity emphasizing Black males as behaving inappropriately, microaggressions of White people due to negative stereotypes are not uncommon but are often unrealized or not admitted (Markowitz & Puchner, 2014). Even though the shooting was not by a White female, Love (2014), in her study after the killing of Trayvon Martin, reported White females were often fearful of Black males, hence the sound of locking doors as Black males walk past a car. Using data collected in Allen's 2010 study entitled *Racial Microaggressions: The Schooling Experiences of Black Middle-Class Males in Arizona's Secondary Schools*, Allen and White-Smith (2014) penned an article detailing construction of the school to prison pipeline by teachers, counselors, and administration. They posited lack of experience or knowledge of Black males' culture led to educators perceiving Black

male behavior as aggressive, arrogant, or disrespectful, resulting in increased suspensions and expulsions that led to academic failure. Allen and White-Smith (2014) referenced Allen's study by using the example of Black males being in trouble for putting hands on each other through *dapping up*, also known as bumping fists, and other physical contact when greeting or talking to each other. Allen (2010) interviewed five Black male high school students and their parents, exposing racial microaggressions. One Black male student reported getting in trouble for having hands on someone else at school when he was greeting friends in a way that was normal for him (Allen, 2010). Many White females have little knowledge of Black male culture; therefore, institutional racism remains because schools operate in White culture (Garrett et al., 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2016).

Impact of cultural differences. Love (2014), after examining views on Black culture following the shooting death of Trayvon Martin, reported in her article the common thought was that White educators held deficit views of Black culture and Black people. Negative perceptions of behavior, attire, and achievement developed due to differences between the culture in power and Black culture (Love, 2014). Thomas, Coard, Stevenson, Bentley, and Zamel (2009) conducted a study of 148 Black males and 25 teachers in a large northeastern city to determine the impact of teacher perceptions on Black males' emotions and socialization in the school environment. Data, gathered from a behavior-rating instrument completed during teacher observations and Likert scale questionnaires completed by students, supported the stereotypical belief that White teachers in their study held the lowest expectations for Black males in academics and behavior when compared to other ethnic groups. Thomas et al. (2009) further reported

White teachers in their study perceived physical expressions and behavioral characteristics of Black males as more aggressive than White students' physical and behavioral characteristics, leading White school personnel to suggest Black males were angrier and more in need of special education services for behavior than other subgroups. Physical cultural expressions included shoulder bumps, fist bumps (daps), and constant hands on someone else giving the perception of fighting. Not surprisingly, the study's Black male participants who were able to suppress their purported anger were viewed more positively regarding classroom behavior by White teachers in the study than those not suppressing their alleged anger (Thomas et al., 2009).

Using a survey conducted nationally, Takei and Shouse (2007) sought to examine White and Black teachers' perceptions of White and Black students' classroom work habits. Finding the sample size by linking two teachers with each of the 6,355 Black and White Grade 8 students completing a National Education Longitudinal Study Base Year survey, teachers also completed a survey on their individual students (Takei & Shouse, 2007). On the teacher expectation and perception survey, White teachers rated Black students approximately 9% of a standard deviation lower than White students regarding productive and appropriate work habits in school (Takei & Shouse, 2007). In another study where 22 White, Black, and Hispanic female teachers in Atlanta, Georgia and South-Central Texas were interviewed, Rauscher and Wilson (2016) studied the relationship between race and job stressors and the implication for women's mental health. Female teachers of all races in the study reported student misbehavior, mostly by Black male students, as a job stressor; however, while Black female teachers attributed misbehaviors to broader racial relations, White female teachers blamed themselves for

the frequent misbehaviors of Black students (Rauscher & Wilson, 2016). Related, but on a side note, Rauscher and Wilson (2016) proposed this belief of the study's White female teachers suggested White privilege and colorblindness could explain their lack of awareness of institutional racism that contributes to misbehavior.

Puchner and Markowtiz (2015) interviewed and observed four White female mentor teachers and two White female preservice teachers about their perceptions of Black families and experiences in racially diverse classrooms. Though they could not explicitly articulate the reason why, all six teachers demonstrated racist beliefs likely stemming from racist background experiences, such as high Black male suspension and expulsion rates influenced their beliefs that Black males exhibit inappropriate or aggressive behaviors and Black families do not value education (Puchner & Markowitz, 2015). Similar to the previous study, Diette (2012) described implicit racist beliefs regarding Black males' participation in higher level classes when White teachers taught predominantly Black male students. Using previously published middle school Algebra I student data in North Carolina, Diette (2012) found fewer Black students than White students enrolled in higher-level classes, with the gap even greater in highly integrated schools. Additionally, North Carolina middle schools having a larger share of White teachers had a larger disparity between Black students and White students enrolled in higher level classes (Diette, 2012). While these studies (Puchner & Markowitz, 2015; Rauscher & Wilson, 2016; Thomas et al., 2009), with the exception of Diette (2012) and Takei and Shouse (2007), represented relatively small sample sizes, they showed trends that include behavior expectations based on institutional racism. Examples were how Black males were expected to behave according to a White norm (Puchner & Markowitz,

2015; Rauscher & Wilson, 2016; Thomas et al., 2009), how White teachers taught from their unacknowledged negative beliefs about Black males (Rauscher & Wilson, 2016; Takei & Shouse, 2007), and how unequal access was provided for opportunities because of Whites' stereotypical beliefs (Diette, 2012; Puchner & Markowitz, 2015). I believe these trends remain because of cultural misunderstandings.

In his introduction to CRT, Taylor (2016) described White society's lack of awareness of racism, microaggressions, and stereotypes. In the qualitative study conducted by Puchner and Markowitz (2015) regarding the preconceived beliefs of teachers about Black males and their families, one teacher stated, "I'm not racist. I think I would have more lower kids if I had more African Americans" (p. 76). According to Love (2014), many preconceived negative beliefs or stereotypes about Black males held by White teachers linger from the negative perceptions of Black culture that is different from White culture. These learned beliefs and experiences coupled with cultural differences, specifically a negative view of rap music, continue to influence many White teachers' belief that Black male students' abilities are lower than White male students and behave as "brutes" (Love, 2014, p. 300); thus, White culture is dominant in schools. Additionally, Love (2014) pointed out the irony that even though most mass school shootings happen in suburban White schools, metal detectors and surveillance equipment are placed in urban schools based on school leaderships' perceptions of who is or is not violent. Ultimately, Love (2014) believed racial stereotypes rather than criminal justice data was to blame. Students entering the building wearing hoodies, repeating rap music, and mimicking hip hop culture are "labeled as unteachable, threatening, and criminal" (Love, 2014, p. 301). Even though cultural differences were present, Puchner and

Markowitz (2015) and Love (2014) concluded students who had an understanding and caring teacher who built relationships, held high expectations, and embraced Black culture were more successful in school. Reflecting upon research regarding the impact of cultural differences (Diette, 2012; Love, 2014; Puchner & Markowitz, 2015; Rauscher & Wilson, 2016; Takei & Shouse, 2007; Thomas et al., 2009), stereotypes remain a hindrance to increased educational equality.

Strategies from research. Minority cultures are oppressed with the presence of different cultures in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2016), but researchers documented some strategies that positively impacted the achievement of Black males in classrooms of White female teachers (Battey, 2013; Boucher, 2016; Douglas et al., 2008; Gay, 2002; Irby, Hill, & Hill, 2013; Puchner & Markowitz, 2015; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). One well-documented necessity for increased achievement was having high expectation for all students, especially marginalized Black male students (Boucher, 2016; Douglas et al., 2008; Puchner & Markowitz, 2015). To increase expectations, Tyler and Boelter (2008) suggested teachers erase common stereotypes and understand other cultures. Most White teachers never experience Black culture and are not aware of many characteristics of Black culture (Battey, 2013); at the same time, cultural differences cannot be overlooked because they are present in classrooms every day (Battey, 2013; Irby et al., 2013). Two practices that increase effectiveness for White females teaching Black males are using culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002) and recognizing and rejecting White privilege in schools (Matias, 2013). Those strategies are described in the next two subsections.

Culturally responsive teaching. Countering cultural deficit explanations as a reason for underachievement of minorities, Ladson-Billings (1995) described a

"theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (p. 469) as *cultural relevant pedagogy*. Gay (2002), an expert in multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching, advocated the necessity of including relevant curriculum and engaging strategies to improve learning for Black male students. Gay (2002) defined culturally responsive teaching as incorporating cultural characteristics, perceptions, and experiences of students to provide more effective and meaningful school experiences using the students' frame of reference. Often used interchangeably with culturally relevant pedagogy, Ladson-Billings (1995) suggested culturally relevant teaching methods included an "ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness" (p. 483). Gay's (2002) article described components needed for culturally responsive teaching. First, explicit knowledge of Black culture that includes understanding characteristics of culture, contributions, traditions, values, communication, and relationships is vital (Gay, 2002). Additionally, Gay (2002) believed teachers must create a curriculum and environment that includes characteristics of cultures represented in the classroom, a classroom climate comfortable for all students to learn, and a communication style reflecting cultural awareness like call and response for Black students where they continually and effectively respond to the speaker without punishment. Finally, Gay (2002) described mutually respectful and caring relationships as important for culturally responsive teaching because students need to know their

teachers care. To begin learning about others' culture and building relationships, the sharing of stories and experiences is needed (Taylor, 2016).

Critical race theorists embrace the use of stories to find meaning in experiences that counter common stereotypes (Taylor, 2016). These are the stories from which teachers can learn about Black males' experiences while giving voice to a marginalized group (Taylor, 2016) and building relationships. Culturally responsive teaching increases learning relevance, meaning, and engagement by including students' home and community culture in the curriculum and instructional practices beginning with what students already know and moving them to what they need to know (Sobel & Taylor, 2011). In a book about culturally responsive pedagogy, Sobel and Taylor (2011) suggested multicultural content and multiple assessment approaches as ways to begin culturally responsive teaching (Sobel & Taylor, 2011). Viadero (1996) proposed, in an article about the clashing of cultures in the classroom, Black males could increase learning by using varied activities as is common at home. Centering around relationships built between students and teachers, culturally responsive educators need awareness of cultural differences to maintain an inclusive classroom (Douglas et al., 2008; Irby et al., 2013). Using counterstories from three White female teacher candidates in her urban-focused teacher education program, Matias (2013) found behavior traits of Black males needed understanding by White female teachers in order to build meaningful relationships important for culturally responsive teaching. Of relationships, Kunjufu (2013) wrote, "Black students are not as affected by the race or gender of the teacher as they are by whether the teacher genuinely cares for them" (p. 51). Caring relationships

were important for culturally responsive teaching (Kunjufu, 2013). With mutual respect, a classroom environment can be created to benefit all students (Garrett et al., 2009).

Understanding culture, including the historical and social aspects of Black culture, positively impacted Black male student achievement in previous studies (Douglas et al., 2008; Irby et al., 2013). Music is an influential part of Black culture; in fact, Irby et al. (2013) suggested using the text of hip hop songs for instruction to increase student motivation and achievement as well as strengthen the classroom community. Likewise, Kunjufu (2013) advocated incorporating lyrics, themes, and disagreements found in hip hop and rap music to engage students. Suggesting the lyrical structure of a rap song is similar to the structure of a concept map, Young, Young, Cason, Ortiz, Foster, and Hamilton (2018) penned an article arguing for the use of a lyrical concept mapping strategy, especially in STEM vocabulary, as a way to incorporate the culturally responsive hip hop pedagogy and empower marginalized learners. Specifically, Young et al. (2018) described hip hop as having four pillars, and those pillars could be used as ways for students to express their understanding of curriculum concepts, especially vocabulary: deejaying, rapping, breakdancing, and graffiti. Similarly, Broughton (2017), a Black male teacher, used hip hop play during centers in his mixed age kindergarten and first grade classroom of 13 Black students letting them express themselves how they chose, and students often chose to rap. Using observations and recordings, Broughton (2017) found students' use of language increased, and students related play to their home experiences. Kunjufu (2013) theorized teachers who were familiar with and understood the role of hip hop in Black culture could effectively incorporate culture, music, and stories into the curriculum. While hip hop is not a staple in the culture of White female

teachers, it could be used as a tool to connect with and provide engaging instruction for Black male students (Diette, 2012; Kunjufu, 2013; Love, 2014; Puncher & Markowitz, 2015). Implementing culturally responsive teaching builds trust, and trust improves achievement (McClain & Cokley, 2016).

Recognizing and rejecting Whiteness. Acknowledging White privilege is necessary for effective implementation of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002; Matias, 2013). Rejecting the Whiteness of schools and incorporating more Black culture promotes social justice, as described in CRT (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016). Along with racism being a permanent part of society, critical race theorists believe schools operate according to the White norm, and Whiteness is an accepted part of society, including educational experiences (Taylor, 2016). Reflecting White privilege, several researchers (Garrett et al., 2009; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Miller & Harris, 2018; Puchner & Markowitz, 2015) whose work included interviews and surveys found White teachers commonly believed White students were positive role models for Black students. Characteristic of all teachers, three White female preservice teachers in Saffold and Longwell-Grice's (2008) study using interviews and focus groups to describe their development of "good urban teaching" (p. 186) entered the profession with their own set of beliefs molded by experiences and learned stereotypes. During the two-year study, all participants changed their view of urban teaching after reflecting on their common belief of desiring to save students from their environment to wanting to build on students' strengths and experiences (Saffold & Longwell-Grice, 2008). After first claiming to be colorblind (Saffold & Longwell-Grice, 2008), the teachers altered that claim after

realizing colorblindness prevents reflection upon or acknowledgement of cultural differences.

Matias' (2013) qualitative study focused on how Whiteness impacted culturally responsive teaching from the perspectives and experiences of three White female teachers in an urban-focused teacher education program dedicated to culturally responsive teaching. At the beginning of the study, the preservice teachers had not confronted Whiteness of schools because not one of them had a teacher of color, yet none felt this lack of experience impacted them (Matias, 2013). Furthermore, participants found Black teachers "odd" (Matias, 2013, p. 75). The teacher candidates entered education with the "White savior teacher" mindset (Matias, 2013, p. 75) destined to save Black males from their current life. This mindset is an example of critical race theorists' assertion that Black males must conform to dominant White culture (Taylor, 2016). Matias (2013) theorized this mindset was common among White female educators. Claiming to be colorblind and seeing everyone as equal, one teacher candidate became agitated when discussing Whiteness and racism suddenly shouting, "But we have Kobe Bryant, Oprah, and Obama!" (Matias, 2013, p. 76). The candidate saw race, and Matias (2013) explained by saying Whiteness is "an emotional investment that exemplifies how Whites feel the need to self-protect their core sense of racialized White identity" (p. 76). Through the teacher preparation program's culturally responsive focus, the prospective White teachers began to confront the Whiteness of schools, a necessity for culturally responsive teaching and confronting "systemic racist practices that allow White supremacy and Whiteness to reign supreme in education" (Matias, 2013, p. 76). Likewise, Miller and Harris (2018), using Miller's experiences in predominantly urban

minority schools, added many White female teachers held the following beliefs: White teachers save Black students through nurturing, White students provide a model showing Black students how to behave, and disadvantaged Black students teach White students gratitude and empathy. As suggested by critical race theorists, racism is a permanent, normal, and accepted part of society dominated by White cultural beliefs (Taylor, 2016). Institutional racism is sustained as most teachers are White females with little knowledge of Black male culture; therefore, schools operate in White culture (Garrett et al., 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2016). As seen in Matias' (2013) study, recognizing beliefs is the first step to confronting Whiteness in schools.

In an explanatory mixed methods study, Siwatu (2011) used a questionnaire when collecting data from 192 preservice teachers to examine self-efficacy beliefs about culturally responsive teaching. Then, eight participants completing the questionnaire were interviewed to identify types of experiences that contributed to their culturally responsive self-efficacy (Siwatu, 2011). While some teachers took courses in theory and practices of culturally responsive teaching, they did not have opportunities to develop those practices in the field; therefore, the preservice teachers felt comfortable with general teaching practices like making students feel comfortable but not with using specific strategies to minimize the mismatch between home and school (Siwatu, 2011). Therefore, Siwatu (2011) suggested more preservice experiences in the classroom to practice and master strategies related to Black cultural characteristics.

Finally, analyzing questionnaire data about teacher practices collected from 155 6th and 9th grade students in an ethnically diverse urban area, Garrett et al. (2009) found Black and White students perceived caring behaviors differently. Black students reported

academic support as a caring behavior; however, White students did not (Garrett et al., 2009). Garrett et al. (2009) also noted Black students had fewer issues with equitable treatment. The authors thought that suggested Black students had accepted practices of inequality, chosen to proceed with conditions they could not change, and became unaware or immune to racism present in schools (Garrett et al., 2009). The dominance of Whiteness in schools negatively impacted acceptance of other cultures and furthered the oppression of Black males (Garrett et al., 2009; Matias, 2013; Miller & Harris, 2018; Saffold & Longwell-Grice 2008; Siwatu, 2011). Even with incorporation of other cultures, White females had different cultural experiences compared to Black males (Love, 2014); therefore, with White females in control, Whiteness remained standard (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Matias, 2013).

Most research came from studies of White teachers' experiences with Black males, preservice teachers' use of culturally responsive teaching, and teachers using aspects of Black culture in the classroom (Boucher, 2016; Irby et al., 2013; Siwatu, 2011). I did not find literature about White females effectively educating Black males from the perspectives and experiences of Black males. While research is available describing the struggles of Black males, it is limited regarding the solution from the perspective of Black males (Battey, 2013). With a principle of CRT being the use of experiences and stories to expose racism and promote social justice, Black male voices need to be heard (Taylor, 2016). My research will help fill this gap in the literature by adding strategies determined from the experiences of Black males that White female teachers can use to more effectively teach Black male students.

Summary. A review of the literature suggested microaggressions have become a common form of racism. Since microaggressions are often unrealized by the person committing them, the literature provided information to increase awareness and identification of microaggressions in schools. Being aware of microaggressions is a step toward eliminating them.

Throughout history, schools operated using White cultural norms. Because White culture is different from Black culture, inequalities persist academically, behaviorally, and socially. The literature described the Whiteness historically and currently used to operate America's schools, even though minorities are becoming the new majority. Recognizing and understanding Whiteness of schools documented in the research provides awareness of the inequalities that remain.

Because predominantly White educators lead America's schools, awareness and understanding of Black culture suggested by the literature is needed for change. Being an expert in ones' own culture, realization by the dominant group of the impact cultural differences have on the marginalized group is almost nonexistent. Literature provided some thoughts on the impact of cultural differences and how the persistence of stereotypes and permanence of racism negatively impact the education of Black male students taught by White female teachers.

Finally, with one goal of the study being to provide White female teachers with strategies effective for Black male students, I would be remiss if I did not include strategies already found in literature. From my research, two strategies were found: culturally responsive teaching and recognizing and rejecting Whiteness. These strategies provided a starting point for my study; however, most of the literature was not from the

perspective of Black male students. With the goal being to determine strategies from Black males themselves, I sought to add more thought or ideas to the current research.

Conclusion

This conceptual framework consisted of my personal experiences and thoughts, the theoretical framework, and the literature review. Critical race theory provided the theoretical framework for the study and offered guidance for my own beliefs and experiences with Black male students. The literature review provided factual information to help understand how Black males were performing and summarized the information available regarding Black males' experiences with White female teachers. The latter provided little information; therefore, the results of this study will add to the literature available. Chapter 3 describes and explains all steps taken to conduct my qualitative narrative inquiry study.

Chapter III

NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Throughout my study, my research questions and methods evolved. The first two questions were my original research questions tweaked for detail and clarity. The third research question was originally intended and written to include the perspectives of White female teachers teaching predominantly Black male students; however, I did not want to detract from the experiences of Black male students because they were the focus of my study, and I realized White female teachers' perspectives on teaching Black males was possibly another entire dissertation study itself. Therefore, the last question was modified to add participants' thoughts on how to improve achievement of Black male students in the classrooms of White female teachers. In this chapter, the final research questions and methods are outlined. Additionally, my subjectivity was acknowledged and managed as described in the last section titled *Validity*.

Research Questions

To add to the literature regarding effective teaching of Black male students by White female teachers and fill a gap in literature about effective White female teachers from the experiences and perspectives of Black males, my study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What were the school-related experiences of five Black males from an urban area in the south with at least 50% of their teachers classified as White females?

Answering this question allowed me to give voice to a group of students who rarely get to share their experiences, allowed me to suggest strategies for teachers to use with Black male students, and opened the door for me to offer recommendations for ways to promote success for Black male students.

2. How do Black male students make sense of their school-related experiences in the context of their place in society, their value in schools, their culture, and their lifetime plans? Answering this question allowed me to use school experiences to build narratives and understand how Black males believed school experiences influenced their lives.
3. How can White female teachers' increase effectiveness teaching Black male students as determined from the experiences and perspectives of Black males? Answering this question allowed me to give teachers ideas and strategies determined from the experiences and perspectives of Black males to increase effectiveness when teaching Black male students.

Research Methods

Following Maxwell's (2013) design, this section has a detailed description of the research method used. It begins with a description of the research design. Then, the characteristics of and plan for participants along with a description of relationship development is provided. Next, my work collecting, analyzing, and presenting data is detailed. Overall, the design and process for my entire study is specified.

Research Design

Beginning the doctoral program, I was sure I would conduct quantitative research because I always loved math, and my master's thesis was quantitative. I

erroneously believed only numbers provided truth and evidence. Living in the geographic area in which the research was conducted and spending my career teaching in a Title I school on the edge of a large, urban, southern city, I knew my topic would include race as my school environment has always been diverse. Without realizing specifics at the time, I knew education in the geographic area in which I lived and worked was not working for all students, especially Black students.

Having never understood qualitative design, reading qualitative studies helped me realize its importance. Merriam (2009) described qualitative research as a method used to derive and describe the meaning of certain interactions with the world. Specifically, she demonstrated how meaning is made from interviews with participants about their experiences and their reflections on their experiences. She further explained how the researcher is the primary data collection and analysis instrument in most qualitative designs. Beyond learning from Merriam and class discussions about qualitative studies and CRT in my research class, I heard the phrase, "Gives voice to those who have had no voice." That phrase remained in my mind. Thinking of that, I realized Black students, specifically the ever-discussed struggling males, had no voice in any of the three schools in which I taught, and I was drawn to qualitative research for my dissertation in to describe experiences, make meaning, and give voice to some of those young men. Therefore, I put quantitative methods aside and conducted a qualitative study because the questions I wanted to answer were best approached through that method.

Continuing my study of qualitative research, narrative analysis became a qualitative design of interest because data is presented in the form of a story from the

perspective of the storyteller (Merriam, 2009). After shifting to a qualitative narrative mindset, my research design was shaped. More specifically, I chose to use narrative inquiry as the focus of my qualitative study. Caine, Steeves, and Clandinin (2013) described narrative inquiry, the study of experiences, as a three-dimensional relational process "both as a view of the phenomenon and as a methodology" (p. 45) allowing the study of an individual's experiences to find ways of improving or changing future experiences. With *temporality*, *sociality*, and *place* being the three dimensions, the first dimension of temporality, which refers to the significance of the past, present, and future of the events being studied to understand how events are always in transition (Caine et al., 2013). This was important to find answers to the research question that focused on the stories or experiences of Black males during their school career by giving them a platform to make their voice heard. The second dimension of sociality encompassed the social conditions (e.g., environment or context) and the relationship between the researcher and participants. This dimension was key to my research as it reminded me to develop a trusting relationship with participants, which allowed them to be comfortable sharing their stories with me. Finally, Caine et al. (2013) termed the last dimension place, which refers to the place where the experiences occur. With this study focusing on the experiences of Black males in classrooms with mostly White female teachers, the place where the experiences took place is important when writing narratives and understanding the meaning of participants' experiences. After using Seidman's (2006) protocol to collect data using three interviews with each participant, stories or narratives were collected that described the experiences of five Black males who were taught in classrooms by White females. Because experiences are often

studied in order to find ways to improve or change the future, the narrative inquiry approach as described by Clandinin (2016) was an appropriate qualitative method to study the stories and present data as first-person narrative profiles.

Narrative research as prescribed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) focuses on retelling the lives of people through their own stories in ways which can lead to a change in practices. Kim (2016) further explained narrative inquiry "presumes the importance of the everyday, the ordinary, the quotidian stories that have frequently gone unnoticed" (p. 55) and "incorporates the feelings, goals, perceptions, and values of the people whom we want to understand" (p. 37). In my study, narrative was incorporated through retellings or recreations of interviews as stories of Black males' school and life experiences to gain understanding of the role of culture in the classrooms of White female teachers, to discover what made some teachers more effective than others, to see how Black male students made sense of their educational experiences, and, most importantly, to give voice to a population who is rarely given the opportunity to speak freely on the topic of their education in a predominantly White-led environment. Kunjufu (2013) defined school culture as the "values, norms, curriculum, pedagogy, classroom management, leadership styles of educators and the principal, and overall behaviors (of educators, administrators, staff students, and parents) that characterize the vision, daily teaching and learning, and socialization of the school family" (p. viii). It is the feeling sensed when walking through a classroom doorway. Classroom culture is a part of school culture and is important because students must know they are valued in order to be comfortable enough to learn (Kunjufu, 2013). The stories gathered provide insight into the classroom culture

experienced by participants. From the experiences and data analysis, stories were employed to accomplish the aforementioned goals and to provide educators with a description of effective White female teachers as defined by Black male students.

My study focused on the phenomenon of Black males taught by White females with the intent of understanding how Black males made meaning of their education and what impact having mostly White female teachers and the classroom environment made on their views. My small number of participants allowed me to analyze their stories on a deeper level than would be possible with a large number of participants. Clandinin's (2016) approach was used because she proposed the creation of a well-planned, structured method inclusive of personal connections before beginning data collection and the use of a theoretical framework as a guide. Before data collection, relationships between the researcher and participants were developed.

Setting and Participant Selection. I became interested in the stories of Black males in the classrooms of White female educators because I am a White female teacher of Black male students, and I struggled my first few years because all I knew were the White normed expectations of my own experiences. I felt guilty over the years for my lack of knowledge of cultural differences. Like most White people, I was born, raised, and educated in White culture, so that was all I knew and all I expected from my students. Little did I understand about other cultures. Therefore, I am personally attached to both the setting and the participants.

Setting. Participants attended one of two high schools in a specific area bordering a large metropolitan area in the south. Student enrollment in the schools was predominantly minority; however, the staff was not. Throughout the years, the

older White male district leadership was described by residents as the Good 'Ol Boys. When I was in school in the 1980s and 1990s, this area was known as one of the "best" or highest scoring districts in Georgia. As the demographics changed from predominantly White to predominantly Black, the area gained a reputation of being a "bad" area. As a teacher attending professional learning courses across the district, I heard comments and language used by others that confirmed negative views of my community and the children in it. Being a product of and teacher in this same area, these comments upset me. This geographic area is a great place that would be even greater with the eradication of racism.

The geographic region studied consisted of two high schools, four middle schools, and nine elementary schools. The two high schools opened in the 1950s. While buildings have been added, the schools are old. Currently, new elementary schools are being built with two smaller elementary schools being combined into one mega school. Still, test scores are low (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.b), behavior referrals are high (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.c; The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, n.d.a), and most teachers are White females (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, n.d.b) who consistently transfer away from the area schools after the required 2 years. While school buildings are beginning to improve, student outcomes remain stagnant, and student demographics do not match staff demographics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018a; The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, n.d.b). While the teachers' color cannot be changed, methods of instruction and perceptions about Black males can evolve. Therefore, my knowledge of, passion for, and proximity to the geographic area coupled with

students' needs helped determine the study setting. Realizing I will never truly understand what it is like to be Black in the United States because I am White, I wanted to know the experiences of Black males in order to identify changes White female teachers could make to more effectively teach Black males, and I wanted to give voice to these students who so often had to navigate a predominantly White-based culture in their schools. Therefore, I purposefully sought participants who could help me achieve that goal.

Participants. Black male former students and White female teachers were the study participants. Six participants were targeted because I believed that number was manageable, small enough to examine deeply and large enough to show similarities as well as differences. Specifically, the study's population included Black males who attended school in the specified area for their entire public school career. Additionally, Black male participants classified at least 50% of their teachers from kindergarten through 12th grade as White females. Based on 10 elementary, 16 middle, and 24 different high school teachers using a block schedule, students had a minimum of 50 different teachers, assuming they graduated high school. Students having at least 25 White female teachers met the criteria of having at least half their teachers be White females.

Because participants were required to meet certain criteria, I originally tried to use *purposeful sampling* (Seidman, 2006) by publicly posting the criteria; however, personal contact and *Snowball sampling* (Merriam, 2009) ultimately yielded the participants. I taught Anthony in fifth grade, but we lost touch through the years. Anthony, who became a participant, was located by a fellow area teacher who had

recently seen him at a grocery store and gave me his phone number. I met Brian at a dinner held after a Sunday service. Brian introduced me to Johnny. Likewise, a former student visiting at my workplace introduced me to Chad, Manny, and Marquez. When I began scheduling interviews, Marquez dropped all communication. Following Seidman's (2013) style of in-depth interviews, I interviewed the remaining five Black male students. This made up one group of participants. An introduction to each member of this group is provided in Chapter 4.

Once volunteers were identified I verbalized participation criterion to volunteers, and they decided whether they met this requirement before proceeding. If they thought half of their teachers were White females, I provided them with a questionnaire to complete (See Appendix A). The participant questionnaire asked potential participants their age and contact information, whether they graduated, if they were currently enrolled in school, to check off schools attended, and to list their teachers' names and race. Answers on the questionnaire were used to confirm eligibility. One participant, Anthony, did not complete eighth grade; therefore, his total number of teachers was much lower than the other participants. The 18 White female teachers he had was more than 50% of his teachers.

Participants were Black males between the ages of 18 and 25. Graduation from high school was not a determining factor; however, participants could not be enrolled currently in public school because experiences collected included how participants perceived their experiences impacted life today, post k-12 public school. Even though six participants were secured, only four completed the interview process, and one completed one interview. Once volunteers were obtained and the questionnaire

returned, I was pleased with the final five participants who were willing to work with me. Table 1 provides an overview of some information collected from the participant questionnaire.

Table 1

Criteria Met by Black Male Participants

Participant	Age	Years Since Attended School	White Female Teachers	High School Graduate
Anthony	22	5	18*	No
Brian	23	4	33	No
Johnny	23	5	35	Yes
Chad	25	3	41	Yes
Manny	20	2	39	Yes

Note. *Anthony left school in grade 8, but at least 50% were White female teachers.

To enhance the study, three White female teachers comprised the second group of participants. Two participants volunteered after receiving an email from me to all White female teachers in schools meeting the criteria for my study. A second email was sent to the same teachers in order to secure the third participant. With the intention of interviewing young White female teachers, I anticipated teacher participants to have from 0-5 years of experience; however, one teacher participant had 15 years of experience overall but only 3 years of experience in a majority minority Title I school. In Table 2, characteristics of the three White female teacher participants are provided. After participating in a single interview, one teacher invited

me to lunch with her teaching team. White female teacher participant introductions are provided in Chapter 4.

Table 2

Characteristics of White Female Teacher Participants

Participant	Years Teaching	Number of Schools	Years in Title I School
Ms. Louis	15	4	3
Ms. Fitts	3	2	1
Ms. Mady	2	1	2

The White female teachers were all elementary school teachers. I had hoped for teachers at a variety of grade levels, but no middle or high school teachers volunteered. Considering the focus of the study was the experiences of Black males, I did not take the extra time to find other White female teacher participants. I believe the teachers who did participate were an accurate representation of the teachers throughout the community.

When collecting data, my goal was to gather as much detailed information as possible. Therefore, participants needed to be as comfortable as I could make them. Building relationships ahead of interviews and allowing participants to choose their own interview setting aided in meeting my goal and allowed me to collect lots of data.

Research Relationships. "Narrative inquirers see their research as relational research," Clandinin (2016) wrote when introducing how to begin conducting narrative inquiry (p. 81). In narrative inquiry, researcher and participant spend long periods of

time together making connections by sharing stories and reflecting on any shared experiences (Clandinin, 2016). Before beginning conversations with participants, I reflected on my experiences as a White female teacher of Black male students for the past 23 years. Being the researcher, I became part of the study's landscape, the sociality dimension, and an active part of the final narratives themselves (Clandinin, 2016). Because all relationships are built on trust, I focused on building trust with participants. Living and working in the geographical area in which the research occurred, the potential existed that I would know some of the selected participants. In fact, one participant was a former student, so a previous relationship was already established. Having no interaction with him for 10 years, I followed the same process to build trust with him as I did with the other participants. I realize the quality and volume of data may have been negatively impacted by the comfort level of the participants, but I attempted to minimize this through creating mutually trusting relationships in order to speak freely without judgement. When meeting for our introductory meet and greet, I dressed casually, spoke freely, and tried to be very friendly. Before beginning the initial meetings, I consulted a Black male friend to increase my knowledge of current topics that may have been of interest to participants: latest mixed tapes, disses in music, current news, Instagram followers, etc. Because race discussions can be tense with people who are not comfortable discussing their beliefs, thoughts, and experiences related to the topic, I boosted the comfort level for all participants to talk honestly by discussing steps to increase confidentiality and reinforcing that I was not there to get anyone in trouble or pass judgement on beliefs. In contrast, I tried to show excitement as I heard their stories and made comments like

"Oh, wow!" and "For real?" along with appropriate facial expressions to reinforce the importance of each story and encourage that individual participant. For the initial introductory meetings, I met each participant at Panera Bread for about 30 minutes to begin building relationships by just chatting and introducing myself, and the questionnaires were used to start conversations if needed. A small plate of cookies, water, and plain coffee was available for the initial meeting. Additionally, I was constantly aware of my own thoughts, inclinations, and biases. Passionate about the study's topic and the geographic area, I kept my conversations focused on introductions and participants' experiences and worked to avoid pushing my own agenda while getting to know the participants in the context of the urban setting.

Data Collection. Before any contact with participants, IRB approval (Appendix B) was obtained. Then, data collection began. As Clandinin (2016) suggested, I wanted to obtain individual's experiences, which are "storied both in the living and telling and that can be studied by listening, observing, living alongside an other, and writing and interpreting texts" (p. 18). I therefore met with each participant at the location of their choosing on a Sunday afternoon for the interviews. Sunday afternoons seemed to be a popular time for participant availability. With permission, interviews were recorded using Audacity on my password protected Apple MacBook Pro, and my iPhone was used for a backup recording. From recorded interviews, I transcribed the audio files, which was the bulk of the data collected, yet it was supplemented by researcher memos. Beginning transcription, I tried to use the dictation in Word to electronically transcribe the interviews; however, that did not transcribe the audio accurately, so I listened to the audio, constantly pausing and then

playing over and over, to type the transcripts. After transcription, the voice recordings were deleted. The transcriptions will be held in a locked file for three years before being shredded.

To interview participants, Seidman's (2013) three-phase interview protocol was used. Seidman (2013) designed his interview protocol with the first interview consisting of the participant's life history with the goal of recreating the event in context, the second interview adding details to the experiences with the goal of reconstructing the experience, and the third interview reflecting on meaning made from those experiences by examining intellectual and emotional connections with the goal of understanding experiences through collecting details on which opinions are built. Seidman (2013) proposed each interview lasting 90 minutes and being spaced from three days to one week apart.

For data collection, Black males' interviews were conducted following Seidman's (2013) three interview method because I believed it yielded information needed for my study. Interviews were semi-structured using a list of topics (Appendix C) as a reference if needed, but conversations seemed to flow naturally. Seidman's (2013) approach seemed to be the most effective method for collecting stories from Black male participants because it allowed for conversation with the participant followed by subsequent interviews to gather more details, clear any misconceptions, and debrief on the draft narratives. Clandinin (2016) explained relationships being central to narrative inquiry, and the timeline of Seidman's approach allowed for the building of research relationships. Following his method, each of three interviews were approximately 90 minutes long; with the intention of conducting interviews 1

week apart, I pushed them to 2 weeks apart in order to complete the transcriptions. Memos regarding the setting and observations during the interviews were both written and recorded as a voice memo which was played as I later constructed the narrative profiles. After each interview, I transcribed and coded the data for the first cycle of coding using *in vivo codes*, which use the participants' words as codes, to begin getting an idea of important components of the narratives using Saldaña (2016) as a guide.

Believing I would receive more details if participants were in a comfortable environment, I asked them to choose where to meet for the interviews. For Anthony's interviews, he chose to return to Panera Bread where we held our pre-interview chat. Not having transportation, I picked him up at his apartment for each interview. Brian and Johnny were the following interviews. Their interviews were held in the basement of the church in which we met. During the first interview, Johnny started to say something and stopped because he did not think he should say it at church. After reassuring him that the church is the people and not the building, he was more forthcoming. Chad and Manny chose to have their interviews at their apartments. Chad appeared very comfortable and eager requiring little talking or asking of questions by me. Manny completed one interview and then did not return any calls, texts, or emails. I used data gathered from his one interview because it was relevant and interesting.

As the interviews began, I asked participants to choose a pseudonym in order to keep their identity confidential. Therefore, they chose the name reflected throughout the study. Beginning the interview, participants were asked to tell about their life

history and background. I used a guide to help stay focused and to make sure I included all topics (Appendix C). Using the stem "Tell me about," I simply began by asking the participant to think back to elementary school and describe his school experiences. Specifically, the participants' historical school-related experiences were discussed. After the interview, I transcribed the recording verbatim and coded the data. The coding of data is described further in the data analysis section.

Following Seidman's (2013) protocol, the second interview was fact gathering. The goal was to reconstruct details of the participants' experiences, which included clarifying details from the first interview while attempting to gather new experiences. Relationships were clarified, and stories from experiences with White teachers were gathered. Overall, this interview delved deeper into the experiences presented in the initial interview (Seidman, 2013). At each interview, a copy of the transcript from the previous interview was offered to participants to keep and read, if they chose, for any corrections or revisions. None chose to keep or read them.

In the third interview, information was gathered about participants' recent life and how his school experiences contributed to where he was at that point. Participants were asked to reflect on the meaning of those experiences and how they impacted decisions they made and the events in their lives after leaving school. Like the second interview, misconceptions or needed details were also gathered, and a copy of his transcript from the previous interview was offered. A fourth interview was not needed for any clarification.

While the majority of data collection was in the form of interviews and researcher memos of Black male students, a group of teachers was also interviewed to

add context and make possible connections to the Black males' experiences. Even though the focus of my dissertation was on the experiences Black males had in school and how they made meaning of those experiences, the thoughts and experiences of White female teachers who represent at least half the teachers these young men had were believed to be relevant and actually did help create the context or landscape of the stories of students' experiences that Clandinin (2016) pointed out were by nature "relational across time, place, and relationships" (p. 19). Therefore, after interviewing Black male participants, three White female teachers living and teaching in the geographic area each participated in one 90-minute interview. All three taught at the elementary level. None of the teachers taught any of the Black male participants. The interviews took place after the interviews with Black males in order to infuse the discussion with experiences reported to me by the Black males. To conduct the teacher interviews, an interview guide (Appendix D) was used. After interviewing one teacher, I was invited to have lunch and conversation with a few teachers on her 5th grade team. While the lunch discussion was not recorded, it was very interesting, and I immediately memoed my recollection of one interaction. That interaction is restoried in Chapter 4.

Collecting data from Black males and White female teachers in the same geographic area allowed me to gather rich information from their various experiences, which I later analyzed. As described, Black male interviews followed Seidman's (2013) approach for organization of content; however, the interviews needed a 2-week spacing for me to complete transcriptions. The teachers only participated in one interview to add context, but I remained focused on the Black males' experiences.

After the stories were collected, they were thoroughly analyzed to discover common as well as unique circumstances, themes, and strategies that both worked and did not.

Data Analysis. To learn from experiences shared during interviews, data collected were analyzed. After each interview, written transcripts were created, and the transcript was uploaded to MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software package, for coding and analysis. Data analysis followed the methods provided by Saldaña (2016) in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Research*. With the goal of writing the unique story of each participant and analyzing them for shared themes, stories were constructed having the typical beginning, middle, and end. After considering the methods described in Saldaña's (2016) work, I chose methods for the first round and second round coding I believed would best provide relevant data for my specific research method and help answer my research questions. The first cycle coding included in vivo, emotion, and values coding. Similar codes were combined, and 17 categories were constructed. Focused coding was used for the second cycle coding. Categories were combined and reduced to determine themes. A brief overview of my data analysis process is shown in Figure 1.

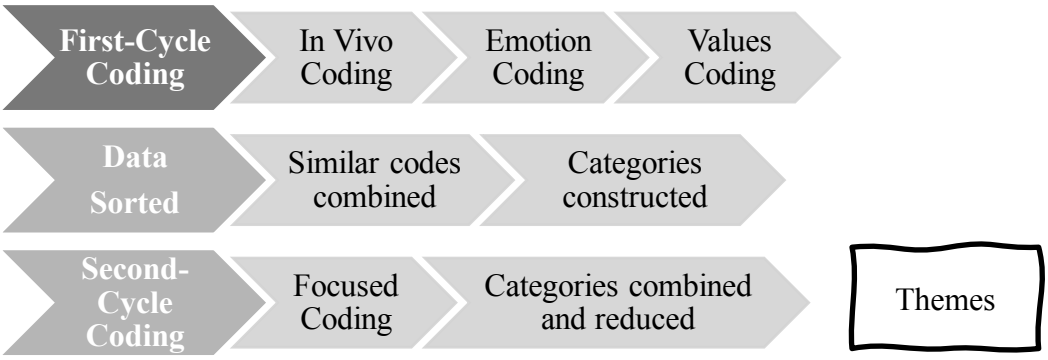

Figure 1. Overview of data analysis.

For the initial round of coding, I first used a combination of in vivo and emotion coding to analyze the data and write each participants' narrative (Saldaña, 2016). As I was interviewing Black males who are so often silenced, I believed identifying and using their own words with in vivo coding was powerful. Saldaña (2016) suggested this method to use for beginning qualitative research and for educational research where giving voice to marginalized youth was important because of the use of exact quotes to capture language differences. When using in vivo coding, I chose the participants' own words to code the data (Saldaña, 2016). Interesting and relevant words and phrases were pulled out of the transcripts to maintain the exact words and meaning of the participants when the *profiles* (Seidman, 2013) were written.

As I was coding the first interview data, I noticed my codes were often longer than a word or phrase associated with in vivo coding, and I noticed participants jumped around when discussing their school experiences; therefore, I organized the longer phrases chronologically into the different levels of schooling (elementary, middle, and high) as shown in Figure 2 to begin to organize data. Data not fitting in a school level were placed under the heading of family, background, buddies, or adult. The longer chunks of texts were sequenced in a manner to create a narrative profile maintaining the unique language and perspective for each Black male participant. These longer pieces of data were used when restorying into profiles. Headings shown in Figure 2 with the largest font have more frequent data. The different colors have no meaning.

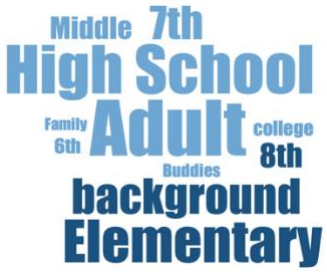

Figure 2. Headings for data sorted in longer phrases.

Using the longer pieces of data, I reduced them further to make them smaller and more manageable for subsequent coding: in vivo coding and emotion coding. I recoded those longer passages into shorter codes using in vivo codes like "best time." Like and similar codes were then sorted for similarities and to begin categorizing in order to determine themes (Saldaña, 2016). The headings remained the same for sorting, but the longer phrases of data were reduced to use in vivo coding described by Saldaña (2016). An example of my in vivo coding is provided in Table 3.

Table 3

Example of In Vivo Coding of Black Males' Interviews

Participant	In Vivo Codes	Transcript
Anthony	best time After elementary not liking school	Elementary was the best time I had. After elementary, I really started not liking school that much.
Brian	scary Yo bro	It was a scary look because [he's hitting the door and] it's like, "Yo." You know what I'm saying? Your kids in the house, bro. You know what I mean?
Johnny	your dreams	Don't let nobody stop your dreams.

Chad	mind set suspension	We explained, but they already pretty much had their mind set of what they was going to do, suspension.
Manny	fye favorite PE and recess	Elementary was fye. My favorite was PE and recess.

Throughout my teacher training, I learned that a memorable story evokes strong emotions from the reader and aids in learning and understanding. Because narrative inquiry uses participants' stories, emotions from the words, tone, and actions were used for accurate retelling. Emotion coding (Saldaña, 2016) was used simultaneously with in vivo coding. With emotions and actions, along with words, expressing meaning when telling stories, detailed field notes recorded during the interviews were important for accurate understanding and retelling (Saldaña, 2016). I wrote notes in a spiral notebook detailing the reactions by participants when they were describing school experiences. For example, when Anthony was talking about his teacher threatening him, I wrote "eyes widened," "leaned forward," and "high pitched, fast speech" in my notes. I included these notes in my data and coding. As I reread the transcripts, I coded the text for emotions and noted words or phrases describing emotions as a comment by that line of the transcribed text to make the emotions or feelings of the participant available for analysis as the stories were defragmented in coding and put back together as restories (Saldaña, 2016). An example of emotional coding in the text of the transcript was Anthony frequently questioning why he was being held back. At one time he stated, "Why are you doing this?" In the margin of that code, I recorded his emotion as *upset about perceived treated unfairly*. Figure 3

shows how this example looked when coded with a comment. The text in the largest font is Anthony's words from the transcript. It is in the 8th line or position of Anthony's transcript and was coded for emotion. After further analysis, it helped create the heading frustration.

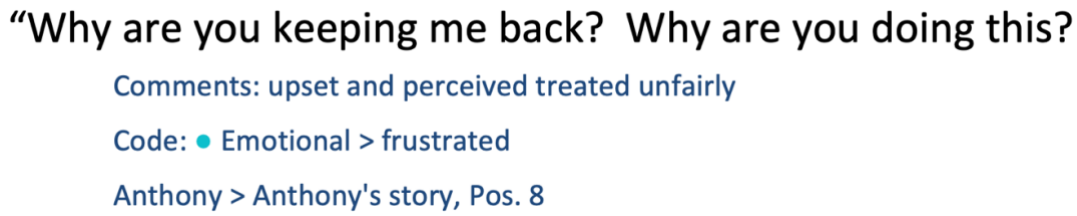

Figure 3. Example of Anthony's emotional coding.

After coding, I then sorted the emotions for similarities and differences in order to determine a heading for emotions that were found. The previous example helped determine two categories: unfairness and frustrated. Figure 4 is a visual of the emotions found from sorting codes. The format and placement of the headings in the visual are random and have no meaning. As the narrative profiles were written, the emotions noted by me were built into the stories.

Figure 4. Visual of emotions determined from codes.

In addition to exact language and my interpretation of emotions based on context, inflection, and actions, maintaining the beliefs and values of the participant by coding throughout the transcript helped me accurately construct each narrative with

integrity. Hence, the transcripts underwent values coding to code for values and beliefs to help the researcher understand the participant's perspectives (Saldaña, 2016). For value coding, the transcripts were reread for what participants believed was important. For example, Johnny repeatedly remarked his parents expected him to graduate high school. This demonstrated his parents valued his education or believed in the importance of education. Individuals are shaped by the interconnectedness of experiences with family, culture, society, institutions, and past knowledge of pertinent topics (Clandinin, 2016). The acknowledgement of the values and beliefs or changes in values and beliefs of participants was important to thoroughly analyze the data in my study and identify connected themes. Values coding yielded the following categories: values education/attendance, values sports, values music, values family and friends, believes in helping others, believes in freedom and own choices, and values a good time. For example, when Johnny repeatedly said he knew from a young age he had to graduate high school, those lines of text were coded as valuing education. The categories of values coding helped with the final round of coding and the determination of themes. After the first cycle of in vivo, emotion, and values coding, the second cycle of coding was conducted by categorizing similarities and maintaining uniqueness when appropriate.

For the second round of data analysis, focused coding was used to place passages with like codes from the first cycle into a category with a single heading and develop themes, or as Clandinin (2016) labeled--*threads*. I returned to the in vivo codes from the initial coding and sorted the codes into groups with similar meanings (Saldaña, 2016). As I sorted the initial codes into groups with similar meanings, I used

words reflective of the codes' meaning for group headings ending in *-ing* to prepare for my focused coding. Saldaña (2016) described placing these groups into categories with the category name emphasizing a process by beginning with a word ending in *-ing*. For example, any listening behaviors by school staff or other peers coded from the transcripts were sorted under the heading of *listening to students*. Listening behaviors includes teachers or administrators listening to students, staff **not** listening to what students have to say, and fellow peers listening to the participants. All of these formed the category titled *listening to students*. Figure 5 shows the focused coding categories and frequency for Chad, Anthony, and Johnny. The larger squares have more codes. The colors have no meaning for this visual.

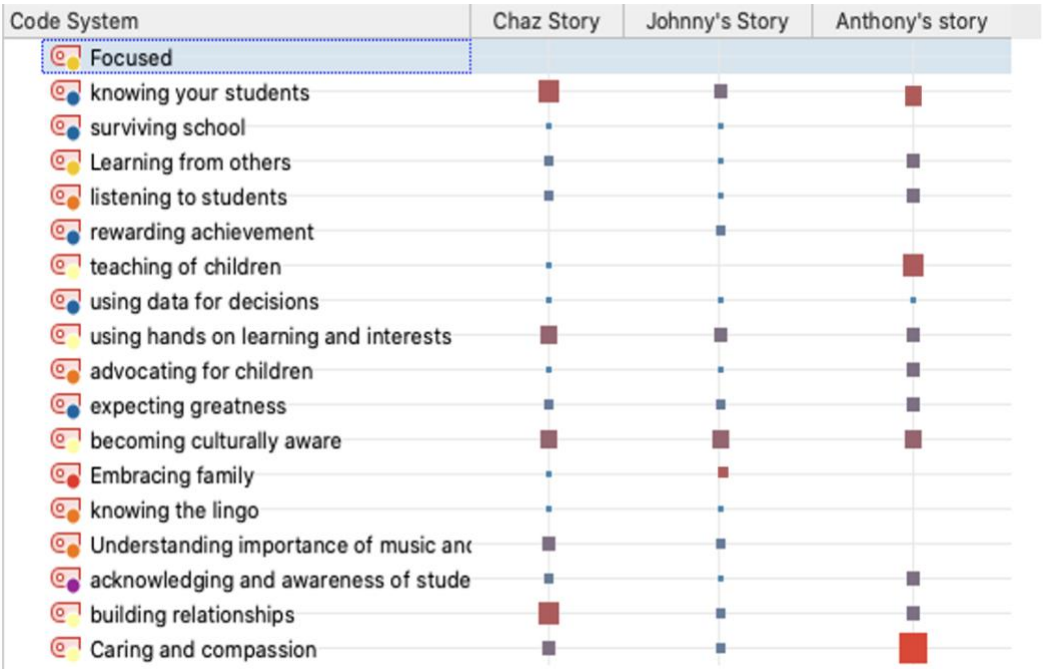

Figure 5. Visual of focused coding for Chad, Johnny, and Anthony.

There were 17 categories. Therefore, I needed to further purge, reduce, and combine the data. To do this, I looked at the frequencies of codes in each category. I created a Word Cloud in MAXQDA of the 17 categories with the size of the words representing

the number of total codes in that category. The larger the word in the figure the more frequently it was found when all transcripts were combined. Figure 6 shows these categories.

Figure 6. Codes used for focused coding.

After coding the data, I had many *-ing* categories; therefore, I further combined and reduced the codes into four themes: building positive relationships, embracing cultural responsiveness, learning from others, and working to reach ALL children. Pulling out the categories with the most codes across all narratives, I considered how the categories could be combined. For example, the theme *learning from others* was created from *listening to others* and *knowing your students*. To learn from others, everyone has to listen to each other: teachers listen to students, students listen to teachers, and students listen to students. Likewise, students and teachers learn about each other by getting to know one another. Part of knowing students is knowing how they survive school. By surviving school, I am referring to how students learn and

work best. All of these are part of learning about others. The same thinking and process was used to construct the remaining three themes. Figure 7 shows how the categories were combined to create the themes.

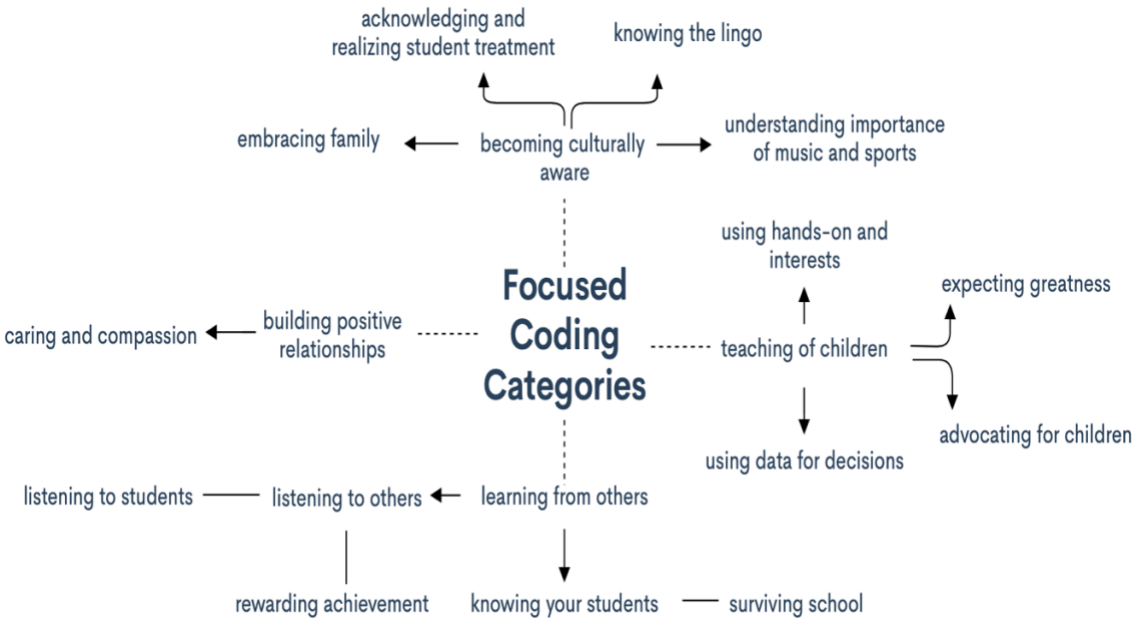

Figure 7. Hierarchical model of categories and subcategories to create the themes.

Saldaña (2016) suggested using focused coding with in vivo coding to maintain the integrity of the exact language when determining themes from the study. From my coding, I was able to determine themes and answer my research questions.

Unique themes from the coding and data analysis were used to restory or write a coherent, relevant profile for each participant using the themes, stories, and findings from the data collected. Then, after cross case analysis using focused coding, common themes were addressed that connected across all narratives. The narratives were the *cases*. The goal was for the narratives and themes to be written into profiles telling the young men's stories as a way to begin to inform White female teachers how to more effectively educate Black male students.

Data Presentation. To increase credibility with readers and preserve the participant's words, profiles as described by Seidman (2006) were used to share data. Because the research was qualitative with a narrative focus, data is presented as a first-person narrative, or story, of each participant called a profile. A profile of each Black male was constructed by me. The profiles are "the participant's words" that were "crafted by the interviewer from what the participant [has] said" (Seidman, 2006, p. 120). With the goal of writing the unique story of each participant and analyzing them for shared themes, the stories were constructed having the typical beginning, middle, and end.

Seidman (2006) clearly sequenced the task of developing the profile, which I followed exactly as presented:

1. I made two copies of the coded and labeled transcript. One copy was saved for later.
2. Passages associated with important codes were cut from the first copy using the cut and paste tool in Microsoft Word and sorted into the initial categories shown in Figure 1.
3. Using chronological order and placing related coded passages together, they were pasted to create a slightly shorter story that still had a beginning, middle, and end with all the story elements.
4. I read the sorted narrative highlighting parts that I believed must be a part of the story.
5. I reduced the narrative again to create a profile of the participant's stories in first person.

I added a final step of revisiting the emotion and value coding in order to add my narration or comments to the participants' words. Any part of the narrative added by me is found in square brackets. This includes first person statements that clarify ideas, replace proper names, and add to the participants' exact words. Anything added in square brackets was discussed or observed in the interviews; however, it is not the exact words of the participant. Additionally, actions or emotions, that is anything not written in first person, added by me were italicized in the square brackets. As with all stories, the story elements of plot, setting, characters, conflict, and resolution were present throughout the profiles. One of the participants' stories (Manny) did not lend to creating a detailed profile because he did not complete all interviews. In that instance, a vignette was constructed that was a shorter narrative covering a more limited experience (Seidman, 2006) with fewer details and thoughts or beliefs of the participant. The profiles and one vignette provided a narrative of the participants' experiences related to school and can be found in Chapter 4. Following the construction of the profiles, data was revisited to present the themes.

Also following Seidman's (2006) protocol, the second copy was cut apart; however, the coded data was placed into the themes generated from the data analysis (Figure 6). Those categories were reduced to the four themes found in Figure 7. Seidman (2006) warned against trying to "force the excerpts into categories, and the categories into themes that he or she already has in mind, rather than let them develop from the experience of the participants as represented in the interviews" (p. 128). Careful reflection and rereading were necessary when placing categories into themes.

I believe the themes determined from my data are accurate, meaningful, and truly representative of the participants.

When presenting the data, I wanted the profiles to remain faithful to the words from participants' interviews. As mentioned, words or explanations added that were not the participants were placed in square brackets to clearly communicate to the reader the exact words of the participants, as suggested by Seidman (2006). I believe writing the stories in first person was more powerful because the voices of Black males remained exactly as spoken. With CRT, the voices of the marginalized are important; therefore, using first-person to write the profiles was effective. Finally, to learn from the study, themes deduced from the interviews were presented after the profiles in Chapter 5. Seidman's (2006) description of using profiles with both researcher comments and the exact words of participants, again, preserved the words of the participant. To me, that was valuable.

Summary. The Research Methods section provided detailed information on exactly how the study took place. Using narrative inquiry, I sought to hear and present the stories of Black males in the classroom of White female teachers. To gather detailed information, comfortable relationships with participants were imperative. Therefore, after enlisting the participant according to the criteria presented, they controlled when and where data collection, in the form of interviews, took place. After each interview, the data was coded or analyzed to be prepared if clarification was needed in subsequent interviews. Finally, information detailing how the data was presented was provided. Throughout data collection, data analysis, and creation of profiles, validity of the study was at the forefront of my mind.

Validity

To strengthen the credibility of my study, checks for validity were incorporated. Working and living in the geographic area in which the research occurred, I had preconceived ideas about the stories I would hear in the interviews and the results from the data collected. I have seen instances of microaggressions and heard the way many Black males are spoken to and about by young White female teachers who do not intend to remain in the area. To keep these preconceptions from impacting my interpretation of the data collected and the conclusions drawn from this data, I followed Maxwell's (2013) suggestion and journaled about my beliefs, experiences, and reactions throughout the study to acknowledge my bias and keep it current in my mind in an effort to decrease the impact as possible. Thereby, checks for validity were an ongoing part of the process.

After much consideration and reflection, I realized some of my own subjectivities. Peshkin (1988) encouraged researchers to identify, reflect upon, and address subjectivity in their research and honestly present these subjectivities to the reader. Subjectivity must be addressed so researchers can be aware of their thoughts and beliefs and incorporate ways of checking for validity and accuracy of information. Peshkin (1988), defining subjectivity as "the quality of an investigator that affects the results of observational investigation," described his subjectivity by calling them subjective I's after reflecting on his beliefs and values, his ongoing experiences during research in a high school, his experiences in certain environments, and his relationships with family and community (p. 17). Throughout the dissertation process, I identified some of my subjective I's.

My first recognition of subjectivity issues modeled after the work of Peshkin (1988) was labeled *Equality I*. Honestly, I believe Equality I can be combined with *Kindness I*. I have strong feelings of sadness for anyone who is not treated equally in any educational institution. After leaving school and obtaining a teaching job, I developed the Equality I because I began to actually witness inequalities. When interacting with students, I always ask myself if that is the way I would want other adults interacting with my child. Likewise, my heart breaks when I see teachers being rude, disrespectful, or just plain mean to students because they can get away with it as parents are not visible in the school, other educators generally do not hold them accountable, and the students do not have the power to step up. Some students are harder to love than others, but all students deserve equal treatment and kindness. When I was anticipating interviewing Black males and hearing stories of their experiences in the classrooms of White female teachers, I saw myself looking for signs of this inequality like minute details of microaggressions. Acknowledging this subjectivity, I strived to minimize the identification of exaggerating microaggressions on my part.

My final two subjective I's developed throughout my entire life. Those subjective I's are *Middle class I* and *Christian I*. Being in the lower middle class, or borderline poor, I saw how hard my parents worked and the sacrifices they made to take care of their three children. My parents were not highly educated, but we had everything we ever needed. We had homemade clothes and rode in old cars, but we were just as good as anyone else. Working in a poor area, I continually hear remarks from new White teachers, who came from a privileged background, about parents not

caring or in reference to interpreting test scores being "too dumb to understand." I get angry when I hear those remarks. I think how I would have felt if my parents were talked about in such a way. Being raised in the Christian church, I was raised to have a Christian I. In fact, I am proud of my Christian I even though others may see me as a Bible thumper. Because of my Christian background, I believe kindness to and caring of others is an automatic part of my life. Therefore, I quickly recognize what I believe are the needs of others, and I do what I think will help them. I have often heard that people who go to church are really the judgmental people; however, that is not the case for people who truly practice the New Testament model Jesus set. With that said, I do not believe I judge Black male students or their families with the majoritarian stereotype from a deficit mindset. Therefore, I do not anticipate a validity issue even though I am a White female gathering data from Black males, and I am aware of my reactions to how the actions and beliefs of other White female teachers may be presented. I have also enlisted a fellow doctoral cohort member who is a Black male to review my work and serve as a check for me in the area of biased judgement. On a side note, being raised in the south, there are certainly stereotypes of Black males I heard throughout my life. Being a female and having White privilege, there are many experiences of Black males I will never truly understand. However, I constantly reflect to acknowledge any stereotypes or unfounded beliefs and to try and place myself in their experiences.

Using Maxwell's (2013) 8-point checklist, validity was addressed. Black males were asked to describe their experiences in classrooms of White female teachers. I conducted the interviews, and I am a White female teacher. Therefore, there was the

potential for a reactivity validity threat. Even though I acknowledge participants' possible reluctance to tell complete stories or sensitive stories due to our racial and gender differences, I did not sense that reluctance during any interview. To reduce this validity threat, I encouraged intensive and long-term involvement with my participants (Maxwell, 2013). Before ever beginning the interview process, a familiarization meeting with each participant was held to increase the comfort level in the interviews. Separately, I invited each participant to a coffee and pastry meet and greet at Panera Bread where I had treats available and the recording began, and the statement was read regarding participation in the study to gain consent. All participants readily agreed to the familiarization meeting. After getting to know each other, I described the study and my background that led to the study. Finally, after no more than 30 minutes, the first interview was scheduled.

The participant decided where to meet for the subsequent interviews to increase comfort in hopes of him being forthcoming during the interviews. Conducting interviews in the homes or personal locations of participants reduced the threat level for the participant; however, I was relieved Anthony chose to hold his interviews at Panera Bread. Even though I carried a gun, I did not feel safe picking him up at his apartment complex for the initial meet and greet. No other safety concerns were experienced. In the first interview, I reinforced that all information given was confidential and nothing said would offend me.

After each interview, data was transcribed and analyzed for clarification and additional details. Before each additional interview, I took Maxwell's (2013) advice and provided the transcript to the participant for optional respondent validation, or

member checking, to receive feedback regarding the data and check for any misinterpretations or clarifications needed. Reading of the interview transcript was optional as it was rather lengthy. However, each participant was asked to read the profile constructed by me to maintain the integrity of their stories. Respondent validation was important after the profiles were constructed because the third interview asked participants for their perspectives about the impact of their experiences on their lives at the time, and I wanted to represent those perspectives accurately. I did not want to mix up their meaning. Finally, a peer in my doctoral program, a Black male, reviewed the typed transcript, coding, and conclusions to check for discrepant evidence and negative cases, another of Maxwell's methods. Having another peer review the work added a check for bias and aided in validating my conclusions.

Maxwell (2013) described the validity strategy of triangulation as a possible way to reduce bias and increase validity. Triangulation is the act of employing a variety of ways to collect data for cross verification from a diverse population of participants in different settings (Maxwell, 2013). In my study, data was collected mainly through interviews with five different Black male participants; however, field texts or researcher notes, questionnaires, and teacher "talks" were also used for data collection. If participants thought of any additional information, stories, or questions after the interviews, they were encouraged to email me. I did not receive any emails. Memos of my personal subjectivities, experiences and reflections were written throughout the study for me to acknowledge my bias, aid in developing research relationships, and add to the landscape, or setting and context, of the stories.

Therefore, data was collected using various methods. In addition, internal validity was addressed through participants reviewing the profiles or vignettes looking for any discrepancies in the conclusions (Maxwell, 2013).

With all of these checking measures in place, validity and reliability of my research increased. Even with these measures in place, I believe me being aware of my subjectivities had the greatest impact on increasing validity and reliability by helping minimize my potential to exaggerate instances of possible inequality. My subjectivities remained at the forefront of my mind as I analyzed the data and wrote the participants' narrative or profiles.

Conclusion

Designing the study and conducting the study was a complex process. Data collection yielded the information needed to conduct the study, and the data analysis process was effective in determining themes. Measures were taken to increase the validity of the study and maximize its accuracy. With the completion of the data analysis, narrative profiles were constructed. After introducing each participant, italicized to denote it was written in my words, to provide background information before reading the profiles, the next chapter, Chapter 4, presents the data as profiles constructed of each participant's own words.

Chapter IV

PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS AND NARRATIVE PROFILES

Each participant came with his own uniqueness within the criteria required for participation in the study. Some participants were more forthcoming with background or personal information. This chapter introduces each participant before providing their story as a narrative profile and giving my reflection regarding the interviews.

Black Male Participants

A total of five Black male participants were interviewed. I became more familiar with Anthony, Brian, Johnny, and Chad than I did with Manny because I met with them for three interviews each. Manny only met with me for his initial familiarization meeting and one interview.

For no particular reason, I sequenced the profiles in the order of interview completion: Anthony, Brian, Johnny, Chad, and Manny. The last story, Manny's story, is much less thorough because he did not complete all interviews; however, there was important data in his story that needed to be shared. Each interview was unique; therefore, each profile is unique. Names of participants, characters in the stories, and places were changed in all stories, but the words and events remain unchanged. As mentioned in the data analysis section, words or phrases paraphrased by me but added as a part of the story are in square brackets. Additionally, actions, emotions, and thoughts added from my observation field notes were added in square

brackets and italicized. Wording added by me to enhance the details in the narratives were added in square brackets but not italicized. An introduction at the beginning and a reflection at the end of each profile was written by me according to my own thoughts. Those paragraphs were italicized to show they were my words and not the participants' words. Black male participants' stories are presented first. Each profile is organized chronologically, almost like a narrative timeline, describing the participants' experiences throughout school using participants' own words, and each profile ends with their thoughts about their school experiences. Throughout the profiles, there are grammar errors and sentence fragments because wording and phrasing of the participants were preserved. Finally, these stories answered the first two research questions by describing the experiences of Black males with at least 50% of their teachers classified as White females, and the stories, particularly near the end of each story, reflected how the Black male participants made sense of their experiences.

Anthony

The first Black male confirmed as a participant was Anthony. Anthony met all requirements for participation and readily discussed his experiences. An introduction to Anthony is provided as background information before his narrative profile.

Meet Anthony. *Anthony was a 22-year-old Black male who dropped out of school in the 8th grade at 17 years old. He was my student in 5th grade, and I am the teacher who many years ago took him to visit a high school vocational program to show him future opportunities after his mother told me at a conference that he wanted*

to live in her backyard in a cardboard box. Since leaving school, he works nights in the fast food industry, and his dream of opening his own restaurant continues.

Anthony unhappily lives in a government subsidized apartment complex with his mother, sister, sister's boyfriend, and her four children in a poor crime-ridden area known for heavy gang activity in the large southern metropolitan area of the study. He has custody of his 3-year-old niece because his sister did not go back to the hospital to get her after a prolonged stay in the neonatal intensive care unit. However, they all live together in a three-bedroom apartment. He sleeps on the sofa in the family room. Due to lack of transportation and no public transportation available on Sunday afternoons, I picked him up on the edge of an overcrowded parking lot in his apartment complex for each meeting at Panera Bread Company. At the apartment complex, no parking space could be found, and many people were walking around or sitting on hoods of cars. Anthony walked up the sidewalk to meet me in the middle of a street due to overcrowdedness. I only observed Black and Hispanic people in and around the apartment complex.

Anthony was a small built young man with unkempt hair, beard, and clothing. In fact, there was a bit of an unpleasant stench when he entered my car. He chose to continue meeting at Panera Bread for each interview where we sat in the same booth tucked away in a corner to lessen distractions. In addition to the treats provided, I purchased his lunch at each meeting; honestly, he seemed hungry, eating every morsel quickly. A very polite young man, he was soft spoken, yet he talked quite fast. I often had to ask him to repeat himself. From my observation, he seemed lonely.

Since dropping out of school in 8th grade 5 years ago at the age of 17, he worked at several fast food restaurants, yet he could not name all of them. At the time of the interview, he worked the night shift at Burger King; however, he said he was about to quit that job because there was too much drama there. Always having a passion for cooking, he still dreams of opening his own restaurant.

In his words. When I was in elementary school, I said I wanted to live in a cardboard box in my mom's backyard. [*He giggled uncomfortably.*] Well, I went to that other school's [high school mechanic shop], and they talked to me about going to work instead of sitting on the street. I couldn't do it [*shaking his head*]. I left school and went to work in eighth grade [at 17 years old].

School was fun. I loved elementary [*stressing the word loved*]. I miss school. When I was in elementary, my teachers was cool [*his already large eyes get larger*]. The science teacher always going to come up with some little project to do that's fun, like make a little bone thing explode. Elementary was the best time I had. [*His demeanor changed from happy and smiling to looking somewhat dejected; shaking head*]. After elementary, I really started not liking school that much.

I lived with my mom. Mm-hmm. She was concerned in elementary, especially about the cardboard box thing. My daddy [*shaking his head and looking down*]. He got another girlfriend [*short giggle*].

The only thing I really remember [of elementary school] is from fourth grade and then on up. We went on a whole lotta field trips. That was the best way to learn. Field trips was fun. I remember seeing some performance about Harriet Tubman at a big

building downtown. Oh [*excited*] and at one place we dressed up and acted [events in history] at some museum.

[*Talking to other people about where to send kids for elementary school.*] I told everyone, "Send him to over there where Ms. Smith and Ms. Atkins was." [*Ms. Smith was White, and Ms. Atkins was Black.*]

I say, "Yeah, they're going on field trips."

The field trips is how you pass. All you had to do was come back and take a test on that trip.

As long as you pass that test, you're like, "Oh, wow. It was cool."

Ms. Atkins was cool. [*His eyes lit up as he spoke fondly and frequently of this teacher.*] She was always playing kickball and running around with us. She would act like a big kid herself, like [she was] one of the students. She was so funny.

Some teachers, my teachers, was fun. They didn't yell at us except to go sit down and go do our work. A couple of my teachers [*pause and shaking head*] we done had a couple little bumps in the head, but that was my fault. I ain't want work, and I want them to do it for me. One [White] teacher [*pause*] dang I forgot that woman's name [*looking up thinking*] was a mean lady. That lady had an attitude every day. I did not like that woman [*very animated and shaking his head*]. Nope. Not at all!

Everything that you asked her was [*holding up his hand*], "Bye, go sit down."

She ain't want to deal with nobody [*pause*] walk right past you [*voice pitch increased, and body language appeared to show disbelief*]. I just figure she ain't want to come to work the way she used to act with the students on some days. They had two teachers in a classroom together. She was the meanest lady there. Then, you had the

other White lady that was in there. [*The mean White lady was his 4th grade homeroom teacher. The other White lady was a special education paraprofessional assigned to that cotaught classroom.*] She was cool. I liked her. Older lady. She would teach, but you can tell the difference when she teach. It'd be a different way. [*She taught the same concept but used different strategies and worked one-on-one and with small groups.*]

You'd be like, "That ain't what I had yesterday. This ain't what she [the mean lady] told me yesterday." [The older lady] actually taught it better.

I don't think she [the mean teacher] knew how to teach. They need to switch her to be the teacher helper. I got kept back in the fourth and, I think, the fifth. [Being kept back] really didn't faze me, up until I got to middle school. Nope [*shaking his head*]. Because, you see, y'all taught us stuff, but it was fun stuff. We got taught in elementary school. After elementary, that's when [*pause*] I must say, to me, you stop learning. I miss elementary school.

Middle school [*eyeroll*]! That's when it all started. All through sixth grade [and] seventh grade, all they showed us was a video, a video, a video, a video, and then get mad when we take a test.

"Y'all ain't learned nothing from this video."

I didn't watch a video in elementary school. I'm sorry.

They get to yelling at you and be like [*exaggeratingly mimicking a teacher*], "You're not going nowhere until you get done with this work."

I'd be [*verbalizing his thoughts*], "Who you yelling at? Dang. I don't feel like doing this, man. Why don't you do it?"

Many times, I got yelled at and wanted to say something, but I didn't. [My teacher] went on and passed me on to [seventh grade]. When she looked at my scores [*pause*] you know how you see everybody's test scores [*he was asking me*]?

She said, "Boy, you're going to make the same damn thing this year."

I said, "Okay." [*shrugging*]

She said, "You want to go?" She just looked at me and laughed.

She said [*thinking she may be suggesting he was stupid*], "You know, you really don't have to do much to pass the sixth grade. You just got to really show up every day."

I wasn't going to school neither. I was bouncing from house to house, house to house, house to house. I started hanging out [*pause*] running the streets. I started smoking before I started drinking. We all [*neighborhood friends*] started hanging out together. After a while, I went back to school.

They [*people at the school*] said, "The street ain't made for everybody," and it sure ain't made for me. I go to sleep too quick and that dangerous on the street.

You had this one [White] officer that was down there [at the middle school]. He would only arrest the Black kids. One time, this one White boy had got into it [*punching him*] with him. All he did was call the real police on the White boy. This Black girl had got into it with him, and he pepper sprayed her. He pepper sprayed her! [*His voice increased in pitch, and his body language suggested he was shocked and angry with his hands moving and head twisting in disbelief.*] It was all on camera. They made us stay in the classrooms. When he pepper sprayed her, the girl's brother came out and jumped on him.

It just went all kind of left field because they [*the Black kids*] was like, “Why didn't you do the same thing to that White boy when he swung at you?”

That boy even had a whole knife. This girl just swung at him and hit him in his face, and he pepper spray her? [*His tone suggested this was a question. He was shaking his head.*]

It was like, “Man, y'all know the officer be racist. Y'all know he racist.”

Every time I walked past him, I'd say, “Hey, Officer Mike.”

He'd look forward and keep walking. He would never talk to us, but he would stand there and have a conversation with this other White dude that was there. That was sixth grade, and [in the end,] I spent one year in sixth grade.

Seventh grade was reallllllly bad [*fidgeting*]. They kept me back twice and was getting ready to keep me back again. The administrator was what you'd call a cougar. She looked mixed. She only liked a couple of Black boys that come sit in her office with her. They always got in trouble. [White teachers] probably didn’t wanna deal with them. On the slick side that's what she wanted because she had never had any kids, but she wanted me and [those] couple of boys to come have a sleepover at her house. It was a little suspicious. [We never went to her house for a sleepover.] I was the main one that used to get everything from her [*giving examples*] money and stuff. As long as I do her paperwork and file her paperwork, I get whatever I want. It didn't matter if it was right or not. I never had to go to class. She liked some of the students that were down there. She was a cougar lady. She kept me out of class [*pause*] never went to class. When I say I never went to class, I neeeeeever went to class. [Teachers] ain’t know that was going on, [and they never asked].

I have this fake note in my book bag, and the note said, "Come to my office."

I wrote a different date on the note, so they always accepted it. She'd run to Burger King to get me something to eat [or] the wing joint to get me some wings and French fries. Everybody thought she was my Auntie, but it was always just come to my office. Whatever class I'd be in, I would walk by her office before it's time for me to go to that class to see if she in there [*twisting his head to the side as if he were looking through a door*]. Then I'd go back to that class [and] show them the note just so I could get out of class. She let it fly. She ain't care.

She would be like, "What you doin' in here?"

"Uh, I don't feel like sitting in class today. Can I come sit in here?"

"Do you have all your work?" [She knew I didn't.]

"Yep."

"Okay, cool. Sit there and pretend to do that work and pretend to be done."

She gave me some of her work to do, and then she'd walk the hallway. She let [us] play on her cell phone, talk on the phone, get on FaceTime, [and] all that. [I went] to the vending machine for her [and] always keep the change. One day, she gave me $5 [for] lunch because I told her I wanted another slice of pizza. I told her I ate it in the lunchroom, but I just took the $5. I did that for a couple of days straight.

My momma had got onto her, she told her, "Anthony ain't learning nothing. Anthony needs to go to class."

She started getting mad at me. She kept me back one year, and I went to her.

I said, "Why are you keeping me back? Why are you doing this? I had passing grades. I passed."

She looked at me and said, "I want you to stay back with me. I feel like you're not ready to go on just yet." What [*pitch increased again*]?

I wasn't learning nothing with these [middle school] teachers [*shaking head in frustration*]. The White teachers that we had just never come. If they didn't care, they just ain't come to work the next day. I had two different White teachers. I had this one science teacher named Ms. Dixon. She wasn't even interested in science. She acted like she don't know what's going on. How are you going to be a science teacher if you don't know how to do science? After I got in middle school, all my grades was 20s. I wasn't really making nothing but 20s all through school with these teachers.

I look at it like, "Well that's y'all [teacher's] fault. Y'all not teaching us. All y'all want to do is show us a video then going to sit at y'all desk." [They didn't wanna deal with us.]

[*Laughing*]. I just laughed. I laugh at everything. I got in trouble for laughing. You remember how I laughed all the time?

The [teachers] got mad and used to tell us, "I get paid whether or not I teach you or not. I can sit here all day long, and I still get paid."

Then I had this other White lady [*pause*] Ms. Blackson. Ms. Blackson was cool. Other Black kids [*mostly Black students at the school*] called her a White bitch, but I never did [*shaking head*]. She was more along the lines of you're going to either learn, or you're not going to sit in my class.

"If you want to disrupt my class, go stand outside in the hallway on the other side of the door. I'll let you know when to come back in."

I was trying to learn algebra [*pause*] Pi [*pause*] all that stuff. I don't know none of this. Ms. Blackson used to always teach us. That's how they used to do in elementary school too. With them teachers, I didn't make what you call a 20 [*a grade on an assignment*]. They actually gave me either a C or a D or a B. Ms. Dixson gave me a 19 [assignment grade] one time. What is a 19 [*eyes widening; increased pitch*]? Dang, how can you get a 19? I never seen that before.

Ms. Blackson came to me, "Anthony, do you need some help with this?"

I said, "Yeah, I don't know how to do no doggone math."

Then I started getting Cs, Ds, Bs [*pause*] kept them coming up. Then Ms. Blackson died. Mm-hmm. The White lady [*pause*] she died. She used to ride a motorcycle to school every day. If we did good, she would take us outside to play on the motorcycle. One day, she had got too stressed out.

I always said, "Stop yelling, or you'll give yourself a heart attack sitting up here."

Sure enough! That next year, after that new set of kids, she had a heart attack. They said she got too stressed out. I found [her husband] on Facebook since I had her on Facebook.

"I was in your wife's class. I was just calling to check up on Ms. Blackson. How she doing?" [I already knew she died. I was just checking to see if it was true.]

He took a long pause, and then he said, "She finally gave out." She was gone.

He said she used to always go home and talk about her class and a handful of kids that she liked.

I said, "Do you remember some of the names?"

I said my name, and he said, "Yeah, you're the Black kid that was in there that used to always tell her to stop stressing." [*He was surprised the husband was remembered.*]

I used to tell them [teachers] all to stop stressing! Stop stressing! When you feeling stressed, that means you ain't fixing to teach us nothing.

She taught me a lot. One thing that Ms. Blackmon did was teach. She never mean-yelled or did nothing.

There was this one White girl in my classes. Ms. Dixson gave that little White girl all the attention in the room. She got a whole lot of kids over here she's talking to, and this child gets out of line. She spun around and started talking to her.

Whenever a Black kid came up to her, she would yell, "Stand in line behind everybody else."

Not Ms. Blackson [*shaking head*].

When the little White girl would walk up, [Ms. Blackson] said, "Your fellow classmates is just like you, get in line and stand behind them."

She ain't show no favoritism to no White kids or Black kids. She treated us all the same.

Ms. Phil [*White teacher*] had a classroom full of Black kids that she didn't like. She yell at us all day long. If we be talking, she yelled [*shaking head*].

She used to slam the door and say [*mimicking her*], "I'm getting tired of this classroom."

You got a class full of Black kids, and you get tired of us [*increased pitch*]. She would just sit there quiet at her desk eating. She wouldn't even hardly teach us, because

we'd just sit there and look at her. If we talked, she'd make up something and send us to ISS. She'd roll that chair back, hit that button on the wall, and call the office. As soon as they open that door, she'd point at who to take out of the classroom. One time, she emptied out the whole entire class. There was exactly four kids left in that classroom [*explaining*] put others in ISS and isolation.

When you in sixth grade acting grown, you go to the eighth grade, but when you acting like a little child up there in the eighth grade, they send you back down to sixth grade. You could say I was like a staff member. If a student got in trouble, I was the teacher buddy [assigned by the cougar]. I used to go around and get the bad kids. If they go to the bathroom and take a pee, I go to the bathroom and take a pee with them. They used to run off and go somewhere, and I'd walk on back to her [*shrugging shoulders*].

We got into it because I put in my two cents. "I'm a kid just like them. You think they're going to listen to me?"

She said, "You're older."

When I used to get smart back, she got mad like, "No, you're not grown."

"You got me doing grown folks work." It didn't change.

Then, I had messed around with this one girl. She came up pregnant. We was cool, man. It was cool. I was Creasy. She was J-Bae. Her belly had got big. It was getting bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger. We were still in school, but she just kept on a jacket to hide it. Mm-hmm. She had the baby. I took a DNA test. It didn't come back to be mine.

I told her, "I'll still help you out because you know you're going to always be my J-Bae."

We still stay cool to this day. I had to do something else because one pop and y'all pregnant. I can't do that. After that, I got with this guy when I first got out of school [at the age of 17]. [*Anthony later told me that him being gay is a choice.*]

I said, "I ain't got time to take care of no children."

My middle school sat over in this part of town called Bankland. Bankland was nothing but young girls out there having babies. Five girls out of the seventh grade came up pregnant in one year. It's like they had a breakout of girls getting pregnant at the same time. Some of them was still trying to come to school, but [the school] wouldn't let them come. Uh-uh. If their belly was out, they would not let them into the school. [The girl] was expelled for the year. In order for you to come back, you got to get re-enrolled in school next year when you had the baby.

Anyway, [the older I got] they try to make me out to be the bad child.

They say, "You know you're just like your sister, and you know you did drugs just like your sister."

They had these other White teachers that was there. They used to love to try to get the Black kids out of the school. They started going after me because of my sister. They knew [her].

They said, "Oh, we figure you're just like your sister."

They [*White teachers who knew his sister*] started making all that trouble [*referring to discipline issues in which he was involved and blaming his teachers for comparing him to his sister*]. They got me on camera, as they say, cutting up the bus seat.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

They tried to make me pay for the bus seat, but they didn't make that White girl pay for that bus seat though. No. She still ain't gave up no money, but I had to give $200. [*He began talking faster and in a higher pitch. Anger was visible on his face.*] They got me as taking the knife from her. I just took it and looked at it. Then, I handed it back to her. She cut up the seat [*pause*] and one of her friends. You can see it clearly on camera. I'm sitting there beside her, like side-by-side, but in a whole nother seat. You can see me sitting up there laughing. You saw when I got it from her and looked at it. Like I said, you could see clear as day that I did not cut that doggone seat. I was holding it, but her seat was sliced. It had a whole X through it [*drawing the X in the air*].

They said, "Oh, since you had the knife in your hand, you was part of it, too."

I'm looking like, "Really [*scrunched face*]?"

They had me by myself against three White people [*administration and officer*]. Up against three White people sitting at this desk talking about I did this, I did that! We got you on tape doing this! I denied it so many times. I even called my dad and checked out because I was tired of hearing it. They was looking for me for 3 days straight. I ain't go to school. I went home. Yeah. [The White kids] admitted that they was there, and they also said that [I] was there, too. Yeah, I was there, but I didn't do nothing. I got suspended for 10 days for telling a lie that I didn't do it and for denying that it was me on the picture. The two White kids just got suspended for 3 days. I found out that they was suspended for 3 days because they was calling me every day.

I called they phone one day, "Where is you at?" [*reenacting the conversation he had with the other students suspended*]

"We in school."

“How did they let you in school, and I'm still sitting at home? Y'all must've snuck up there.”

“No, it was time for us to come back. We was only suspended for 3 days, how long you got?”

I got 10. That's crazy. Part of me cared and part of me didn't because I already had in my mind that I was not going back to that school. I was already going from one house to another house at 4:00 in the morning just to get up to go to school. I don't even live in this territory, but I did go back.

When I would leave school and go home, my cousin would be sitting there.

He would be like, “Hey cuz, you want a hit?”

I'd be like, “Uh, okay.”

I was smoking cigarettes. I stopped going to school. That's when I started smoking weed. I was smoking weed every day. My daddy had a problem with it.

My momma was like, “Well, you know, your kid is going to do what they see you do.”

In seventh grade, I started smoking and drinking. I was already about to be old staying down here with these children. I was going to school drunk every day [*pause*] sitting in class drunk. I'd usually have a bottle in my bag. Drunk [*pause*] because she said she wasn't ready for me to go on. I was in seventh grade two times. I had talked to that cougar, and she told me she felt like I wasn’t ready to go to eighth. I felt unwanted or maybe she wanted me too much.

“How many times y'all done kept me down here? Y'all should know me by now.”

The second year that lady told me she felt I'm not ready to pass on to the next grade I was fixing to be 18 in eighth grade. It took my daddy to keep coming up there, to keep cussing these people out, for them to pass me on. That's how I ended up getting sent to eighth grade.

I was staying with my daddy, and he got to the point where he ain't want us staying there no more, "Y'all got to get out, y'all got to get out, y'all got to go."

His girlfriend [*pause*] she got her head shaved like a little peacock chicken, so I call her a chicken.

I told him, "That better be the best piece of chicken that you went to Food Depot and bought."

Me and my dad just stopped talking after that. That woman got herself a whole lot of children. He got him a Ku Klux Klan [*pause*] because [the woman and her children were light skinned, there were a lot of them, and] they stayed in jail more than we [*him and his siblings*] do. Her children is way older than me and my sister, and they stay out there with him [*referring to his father leaving his own younger children but living with the woman and her older children*]. You got his grown children that stay there [*Anthony's older brother lived with his father also*]. They got a whole Ku Klux Klan staying in the house with them now but not me. [At least I was going to eighth grade.]

When I got to eighth grade, they had this long talk about [me] getting too old to be hanging around the students that are here, and I couldn't date nobody because of the age. I didn't want no girl now. A boy held my hand in eighth grade. [That was my first experience with a guy.] One day in health class, the teacher started teaching about smoking. She came out of nowhere and asked a crazy question.

She knew she had a room full of Black kids, and she asked a dumb question like, "Who in here knows how to roll some marijuana up?"

I actually knew. My dumb self went and demonstrated I knew how to do it. [*He was excited that he knew how to do something, so he volunteered.*]

She said, "Thank you for telling on yourself." Uh-oh!

She looked at me and said, "I wouldn't put it past you that you know that. You smoke. I was wondering why your eyes be so low and you be up in here asleep all the time. You be high?"

I said, "I ain't high. I be drunk though." [I told on myself again.]

I always had a Sprite bottle in my zip up notebook with something besides Sprite. I'd go in that notebook all day.

Eighth grade is when I started other experiences. I started getting into it with a couple of people. There was this boy that held my hand, and I started messing around with him. To be honest with you, he gay to this day too. We just don't talk. That was my first experience with being gay. I also had a problem with some others. [In fifth grade], I borrowed $5 from [a kid] in Charleston [on the fifth-grade field trip]. The one thing that you don't want to do is borrow money from the Ku Klux Klan [*referring to light skinned Hispanic kids who were after him*] because they sure come after you. [The kid] made all of his Mexican cousins [come] after me over $5, and I got into with every last one of them. [He finally] realized I wasn't scared of none of them.

I told him, "I ain't nobody scared of you. I ain't scared of your cousins. I ain't scared of nobody."

I even went to [his] house. Since he got his cousins, I got my cousin. [We] got on our bicycle and rode to [the kid's] house sitting outside.

I said, "Y'all want to fight me at school. Let me show you how I do mine." They didn't come out.

[He] left me alone. His cousins wouldn't stop. You know I don't have time to be fighting y'all little kids down here because I'm already too old, fixing to be 18 years old. I just needed to go work.

I quit school for good in eighth grade when I was 17. I stayed in trouble because of the age difference. They started treating me different because of the age thing. The teachers started being hard on me because I was older, [had started getting some hair on my upper lip, and had been at the school for several years]. A Black teacher is the one that showed the favoritism for the White kids [*pause*] not the Black kids. Some Black teachers don't care about the Black kids. You're going to be shocked. The teacher I had was Black from Alabama. She got mad at me. I don't know what ticked her bill this day, but she put everybody in another room that she ain't like [*pause*] a room full of Black kids. I don't know if she thought we was going to actually do better or feel some type of way. When she separated all the Black kids, that White girl was sitting by herself in that lonely little spot that we was all sitting at. She gave all her attention to that little White girl. It kind of gave the girl a bad name. When it came down to the Black kids, we were stupid [*he believed that is what the teacher thought*]. [The teacher] was acting like she was White, but she was Black. Pointed every last one of us out, talked about every last one of us, and cussed every last one of us out. When she pulled us into that other classroom, she told us that we was stupid.

She said, “All y'all Black kids is just stupid. Y'all ain't never going to be anything.”

I was sitting up there just looking at her.

She looked at me and said, “I can tell you don't care.”

I said, “I really don't because you're just talking jibber-jabber.” I’s rollin’ my eyes and shakin’ my head but didn’t care one bit.

She stared at me, “What do you want to be when you grow up?”

I said, “I'm going to be a cook. I want to open up my own restaurant.”

She said, “I would never come eat at your restaurant. You might put something in my food and kill me.”

[*Shaking my head*], I said, “Hmm.”

She said, “See, I'll go to the principal right now and say that you threatened to poison me.”

She was fixing to literally go up there. She said she was going to get everybody in that room to say that I said that I was going to kill her, and she would write everybody up if they didn’t. She really fixing to try to play something on me, and she was a Black lady. Yes, Black. Black with a room full of Black kids [*using high pitched voice*]. I don't know what happened because I left school and never showed back up. They started calling saying I missed 32 days of school.

I told them, “Y'all need to learn how to control these damn teachers up here. It's y'all teachers.”

That lady and me was cool in the beginning, but I never went back. How can a teacher do that to you? Why would a teacher do that to you? That was the worst time I

ever had in school. My daddy was getting tired of going [to school]. He [turned everything over to my Mom].

My mom said, “You're 17 years old. You leave school. You got to go to work.” My momma said she saw it coming anyway.

I was like, “Damn, I'm so tired of being in school. What's the point? I'm not learning anything.”

I'm just supposed to walk around school looking stupid and crazy every day. I was going to be exactly 19 years old still in school if I would've stayed.

Ms. Walker had been acting White the whole time. I know how the people from Alabama talk. She'll talk like she's from Alabama, but when another teacher come in the room, everything about her switched up [*referring to her acting White*].

One day, I was like, “What are you doing on this fake little accent that you got? Ms. Walker, you don't have to act White. You're not White. Stop.”

She said, “This is how I have to act at work.”

We had got into about [her acting White], and she sent me to ISS. [I told her,] “One minute you act like you're from the country, then the next minute you act like you're from the suburbs.” They started saying I got a slick mouth kicking me out the classroom. This is what y'all [*teachers*] made it.

I did awful in school. Middle school says they give individual help but nope [*shaking head*]. They didn't do that there. A better way to teach somebody who says they don't understand is one-on-one, but they don’t.

They get mad [*mimicking teachers*], “Oh my goodness! I just talked through this yesterday. I just told you this yesterday. Why are you still struggling on this today?”

I'm supposed to get it right then and there. That's not how I learn nothing. It did hurt me a little bit because I really didn't learn nothing, but you don't need no education to get what you need. It's all about how you talk to people. I learned how to talk to people on the street. School wasn't teaching me how to do nothing. They was just teaching us how to turn in some work. I learned how to count money on the street. I got more education by teaching myself than anything. After elementary school, I learned how to read by texting and reading stuff on the web. I was not reading no books in school. From the time I left elementary, I ain't read no books. I'm not going to say school didn't help nothing, but the teachers ain't help nothing. I learned how to do everything I need on the street.

I don't regret not going to high school. Nope [*shaking head*]. I felt like I was going to learn the same thing that I learned in middle school [*pause*] nothin'. It was going to be a waste of my time. You can lollygag, you can play, you can do whatever you want to do. It's up to you. If you see that you got that teacher that don't care, you ain't going to learn nothing. They told us that they didn't care.

I got to talk. [Teachers] need to understand the difference with how Black people talk and how White people talk. White people may think we come off strong and too harsh. Black people think White people got attitudes, and they come off as whatever. I had a couple of teachers that [thought I was mean]. I wasn't a mean student, but I meant what I said. I didn't say it in a rude way. I said it in a nice way, and I laugh at what I say because it's funny. It kills me what I say, but not one time have I ever came off in a rude way with none of my teachers. Out of all my White teachers, only a few of them came off in a rude way whenever I ask them something.

I thought, “I don't know why I asked you [*the mean lady in fourth grade*].”

[Like I said,] you got some teachers that don't want to teach the kid's nothing [*shaking head*]. All they want the kids to do is just come to school and sit there. Getting up in the morning and going to school is like getting up in the morning and going to work, but when you're working, you are moving around all day long. The only time you get up and move around at school is when you go to another class.

Some teachers teach different. If they have two teachers in the classroom together, the one teacher teaches differently than the other teacher. If they're going to have two teachers, then they need to get everybody on the same page. Keep that same lesson going the same way. Don't switch it up the next day when the other teacher teach it cause she don't know what the other taught yesterday [*the day before*]. That confuses the people that doesn't, how do you say, catch on real quickly. They are still stuck on yesterday. The kids that catch on real quickly, your honor roll students, are going to come back and actually know what they're doing. But, you just came back and switched up the whole thing on the ones that don't know what they're doing.

It's all about the students, and it's all about how the teachers start treating the students. To be honest with you, I do better working one-on-one, not with a whole class, because with a whole group you're concentrating on a whole million other problems. On top of that, [the teacher] got to keep on with them [higher students] too, so [they] don't have enough time to sit down and work out that one problem. You pay attention when they going step-by-step with you one-on-one, but on the board in front of everybody is a quicker way to do it, but everybody don't listen. When we're in private, I'll listen to you. I'm not going to learn nothing sitting with everybody else. If I used a little tutor I'd

probably get a better understanding on what I was learning in school, and I'd probably get it even more now.

One thing I'd change is the teachers that I had. Teachers get impatient. The ones in middle school got impatient when they have to teach students how to read. Elementary teachers did not get impatient [*shaking head*]. [They] would sit there, mm-hmm, okay, okay. A lot of books were boring, though. When [middle school teachers] get impatient, they be like, "Oh my!" [*His shoulders drooped, and he sighed while dropping and shaking his head.*] You don't want to teach me [*pause*] that's fine. Some teachers I wanted to keep. Some days I wish I can bring my elementary school teachers [to middle school].

I tell [middle school teachers], "Y'all wouldn't like them because them women over there know how to teach. They going to teach you. Y'all don't know how to teach." They just look at me crazy. Everything goes smooth [*pause*] good through elementary school. [Then], everything just changes, like the way they talk to you. In elementary school they talk to you like, "Little sweetie pie or a little love bug." In middle school, you've got more teachers you're going to every day. [Maybe elementary teachers should] start showing [students] stuff like switching classes.

Elementary [*pause*] what you call the real meaning of a teacher! They teach you. They don't play. They ain't joke about learning. When they joke, they joke with you, but when it's time to learn, they're going to teach you.

The schools need to understand White and Black culture because [teachers] don't bother the Mexican people and all these other ones. It's the Black and the White kids. We couldn't even listen to our music in school. For real. We had to listen to Beethoven.

The only time I ever heard real music was in elementary. After I left out of elementary school, oh it changed [*shaking head*]. If a White teacher is teaching, they better know how that child acts [*referring to culture characteristics*]. The White teachers like to teach, but the students don't want to listen. The Black teachers don't like to teach. Black teachers that act White just want to pass on the White kids [*pause*] want the White kids to get all the education. They think White people got all the education in the world because they stay out here in all these big houses. Black people could get a big house like that too, if you teach us the right way. The Black teachers don't want to teach the Black kids the right way. They just told us that they get paid whether they come here or not to teach.

"Whether y'all learn and get your education or not, I still get paid," they stayed putting that out there towards us.

Mm-hmm. Every last one. Even the White teachers. There are some White teachers that don't care. The White teachers started hanging out with the Black teachers and telling us the same thing. They even started being mean to the good kids. [When they would go off], we'd be sittin' out there waiting on her to start back teaching, "I'm sorry for the ones that wants to learn and the ones that's trying to learn, but it seems your fellow classmates don't want you to learn, so I'm not going to teach you."

White principals was all we had. They didn't do nothing. All they did was suspend you and let you come back 3 or 4 days later. I got suspended three times. All the other times, I was like I can't stay at home, so I did ISS.

When I had left school, it was sort of hard coming out. In eighth grade, me and Tracy, [a family friend], slick [*slang*] was going together. I started talking to Tracy's brother. Tracy's brother started talking a whole lot of stuff and made it hard to stay at

home. I stayed by myself for a little bit on the street [*pause*] back and forth from different people's houses. I got my first job at Zaxby's, and everything was going good, living the best life. I was staying with one of my ex's. He started stealing people's TVs out of their house. I had to end up going back home. I quit Zaxby's and got another job at UPS. From then on out, I just kept getting jobs. To this day, I can get a job quicker than anybody.

The past still will come back every time I get with somebody to this day. This is exactly why I stay to myself. It keeps reminding me of bad experiences I had already, and I'm only 22. From sixth grade all the way up to now, I had a drop. I came up and had another drop. My [real] Auntie had passed. The lady who took care of me my whole entire life, who I was always going back to Alabama to see. She passed a month before my 21st birthday. I was at work. I was supposed to been moving back to Alabama that following week. I lost my job. I lost everything. She had a tumor. They told her to lose 100 pounds, but she wouldn't do it. She kept eating four or five slabs of ribs a day [*pause*] sunup, sundown [*pause*] three slabs of ribs in the morning [*pause*] non-stop.

Before my Auntie died, she said, "Let me tell you something. Your family is not going to accept you for who you is. I ain't got long, but folks not going to accept you."

This is why I said that if I don't have no apartment, I'll stay on the street. My momma had already raised a gay son before. They don't want another one in the family, but I don't act nothing like the other. When I say he's an old female, that boy's a female. One day I brought a dude home. They ain't know how old he was. That's just a friend. I don't deal with dudes this age. I came to bed with a 40-year-old. I deal with grown men.

They thought I was partying. That was my brother. I go back and forth. I still look at women, still look at men. I live that life. I play the role.

Life's getting better. I paid off my name. I've had my name in the court system for 4 years. I've paid out thousands of dollars and went to jail three times in one year. Mm-hmm. I just kept fighting. Fighting. Fighting. Fighting. I couldn't stop. Every time somebody came at me, I fight them. After the last fight I got in, [the police] told me that if I fight again it's going to be a felony charge because I caught four misdemeanors in one day. How could I catch that many charges in one day?

They were like, "Have you seen their eye? And you tried to run them over too!"

I finally got my name cleared. Now, I want my own place. I want a good job. I guess I woulda got a better job if I stayed in school, but it was impossible.

Everything helped me be who I am today [*pause*] helped me deal with how people is. We'll see what happens.

Reflection. *Anthony was like an open book. He readily answered all questions and did not seem to hesitate with any information. On the last return ride taking him back to his apartment, he told me he enjoyed participating in the interviews and that it made him think of things he had not thought of in years. I was pleased that he was a participant.*

Reflecting on Anthony's interviews, I was shocked at some of the stories he told, especially during his middle school years. Whether all events happened as described, I do not know; however, I do know that Anthony perceived it all as true repeating the same details multiple times, and those experiences seemed to remain vivid in his memories. Anthony's experiences have left a very negative perception of schools and many teachers,

White and Black. As a White student I never witnessed any of these types of experiences. As a teacher, I cannot imagine these types of experiences happening in schools, but I am thinking they must be more common that I realized.

Two ideas remained at the forefront of my mind. I found it interesting that Anthony recognized the need for understanding culture, especially in relation to speech. He explicitly said that teachers need to understand the differences in how Black people and White people talk. Another importance was his realization that he was treated differently than White students. Being White and knowing how to succeed in the White run schools, I never considered inequalities because of color; however, I was looking through a White lens. I began to wonder if the staff at his middle school realized Black students were treated differently or that Black students perceived their treatment as different. I tend to believe these were microaggressions stemming from past learned beliefs and experiences. As I began other interviews, I was eager to hear the stories of more Black males. I knew more stories of differential treatment would be voiced. After Anthony, the next participant interviewed was Brian.

Brian

I met Brian at a church service I attended. After talking for a while, I realized he would be a great participant in my study. Interviews occurred after subsequent church services. Later, I found out that the church had helped his family by providing food, housing, and mental health assistance.

Meet Brian. *Brian was a 23-year-old Black male living his life so far in and around the large southern urban city. The first few years were spent in the inner city living in one of the many government housing projects. From an early age, he lived*

with his grandmother, mother, brother, and sister. Even when his mother moved with his siblings, he continued to live with his grandmother. At the time of this study, his brother was in jail for burglary and selling marijuana, his mother had died of congestive heart failure, and he was living with his grandmother, sister, and nephew in an extended stay motel on a busy inner-city street known for drug trafficking and prostitution. However, they were looking for somewhere to move because a neighbor was murdered on the floor above them.

Although he remained in school until the age of 19 when his mother died, Brian never earned enough credits to progress from being a freshman. After his mother's passing, he was depressed and suicidal needing mental health support. At this time, he has a full-time job and his own car. His next goal is renting his own apartment.

Brian was a big guy, tall and hefty. With short cropped hair and clean fingernails, he was well-groomed. For all three interviews, he wore a gray hoodie having the slogan "Fat Boy Season" across the front with torn sweatpants or jeans. Often an issue that is corrected at birth, his right leg curves out at the knee causing him to walk with a limp. His leg constantly hurts, but he needs surgery to correct it and has no insurance. With a massive smile and big personality, he was an extremely friendly guy. During the second interview, Brian brought his paperwork from a counseling service where a psychological exam was completed. Results showed that Brian had a 68 IQ with performance typical of a fourth grader. In the psychological narrative, the examiner wrote his street IQ and adaptive skills were higher. According to Brian, he never received small group or individual instruction in school. Therefore, he

never received individualized services. Brian had such a great sense of humor, and I enjoyed interviewing him.

In his words. [*Sitting at the end of a white plastic table in a beige metal folding chair, Brian leaned back with one elbow on the table, his handicapped leg stretched forward, and his Fat Boy Season hoodie fully visible.*] I work. I also deal with music. I'm a music manager. I got involved with music management because I was an artist myself with an independent label that served a lot of big, major people, like T.I. [That was] several years ago. After a while I lost my taste and touch for the rapping side of music. With my skills and my learning from other people, I could do more than just rapping on the song [*pause*] more of knowing how to market or manage people. The manager's situation is more into the marketing. They help the artists develop what they're trying to do in their rap music career, so that's what I do as far as the management. [If I had an artist right now], I would try to work with him as far as studio time, creating the sound that he needs, definitely a lot of promo, booking the shows, video shoots, photo shoots, and just creating an image for him. That's what I'm basically doing.

I first had a passion for music when I was seven. Honestly. I seen my first music video when I was five. Timbaland and Missy Elliott had a song they was doing. I seen the video and how Timbaland was so energetic when it came down to music. He produced and wrote. That's how I really got into music. At seven, I really just listened to it. Around sixth grade I started writing, but I never got a chance to perform my own at that age or time yet. I ran with a crew who at that time was well connected with this crew that did a deal with Hustle Gang, which is T.I.'s record label. They was basically performing minor gigs around the [large urban southern city that has become the center

of rap and recording studios], so that's how I really got my start. Most of the times, I sat there and listened in the studio. You know what I'm saying? They showed me the best way to come at it because I was young. I was the youngest out of them, but I wanted to learn. They was really older than me. Some of them was already in high school. Some of them was from my apartments, and some went to my church. That's how we really got connected.

I love football, and my favorite football team is the Falcons. I'm a chill person and very outgoing. [*His phone rings, and he answers one of many phone calls to come in each interview.*]

I'm a family of three [*pause*] my brother, sister, and me. My sister is older than me and my brother. My brother is about to get out of jail for burglary and selling weed [*He smiled*]. I'm the baby of the family. I was raised by my grandma and mom. When I was younger, I mostly stuck with my grandma because she was more understanding of me than my mom. My mom was still clinging to my brother and sister because they was the oldest. My grandma came from a big family. Her dad was a pastor and her mom the first lady, so we basically a church family. Grandma lived with me my whole life.

I really didn't have a connection with my dad at all. I knew of him, but I didn't **know** him. He came around from time to time, but there was this one incident where he was trying to attack my mom one night over a phone call she had. He was trying to get through the door [of our apartment] to get to her. You know what I'm saying? It was a scary sight to be that age. I think I was going to pre-K at the time [*pause*] yeah, I think so.

It was a scary look because [he's hitting the door and] it's like, "Yo."

You know what I'm saying? Your kids in the house, bro. You know what I mean? You doing all this, for what? It was to the point where I was scared, but I got mad. It was my sister, my brother, my mama, and my grandma there. I was going to get a knife to try and scare him off, but he ended up getting a brick that was outside. He broke the window. He ended up leaving because our neighbor girl heard it, and she was going to get her boyfriend's gun and let the dogs loose on him. The police was called, but my neighbor's husband or boyfriend, whichever one it was, came home.

He came over with his gun, "Where he at?" [*His head turns from side to side like he's looking for someone.*]

My mother was like, "He gone." That was it. [I was scared for a long time after that.]

I grew up in Memorial Courts, [a housing project]. Oh, man [*looking down and shaking his head*]. Growing up at Memorial Courts was rough [*pause*] rough! You had your people who just chill. You had your drug dealers. You had your people who gamble. You had your people who steal cars. You had your people that fight. You had your people that [*pause*] I mean I seen a couple of people get killed out there. Actually, one of my homeboys I went to school with [*pause*] his dad got killed not far down from where I lived [*He looks down when talking about "bad" stuff he witnessed.*]. One of my neighbor's brother got killed in an abandoned apartment two doors down from me. One night I went to the trashcan, and in one of these vacant apartments was a couple of guys arguing. You couldn't see. You just heard they were fighting, so you had your moments. You know what I'm saying? [*looking up and then back down*] I would say [I saw my first murder when I] was 11 to 12. It was more after it happened that we seen the body there.

When I first seen it, it was like, "Oh my God, a dead body."

Out in broad daylight. On the steps. You know what I'm saying? It was crazy to see somebody dead [*pause*] that was life in the projects. We called it Memorial University [*smiling and laughing*].

Every kid in there played some type of sports. We all played football and baseball, and I coached them in the apartments [because of my leg]. You met a lot of people and went to school with a lot of people. Everybody knew my grandma because [she] was the candy lady in Memorial Courts. The candy lady is somebody who sells products like M&Ms, nachos, and candy type stuff. My grandma was the freeze cup lady, so she sold freeze cups. People were eating them all year around [*pause*] freeze cups, chips, candy, cookies, and soda. All the kids came after school.

You're inside of an apartment complex, and you have a[n elementary] school [*pause*] right there in the complex. Most went to the school. From the janitors up to the principal, everyone in that school cared. They knew your education was more important than anything, and they let you know that. Especially with attendance, they made sure we all showed up to school. One thing I could say, if anything happened, somebody from the school came directly to your house to talk to your parents, bring schoolwork, or whatnot. If you're sick, everybody in that school cared. Everybody at this school became family to me.

My first school experience was pre-K [*pause*] getting up early to go to school. They teach you to count your numbers, say the ABCs, and just learn the basics. I think my earliest school days taught me a lot. I even had balanced meals. I think one of my favorite meals in pre-K was broccoli. I can't remember the meat I had. They always

gave us milk, cold milk. It was so good. Cold milk, cold milk. Everybody at pre-K drunk milk. Nobody was drinking juice. [*I believe Brian may have been without food during his childhood.*] Nobody was drinking water. I mean, of course, you're going to drink water, but lunch was straight milk. [Then] I spent my kindergarten year the same year that 9/11 happened.

My first-grade teacher was a White lady, Ms. Fisher, but it was majority Black people there. She was only there a couple of months. She just was gone, and I had another teacher [in the middle of the year. She was Black.]. I think [Ms. Fisher] probably had a better job opportunity. She made this little book for us with our name in the story, and she was the teacher saying how successful we could be. If we got our mind together, we could achieve anything. The one difficult child I had in my class was Chad.

When Chad used to pout or get a little attitude, [Ms. Fisher would] just grab Chad, give him the biggest hug, and say, "Don't worry, you're my big baby. It's okay. You're going to learn one day." [*Brian pretended a hug.*]

Somehow Chad would smile and still pout at the same time, but he loved Ms. Fisher. I remember seeing her cry sometime, but I don't know why. One day we came to class, and a new teacher was there.

I was looking like, "Where Ms. Fisher?"

We were so clingy to Ms. Fisher, but Miss Davis turned out to be a great teacher for us, too. Thinking now, maybe we ran [Ms. Fisher] off [*pause*] we was bad. I don't know, but elementary was fun. My grades was never real good except math. I was good at math. That's really all I remember of elementary.

For middle school I had to be taken to school. My mom stayed in [another county] with my sister, brother and stepdad, but I didn't. I was just coming over here because my mom lived over here, and I'd go to school here. After I got out of school, I would go back to the other apartment with my grandma. Sixth grade I had a White English teacher. She was vibrant. You know what I'm saying? She was cool. She . . . she wasn't a bad person. She was just her own person, and she loved all her students. You could not fail her class because she made it possible for you not to fail it. If you needed just a hint of answers on the test, it was around the room because we did the work already for it. [*Brian is referring to work and charts or poster on the walls.*]

I had two White band teachers. I never was a big fan of Ms. Smart. It was just the way she was [*pause*] her demeanor sometimes. She never smiled to greeted us . . . seemed kinda rude. Ms. Martin was always cool. [*Brian smiled when thinking of her.*] She made sure I was always ready to play. She had me a reed if it got chipped. [I played a clarinet.] She was that person. You know what I'm saying? But, Ms. Smart? I don't know what to say about Ms. Smart. I never too much looked toward her.

My best experience was probably middle school because of my teachers and my bro, Rudy. In the morning, we used to get dropped off. We had to go in the cafeteria because we had instruments. [If the coach was there], we'd go to the gym to play basketball or whatnot. [If we were stuck in the cafeteria, Rudy and I] would run out and run to our teacher's classroom because she'd leave the door open and unlocked for us. We did so much in middle school. At that time, we had so much fun, no matter what it was. We had so much fun with Christmas parties, whatever it was, in the school year. It

was always something fun to do. I think that was mostly my best experience, even though I didn't like schoolwork.

High school was fun mostly. I had a [White female] social studies teacher that made sure your grade was where it's supposed to be. She knew your whole potential.

She'd look in your face and be like, "Come here."

You'd be like, "What's up, Ms. Miller?"

"I don't want you to get distracted by people who don't want to pay attention. Your potential is much better than that. And I want you to do better. Not just do your best, do better, and be best at what you do."

One thing about Ms. Miller [*pause*] she was so funny because she always whisper. She never been that type to [*pause*] I guess she only get loud when in basketball practice.

She was that teacher to tell you, "You don't have to be so loud. Talk among each other."

At test time, she always came around [*walked around the room*]. She'll look, see that we're struggling, and say, "We just talked about this. You know what it is because when I asked the question on the study guide you got it right."

You'll sit there, think about it, and be like, "Oh."

"Okay? You got it?"

My ninth-grade year I had a cool teacher. She was one of the finest White teachers because she had braces, and she was short. She was my math teacher, but she also was one of them teachers where she didn't want to see you fail. You couldn't fail. If you didn't understand, she'd stop her lesson.

She was like, "Look, if your grade low and you questioning why your grade low, come see me, and we're going to get it straightened out."

She'll tell you, "If you do this, do this, do this, and turn this in, I'll bump your grade up, and you'll have this."

My sophomore year I had another cool [White female] math teacher. I ain't going to lie. I used to get on her nerves because sometimes I didn't want to pay attention, but she know I can do the work. [*Clearing his throat*] I was always chattin' up the females [*laughing*]. I just don't even want to pay attention sometimes.

She had to call me to her desk like, "You're just lollygagging. I need you to do your work. I want you to sit by my desk the rest of the day."

I'd be [*grinning*] like, "Naaaawww, I can't do that."

She's like, "Why not? Well, I need you to study. No, no. I need you to pay attention to your work instead of be back there talking."

I'd be like, "Aw, man. All right, cool, cool, cool."

She was one of them other teachers that cared.

My junior year I had the best teacher ever. Miss Russ was more of a mom than a teacher. I think she had her role kind of backwards, but it was good for us because she had kids herself. She made sure you had everything you needed. Just come to her whether it's about your grades or if you need a poster board or anything. Whatever you needed, if she got it, she going to supply it. She was like your mom, and she always made sure your grades was definitely on point.

If not, she'd come to you, "You need to stay after school because we need you to make up this work. Your grades should not be this. It should be this."

That's what made Miss Russ one of the [*pause*] actually to me, I think that made Miss Russ the bestest teacher because of her mom feeling. Anybody that had Miss Russ' class is going to say that Miss Russ is like a mom.

If you skipping class, she'd be like, "What you doing? You, don't you, supposed to be at dah, dah, dah?"

She knew your class, so [you couldn't skip]. If you don't go to your class, she going to email your teacher to see if you in your class. If you're not, she going to come deal with you herself. Not administration. Only time she go to administration is when it's reallllly needed. Miss Russ was one of them teachers much respected by everyone, including the staff.

High school was kind of a little different because you're around different people [from] different backgrounds, different race, and all that. The worst experience was getting suspended. Honestly, it was just for tardies. I got suspended and missed school for not being at school [*pause*] for being tardy. I was late for school. I didn't show up for Saturday school or detention. I remember I got written up one time because I didn't come back from lunch on time. I was right there by the door and had to finish my slushy.

I told my teacher, "Give me two minutes."

I was trying to finish, and the bell rung. She tried to close the door on me.

I'm like, "You trippin'."

She was like, "Nah, I told you. I gave you enough time. You're just wasting time to miss class."

"Man, whatever," I said and left since she wrote me up anyway. [*She was a White female English teacher*.] That was my freshman year I think, and I got ISS [In School

Suspension]. The administrator called my mom, but really nothing bothers me, so I still was chill.

The work was hard, and I didn't graduate. I kept failing and got too old. They tried to get me in some program [*pause*] job corps, but I don't know what it was. Then, my mom died. I visited her at the hospital, and 2 hours later she was gone. [*He had tears in his eyes.*] Her organs just failed. I got depressed and wanted to die.

My worst experience ever was when I went to a stabilized unit. A stabilized unit is a place where people have different types of crisis [*pause*] drug addiction, alcohol addiction, or where you're suicidal or something like that. I was going through a tough time dealing with losing my mom and with the difficulties in the situation of me and my ex-girlfriend. After I lost my mom, she had cheated, and it kind of took me to a different state of mind. I went to the doctor, but he sent me to the emergency room since I didn't have insurance. I was put in a concrete room and searched by two officers because someone reported I had a gun. I ain't have no gun on me. It was just because a White woman brought me. They sent me to the unit. The stabilized unit felt like a jail where you barely get to go outside to get fresh air. You're stuck in this facility. You can't escape it no matter how hard you try. It was just mostly conversation with different people. It was like a normal day, but you just stuck in this facility. You have windows to look out, but you never went outside to actually get that fresh air. It was more a prison but not really a prison. You felt like you were trapped in an institute, man.

After that, I visited a counseling service. They did some tests to see if there was some way to get any financial help for treatment since my mom died. I had a caseworker for a while, but nothing ever came of it. At that time, I was 19.

Of course, with any household, education is the key to success. Education can empower you in different ways you wouldn't understand. You know what I'm saying? [*He used this phrase frequently when giving his opinion.*] Education can always be a backup no matter what it is [*pause*] whether you're in music, or whether you want to be a doctor or a teacher [*pause*] whatever it is. If you have a plan to achieve say the NFL, you go to the NFL, and you play ball for a certain amount of years. You get hurt and can't play no more. With an education, you can fall back on it. So, education is always going to be the important key to whatever you do for success in life.

Reflection. *After dropping out of school, Brian never returned. He tried to get into Job Corps programs, but he could not. After our interviews, I saw Brian again at a community church service. He, his grandmother, sister and 7-year-old nephew moved from the hotel to an apartment. While standing on the balcony of the new apartment, he was shot in the stomach from a stray bullet. It was a superficial wound where the bullet grazed his stomach, and he did not let the police know when they came to the scene. He didn't trust them or want to "get on the bad side" of the shooter since it was gang related. As I reflected on Brian's experiences, I realized the impact the intersection of being a Black male and being in poverty played in his life from the beginning. From the age of 4, Brian dealt with adult issues involving violence. Issues that most White female teachers, or most White females in general, do not have to confront. I cannot imagine trying to study, or even sleep and play, not knowing if I would encounter some kind of violence. Nothing prepares a teacher for the presence of these experiences in the classroom. I believe Brian experienced hunger during his childhood. If she had known how much cold milk in Pre-K impacted Brian, the teacher that did not allow him to finish*

his slushy may have made a different decision. Finishing a slushy was probably not an issue for her. Brian pulled at my heartstrings, and I cheer for him to do well. I will keep in touch with him.

Johnny

I met Johnny through Brian. He lived on the same street and went to the same middle and high school. They have been friends since middle school. Johnny accompanied Brian to a church service. At this church service, we discussed the study and participant requirements. He became my third participant. Like Brian, I met with Johnny at the church after services for each interview.

Meet Johnny. *Johnny was a 23-year-old tall and hefty Black male wearing gold glasses and lots of gold jewelry. Each time we met, he was wearing jeans and a t-shirt even though it was during the winter season. He remarked that he did not get cold. Having long fingernails, he frequently picked at them when talking. Loving rap music, he creates his own beats and writes his own lyrics. One of his songs was released to radio and iTunes. Living just outside the city limits of a large city, he resided with both parents in a government subsidized apartment complex throughout his public-school years. Johnny was the youngest of five children.*

Johnny is a high school graduate but not at the end of his senior year. Earning enough credits to graduate, he did not pass seven attempts of the required writing test to earn his diploma. The following year, the state decided to throw out the writing assessment as a graduation requirement. Therefore, Johnny earned his diploma; however, he never walked in a graduation ceremony or went to the district office to

acquire his diploma. At the time of his interviews, he had a full-time job delivering car parts. After completing two interviews, I could no longer get in touch with him.

In his words. I'm Johnny, a 23-year-old average guy. I work 12-hour shifts, and I live pretty much a normal life based on what I consider normal. I have a lot of good memories. My family [*pause*] they're loud and they're rude, but they love you [*laughing*]. It's funny, and it's coming from a place of love. I have a lot of aunts and a few uncles. I know the majority of my mom's side better because my dad's side lives out of state, and they don't travel. My family gets together soooooo much. Sometimes it might be a Sunday dinner. Sometimes it might be a birthday. I think it's a majority of holidays like Christmas or Thanksgiving. That's when I get to see my folks the most. Family is very important to me. Actually, me and, I think, about three of my cousins all graduated the same year. They gave me advice and were helpful. When I start my family, I want them to understand that if you can't count on nobody else you can always count on your family no matter who it is.

School was hard, hard, hard [*shaking his head*]. For me, I think it came from how I didn't apply myself too much. I mean in elementary school, as a little kid, I played sports, played football, tried to get into baseball. Man, [my] elementary was lit [*smiling*]. We took field trips to professional hockey games in [the city]. I think I went to every [professional hockey game in that city] throughout my elementary school years and enjoyed it. I really wasn't into hockey though [*pause*] not even the fights. I don't think anybody got in a fight when we came. They probably did. I probably just wasn't paying attention. I was just happy to be out of school. For field trips, you go to school as normal. You know what I'm saying? Once you get ready to go, [teachers] do roll call to

make sure every student is [there] that's going on the field trip. Everybody that's attending [*pause*] they get you in one class. Everybody that's not [*pause*] they get them into another teacher's [classroom] who's staying behind. Most of the bad kids stayed back. You go to the cafeteria and get your lunch bags because either you're going to hold it yourself, or they're going to put it in a box. Once you get on the bus, they do another call to make sure every student is accounted for. Then, off you go. Once you get there, they tell you a teacher to stand behind or what line to go to. It was like boys might sit here. Girls might sit here [*moving hands to different places*]. It all depends on what kind of field trip it was and how many teachers there was. To my memory, I sat with a few classmates, but everybody would spread out. If your parent gave you some money, you can get little accessories or whatever. Like I said, you'd enjoy your field trip. As you're getting back on the bus, they do another roll call to make sure everybody is accounted for, and then we're back at school to go home. I also went to the zoo in elementary.

In elementary school I got in trouble a lot, so they put me in in-school suspension or whatever they wanted to call it back then [*waved hands*]. I think I was just showing off trying to be the class clown. I don't know. I would talk back to the teacher like I was Mr. Big and Bad. I'd get home, and that belt was ready. Yeah, isn't no getting out of it. If you get in trouble in one place, they'll call or send a little note home. If you're smart, you're going to try to hide it, but sometimes it's, what they call it, inevitable. You just got to face it. If I got in trouble at school, the teacher might call my mom or send a note home saying what I did and that I'll be spending time in the in-school suspension. I hated in-school suspension. You can't get what you want. You got to get what they tell you to get. If it's pizza day, you got to get a turkey sandwich. If you like chocolate milk, you

got to get regular milk. You still get fruit, but not what you want. In elementary school if you got money, they have ice cream bars. It just so happened I had $2 or $3 in my pocket but can't get it. I cleaned up my act. You get tired of getting whoopings. You know, you can try to be the quietest kid in class, but it's always that one person that brings it out of you.

In third grade, I was falsely accused of saying a bad word in class. I didn't say it. The kid next to me, Hunter, said it. [Hunter was a White boy]. Every year teachers pass out a card for you to have completed with your name, address, parent or guardian, phone numbers, and email. [The teacher] got the wrong card, supposedly. I guess it's true, but I wonder now that I'm older. I guess it's because we sat next to each other. I don't know how it happened really. The student's mom that she should've called [*pause*] she didn't call them. [Hunter's mom should have been the parent called], but she called my mom [*pause*] and I had a football game that day. Let's just say your dad is the first one home. He calls you [when he walks in the door]. He turns the TV off. [*Johnny reenacts the conversation.*]

"How was school?"

"Oh, you know, school was straight." You tell him this and that.

He's like, "So, you don't want to tell me nothing?" That's strike one right there.

That's him asking you if there something you want to get off your chest. He's giving you a chance to tell him before your mom comes home because it's going to be worse with her if you don't tell him.

I'm like, "No, I don't got nothing to tell you."

I'm thinking my progress report or report card came out or something and say, "Okay, am I failing again?"

He's like, "You didn't cuss in school today?"

"No."

"All right." [*eyes widen and head nods*]

I finished getting dressed for the football game. I hear the front door open.

My mom asked where I'm at, and I hear, "He's upstairs sitting on the bed."

She yelled at me to come down. I ran downstairs to go to my football game. She spanked me saying I shouldn't be cussing in school, and I had to miss my game. I was ticked. I tried to tell her I was not the one who cussed, but she believed the teacher. [The teacher] didn't even talk to me about it. When you don't get in trouble for anything since you stopped being bad, it's bad to get in trouble for not doing anything.

When I got back to school the next day, I [told] the teacher like, "Hey, I need you to call my parents back because I don't cuss. I don't cuss in school. It was Hunter." I didn't cuss period.

The teacher is like, "Oh, sorry [*pause*] I'm sorry," just some type of heartfelt apology for a third grader, and she called my mom.

It sounded sorry, but if I falsely accused a child, it would be funny to me. In my mind, I think she really thought it was me, but just thought, "Maybe you learned a lesson. You better not do this [*pause*] you better not act like him." Actually, I didn't start cussing all the way up to high school. After that, it was just like being wrongly accused hurt because you know you didn't do nothing.

I can't really too much remember kindergarten, first, and second. As far as third, fourth, and fifth, I think fourth grade was my best year because I was good in math with addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. [The White female teacher] gives you a multiplication timed test sheet, and then they time you five minutes, 10 minutes, or something like that. You got an ice cream party if you made 100 on your quiz. We also played this little game where you stand up if you say the answer first. Then, you go around beating folks on multiplication facts. [*A circular motion was made with his hand.*] I felt like I was a whiz at math in fourth grade, but when I got to high school, math became tricky. Who wants to round something up for the sum of X and Y [*shaking his head*]? In fifth grade, I was in an all-boys' class. That was lame. Nobody wants to be around a bunch of dudes. If you was acting like a punk, the teacher didn't call you a punk, but she'd crack her jokes. [*My intention was to gather more information on the all-boys' class in the 3rd interview.*]

I liked getting rewards. Rewards did get you through school. I felt like [my parents] got me everything I asked for. School-wise, if you get rewards, you get certificates, honor roll, most outstanding, something like that. We got an ice cream party fourth grade year [for knowing multiplication facts]. I never was an honor roll student. I got a certificate in something. I think it was perfect attendance or something [*pause*] I was always in school. That was about the most I got.

I think it was seventh grade year that me and a buddy used to clean up after our class when they got done with lunch, and our teacher [*White female*] would give us extra candy. You know what? [*like a thought just popped into his head*] That made math fun for me, too, in seventh grade. Every Friday, our math teacher would do, not a pop quiz,

but just a quick quiz on whatever we was learning. If you get your answer right, you get to choose candy before you go to lunch. Then, we'd clean up the cafeteria for two extra pieces [*pause*] usually Airheads or something like that. That was fun.

Eighth grade was not so much fun. I think I fell off of school in eighth grade. I got tired of school. I didn't put no effort into school. After I twisted my ankle, I fell out of sports and fell in love with music.

I was thinking, "I don't really want to be in school. I just want to sit in the studio and rap. That's all I want to do."

My parents weren't going for it [*shaking head*]. I **had** to graduate.

"Forget school. I don't want to do this no more," but my parents didn't play that.

They always said, "You're **going** to graduate."

If I was lucky enough to have a nice paying job, I would've moved out and started doing what I wanted to do, but life don't work like that. I'm glad it didn't work like that because I wouldn't have had no education. I wouldn't be as intelligent and intellectual as I am. Then, I wouldn't meet the people that I came across in life. I'm glad I didn't drop out.

I wanted to start rapping [*pause*] be an artist. My teachers didn't know I wanted to rap. Only one person did. I didn't think I was good, and I didn't know what I was doing.

My cousin came to me like, "Yo, let's start rapping."

Something clicked in my head, and I agreed. Then, I met Brian. I knew of Brian from my grandparents' neighborhood down the street, but I didn't really officially meet

him until my seventh-grade year. He was hanging with some dudes that would go to the studio a lot.

I'm just like, "Yo, excuse me. Let them know I rap, or I'm trying to rap, something. Do you want to see what I sound like?"

At school, I kept my head in my notebook. Instead of taking notes, I was writing raps. I would write whatever came. You know, a rapper does his own music. Whatever came to my head, I'd jot it down. If it rhymes, go with it, and move on to the next line. Then, I think in eighth grade we started learning about haikus. I tried to use it, but it didn't work for me because, like I said, I'd never been to a studio. I just wrote and go, no beats, no nothing. I tried to use what I learned in writing, like words from a thesaurus to sound more intellectual.

I wanted folks going, "Oh, he said something then."

If I say, "I'm falling back in space. I just need some space," they'll be like, "Oh, he said something then."

Yeah, I think it gave me a false confidence of my music. You could tell me that it's all right, but I don't think that it's good enough. I think it could be better. My writing was trash. I'm not ashamed to say it. I could read what I write. I think my teachers could read what I wrote sometimes, but if you wanted me to be real neat and everything, that was not happening.

My [White] eighth-grade teacher, man [*pause*] I feel like she wasn't against nobody in the class, but she would bring her problems to work.

She'd be like, "All right, I need a silent day. Nobody talk."

If you talk, you got to stand against the board and do, what they call, planks. You got to stand up there for five or 10 minutes. I never stood exactly her way. I wouldn't say she was the worst, but I didn't drop out of eighth grade either. I had a buddy whose dad dropped out of eighth grade. I couldn't be like him. I started speaking to teachers more in middle school, but even then, I never really got into trouble with my teachers.

Once I got to high school, I was like, "All right, I'm here, but I don't want to put no effort into this. I want to put my effort into my music." I felt like I'm putting more effort into my music now.

If I would've put effort into more writing, I think [my teachers] probably would've understood me. At the beginning, I failed a few classes and then played catch up towards the end of the year just to move on. I feel like if I'd applied myself more, I would say school was the cake walk it might have been. It was hard, but I feel like I didn't apply myself much. It wasn't interesting to me.

In 10th grade I realized, "Okay, I made it to high school. I can drop out now. At least I made it to high school."

Oh, I did have a horrible teacher. In 10th grade, I got put into a 12th grade British lit class. This was the beginning of the year that I was put in her class. I had turned in a writing composition, and she graded me an 18. She never help me. My parents seen it online.

My mom was so mad and yelled at me, "What the fuck? You really aren't trying."

I just felt bad and said, "I am trying." At that point, I really was trying.

I tried to get my grade up with her as much as I could, but I failed that class. She was one of those teachers you got to have your name in a certain spot.

"You have to have your name in the upper left corner, name, date, the writing composition number."

I don't think I wrote enough for her. I would see everybody else turn in two or three pages. Still, I was in 10th grade, and that's a 12th grade British lit class. I was put in that class because too many people were in the class I needed. I guess that was just the only class that was open at the time. I spent a semester in there. It was unfair, and I wasn't the only 10th grader in there. It was two or three other dudes I knew, but for me to get put in there was wrong. I hate British lit. I hate the hell out of British lit.

I'm not a hateful person, but I was saying, "I hate this teacher. I hate Ms. So and So. I hate Ms. So and So."

She was an old White lady. If she's still alive, shouts out to her, but if she's gone, may God rest her soul.

Everybody loved Ms. Ross [*a White female English teacher*]. I think it's just because she cared. When I met Ms. Ross, before I got to know her as a Godly woman, she already just seemed nice and sweet. Some days she'd have a bad day. If you don't know somebody, you're going to talk about them. Yes, I did talk about Ms. Ross, but I didn't know her then the way I know her now. She was the most helpful woman throughout the rest of my high school career. If we wanted to raise our grade, she gave extra credit work. Say, it's going to be Christmas break. She'll give you everything from the past like 5 months. If you do everything on that list or at least attempt to do a fourth of those things on that list, you pretty much got your grade back up.

If you have a low grade, she was not the type of teacher just to be like, "I can't help you. I don't know what to do to help you."

I think that's pretty much why everybody loved her. She'd stay after school on certain days, and maybe she'd even stay after anytime if you asked her to stay after. You know what I'm saying? That's what made her loveable to me, and my perception of why everybody loved her. If you had Ms. Ross, you had the best teacher out of the high school. She would be helpful in high school all the way through. I'm not going to say all the way through, but 11th grade up was Ms. Ross. When I left [that high school] to catch up on some credits, she still helped me. [*He transferred to an alternative high school only taking required classes going toward technical skills or trades*.] If my English teacher said I needed to change something in my essay, Ms. Ross would help me.

Anybody else, "Forget that class."

None of my teachers were that bad [*pause*] weren't jackasses. Like I said, they were sweet people. At least I think they were sweet. I don't know what goes on in their personal life, but they'd come to school like, "You don't mistreat me. I don't really give a damn what you do to somebody else."

I got along with everybody, even my teachers. I didn't notice Black or White. I just saw what was going on right then and there. If you was getting in trouble, there was a reason why you was getting in trouble. If you was getting an award, you know what you did to get that award.

I'd say my first homecoming dance was my favorite school experience. It was lit. You see movies with high schools, and I was waiting for the first high school house party. That didn't happen, but Homecoming did. It was exciting. The music, everybody just [*pause*] I think we won the game that year too. We won Friday night, did the homecoming parade that morning, and then everybody got all dressed up to go to the

homecoming dance that night. The right music was being played. We all got crunk, lit, whatever word you want to use.

In the end, I didn't pass the writing test to graduate. I took it like seven times. Then, there was some problem with the test, and it was thrown out. I was issued my diploma, but I never went and got it though [*pause*] one day I will.

Once I got out of high school, I started focusing on my music career and joined the workforce. A good buddy of mine went to Tuscaloosa Tech. He was telling me to just do 2 years, and I'd have me a degree, I think, in engineering. I never went. Could I handle those pressures of the quizzes and exams that they do? Naw. I got me a 9:00 to 5:00. Legit, that's what time I had to be there, and that's what time I got off. Then, I had thoughts of going back to school for real. I still have thoughts about what kind of student I would have been if I did go on to a technical college.

I'm working so much, but I'm trying to find time to do music [*pause*] writing and rapping. I'm trying to learn how to engineer. Other than that, I still write because you never know. One day somebody might just be like, "I'll give you a shot. Just show me what you got."

We're in the [city that is the] home of recording studios. They can be in the places that you don't even think to see a studio unless they got a sign. All you got to do is hop on Google and type in recording studios near me. Pretty much, you can do everything on your own now after recording [*pause*] the promo and whatever. A lot of people just do their own music. I got a bunch of songs on my phone written and recorded, but I only got one song out. More will be released soon. [My songs are about] partying, smoking, drinking, what I want my life to look like. My party songs are what I

want my life to be like. I want the diamonds and girls and having fun and all that [*pause*] folks to take shots [liquor shots, alcohol, Crown Apple]. I've been to a few parties where it was like that [*pause*] the jewelry, taking shots, folks smoking, chilling. The jewelry may be fake, but people fake it until they make it. When me and my friends do get together, we party.

My family is the best. At the time [in school], I didn't know too much about my parents. I knew my mom graduated, but my dad dropped out of school. Then, both my sisters graduated. As long as you graduate, we're cool. What you do with your life is what you do with your life [*rephrasing what his mother expected*].

They never really put too much stress on me like, "You need to be this much smarter in school. You need to bring home As and Bs."

My mom just said, "Bring me home anything above an F."

That was what I could seem not to do. I always had to bring the F home for some reason. Something in my brain just wasn't clicking until it's time to really get down to it.

"I'll get you anything you want. Just don't bring home no Fs," but I couldn't do it [*shaking head*]. I don't know.

When it's parent teacher conference week they'd go up there, but as far as PTA and stuff like that? No. I think they were more involved in my out of school curriculars than in school. They was at every football game. I'm not saying school didn't matter to them, but as far as going up there all the time [*pause*] after first grade I wasn't a bad child like that. I don't think I ever really invited them either. They worked so much. One time in eighth grade I asked my parents to go to this little play, and they came. If I would have invited them more, I think they would have come. I don't think they would ever say no

unless there was a reason behind it. It was like two different lives. At home, I was their son. At school, they were Pat and JT. I already got enough quality time at home with them. Why bring them to school?

You think about what you want to do in life, where you want to be at, but some people [*pause*] they go through different stuff. That's one of my worst times [*pause*] hearing two of my friends from high school killed themselves [*pause*] suicide. [*He wiped a tear.]* When you're a kid, you don't think about death. [Suicide] can be a number of things, but I'm just going to chalk it up to pressures of life. Sometimes you might not be who you want to be once you get out of high school, or you might be fighting depression. You can be going through anything. I always knew life wasn't that sweet, but I never thought any of my friends would take their life.

Everybody says, "Man, you remember the smile on his face?" [*talking about his friend that committed suicide*]

It's crazy that somebody that always smiled took they're life. Both of them were smiling guys. It brightens up the room. I might write some stuff. I feel like I haven't recorded something that explains just me. So many people died so it made me cherish all the friendships I still had from elementary up until now. You know, [my city] has murder sprees. It was a lot of people I didn't know, but the people I knew [*pause*] so many died from 2011 till now. As I put it in my music, I hope if I explain that part, some people might [*pause*], the right people might, feel me [*pause*] not just in Georgia but around the world.

Somebody might be like, "I understand what you're going through."

It's in the works. I would really like to put it out because I want them to feel me and understand life ain't always going to be a party. Some days you might have to take that shot [*drink*] just to kill some stress or to get away from whatever you're getting away from. Sometimes you might want to take a smoke. I believe in those that use cannabis the right way [*pause*] not smoking just because you think it's cool. Use it because [*pause*] chronic pain, sleeping disorders, stress, all of that. I feel like cannabis really helps, especially those in depression.

That's why people say, "I wish I just had a blunt, just chill me out." For the murders in [my city], I say people do dumb shit [*pause*] mostly. Sometimes people were backed into that corner out on the street.

[I think], "I know you. I grew up with you. You over there slinging drugs and kicking in doors and robbing. I'm over here. I got my nine to five."

[My buddy's] laughing at me because [I] work for the government. [*He is referring to a legal job with taxes being deducted.*]

You know what I'm saying?

"You work for the government. I got bank rolls on bank rolls. You get little boy money. I get killed. Only reason why I got killed because what I was doing. I was slinging drugs. I was kicking in doors." [*pretend statement from a friend who was killed*]

But yeah, I just feel like some people are just backed into a corner, and it just caught up to them. That's where I feel like most of the murders came from.

As a kid, you don't really look too much for the racism [that's around]. If it was there, you could see it. You acknowledge it. Students were mostly Black, White, or Hispanic. Other than the homecoming dance, we didn't really hear our music, or any

music, in school. In popcorn reading, somebody might try to rap the paragraph he's reading. As long as there was no profanity, I guess it was fine. Some people might do a little freestyle in their projects. We did the dance battle the end of eighth grade year, but that's just because dancing was the thing. I feel like rapping is the wave now. Everybody wants to rap, but dancing was the wave back then. I think music, to me, is just a positive influence. It should be used as a positive influence to folks no matter where they are.

Looking back, I think I'd be proud [of me]. If I could go back and talk to my young self, I think he'd be proud of me.

[I would say,] "Don't let nobody stop your dreams. If you want to do something, really apply yourself. Learn the ins and outs of what you want to do and become a master at it. You don't got to be rich to have everything."

That's the most important thing I'd tell him because now everybody wants to be rich, but if they're going to have all that money, they're going to blow through it.

Reflection. *Johnny was a little more hesitant in his interviews, especially the first one. Several times I reiterated to him that his actual identity is confidential. After that reassurance, he would open up for a while. When discussing his mother wanting him to graduate yet not attending extracurricular school activities, I was reminded of a belief I have heard so often: Black families do not care about education. That statement is not true. Many Black families indeed value education, but it is not shown like White families. While there may be some families of any color that truly do not value education, his parents took care of behavior concerns that happened at school and instilled in him the importance of completing school.*

Another experience of Johnny's upon which I reflected was his 1st grade teacher automatically assuming he was the student that cussed. I have heard students say, "Blame it on the Black kid." I believe that is exactly what happened. Although Johnny did not explicitly verbalize it, his teacher's previous learned and unrealized stereotypes emerged, and he was negatively impacted. Because Black male students are so commonly blamed, he did not consider it was a microaggression. Even though he told me of some experiences, I believe he was holding back when discussing his White teachers. Overall, he was a willing participant and a joy to interview. After Johnny, Chad was interviewed.

Chad

I met Chad through a former student who visited me at my workplace. They attended school together from elementary through high school. For his interviews, we met at his apartment, and he was very forthcoming. Chad was the sole college graduate in my participant pool earning a business degree with a concentration in sports management.

Meet Chad. *With close cut hair and a meticulous appearance, Chad was a 25-year-old light skin Black male. Dressed in skinny black jeans, form fitting black t-shirt, small gold cross necklace, and diamond stud earrings in both ears, current fashion appeared to be one of his interests. To complete his "swag" an all-black Chicago White Sox ball cap was turned backwards atop his head. Sports were his life. He began when playing little league sports during his childhood. With a short stature yet muscular build, it was evident Chad was an athlete. Finally, Chad grew up in a house with both parents and his sister. They remain a close family.*

After the initial introductory meeting, Chad chose to meet at his apartment for the interview. His third-floor apartment was located in a trendy section of the downtown area of the large metropolitan city. Recently moving to that apartment and living alone, it was sparsely furnished with only a couch, television, gaming system, table, and table chairs. All walls were bare. He was in the process of furnishing his apartment.

Even though he graduated college with a business degree in sports management, he has not worked in the sports management field. He has a full-time job with a major shoe retailer, which he has had since college. With his friendly personality, he was easy to talk with and appeared comfortable.

In his words. I am employed at [a nationwide shoe company]. We are all over from New York to Miami. I'm living in [a large urban city] now as the District Sales Assistant Manager, so I'm pretty much in charge of the whole [city's] market. We got a team of about three or four of us, and I'm in charge of everybody. I began working retail there in college. When I graduated college, I still worked there, but I was [not] making the money that I wanted.

I went to them and asked, "You guys have any opportunity in management?"

I started as a manager trainee. From manager trainee I worked my way up to assistant manager to manager [*right hand motions as if climbing steps*]. [A little while after college], the CEO of [the company] came into the store one day, so he actually got me a job as a store manager. I got a promotion in management and moved back to [my hometown]. Even though I like my job, I want to find a job I love and am passionate about [*pause*] with my [concentration] in sports management. I'm applying now that

some things are off my record. That was a time in my life that I want to take back, but it made me grow as a person. I hung around with the wrong folks [*pause*] got in some trouble. I learned from it, and it actually got me to who I am now.

Each grade, elementary, middle, high, college [*pause*] all impacted me because it all taught me something different about myself [*pause*] helps me to this day. Schooling, it might be schoolwork, friendships that I developed, teachers or mentors along the way, all that kind of helped me with where I'm at now because I know what I wanted to be. My earliest memory I can recall is probably my fifth-grade talent show [*very fidgety in his table chair*]. It was at nighttime and parents came. It was a good experience. A couple of us buddies who grew up together won doing outside basketball tricks or street ball. We put on a show with tricks and dances. Man, that was fun [*pause*] everybody loved it, honestly. It was different. Everybody else was singing, dancing, or some sort. We came out with the basketball and the gear on from head to toe [*hand motions rom his head down*]. We put in some time and effort to make it work, and it was good. I guess I can say that's one time I do remember as a child just because it was a good experience and the time I knew I loved sports. That was the era I realized I really wanted to do sports.

I don't remember much else from elementary. [I remember] my kindergarten teacher because she was my mom's friend. Every morning, I would go help her set up her classroom. I moved in fourth grade, but my mom knew a lady [*the kindergarten teacher*] at [my school] to watch me so I still could go to school there. I remember my fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Davidson, because she was just fun, and that's when I did the talent show. [Ms. Davidson] just had a different teaching method than others. In elementary school,

you had one class that you was in most of the day, but you might've went to like a computer class or PE. [Then], you came back to your main class. [She was] just a good teacher because she taught me a lot, and we was able to do fun things. One thing I was proud about doing, was [*pause*] you know February is Black History Month? So, we had to do a project. I used the alphabet. For every alphabet, I picked a Black person to learn about. To be able to find 26 people to do the whole alphabet was just good. Me being African American, it's something to be proud about, and I just remember doing that project. Even to this day, it was a good project. It means something to me to do that [*pause*] learn about people from your culture. I was able to present it. [Ms. Davidson] was my only Black teacher in elementary that I remember. She probably did that project because she was Black, but I mean when you're elementary I don't think you [*pause*] we don't notice that [*shrugged shoulders*].

We didn't know color. That ties into a lot of the life I see right now. You see kids that are playing no matter what color: blue, purple, red, right? They're playing. They're having a good time. You see pictures of kids of all races playing and having fun. They don't care about color, but as they grow up, that may change, not because of them [*pause*] because of their surroundings: who they are, who they live with. [Their parents] still living in the past, and that's what they want their child to do [*pause*] that's what they're making them. My mom didn't teach me that because that's not what you should be learning at that time. Then, people's surroundings start influencing them.

My favorite subject was always social studies. I just love the history. I hated math just because I wasn't good at it, I think. Then, I hated English [*pause*] writing and reading, but social studies [*pause*] I mean that's it. You got to read but it taught me the

history, and it's something that just [*pause*] that grew on me even through college. I also loved recess and lunch. I developed a lot of relationships with friends through sports. One friend I still have today I met when his dad coached me. I think [*eyes squinting*] that was fifth grade maybe.

Sports really made me think, "Okay, this should be fun."

Sports builds you as a person and as a team because [*pause*] you just having a good time and being a boy, not that girls are not competitive. I'm not saying that, but I'm not a girl so I can't speak on them. Honestly, if I would've thought about reading [sports], I think I would have liked reading a lot more. [There is] so much stuff out there about sports, and it doesn't just teach you about sports. A show I'm watching right now about fishing is not just about fishing. It's teaching you about patience, responsibility, and things like that. If I was able to read more stuff like that [*pause*] I ain't mad, but that's why I read things like that now. We were always **told** what to read. Elementary was good, I guess I can say. I mean in elementary you're still learning and just trying to figure out who you are and getting ready to go to middle school.

[Middle school] is the real books and not that you shouldn't get good grades in elementary, but this is when it starts getting more. [Since I had moved], I ended up going to [middle school] in my area. In middle school, we got to study more, and it affects your grades, like your grade point average [*pause*] how you're going to be, I'll say, further on in your life. I did good in middle school. I don't remember the grade point average, but I don't remember having too many issues. My mom's a teacher, so she always kept me in line and doing something. I was either at a program learning or playing sports. I was suspended back in middle school. This was a long time ago from now. But yeah, I did

get suspended for giving a gang sign with a handshake [*pause*] me and some buddies who met through football. Our middle school didn't have a football team, so we actually represented the high school as a junior team. We was the Junior Eagles. We played at the high school, so that's how we met [some of the guys now in our group]. Some went to our middle school as well. The gang thing [*pause*] it was eighth grade actually. It was just something to expel people over. Basically, it was a handshake we had. We'd dap each other up, and then we would put our fingers out like a gun. We did it in the hallway one time and got suspended. Well [*shrugging*], we did it all the time really. I guess they started locking down on it, and it was a White teacher or administrator [*pause*], like everybody that worked there was White, in the hallway that caught us dap each other up and do the gun. I guess they had been seeing it and taking note to it, and they thought that's suspicious or gang related because of the gun-like handshake. They did think it was a gun. Maybe it was a gun gesture, but we didn't think nothing of it [*pause*] in videos all the time. All this had to do with graffiti drawn on a piece of paper with our names on it. They got everybody. We had a name for our group, Mafia. We even had one White boy in it. I think they just did too much with it, but we did all get suspended. They just didn't like it, so we all got suspended. They ain't really mentioned it [or talked] to us until they found our picture. We explained, but they already pretty much had their mind set of what they was going to do [*pause*], suspension. White people hear gang, and it scares them. There was nothing we could do to get out of it basically. I guess when you try to discipline kids you knew what you wanted. We had to get suspended because they want to try to teach a lesson and avoid you doing it again. It definitely was White administration, but I forgot who the principal was at the time. We actually went to the

principal's office. We all got like 3, 4 days. We weren't really in a gang. It really wasn't gang activity or gang related. We didn't have flags [*pause*] typical gangs carry flags. Nobody was jumped to be in it. So, we really got suspended for nothing [*pause*] just copying what we saw. You think of it now, and it's silly. I guess the administration thought they was doing something right.

In middle school, I was always in some type of learning program, or [my mom] taught me at home. I needed extra help. I guess I can kind of say I got tutoring. My favorite teachers in middle school was ones who cared [*pause*] not the ones that suspended us. I don't remember too many of my middle school teachers. It's just a blur now, so none really stood out to me.

I love high school. [It] was really fun. Everybody knew us [*pause*]. We kind of ran the high school I would say. It was a good time with your typical teenage boys growing up. That was high school. We ran the high school and got all the girls [*pause*]. We did. I ain't trying to be cocky, but that's just how we were. High school was fun. I enjoyed it, and I developed better relationships with [my boys]. We had some classes together, and, of course, we met each other at lunch or hung after school. I played sports a lot more. Sports got big in high school for me. I guess to any teenage boy playing high school sports is big because it gets more competitive.

Basketball is probably my favorite sport to watch. I wasn't the best basketball player, but freshman year I made it to the second cuts.

I got past the first, and I was like, “Oh yeah, I'm going to make the team.”

I was happy, and then the second try outs didn't go that well. I was missing layups. I didn't play good, and I got cut. They used to post the cuts on a piece of paper

[*holds hand up like touching a door*]. You had to go see if you made the team or if your name was on there. They actually posted it at nighttime, so I came back up there. I was just hoping I would have still made it, but I ended up not making the team. I was upset because I did so well at the first one. I wanted to be on the basketball team. I loved basketball. I just never was the best. My size wasn't good. I probably would've never gotten nowhere with it, but I just wanted to be part of that team [*pause*]. I never tried out for it again after that. I just played rec ball. You didn't have to try out. You just got put on the team, so I knew I was going to be able to play and be on the team.

Actually, baseball was my sport. My coach had his favorites, and [I] was one of only two African Americans on the team. We wasn't used well [*shaking head*]. We just used to be used as base runners because [of] our speed. I mean, you know African Americans [*pause*] we're fast. One time my buddy made a great catch in the outfield [*pause*]. Everyone said so, but he still didn't get to play the field. He was Black. It took the passion away from baseball and changed the way you played out there and everything.

I played several sports. [On a typical day], I would have practice after school. If it's football or baseball, I'll come home and take a shower. I don't think I was hungry anymore cause I was tired. I just wanted to drink. In high school, I didn't have a car. I didn't get my first car until I got to college. All my friends that had cars, if it's a weekend [*pause*] we out!

My mom was a teacher [*pause*] elementary. In high school, it helped me because I knew the right thing. I knew what to expect, and my mom didn't play. Even in high

school, history came to me easy because I was interested. I wasn't interested in math or English.

Social Studies was just like, "Oh, this is what happened."

You learn it. As you get older, you just learn even more and more details. I learned back in elementary school [*turning around in his chair, elbows on knees, talking with his hands*] Christopher Columbus discovered America, and now they don't even reallllly say he actually discovered it. That's what they was teaching us kids. As you got older, it was you figuring out that's not the truth [*sits back with raised eyebrows*]. You find out more in depth what the history is, so that was my favorite subject.

In high school, you had to read what they told you. I had an [old White female] English teacher. We were reading Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* and some book about a monster with one eye. How the hell is that going to help me? She was all in to that stuff, man. They picked out the books to read and write a summary about. I didn't like to read stuff I wasn't interested in. I didn't read it. We asked about reading other stuff, but she said something about the beauty of a text [*dramatic voice and movements with eye roll*] and needing to read stuff worth something. I never forget that [*pause*] sounded kinda strange. She was kinda strange. [*Laughing*] I feel bad now, but we gave her a hard time [*pause*] made fun of her. It was bad stuff I don't wanna say [*never would say after much prompting*]. Now, I guess it's not as long like a book, but I'll read any sports related article, book, magazine, or newspaper.

The thing with math [*pause*] nothing in math am I using in life that I learned in high school [*pause*], just being honest. I know how to count, add, multiply. What's the saying? PEMDAS [*pause*] Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally. That's what I'm using

now in life to make sure I'm counting money right, but you're not using geometry that I have seen. People probably do, but as far as me [*shaking head*], I haven't used it in life. I had to try to figure it out in high school. People helped me with my math [*hesitantly*] they just did my work. We wanted to get through high school, and I knew I was going to get help somehow someway. So, my friends helped me with math, and I was able to get by. That curriculum was taught, so I had to learn it. It was tough for me because I just hated it. I got better at math. When I got to college, I started all over and took college pre-algebra. I took algebra one in high school, but I was able to start fresh and redo it in college.

In my senior year, I got to the point where I would just sit in a class because I got done [with required credits]. I started taking half days by the second semester because I took so much classes. I was chillin'. I was a teacher's aide and just helped a teacher. I had a girlfriend in drama, so I would leave teacher's aide class and hang out in the drama room. [The teacher] didn't care.

I think the most trouble I got in [in high school] was selling candy. They used to take our book bags because they didn't want us selling candy. [Some of the guys] always was hustling. When your parents ain't giving you $5 to $20 a day or a week, you ain't got no money. [A couple of buddies] used to walk around with stacks. We supposed to be going to school with books and pencils in our bag, but they book bags got candy. No books! Just candy! Those fools went crazy with it [*smiling*]. It wasn't like it was just a couple of pieces, bro. The **whole** book bag was filled with candy, bro. Every pocket was something in there, and it would be done by the end of the day. Back in the day in high school, nobody had money, and they [*guys selling candy*] were walking around with

wads of money selling candy. I didn't get into it until I saw how much money they was getting from it. Me [*pause*], I started doing it. I didn't do it as big as them, but I was getting sales because I was selling in my classrooms. Every period, kids were ready for me to come in because they knew I got the candy.

"Oh, here Chad is." They come right when I sit down.

"Yo, let me get Airhead." [*reenacting the requests*]

"Let me get Snickers."

"Yo, let me get a Reese's," and I had Blow Pops.

Blow Pops and Airhead sold for quarters. Snickers and Reese's sold for a dollar. I would go to BJ's, and my mom was in on it with me. Once I started bringing home money, she ain't have to give me money no more.

She was like, "Let's go to BJ's and buy bulks of it."

That's how I got onto it. Once I got good, I had my own money to go buy. She put up the money for the first batch, but then I got so much money that I got my own. [The school] started not wanting us to sell candy. [The school] would take our book bags because they know it had the candy in it. I can't sell the candy if I don't have the book bag, so I stashed some in each classroom. Then, I would still have some to sell if my book bag was taken. I usually had another book bag in my locker, too. The teachers [*pause*], our administrator [*pause*] whoever it was that saw [the candy book bag] would just take it. We would have to get it at the end of the day. I didn't really get caught like that. I got caught once or twice, but that's really the only trouble I remember getting in. [*pause*] I wasn't fighting. I was never a fighter.

Ms. Robertson and Ms. George [*both White*] was close, and we was their first class when they got there [as new teachers]. They taught literature. When we graduated, they was our senior advisors. There was another teacher with them sometimes [*pause*] don't remember her name. She's White but had a Black guy, so she probably related because she'd hang around him. We hung out in their rooms all the time. They treated us like students when they was in class, but after class, they would talk like regular, normal people about anything. They might see us talking to these different girls and ask about who that is. Of course, when it was time to get serious, they would get serious. The lady with the Black boyfriend [*pause*] I got into it with her sometimes over the work [*pause*] didn't understand it, and she didn't help any. I had her for trigonometry. We [*Black males*] didn't have no business in that class.

I really didn't care for a [White female] science teacher I had because she used to take people's phones. She was the teacher, and you're a kid trying to grow up. She never liked you being on your phone [in class], not that you should, but she would take people's phones and keep them until the end of the day. She didn't like chewing gum in her class. That stood out to me. I still used my phone and probably chewed gum. I know I ate candy. I got into it with her sometimes, but I loved science. You always did something interesting [*pause*] rarely just sitting there. I ended up taking more sciences than you were supposed to. I think you were supposed to stop at chemistry or biology. I took zoology, but it was an extra credit you can get. I love animals. I grew up watching Animal Planet. In Zoology I had fun dissecting animals. My teachers [*pause*] they were cool for the most part.

My mom always kept me in something. In high school, I was in a youth foundation program [named after a former influential mayor of the metropolitan city]. I think his wife was the one running it, but it taught you as a person to grow up. Every other Saturday I had to go. It was separate from school and taught us etiquette. We actually went to like a dinner etiquette class. [The program] took us to Chicago because people never get to go out and experience life. I always thought I wanted to be a lawyer. Then, I went to a 2-week summer program at Southern University in Baton Rouge about law through the program. We had to write a 10-page paper. It's summer, and I'm like [*pause*] nobody wants to do this. That program kind of discouraged me from doing law because it was just so much. Not that I hated the experience, it's just the work that I had to put in. I didn't want to do it. The program was a great experience; overall, I'd say that high school [*pause*] I had a lot of fun in high school.

I wanted to go to [college] with my friends. I didn't get in [the same college] though. I could've did a summer program and still got in, but who wants to do that leading up until you go into college? I think I was 17 or 18 years old, so I wanted to just stay home and chill with my friends. I went to an HBCU [out of state]. HBCU was always my mindset because they catered to the African American culture, and I wanted to grow on my own.

I was arrested in college for stealing books, but I got off. I wasn't even there [*jail*] overnight [*pause*] probably like 6 hours. It was dumb mistake. We would steal books from the bookstore and resell them at another bookstore; they'd give us cash. My first time I got caught. I was in college away from home, which I wanted to do, but I got with the wrong crowd. It messed me up at first. I just wasn't hanging with the right people,

and I had to think about life once that happened. It hit me. I don't need to be doing that. It's not who I was, and that's when I changed my life and was able to do better in school and as a person. College was a slap in the face for me, and it made me re-get on track [*pause*] on focus. The situation hurt me at the time, but I think it made me grow as a man. I wouldn't change it.

My sophomore year [of college was] when I was struggling and went the wrong path. My teacher noticed me missing school, missing classes.

She would be like, "Why you wasn't in class yesterday?"

My college was small with only 1,600 students. Because it was so small, they knew when people weren't in class. We took attendance. If you was tardy three times, it was an absence. If you miss three classes, they will fail you. Once they saw me walking on the block, but I wasn't in class.

She asked, "Why are you on the block, but you wasn't in class?" [It hit me that they cared.]

They knew me by name, so that helped a lot. Of course, all my college teachers was Black. Going to HBCU and being an African American man, they wanted me to be positive. Going to a bigger school might not have been best for me because I was able to go to my teachers if I needed help. If I needed one on ones with them, they had time for that [since there were only] 20 to 25 [students in a class]. If they see me struggle, they would tell me to stay after class. I was able to relearn things in college. One of my favorite professors had me when I was freshman. He seen me transition from freshman to a senior and saw when I was struggling.

The words I remember him saying [at graduation], which I'll never forget, "Chad," he said, "You came a long fucking way."

He said it just like that, and it meant a lot to me he noticed I changed. He noticed I went through something, but obviously I got back on the right path. He was the realest teacher I ever met [*pause*] still to this day. He just taught it how it was, so his language came out sometimes. We appreciated that. As a young adult in college, obviously, they're going to talk to you like a young adult. They're not going to talk to you like a student because you're an adult.

A big impact on my life now is my friends and seeing where they are. I met all these guys from [public] school. High school is always going to be a memory of us. I had good peers. I had bad peers. The good peers [*pause*] they're still there to this day. Our circle has six of us, and sports is what built the relationships. [Sports] just builds a friendship and a bond. One bro I met in middle school because we brought him to the [little league] football games. Getting him onto football and being my friend is how we got closer. Sports just brought everything together. We're friends, but we're brothers. I haven't been around as much as they have been, but when I came back, it was like I was here yesterday. Our relationships never changed. I don't think any of us would be where we are without each other. All of us had nicknames and our own identity [*pause*] the goofy one of the group, the hustler of the group, the flashy one, the mysterious or unpredictable one, the aggressive one [*Chad*]. We look after each other. Can't Get Right needed help to go to college.

Everybody has their own personality, but it all helps each other. I always felt like they all wanted to pick on me because I was small. Once, one of the guys slammed me in

football practice and held me back by my forehead and laughed that I couldn't reach him since I was short. I can't make my height be any higher, so I just lived with it. Now that I am back with them, they're helping me as far as in my life as well.

It made me think, "Dang, this is my friends, and I missed them."

We got smarter, wiser, and became better people. If I was with them in college, I know I would not have gotten in trouble because they would've helped keep me on the right track. My grades might have been a little bit better as well because I know they was always on it working together. I would have been focused more. I wouldn't have had to try to fit in. Our parents were the one group of people that didn't understand that we were good for each other [*pause*]. If they would have known how we were going to turn out, it wouldn't have been no issue. My peers were more impactful than school itself. I looked up to them a lot, and I appreciate them for that.

You supposed to go to school and learn and study. [One thing that needs to change is] they might not be teaching all the right things in school [*pause*] I wish they would teach stuff like finance and balancing your money or taxes. That's what's more in the real world when you grow up. Like I said, me working in retail and getting a little money got me better with numbers. By the time you get to high school, you should be learning those things. Some of the stuff I was taught was just useless to me. Maybe that's why I like Ms. Cole. I feel like she taught what we needed to learn and not what they just teaching us because that was in the curriculum for us to learn. Ms. Cole actually kind of went around the syllabus and taught us things that she knew was going to be beneficial to us in life. She was [one of] my [White female] high school teachers [*pause*] I don't even remember the class [*pause*] just that she gave us what we needed.

I'm living in [the large urban area in which I grew up] now. You know, some of the public schools embraced Black culture. Of course, there was, I guess you'd say White privilege. I do say it exists. Some of that stuff [*pause*] people be still living in the past, but it is what it is. It's going to be like that because of how people make it. I knew I wanted to be successful, so I just kind of tried and follow those ropes to get where I needed to be. Yeah, I had some bumps in the road, but those bumps in the road helped me with this now. School made me learn about myself to be able to be successful now and get me to where I need to be. I guess I wouldn't change a thing.

Reflection. *I found Chad's thoughts of the development of racism interesting. He discussed how children of all colors play together in childhood without thoughts of being different colors, but the beliefs of their parents or caregivers influence them as they get older. This supports the acceptance and permanence of racism as suggested by CRT. Additionally, when Chad was suspended for gang activity by White administrators, I thought about a lack of cultural awareness with unrecognized stereotypes playing a role in the suspension. Honestly, I thought about the actions of myself as a White female teacher if I were involved. I know I would listen to what they had to say. Believing administrators had their mind set on suspension and that they thought what they were doing something right, Chad verbally illustrated how the permanence of racism led to Black Americans' acceptance of racism as normal.*

Chad consistently discussed relationships as influential. He developed an almost extended family with his friends who were very influential in his life, and he credits them with his success. Throughout his interviews, I constantly thought about how important socialization and relationships are while in school. The overall expectation throughout

my career as a student was to sit quietly and complete work. As a teacher, I do not think much has changed. During teacher collaboration I have heard the idea that less interaction leads to fewer behavior issues. From Chad's experiences, the influence of the relationships built through collaboration and socialization at school were more advantageous than students quietly completing work. Additionally, relationships with teachers were influential to Chad. Therefore, Chad's experiences supported the need for opportunities to build positive relationships with peers and school staff.

In addition to relationships, Chad's experiences showed the need for culturally responsive teaching. Specifically, projects or assignments relevant to Black culture were appreciated and beneficial. His 5th grade Black History project and a talent show performance were two culturally-related experiences he remembered that positively impacted him. Researching famous Black Americans to create an ABC book was a project on which he worked hard and did his best; as a result, he remembers this project. The talent show influenced his decision to pursue a college degree and career in sports. These experiences where his culture was at the forefront increased his motivation and success. Would more of these types of opportunities be beneficial for more Black males in schools? I think so!

Manny

Like Chad, I met Manny from the former student who visited my workplace. Manny participated in one interview, and then he did not return calls, texts, or emails. I did not go to his apartment because I felt that may be harassment. Although he was responsive during the first interview, I was looking forward to digging deeper and adding further details in subsequent interviews. Thinking back to his interview, he

began with short responses leading me to believe he was not comfortable describing his experiences to me, a White female, but I thought he became more comfortable as the interview progressed. Even though there was only one interview, I was able to gather beneficial data.

Meet Manny. *Manny was a 20-year-old dark skin Black male with shoulder length dreadlocks, hair on his chin, and a wide handsome smile. Tall and lean, he fit the stereotype of a basketball player, and he was indeed a basketball star in high school. After graduating high school, he briefly played college basketball on a full basketball scholarship. However, that did not work out, and he was employed full time for a well-known international shipping company.*

Growing up, Manny lived with both parents and seven siblings. After his parents divorced when he was in middle school, he lived with his father and one brother; however, he still saw his mother. For the interview, we met at his apartment. Slouched down at the end of a gray sofa, he appeared comfortable in his black Nike tracksuit.

Manny spoke softly, slowly, and monotone. He appeared to be laidback or easy going and showed little emotion. Before responding, he looked at me for what seemed like a full minute of constructing his response, like he was carefully thinking of the exact words to say. Manny answered my questions, but it was difficult to get him to conversate. He stopped all communication after the first interview.

In his words. [*Manny was fidgety. He moved his phone and around and around and jiggled his leg throughout the interview.*] I have a full-time job at [a nationwide package delivery company] and have been there for just a little over a year

now. I worked with my dad through school and after school, but I can't do that no more [*pause*] guess you could say we too much alike. He fired me [*pause*], or I quit lots of times. Plumbing is hard work. We worked hard [*pause*] he made me. I guess that's why [the company I work for now] says I'm a hard worker. I live with my girlfriend for a while now. I graduated high school and got a basketball scholarship for college, but that didn't work out too good. I was kicked out [*pause*] don't think I would have done too good in college anyway. Now, I just work and live.

Elementary was fye. My favorite was PE and recess. For real though, I did kind of like social studies and science. Reading and writing was awful. I can't stand it to this day. I think PE and recess was my favorite because we got to run around [*pause*] sitting in a seat all day just ain't for me. Well, in elementary you didn't sit all the time, but it was still a lot. History is just interesting. I liked hearing stories about things that happened. Pretty much all my teachers were White women [*pause*] all in elementary school. My fifth-grade teacher was a good social studies teacher because it was like a play she would put on [when telling things that happened in history]. It kept your attention. Of course, science was fun because you was always doing experiments. We worked in groups [*pause*] that we chose. I hated when teachers assigned you to groups [like in 4th grade]. They put me in groups with kids I didn't like just because I was active. I got in trouble a lot cause I was active [*pause*] sit down, go to your seat, stop talking, pay attention, do your work, keep your hands to yourself [*pause*] I heard it all! Me and the boys always playing, I guess they [*teachers*] thought we was bad. I was kind of hyper [*pause*] but that didn't mean I couldn't work

with my friends. In fifth grade, I didn't get on her [*the teacher*] nerves. She liked me [*pause*] was my best year.

I **hated** reading and writing [*pause*] still do. Read it to me, let me listen to it, but don't make me read it. I can read, but it takes me so long and so many times of reading it over and over. If it is something I wanna read, no problem! Most of the stuff we had to read was boring [*pause*] feel good stuff or stories that were kind of stupid. By the time I finish, I don't remember what happened at the beginning. In fourth grade [*pause*] that about the earliest I remember, I was in the lowest [reading] group. Naw, they didn't tell me I was, but I knew I was because I was with the kids that had all the problems, mostly Black. My problem wasn't that I couldn't read [*pause*] well, I couldn't read stuff that I didn't care about. I need interesting things to read. My reading group read these little square books about half the size of real books. They was about some frog or talking animals or robots, stupid stuff [*pause*], really? I was embarrassed sitting at the table, so I tried to hide the book by standing in front of it and getting kicked out of the group. In fourth grade, I never read anything good. Thinking back, I was probably in the low group because I didn't read the stuff they wanted me to. Then, if you don't read it, you can't write about it. Dah, dah, dah [*pause*]. My grades were not real good either in fourth [*pause*] or anytime really. Actually, I think I got tutoring at Sylvan.

Fifth grade was better. She [White female teacher] was chill. We had reading groups, but it was different [*pause*] each month or so we changed. One time, I think it was near the beginning of the year, there were lots of tubs on the floor with different books about sports [*pause*] all kinds of sports. We got to look at each book and

choose. If you chose the same book, you was a group. One time we did a play reading the lines over and over and over [*pause*] maybe she liked plays is why she taught history like a play. We did famous Black people during Black History month. I did Michael Jordan. Then, we did a museum to present them. That was fun. Fourth grade [*pause*] never would have done that.

Played sports my whole life. Basketball was my fav. Elementary and middle I played on travel basketball teams. My teacher, fifth grade teacher, actually came to some of my games [*pause*] [I] played on the junior high school basketball team. I didn't do that great in school, but I was killin' it on the court. After my freshman year of high school, a private school [in the area] offered me free tuition to go there to play ball [*pause*] lasted about a month. There were like two real Black kids there. Black kid from the hood just didn't work [at that school]. I finished at my high school and got a scholarship to a small college. I was big shit in high school [*pause*] basketball star, but I had problems with my classes.

Man, I got to college, and it was different. They never drug tested in high school, but they did in college. Weed [*pause*] I smoked it since middle school [*pause*] whole family did. I tried to stop in college, but naw [*pause*] too immature I guess. Halfway through the first season [*pause*] lost it all because I tested positive on the pee test. I miss the basketball and the fame but don't miss school [*shaking head*]. I wish it would've worked out, but [*pause*] my mom still has my signing picture in her garage. I see it every time I walk in.

After fourth grade, I really don't remember not liking a teacher. Now, that don't mean I liked school. I have the personality that everyone likes [*pause*] charm

and good looks [*laughing*]. If a teacher got pissed off, I found some way to make them laugh [*pause*] compliment them [*pause*] or make them more pissed. I do wish I took school more seriously. Maybe I would have with more Ms. Scotts [fifth grade teacher], but it is what it is. I like my job, but I could make more [money] with more education.

Reflection. *Sports played a major role in Manny's life. I think he regrets not finishing college and playing college basketball. I planned to gather more details about his experiences playing little league sports and high school sports.*

When reflecting on the interview, there were two areas that continually entered my thinking: choice and culture. Manny recognized that his performance increased when he was given a choice, especially on what he was reading. He wanted to read books of interest to him, and they happened to be about sports. Recognizing the act of reading uninteresting books was difficult for him, he was willing to listen to texts read aloud live or on audio to learn the material. In future interviews, I intended to ask him how he thought his experiences would have been different if he were given more choices regarding assignments throughout school.

Finally, his need to move around and his use of weed were cultural topics he discussed. When Manny could move around and was active, his school experiences were better. My intention was also to gather further detail on the role of movement in his school experiences. Additionally, weed was an important part of his family life, saying he started smoking in middle school. Because of a positive drug test, his basketball career and college education suddenly ended. Again, gathering further details on his weed use was intended. Even though I was unable to complete all three

interviews, I believed Manny's experiences from his one and only interview were beneficial to my study.

Summary

As intended, each profile was constructed from the exact words of Black male participants. Before discussing commonalities and findings from the profiles, data from White female teachers is provided. Because White female teachers were not the focus of the study, ideas from their interviews are compared, summarized, and presented in the next section.

White Female Teachers

Even though they were not the focus of my study, I spoke individually with three White female teachers in the same school district as the Black male participants to add context. Other White female teachers were present at a lunch I attended with one teacher participant. Time spent with the White female teacher participants was short, one interview. Even though I have limited background information about them, each White female teacher is introduced in the next three subsections. Small moments, or small snippets of events, are provided from the observations and discussions with White female teachers. As these participants added to the landscape of the data and reflected on continued institutional racism, only data relevant to White female teachers teaching and interacting with Black males was included to keep focus on the voices of Black male students.

Ms. Louis

Ms. Louis, a White female teacher, was older than the other two teachers interviewed. She had taught for 15 years; however, this was only her 3rd year teaching

fifth grade in a Title I school. In addition, this was her first year in this specific geographic area with predominantly minority Title I students. Small in size with gray curly hair and wearing an out-of-date knit outfit with baby blue pants and a white banded shirt with little embroidered flowers, she had a loud voice that carried far.

Her class consisted of 23 students: 10 Black males, 2 Hispanic males, 1 White male, 8 Black females and 2 Hispanic females. During the interview, she repeatedly referred to a couple of students in her class who were problems. They were both Black males. After a few months of school with no change in behavior and continued disruptions, she immediately sent them out of the room when they did not follow directions. When discussing these students, she described how they were from terrible home lives and "just plain pitiful, but they have to read and do what [she] tell[s] them to do." Saying they lack motivation, she believed what they needed was beyond her abilities [*spankings*]. I noticed she consistently referred to the problem Black males as "those children."

Seemingly having an anxious personality, she has cried twice this year because "those children" would not listen or sit down and complete their work, and they were disrespectful. Never experiencing a class like them, she compared her class to a zoo with students in different areas doing something different but not what they were expected to do. She ended by saying, "If had known it would be like this, I would not have transferred here."

Ms. Fitts

Another teacher, Ms. Fitts, taught for the previous 2 years in a Title I school; however, this was her first year as a teacher at her present school. Looking like a high

school student, she appeared to be in her mid to late 20s with long straight red hair wearing a short gray dress with black gladiator sandals. With a strong southern accent, she had 14 students who were all below level. Four students were Hispanic, and 10 students were Black with eight of them being males. When talking to her, she was blunt and had no hesitation answering questions or discussing her beliefs. She was animated when talking frequently twisting her head, shrugging her shoulders, and moving her hands. Observing pictures on her desk, she was recently engaged after dating her fiancé (a Black man) for 2 years. Reflecting on the interview, Ms. Fitts appeared laidback and easygoing, quite the opposite of Ms. Louis.

Ms. Mady

This was Ms. Mady's second year teaching. Appearing to be in her early 20s, she was flawlessly manicured and trendily dressed in denim bell bottoms and flowy white shirt. Married during her initial year teaching, it was hard planning a wedding and being a first-year teacher. She hailed from an affluent family with her father being a dentist. Moving to the south from a state bordering Canada, she secured her teaching position immediately after graduating from a large southern university whose sports affiliation is with the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC).

Ms. Maddy's first-year teaching was in a fifth-grade Title I, all Black classroom. Reflecting on that year, she described how she was miserable and cried at home a lot--to the point her future husband got tired of hearing about her class. She transferred to third grade, where she was teaching at the time of her interview, in hopes student behavior was better. However, she planned to apply for a transfer to a school in another area at the end of the year. If not, she will quit teaching.

Data from Teachers

Teacher interviews were held after the 12 interviews with the young men so content from those interviews were on my mind and influenced my questioning of the teachers. Reading the transcripts, I marked parts of the White female teacher interviews related specifically to my study. Data from White female teachers' interviews related to the experiences of young men like my participants are presented here alongside a few general themes in their discussions that appeared tangential at the time but later were made meaningful.

Interviews took place near the end of the semester, so assessments were in progress, which is likely why all three elementary teachers expressed frustration with the number of assessments and the amount of paperwork before interviews began. When finally speaking with each teacher individually in an interview style conversation, all three teachers made comments about being colorblind. Ms. Louis and Ms. Mady both said they "don't see color." Ms. Fitts stated that she just "see[s] a classroom full of bodies." However, when discussing their initial thoughts about Black male students, two of the three teachers held the negative stereotype that Black males struggled with behavior and academics. Speaking slowly, Ms. Louis stated, "Most of my Black boys are a little, [*pause*] a lot actually, more active than other students. I hate to say it, but most struggle in ELA [English/Language Arts]." She does not like to call Black families because they cuss and "yell at you [*pause*] think it's your fault." Therefore, she rarely calls, opting to consult the counselor. With frequent wide eyes and hesitation when speaking, I believe she was carefully choosing her words.

Ms. Mady reported the same ideas about Black males saying they "are always in trouble [*pause*] not listening. It's little things all the time [*pause*] noises, loud, interrupting, just touching someone, rude [*pause*]. [One Black male student] said he hated me [*pause*] called me a racist White bitch. That's why they are so behind, I guess. Then again, I only have one White boy in my class, so I really can't compare, but they just seem lower [*pause*] don't do what they're supposed to." She teared up but laughed a little also.

Ms. Fitts had a little different response, "Hmmm, my boys are active, but that's just who they are. I try to plan so they can move around, but then they always do something to get in trouble. I don't know why so many are behind, but they are all low in reading and math. I do have an EIP self-contained class, though." She appeared to have a little better understanding of the need for students to move around. All of the White female teachers reported frustration with behavior and lack of support from leadership. All three verbalized that Black male students were well behind grade level in academics. Teachers wanted students to do well but did not know what to do.

When discussing Black families, all three teachers reported little interaction with Black parents. Ms. Louis stated, "They always seem to yell or just kinda out there. I'm not used to that, so I try to email or text, but I rarely get a response [*pause and shrugging*] but I did my part to communicate." Ms. Maddy began calling and talking to parents at the beginning of the year, but she stopped because, "it didn't do any good. They still did whatever they wanted, and the parents were asking me about what I was doing in class [*pause*] like it was my fault." Ms. Fitts reported that she calls parents when necessary, but she tries to handle everything on her own. She does

not want to "deal with calling parents all the time because [she] can't get them off the phone [*pause*] and it usually ends up not being about school." None of the teachers interviewed have ever had training in *Culturally Responsive Teaching*, other than the multicultural/diversity class taken as an undergraduate. Two teachers (Ms. Mady and Ms. Fitts) expressed that they would welcome the chance for the training. However, Ms. Louis did not believe she needed training because she had taught for 15 years, and the students "just need to sit down, behave, and do their work. It's school. It's not hard to follow directions."

During our conversations, I told each teacher about Chad's talent show influencing him to love sports and his experiences with baseball and basketball in high school. Ms. Louis believed "very few people make it in sports [*pause*] good to find out now. There's too much emphasis on sports." Ms. Mady responded, "Aww [*pause*] I hope he finds something else he likes [*pause*] maybe some kind of technical skill." Ms. Fitts just shrugged her shoulders saying, "Everyone can't make it in sports. I guess he wasn't as good as he thought he was." Finally, all teachers maintained that they loved the students and teaching, but changes need to come soon; however, other than administration being harder on behavior and parents providing a better homelife, the teachers could not verbalize how to make changes or the changes needed.

Data was also collected through observation field notes. Ms. Fitts invited me to have lunch with her team that happened to all be White females. During lunch, there was one discussion I found quite interesting, but there was no recording. I immediately memoed the interaction recreating the dialog between the White female

classroom teacher, Ms. Fitts, and a special education coteacher, Ms. Carrie. The following is that exchange from the best of my recollection and use of field notes:

Ms. Fitts: [*frustrated as she is walking into the room with her lunch after attending an RTI meeting*] So, what the heck is up with Kevontae [*one of her Black male students*]?

Ms. Carrie: [*already sitting at the table*] He doesn't qualify.

Ms. Fitts: You cannot be serious. His IQ is a 62.

Ms. Carrie: His adaptive skills are too high.

Ms. Fitts: What the hell is that? He got suspended and showed up the next day not understanding he could not come to school. He has been on RTI for years and has received no help at all. This child is being "left behind [using finger quotes]." We are failing him. There are students in the self-contained class with a higher IQ than that.

Ms. Carrie: Adaptive skills are things like being able to go to the bathroom by himself, find his way through the school building, eat on his own, stuff like that…

[*Kevontae and his siblings have been picked up walking to school in the dark by a paraprofessional and brought to school after attempting to cross a major roadway. Administration told her not to transport students in her car. Kevontae takes care of his siblings and has been seen in the neighborhood walking around with his younger siblings at 12 or 1 at night. His parents are rarely around.*]

Ms. Fitts: So, because he was born into a poor Black family and has been forced to take care of himself and siblings to just survive, he can't get help in school and will just be passed through on the College and Career Readiness path where he will drop out and never learn skills to work in society. I guess he'll adapt to that to then [*sarcastically referring to surviving life with no work skills and an unbeneficial education*], huh? We are failing this kid, and it will be this school's fault because we are not doing anything to make sure this kid learns, but, hey, he can use a fork!

Ms. Carrie: [*shrugging her shoulders*] I get it, but I can't do anything. There're guidelines we have to go by.

Summary

While the experiences of Black male students were the focus of this study, perceptions of White female teachers added relevant data and showed the presence of racism in the operation of schools. Deficit thinking as described by Valencia (2010) was evident in the teacher data, especially from Ms. Louis. Because the White female teacher experiences added context and were not the study's focus, appropriate data was interspersed where relevant throughout the findings and discussion.

Conclusion

Black male participants provided many stories of educational experiences at school and at home. A wealth of information was gathered that helped to begin constructing an understanding of how their home and school experiences intertwined, and the experiential stories given provide texts for reflection and analysis. Using their

exact words, each Black males' profile remained unique and true to its subject. Likewise, White female teacher interviews added data to the study exposing racism that remains in the educational system. I was pleased with the variety of participants and amount of data found in the study. The next chapter discusses the themes determined from the data analysis.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION OF THEMES

There is no magical strategy to increase achievement of Black male students or to increase effectiveness of White female teachers, but progress is possible. One step toward progress is exposing the institutional racism that remains a part of education. Hearing the experiences of Black males in schools revealed institutional racism. This chapter used the themes and data from the Black males' experiences to briefly expose the presence of racism in education. Then, participants' experiences along with my perspectives and thoughts were combined to turn the subcategories into recommendations or suggestions for White female teachers to increase their effectiveness teaching Black male students. Therefore, examples of racism and suggestions for teachers are woven into the themes discussed in this section: building positive relationships, embracing cultural responsiveness, learning from others, and working to reach ALL students. This chapter answers the third research question: how can White female teachers' increase effectiveness teaching Black male students as determined from the experiences and perspectives of Black males? Suggestions for White female teachers to increase effectiveness are presented and italicized to denote they are my suggestions constructed from the experiences of my Black male participants; however, when I was aware that the suggestion was found in other literature, it was cited.

Building Positive Relationships

Positive relationships were the primary indicator of positive school experiences. Chad, Brian, Johnny, Anthony, and Manny all described positive experiences with teachers, peers, and/or mentors with whom they connected. Positive relationships with peers, specifically, were impactful. Increased achievement and better school experiences were reported when respectful and encouraging relationships were present.

Students spend many hours at school, making teachers influential in their lives. Battey (2013) found that reform-minded instructional strategies were beneficial but noticed relational interactions between students and the teacher influenced understanding. All participants remembered the fun from school, and the fun stuff was provided primarily by the teachers with whom they had positive relationships. Small interactions created lifelong positive school memories for students. In the data, positive relational interactions like playing kickball with students, providing reeds for a band instrument, and offering to stay after class to provide extra help were all beneficial for students, and students saw them as memorable and positive. Being involved with students at recess allowed students to interact with their teacher on a personal level. Students were able to see their teacher informally, as a person outside the classroom. Anthony described a good teacher saying, "When they joke, they joke with you, but then when it's time to learn, they're going to teach you."

Part of teaching is providing for the needs of students and checking on them when they were struggling. Brian, Johnny, and Chad's teachers staying after school to give extra help relayed the message to students that their learning was important, and

their teacher cared. Anthony had such positive relationships with teachers in elementary school that he wanted to return to his elementary school teachers or have them go to middle school. Finally, providing or giving students choice of learning activities relevant to them increased motivation, achievement, memory, and positive interactions among students and teachers. Therefore, *make learning fun, and if students have a need, personal or academic, that can be met, then do so.* Ladson-Billings (1995) suggested teachers need to connect with all students and "*scaffold*, or build bridges, to facilitate learning" (p.481). Making learning fun builds connections and meeting personal and academic needs help build the bridges students need to increase learning.

Many positive interactions were very quick and not always academically related, but they impacted achievement because they made school inviting. Manny achieved more work and fewer behavior issues when choosing the people to work with in a collaborative group. From my experience, teachers build groups to spread out behavior issues, and Manny, for example, seemed to be one of the Black boys separated because of his behavior. Ms. Louis indicated she always chooses groups for students because it is easier. I realize the teacher, as expressed by two of the White female teachers interviewed, may need to choose groups or even move students at times to maximize the learning of all students; however, effective teachers *give students a chance to at least begin working with their friends* sometimes. Because Black culture is communal (Hill, 1992), Black males are accustomed to interacting with others frequently. Allowing students to work together enhances social relations

by building a community of learners that Ladson-Billings (1995) found was an important part of culturally responsive teaching.

Though not academic, Chad said many times that sports helped build relationships. He had his group of friends that checked on him and challenged him. Even though he had some good experiences with teachers, Chad had more impactful relationships with his group of friends that kept him working toward his goal of finishing school. Two of the teachers interviewed, and me at times, appeared too rigid to give up time for social interactions; however, Black culture is social and needs peer interaction. Therefore, the building of relationships with peers is highly beneficial for school success, so effective teachers *provide opportunities to create and strengthen relationships with peers by using cooperative learning activities and giving frequent opportunities for collaboration*. Gay (2002), in her article about preparing for culturally responsive teaching, suggested building community through cooperative groups benefits individuals because many students of color grow up in an environment where individuals "pool their resources to solve problems" (p. 110) for the good of the group, which, in turn, determines individual success or failure.

Teachers have the unique power of impacting the future. Puchner and Markowitz (2015) and Love (2014) concluded students who had an understanding and caring teacher who built positive relationships were more successful in school. Brian and Johnny both had a high school teacher who allowed them to redo work and stayed after school to help them. Therefore, building positive relationships increased comfort in asking and receiving help and made a difference by increasing motivation and

effectiveness in the classroom. However, the opposite was true for negative relationships.

Negative experiences were associated with negative relationships. In fourth grade, Manny knew he was placed in the lowest reading group "because [he] was with all the kids that obviously had problems, mostly Black" and had to read baby books. The books were on what she thought was his reading level, but he was embarrassed to be reading them. His groupmates probably were embarrassed also. Manny said he could read interesting books, and it appeared as if the teacher placed him and the other Black students in the lowest reading group. A persistent stereotype is that Black males score lower than White students, and they exhibit bad behavior (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). Placing Black students in the lowest reading group and giving them baby books to read, I believe, is an example of unintentionally exhibiting that stereotype. Taylor (2016) described White society's lack of awareness of stereotypes. Because I could not complete the interview process with Manny, I did not get to clarify details of this experience. However, I do not believe that a reading screening was administered before building reading groups in his fourth-grade class. Placing him in that reading group, the teacher may have believed she was providing instruction on Manny's level; however, not building a relationship with him to know his interests and to realize his embarrassment reading a baby book allows the stereotype to continue that Black males score lower and have more behavior issues than White students. Hence, CRT's belief that racism is a permanent part of society seems true (Taylor, 2016). When Manny was given choices on what to read in fifth grade, his reading achievement improved. Past experiences can provide valuable information for teachers to reflect upon and

improve their own practices. Therefore, an effective White female teacher *builds relationships with students to understand their interests and integrate those interests into instruction*. Like the interview data revealed, Ladson-Billing (1995) and Gay (2002) previously suggested building relationships and community as an important part of culturally responsive teaching.

Positive relationships were built by caring and compassionate teachers. "If you see that you got that teacher that don't care, you ain't going to learn nothing," remarked Anthony in his interview. When I asked participants to tell me about their teachers, each discussed a teacher they liked because she cared. They knew she cared because she helped them. As mentioned, Brian and Johnny had a teacher available after school on certain days and any other day she was asked. Johnny's teacher helped him even after he left the high school for alternative education. If suspected of skipping classes, Brian's teacher checked on the student and dealt with the student herself rather than involving administration. Unlike the teacher who shut him out and wrote him up as tardy for standing in the hallway finishing his slushy after lunch, she realized that him getting suspended for being tardy made him miss even more school. Finally, Brian told the story of his first-grade teacher who, when dealing with a difficult child, would just give the child the biggest hug and say, "Don't worry, you're my big baby. It's okay. You're going to learn one day." Even though Brian remembered seeing her cry sometimes, the class loved her and was sad when she left during the middle of the year. They knew she cared. Her crying and leaving during the year suggested to me that she was overwhelmed handling the class of all Black students; however, Brian never realized she was having trouble in the classroom. She still showed students she

cared as she left her position by giving each one a book. Gay (2002) described caring and respectful relationships as necessary for culturally responsive teaching because students need to know their teacher cares. If a teacher who is miserable in the classroom can still show kindness and compassion to students when she is leaving, care and compassion should not be difficult for remaining teachers. Caring teachers patiently *work with students providing them opportunities to master the content*. Caring teachers also *know their students, provide for their students, expect greatness, eagerly learn about their culture, and fight for students.* Ladson-Billing (1995) and Gay (2002) both agree that culturally responsive teachers match their instructional strategies with the learning styles of diverse learners, which requires knowing the characteristics of the culture and integrating it both academically and socially.

Embracing Cultural Responsiveness

To be culturally responsive, an understanding of cultural differences in the classroom is needed for building connections and for integration into the curriculum. Culturally responsive teaching makes learning more relevant, meaningful, and engaging by including students' home and community culture in the curriculum and instructional practices beginning with what students already know and moving them to what they need to know (Sobel & Taylor, 2011). In the literature review, it was established that education is a field dominated by White females (Walker, 2018); however, the clientele is soon to be majority minorities (United States Census Bureau, 2018). Each race, geographic area, classroom, and family have their own culture. Teachers guide the culture in classrooms, and cultural awareness increases effectiveness. Being a part of a society with White cultural norms, most White female teachers believe they treat all

students equally by not seeing color (Delgado et al., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 2016). My discussions with three White female teachers supported the research because they all claimed they did not see color. With the dismissal of color differences, cultural differences are rejected also. With the exception of Chad in elementary school, culturally responsive learning was absent in the experiences shared during the interviews. From these stories, several suggestions emerged for White teachers to address cultural responsiveness. Specifically, embracing cultural responsiveness includes getting to know students personally, understanding the role of family, supporting music and sports dreams, recognizing when treatment of students is different, and expecting greatness. Each one of these subsections are discussed in more detail.

Understand the family role. One stereotype heard in schools with high minority and low achievement is that Black parents do not value education because they do not provide parental support (Puchner & Markowitz, 2015). That belief reflects the White norm culture on which critical race theorists assert schools are operate (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016) with parents active in all school activities: conferences, parent meetings, performances, dances, and any other extracurricular opportunities offered by the school. Although all three White female teacher participants questioned the value of education by Black families, evidence from the interviews with Black males negates that stereotype. Black families were involved in ways that were not typical in the Whiteness of schools. Chad's mom enrolled him in programs throughout his school career to keep him "in line" and learning, and Manny's parents enrolled him in tutoring when he was struggling in reading. Though

there were many hardships at home, Anthony's parents still questioned the school about him not learning and being retained. Even though parents were not attending school functions or in frequent contact with teachers, most were supporting their child's education. Johnny's mom supported the teacher by supporting her at home with discipline and attending conferences. Johnny explicitly said there was no need to come to school because his behavior was corrected early, and they had quality time at home. Adamant that Johnny graduate, she instilled that goal in him. With the exception of Brian, all participants gave evidence supporting the idea that their Black parents did care about and value school and were willing to help when needed. Understanding family roles in other cultures increases culturally responsive teaching.

Johnny described his family as rude and loud but knew they loved him. Anthony suggested the need for White teachers to understand the difference in how Black and White people talk. In the research, McIntosh (1988) described how White people do not have to worry about negative attitudes or responses blaming illiteracy for language or cultural differences; consistently, Black males must be aware their language and behavior learned at home are considered deficits. Therefore, the language and loudness Johnny experiences at home may be considered rude and consequences given at school. Anthony believes White people think Black people speak too harshly or strongly, and Black people think White people have attitudes. Cultural differences impact parent teacher communication. In a conversation with Ms. Louis, she indicated she was hesitant to talk to Black parents because they always seemed to "yell at you and think it is your fault." Ms. Mady expressed a similar view. Being aware of the cultural differences in language increases acceptance and comfort in the classroom.

Black male culture embraces handling problems aggressively (Kunjufu, 2013). In Black homes lots of stimulation is present with the television and music playing; in contrast, the atmosphere in traditionally White operated classrooms is quiet and controlled with routine activities (Viadero, 1996). *Building relationships with families early allows the parents and the teacher to become familiar with each other and better understand each other's role*. This may include an introductory phone call, visiting with the family at the child's sporting events, talking nonacademics with families at extracurricular events, and actually inviting the parents into the classroom. Then, both parties maintain their cultural roles, but beneficial and understanding relationships are created. Additionally, explicit knowledge of Black culture is vital and that includes characteristics of culture, contributions, traditions, values, communication, and relationships (Gay, 2002). Therefore, effective White female teachers *continually increase their knowledge and understanding of Black culture through study and experiences,* like attending sporting events of their students.

Learning about Black culture helps teachers understand the inclusion of friends in the family unit, as described by Hill (1992). Black families are communal with aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends' children living together and taking responsibility for the care of all children (Hill, 1992). Throughout all interviews, the men talked about their "bros." With the language differences, bro is short for brother; however, friends were being described. Chad has a group of six bros who first became friends in elementary and middle school, and they are still close today. They push each other to do better and be better. All having a college degree, he was adamant his friends were more impactful on his life than anyone at school. Found in the literature review and

supported in the interviews, Black culture is communal with extended family living and parenting together (Hill, 1992); therefore, the closeness and social nature of friends and family in Black culture needs to be respected by educators. Johnny was impacted by friends committing suicide and being lost to murder. Anthony remains close to his friend J-Babe, even though DNA showed he was not her baby's father. Brian and Johnny were influenced by rappers and friends working in the studios. In the busyness of schools, friend issues or nonacademic situations are often dismissed with the belief that students are at school to learn--not worry about friends (I am guilty of this myself); however, issues with friends can be just as important or traumatic as blood family in Black culture as Hill (1992) suggested. Even though it may be time consuming, these *treat nonacademic issues as important because they are important to the student*. Additionally, empathy builds relationships. After reflecting on the data collected, some suggestions to increase effectiveness are to *embrace Black culture by getting to know students' friends, incorporating opportunities to talk with peers, respecting the extreme emotions and feelings of students about friendships, and creating a family-like atmosphere in the classroom*. In her research, Ladson-Billings (1995) stated culturally responsive teachers have "fluid student-teacher relationships" (p. 480) that are important for learning and "encourage students to learn collaboratively and be responsible for another" (p. 480), which is reflective of the importance of the family role that friends play in the lives of Black students as determined from my research.

Support music and sports dreams. In my interviews, more discussions focused on the influence of extracurricular activities, with music and sports being a

major part of each interview. All participants played sports, loved sports with recess being one of their favorite subjects, or coached sports in their complex. Anthony mentioned that playing kickball outside with one of his elementary teachers was fun. Chad and Manny were steadfast that sports helped build relationships and helped them through school. Chad's best and most memorable experiences centered on sports, specifically winning the talent show with a basketball demonstration and competing in high school sports. Manny's basketball talent led to a college scholarship. Like Manny, there are many students who receive scholarships and even walk on sports teams. However, teachers are quick to stop students from pursuing their sports dream by not allowing them to research a sports career or read materials related to it. In conversations with White female teachers, I told them the story of Chad working hard for his talent show, being cut from the basketball team, and how influential sports were in his life. While all of the White female teachers' responses indicated sports dreams appeared unrealistic, Ms. Louis believed "very few people make it in sports . . . good to find out now. There's too much emphasis on sports." However, some do make it! Somebody has to play professionally. Why not those students that dream of playing? Students are told they can do anything they want to do when they grow up; however, that is contradicted by actions in the classroom. Ms. Louis was primarily a reading and writing teacher. She had students complete a career research project. Many of her students wanted to be professionals in a sport; however, she would not let them choose to research professional sports or any career leading to fame. I believe engagement and focus would increase if they were allowed to choose research important to them. After all, they would be researching and learning. Wasn't that the goal? The next

year, she let students research their dream career, but they also had to research a career to fall back on since they would not be able to play sports forever. Her decision was progress, but I believe the dreams of students who truly wanted to play professionally was still devalued because they had to do double work. Rather than embracing students dreams, White beliefs were being forced upon them. Black male culture embraces rap, hip hop music, sports, not asking for help, and not snitching (Kunjufu, 2013). Compliant students who stay within the institution's realm of thinking and dreaming are expected, reflecting White culture and not the inclusion of all cultures. Effective White female teachers *support students' dreams rather than suppress them*.

Like sports, music, especially rap music, has a major influence in Black culture. After elementary school, Anthony said they never heard real music, only Beethoven. In his study, Henfield (2011) found Black male participants believed their White teachers assumed superiority of White values, such as only playing country music at the school. While rap music is often seen as negative by the White population, the stories and meanings of rap songs actually reflect fluent writers with deep ideas (Kunjufu, 2013). Kunjufu (2013) described one facet of Black male culture as embracing rap and hip hop music. In his study, Irby et al. (2013) suggested using the text of rap and hip-hop songs for instruction to increase student motivation and achievement as well as strengthen classroom community. Many songs are stories that could be used for building relationships as well as reading or writing instruction. Brian and Johnny are both involved in the music industry with Johnny attempting to use his classroom writing instruction of haikus in his raps to express his feelings to others. If his teachers had really known him and known his dreams, they could have used that to meaningfully

work with him in writing; however, until his junior year of high school, he did not report a bond with any of his teachers or their knowledge of him writing rap. Interestingly, he never passed the state writing assessment to graduate with his classmates. Effective White female teachers *incorporate the music of Black culture into classroom instruction.*

Love (2014) believed racial stereotypes were to blame for students entering the building wearing hoodies, repeating rap music, and mimicking hip hop culture being "labeled as unteachable, threatening, and criminal" (p. 301). During the lunch discussion with Ms. Fitts and some other White female teachers, the 2020 Superbowl Halftime Show was discussed. The common sentiment was the show was inappropriate, and the songs were not understandable "like most music today," according to Ms. Louis. One teacher at the lunch table said she plays clean rap and Hip Hop stations on Pandora that her kids like one time a year, the Christmas party, because that is all she can stand. This negative attitude about rap and hip hop is the norm of White culture, but what is the harm with incorporating rap lyrics within language arts lessons? Johnny strongly believes that rap should be used as a positive influence for others. Therefore, teachers can *use rap and Hip Hop music to teach reading skills like figurative language and inferencing, practice fluency, model fluent writing, or as a framework for students to write about their content learning using beats*. To truly know Black male students and more effectively teach them, White teachers need to *become more aware and comfortable with the sports and music aspect of Black culture*. Gay (2002) was a proponent of delivering instruction using movement, music, drama, and task variation representative of the culture in the

classroom. There are many ways to incorporate music and sports; however, it may take a little more learning and planning.

Recognize differential treatment. With White female teachers reflecting their culture when leading the classroom, White privilege remains evident in schools. Whether intentional or not, stereotypical behaviors and microaggressions were present throughout the Black males' stories. For example, Anthony described how his health teacher used a stereotype when asking a classroom of Black students, "Who in here knows how to roll some marijuana up?" When Anthony demonstrated, she replied, "I wouldn't put it past you that you know that. You smoke. I was wondering why your eyes be so low and you be up in here asleep all the time." Anthony believed she intentionally asked the question because the class had mostly Black students. Another microaggression present in Anthony's experiences occurred in the form of a sarcastic remark when his teacher snapped, "Boy, you gonna make the same damn thing this year." She expected him to fail. Before stepping into the classroom where other cultures are present, White teachers *need knowledge about the culture of their students*. This includes *deeply reflecting on their own personal beliefs about people different from themselves.*

From Johnny's perspective, he thought he was "pretty much treated fairly. If you was getting in trouble, there was a reason you was getting in trouble." Ironically, Johnny missed a football game and got a spanking because his White female teacher called his mom saying he cussed in class, not realizing she was calling the parents of the wrong child. The other child was White. As we were discussing this incident, Johnny began to wonder how she could have gotten it so wrong because she had to

know whose parent she was calling. Not deliberately blaming Johnny because he is Black, this was a microaggression where she unintentionally believed it was Johnny because of the stereotype that Black males' behavior and language are arrogant and disrespectful (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). She did call and apologize, but the damage was done. Before any action is taken for student behavior, incidents should be fully investigated and all facts gathered. If she had talked to the students before contacting parents, she would have known Johnny was not the one who cussed; then, he would not have gotten a spanking or missed his football game. Another student, Manny, was placed in a lower reading group with other Black males by his White female teacher mainly due, from his perspective, to his lack of focus and hyperactivity, even though he was not really a low reader. Manny's experience reflects the stereotype that Black males are not smart and exhibit bad behavior established by differences in White norm culture that operates schools. To confront stereotypes, effective White teachers *acknowledge bias by intentionally learning about differences in cultures represented in their classroom.*

One of Anthony's White female teachers gave a White girl attention by conversing with her when she got out of line in the hallway to ask a question; however, Black students were redirected and sent back into the line. On the other hand, another White female teacher, who Anthony liked, did not give the "little White girl" preferential treatment and told her to stand in line like everyone else. Whether intentional or not, White privilege and differential treatment was evident from the teacher conversing with the White student in the hallway. An effective White female

teacher *creates and practices school routines for ALL students to follow and reduces instances of differential treatment.*

Additionally, Chad was one of two Black players on his high school baseball team and was used only as a pinch runner because, as he put it, "you know African Americans [*pause*] we're fast." Although his coach was White, he was not female. However, I felt including this experience was important because it supported the CRT assertion that racism is a permanent part of American society (Taylor, 2016) and showed that schools remain places of institutional racism. Additionally, Chad was suspended for gang activity in middle school by an all-White female administration because he and his friends greeted each other with a handshake that included a gun gesture, along with their name appearing on a picture with graffiti. Having no gang affiliation, the boys were only mimicking what they had seen in pop culture. Even though they were using the handshake for a while, no prior discussion or conversation occurred before they were called in and suspended under a zero-tolerance policy. Suggesting these policies were created for and geared toward minority students, Allen, Scott, and Lewis (2013) provided examples of microaggressions that included zero-tolerance policies beginning with weapons and increasing to other forms of school behaviors, which in Chad's experience included gangs. Again, the stereotype that Black males are more violent and belong to gangs (Douglas et al., 2008) influenced this microaggression.

While there are explicit acts of racism like the White campus officer not speaking to Anthony but interacting with White people, for the most part White female teachers and school staff are not intentionally treating Black males different. When

Ms. Mady remarked that Chad could do "something else he likes [*pause*] maybe some kind of technical skill," I believe she was assuming he would not go to college because, as CRT explains, low expectations for Black males are the norm (Taylor, 2016). Teachers enter the classroom with their own set of beliefs molded by experiences and learned stereotypes (Saffold & Longwell-Grice, 2008) and genuinely believe they are colorblind as suggested in CRT (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016). Therefore, being mindful of how students are treated requires *examining one's own beliefs* first. Ladson-Billing (1995) acknowledged that teachers cannot teach what they do not know; therefore, explicit knowledge about Black culture is beneficial when teaching Black male students and examining personal beliefs.

Stereotypes and beliefs are developed as children grow. When they are young, as Chad said, "Kids are playing no matter what color: blue, purple, red, right? They're playing. They're having a good time. They don't know about [racism], but then as they grow up, that may change, not because of them, because of their surroundings: who they are, who they live with." Recognizing microaggressions and stereotypes begins with learning about characteristics of other cultures. To be effective, White female teachers reflect upon what they have learned, examine their own beliefs, and assess previous actions to increase awareness of interactions with all children. With cultural awareness and self-reflection comes change that is needed for more equitable treatment of all students in the classroom.

Expect greatness. From my own experience, educators hear about the power of expectations frequently. Expect kids to excel, and they will. Expect them to fail, and they will. "Boy, you gonna make the same damn thing this year," Anthony's teacher

told him when looking at his test scores. He met her expectations and repeated seventh and eighth grade twice, eventually dropping out of school in his second year of eighth grade. With many Black males having lower test scores than their White counterpart, the expectation by many White teachers is that Black males achieve lower (Thomas et al., 2009). Black males recognize the presence of lower expectations by their teachers (Thomas et al., 2009). Every Black male participant in my study struggled academically, yet none of them (with the exception of select teachers who would not let them fail) described consistent help when they scored poorly or did not understand. Anthony and Johnny reported grades of 20% and 18%, respectively, on assignments; consequently, they failed. Grading assignments, I would recognize the need for more instruction or small group help for content mastery, but none was given and failure ensued. Anthony once asked for help to which his White female teacher replied, "Bye, go to your seat." If his teacher had higher expectations, help would have been offered and given. Throughout the interviews, the young men gave examples of White female teachers exhibiting lower expectations for them. Students cannot learn if their teacher does not believe they can, and with belief comes the expectation of learning. Therefore, effective White female teachers *expect all students to do well and provide the help needed by observing and conversing with students about how they are doing, if they understand, or if they need help*.

When higher expectations were present, school experiences were more positive. Brian had a social studies teacher who would walk around during a test monitoring and checking on the students. Noticing when a student was struggling, the teacher would prompt his/her memory by suggesting they look around the room and provide

encouragement saying, "You know this. You can do it." She let students know that she expected them to answer correctly without actually giving the answer. Johnny and Brian described a teacher who came to them when their grades were low to offer extra help saying, "She refused to let [them] fail." Providing extra help and checking on absent students sent students the message that they were expected to be in class and to learn. While verbally describing expectations is important, modeling expectations is also beneficial. Ms. Russ checked on her students to make sure they were not skipping class and handled discipline as much as she could without calling administration. Her actions let students know her expectations. Therefore, an effective teacher *checks on students and models expectations*.

Anthony and Brian struggled through school, failed a few times, and never finished. Later, a psychological showed Brian's IQ was 68, falling in the mildly intellectually disabled range. His consistent low grades and retentions were clues that something was amiss. Low expectations as suggested in CRT (Taylor, 2016) were likely the reason he progressed to high school where he eventually dropped out of school altogether. While Black males are overrepresented in special education (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Payne & Brown, 2017), there are some Black male students, just like any other race, who legitimately need modified instruction to learn skills that increase success in life after school. Effective White female teachers *interact with students to recognize individual needs and advocate for students to receive the appropriate instruction needed*.

There are differences among cultures that influence learning; however, all students can be expected to learn at a high level. Determined from the data, increasing

effectiveness when teaching diverse students requires *understanding, embracing, and valuing students and their culture through continuous learning, reflection, and action*. Observing effective teachers of Black students, Ladson-Billing found effective teachers believed that "all the students were capable of academic success" (p.478). Found in my study and also in Ladson-Billing's study, having high expectations and valuing students creates a culturally responsive teacher whose impact potentially carries into adulthood.

Summary. To me, embracing cultural responsiveness is embracing each child. To be culturally responsive and progress toward increased equality, teachers need to incorporate students' culture. The stereotype that Black families do not care about education is false; understanding the family role in Black culture could increase effectiveness for teachers and families to work together to educate students. With Black culture emphasizing music and sports (Kunjufu, 2013), dismissing students' dreams of excelling in sports and music devalues an important part of Black culture and deflates many dreams. With the Whiteness of schools and most teachers having a different culture than students (Garrett et al., 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2016), personal awareness and recognition of differential treatment of students decrease many microaggressions and inequalities. Finally, expectations influence stereotypes about Black males and impact academic success. High expectations increase achievement.

Learning from Others

All people are constantly learning. We learn from our own experiences. We learn from reflection and pondering, and we learn from others. Potentially, teachers learn the most by listening to students and collaborating with other educators.

Listen to students. As a result of conducting this study, I believe that to build relationships with students and increase effectiveness, student voices should be listened to attentively, heard eagerly, and incorporated into the classroom. Students are valuable resources to provide insight into their understanding. Conversing with the young Black men on their school experiences, I realized stereotypical beliefs can decrease so much by merely listening to students.

Preconceived beliefs and stereotypes based on school experiences of White teachers, known as Whiteness of schools (Taylor, 2016), are consistently present in classrooms. When Johnny was falsely accused of cussing and the teacher called his parents, his consequences could have been avoided by his White female teacher first talking to the boys involved to understand exactly what happened. She did not have a conversation with the boys and likely assumed Johnny cussed because of the stereotype that Black males exhibit more bad behaviors (Douglas et al., 2008). Talking with the boys could have avoided the whole situation. Likewise, Chad and his friends were suspended for a gang handshake and graffiti. For a while they had greeted each other with the handshake, but no staff held a conversation with them about the gang-related symbols. According to Chad, the young men tried to explain they were not a gang and were copying what they had seen, but the all-White administration already had their mind set. Therefore, the boys got suspended for something they did not understand was wrong. In this instance, the boys articulated their story, but administration did not listen, did not care, or did not believe them. Their voice was not taken seriously. Black males suffer from White privilege with school staff acting

on their learned beliefs and not taking truly listening. Therefore, effective teachers *allow students the opportunity to speak and internalize to what they have to say.*

Black males are the expert on their own academic understanding. However, sometimes the teacher needs to ask students about their understanding of the material and observations of behavior because most Black males do not readily initiate that conversation. A member of the lowest fourth grade reading group, Manny was consistently in trouble for his behavior and constantly sent away from the group. His teacher never had a conversation with him about his behavior or feelings in reading. While I do not believe she intentionally meant to embarrass him, this was a microaggression (Allen et al., 2013) developed from her learned beliefs about Black males being academically lower and having behavior issues. According to Kunjufu (2013), Black culture embraces not asking for help. When students do not ask questions, teachers believe they understand the material. I have been guilty of telling parents their child does not ask questions in class. Having an understanding of Black culture, White teachers would know that Black students rarely ask content-related questions; therefore, teachers need to initiate conversations to check for understanding. By having a conversation with him, Manny's teacher would have realized he had no interest in the books that the rest of the class knew were babyish; however, he had no opportunity to speak except through his behavior. Ironically, having him read more material about his interests would have helped her realize that he actually was not a very low reader. As explained by CRT, Manny's experience reflects the Whiteness, or White culture, on which schools operate (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016). Unlike his previous teacher, his fifth-grade teacher understood and embraced his

interests, resulting in increased achievement and better behavior. Therefore, effective White teachers *listen to Black males by observing and initiating conversation rather than expecting students to ask questions or for help*.

Finally, students know **how** they learn best. Anthony and Chad knew they learned better in small group or in one-on-one situations; however, they remembered very few or no instances of small group instruction. On the other hand, Brian and Johnny described a high school teacher who stayed after school for extra help. They did well in that class. With many Black males rarely initiating conversations, instigating conversations to understand students often falls on the teacher. Therefore, effective teachers *create a personal connection by conversing with and listening to students to understand how they learn best.* In fact, Gay (2002) recognized the importance of involving students in the curriculum by suggesting "students working with each other and with teachers as partners to improve their achievement" (p. 110). The higher the level of communication with students the more a teacher can determine what students know, can do, and are capable of knowing and doing (Gay, 2002). Listening is necessary for an effective partnership where conversations allow teachers to get to know students personally.

Get to know students personally. Each student enters the classroom with their own beliefs, values, and experiences. An inclusive classroom requires the culture of all students be valued. Anthony explicitly said he felt unwanted because he kept being retained, did not receive extra help, and perceived a lack of concern from school staff. Throughout his school experience, he did not discuss any teacher after elementary school interacting with him on a personal level. The middle school administrator he

described as “the cougar lady” entertained him nonacademically while keeping him out of class, but he sat in his academic classes failing. In a verbal spar with an eighth-grade teacher, he told her, “I'm going to be a cook. I want to open up my own restaurant.” The Black female teacher who acted White missed an opportunity to connect with him when responding, “I would never come eat at your restaurant. You might put something in my food and kill me.” Small pieces of information about students can be used to build connections and relationships that Gay (2002) described as important for culturally responsive teaching because students need to know their teachers care. Getting to know students allows the teacher to incorporate their interests into the classroom.

When interviewing the White female teachers, two of them indicated students did not care about learning. Students are interested in learning; however, they want relevant learning with skills and concepts beneficial to them. For example, Johnny tried to use haikus he learned in class to write raps, but it did not work. When asked, he said his teachers did not know he wrote rap songs. If his teacher had known, she may have helped him with writing the haikus. Effective White teachers *build connections with students to learn about interests outside of school and integrate those interests into the curriculum*.

Providing individual attention to a child and knowing them outside of the school environment builds the positive relationships needed to connect with students and improve academics. Manny knew he was very active and that it irritated his teachers, yet he remembers his favorite teacher coming to his basketball games. This type of interaction allows for connections and interactions with the student and their family. Effective White female teachers *attend students’ outside events to build*

relationships with the family, learn of students' interests, and experience Black culture. Effective culturally responsive teachers in Ladson-Billing's (1995) study made an effort to shop and participate in fun activities in the community of their students to demonstrate the community and culture was important.

Some students come to school dealing with issues beyond their control that most teachers from the White norm culture have never encountered. Brian lived in a housing project with frequent murders, and his own father threw a brick through the apartment window trying to get inside. His first thoughts—a kid—was to get a knife. He probably did not sleep that night, and no sleep impacts learning. He may have needed a nap before being able to concentrate on schoolwork. Then, his mother died when he was in high school. Likewise, Anthony spent time living on the streets. Students with these issues may need help meeting their basic needs before learning can take place. For example, they may need a small part of their school day modified to merely rest with a feeling of safety, provided a snack if they missed a meal, or granted permission to see a counselor when upset. With so many issues brought to the classroom, effective teachers *take an interest in the personal lives of students to meet basic needs before having any impact instructionally*. To me, knowing students personally and understanding what is happening in their lives outside of school is more important than any cute activity to teach a concept that may or may not relate to them.

As concluded in a previous study by Battey (2013), relational interactions influenced understanding. Anthony had positive relationships with his elementary teachers, and he reported learning more. Brian and Johnny had a teacher who did not let them fail and even helped them after school. Manny's fifth-grade teacher realized

he could read texts if they interested, and he improved in reading. Educating students is more than, as stated by Anthony, "just teaching [students] how to turn in some work" or sitting quietly in a desk. Relationships determine learning, and knowing others personally creates relationships. Effective White female teachers *get to know students personally to create a learning environment where all students' interests are valued.* Discussing societal relations, Ladson-Billings (1995) concluded culturally responsive teachers "demonstrate a connectedness with all of the students" (p. 480). To build connections with students, frequent communication and interaction about common interests are required by the teacher.

Collaborate with teachers. Common throughout the study was the belief that elementary school was fun. In addition to being fun and learning a lot, elementary school teachers were considered to be caring. While I believe part of the participants love of elementary school was just being a child, there were teachers and experiences that impacted participants. Preparing for the talent show was an experience that impacted Chad and resulted in him realizing his passion for sports. Anthony wanted to take his elementary school teachers to middle school. With schools divided into levels, many teachers at the different levels do not know or understand how each other teach. Viadero (1996) proposed Black males would increase learning by using varied activities because that is common at home. While the upper-level teachers deeply understand their content, elementary teachers use engaging strategies to keep kids focused and learning. To increase learning, combining a deep understanding with engaging and varied strategies makes sense. Ladson-Billings (1995) suggested exemplary teachers of Black students "saw their pedagogy as art—unpredictable,

always in the process of becoming" (p. 478) and "pulling knowledge out" (p. 479). Learning from other teachers is one way to pull knowledge out and increase classroom effectiveness. Therefore, effective teachers at all levels *collaborate to share strategies that work*.

Summary. The experiences and stories of Black males have been presented. To learn from these stories, they shared and internalized. The phrase lifelong learner is common in education. Learning continuously takes place from experiences of and collaboration with others. Listening is a skill that must be practiced and practiced. Everyone has something of value to share if we just listen.

Working to Reach ALL Students

White privilege is a permanent part of society and has been established in educational institutions since the beginning of public education in the United States (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016). According to test data, White students continue to outperform Black students, especially Black males, academically (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018b; Puchner & Markowitz, 2015). However, ALL children need effective instruction to perform well. Working to reach ALL students requires the use of data to make decisions, the incorporation of student interests and experiences, the showing of care and compassion in all areas, and the advocation for ALL children to receive an effective education.

Use data for decisions. Data needs to guide decision making in schools. Anthony was suspended 10 days for slicing a bus seat and lying about his involvement; however, his White peer who actually sliced the seat was only given 3 days of suspension. According to Anthony, a video from the bus showed him holding

the knife and laughing after the White girl near him cut the seat. With the video showing him not guilty of cutting the seat, the data was misused to suspend him and make him miss so much instruction. He was already earning very low grades and being retained frequently. Likewise, Brian was suspended for accumulating tardies. With frequent tardies, he was already missing class, so he was suspended and missed even more instruction. Earning low grades already and being suspended (not for misbehaving) did not help his achievement. To me, this seems like a misuse of data.

Scoring low academically, participants struggled especially in language arts and/or math. Johnny and Anthony remembered having scores of 20% or below on class assignments. Anthony was retained several times, but retention did not work. He never received small group or extra help that the data showed he needed. Johnny earned an 18% on a writing assignment as a sophomore in a senior level British literature class, yet he remained in the class and failed it. If I had been sitting in that class as a sophomore, I would also "hate the hell out of British lit." Placing students in classes where they do not meet the requirements is not using data to make appropriate educational decisions. After leaving high school and becoming suicidal, Brian was given a psychological that showed he had an IQ of 68 and performed at the level of a typical fourth grader. His performance in school was well below his peers, and his grades provided evidence that he was not understanding the concepts. To his knowledge, he was never evaluated for a modified curriculum. Instead, he was placed in ninth grade and remained there until he quit school. Data was not used for instruction in these examples. If students are earning low grades, they are not understanding the material. Chad knew he needed help in math in order to pass and

graduate. If he knew his grades were low, his teacher likely did also. Not receiving extra help to ensure understanding of math, he resorted to having friends just do it for him so he could pass. Never learning the material in public school, he relearned it in college. According to the data, students were not given an opportunity for maximal learning. I cannot imagine why the data was not used effectively, but I can surmise the stereotype of expecting Black males to struggle played a role. However, effective White female teachers *acknowledge any stereotypes and use data to make appropriate educational decisions*. Not taking the initiative to learn about students and use the information learned continues the oppression of Black male students.

While some teachers do not use the data and students continue to struggle, other teachers use data and increase effectiveness in the classroom. Johnny had a teacher who had students stay after school if she noticed they needed extra help or if they asked for extra help. Not surprisingly, teachers formed a close bond with students, and student performance was higher in those classes. Therefore, effective teachers *reflect on data and use it to positively impact students*.

Incorporate interests and experiences. Gay (2002) encouraged the inclusion of relevant curriculum and engaging strategies to improve learning for Black male students and defined culturally responsive teaching as incorporating cultural characteristics, perceptions, and experiences of students to provide more meaningful school experiences using the students' frame of reference. Brian went through school living in a housing project and had experiences growing up that most White female teachers cannot imagine, but Brian and Johnny knew from an early age they were interested in rap music. While rap is a prominent part of Black culture that includes

experiences and issues central to Black culture, Kunjufu (2013) reported rap is viewed negatively by the White population. Because rap is engaging for Black males, Kunjufu (2013) suggested the stories in and meanings of rap songs reveal fluent writers with deep ideas. Including rap music and lyrics in the curriculum is one way to incorporate Black culture into the classroom. Therefore, effective White female teachers *increase their knowledge of the rap music genre and include lyrics in the classroom*.

Additionally, Black male culture embraces handling problems aggressively and seeking short-term satisfaction as experienced in sports (Kunjufu, 2013). While sports are a key part of Black culture, they have little support in the academic curriculum; however, they could. Chad and Manny were athletes and loved recess. They would read anything sports related, but that was not a topic often assigned. In Black homes, lots of stimulation is present with the television and music playing along with other activities; in contrast, the atmosphere in traditional classrooms is quiet and controlled with routine activities (Viadero, 1996). Physically active activities, like sports, and games that are highly stimulating and varied are beneficial for concept practice and learning. For example, math games Johnny played helped him learn multiplication facts and increased his confidence in math; likewise, Chad was positively impacted by designing choreography for the talent show, which is another activity that can be incorporated into the classroom. Highly stimulating and varied activities, while not traditionally present in schools operated by White cultural norms (Taylor, 2016), incorporate experiences and interests of Black male students. Effective White female teachers *include highly stimulating and varied classroom activities using movement*. In his study of the instructional practices of four teachers identified as culturally

responsive, Tyrone Howard (2001) observed in classrooms and interviewed 17 Black elementary students in a large northwestern district before concluding culturally responsive teachers with engaging classroom environments that were fun, dramatic, interactive, and emotion filled were preferred by students; thus, achievement increased.

Anthony was interested in cooking and eventually opening his own restaurant. Experiments, which are highly stimulating activities, that he enjoyed in elementary school science mimicked the hands-on culinary arts. More hands-on activities may have benefitted him. Incorporating the interests of students requires knowing all students. Language arts is a subject that, in my opinion, is more difficult to make highly stimulating. In reading, many Black male students struggled with most texts having no relevance to their lives (Douglas et al., 2008; Sharma & Christ, 2017); however, relevant reading materials reflecting interests and experiences of Black males can easily be incorporated. Texts about any topic can be used to increase fluency and comprehension; however, most reading materials are chosen by White female teachers having different interests than Black male students. Chad and Manny expressed their belief of increased reading achievement if they had read about topics of interest. Chad stated, "We were always told what to read. We were reading Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*. I didn't like to read stuff I wasn't interested in. Honestly, if I would've thought about reading [sports], I think I would have liked reading a lot more." Similarly, Manny said, "If it is something I want to read, no problem! Most of the stuff we had to read was boring [*pause*] My problem wasn't that I couldn't read [*pause*] I couldn't read stuff that I didn't care about." The statements of Chad and Manny are likely

expressive of many Black male students required to read texts representative of White culture chosen by White female teachers unfamiliar with their interests and experiences. Effective White female teachers *allow student interest to play a role in the selection of materials to engage in learning, increase achievement, and promote a positive learning environment*.

Students need to see themselves represented in the curriculum to understand they are valued. White people can turn the pages of books and magazines and see themselves represented; often, that is not an option for Black students (McIntosh, 1988). Rarely seeing themselves in the overall curriculum, incorporating Black male culture and interests into schools can be done successfully. Chad described an ABC project he completed in fifth grade during Black History Month. He found an influential Black person that represented each letter of the alphabet, created a book, and presented it. Specifically, he stated, "To be able to find 26 people to do the whole alphabet was just good. Me being African American, it's something to be proud about [*pause*] Even to this day, it was a good project. It means something to me to do that [*pause*] learn about people from your culture." Chad was proud of this project because he had an opportunity to learn a lot about people from his culture, and he thought his teacher wanted to include their history. The ABC project added his people to history making it more meaningful. This type of project is beneficial in any classroom. Effective White female teachers *believe students seeing people who look like them provides a more inclusive classroom and brings a feeling of importance for students*. When a culturally responsive teacher in Ladson-Billing's (1995) study realized students

thought only blond-haired White women could be a princess, she pulled out an African folk tale about a princess to show that idea disseminated by mass media is not true.

Constant call and response (Emdin, 2017), movement, and socialization are all Black cultural behaviors that White culture views as disruptive and, at times, rude (Garrett et al., 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2016). Even though they are outside the teacher's comfort zone, those types of experiences from Black culture can be provided to increase the comfort and learning of Black male students. Allen and White-Smith (2014) posited the lack of experience or knowledge of Black males' culture led to educators perceiving Black male behavior as aggressive, arrogant, or disrespectful.; however, Black culture is just different, not deficit as described by Valencia (2010). Therefore, effective White female teachers *incorporate Black cultural behaviors into the classroom without punishing students for behaviors characterized by Black culture*. Unlike White culture, communication in Black culture is more active where listeners engage with the speaker; however, uninformed nonculturally responsive teachers consider this interaction rude and distracting, denying students their natural way of talking, thinking, and engaging (Gay, 2002). To incorporate interests, experiences, and Black culture, Black males need White female teachers who will advocate for their inclusion and the inclusion of their culture.

Advocate for children. According to Chad, and I am sure he is not alone, much of what he learned in school has never been used in real-life. Teachers who know and listen to their students realize the need to include instruction in real-world topics like balancing bank accounts or making budgets. The need for relevant instruction was evident. Chad felt he became better at math by working in retail.

Likewise, Anthony was not interested in reading until he began texting and reading from his phone. For that reason, he believes he learned more on the streets than he learned at school. Advocating for children is fighting to provide children with the instruction they need.

Anthony and Brian greatly struggled throughout their school careers with low grades and retentions until they quit school, adding to the negative statistics of Black males. Neither student was provided extra support nor assessed for a specialized curriculum through a technical path or special education. I recognize the overrepresentation of Black males in special education programs (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Payne & Brown, 2017); however, there are some students truly in need of services or, at least, assessments gathering data to increase understanding of how students learn and better meet their needs in the classroom. While Black males are overrepresented, some Black males are not on referral for evaluation because they are expected to struggle academically. At lunch with one White female teacher participant, the discussion centered on how Kevontae was evaluated and was determined to have an IQ of 58, falling in the range of intellectually handicapped. Several students with an IQ higher than his were in a special education program with specialized instruction learning skills needed in the real world. However, Kevontae was deemed ineligible according to system guidelines because his adaptive skills were too high. He could go to the bathroom by himself and navigate the hallways, so he did not need additional academic assistance. His teacher tried to advocate for him during the lunch discussion I attended, but no one could change anything. There were system guidelines. In reality, the problem was systemic racism (Ladson-Billings, 2016;

Taylor, 2016). Basically, he did not meet criteria for specialized instruction because he was poor and Black. He survived by wondering the neighborhood and living with family who were frequently gone, so he adapted. With an institution founded and operated on the White norm (Taylor, 2016), his stereotypical Black family's upbringing prevented him from qualifying for services he truly needed. Kevontae's teacher argued with the lead teacher that he was being left behind because he is Black and can clean his own self up if he pees on himself. Even though he did not get help, she advocated. To progress toward social justice (Taylor, 2016), effective White female teachers *stand up for their students' needs*. With culturally responsive teacher's students reporting interactions resembling those with their mother or other family members, Howard (2001) suggested culturally responsive teachers create a community or family environment where trust care is evident. Thus, culturally responsive teachers are advocates for their students. Therefore, Black male students need White female teachers to advocate for including their culture in the curriculum to effectively teach them.

Summary. From the stories and experiences of participants, most challenges Black males face are the result of institutional racism from schools operating according to the historical White norm that has become accepted as the way to operate schools (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016). Though people may relate easily to others from their own culture, ALL people should be valued, and ALL children should be taught in a manner they learn best. They are the experts on themselves and need to be consulted. Through conversations with Black male students, their interests and experiences are gathered so instruction can be relevant to them. Finally, Black males

need an advocate or someone who will stand up for them, fight for what they need, is intentional about providing students with meaningful instruction, will recognize Whiteness of schools, and work to make education more inclusive. Even though the suggestions were constructed from interviews with my Black male participants, they were also directly and indirectly presented in previous research, specifically about critical race teaching or culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billing, 1995). Throughout this entire chapter, research by well-known academics Gay (2002), Howard (2001), and Ladson-Billing (1995) was referenced that supported the characteristics of an effective White female teacher constructed from the experiences of my Black male participants.

Conclusion

After data analysis, categories were reduced to four overall themes: building positive relationships, embracing cultural responsiveness, learning from others, and working to reach ALL students. Positive relationships with teachers and peers were determined to be necessary for an effective education. Having different cultures together in one room, a classroom environment welcoming, accepting, and integrating the different cultures represented provides relevant content and increased feelings of belonging. Characteristics of Black culture are learned from listening to others. Finally, understandings gained about Black culture are only beneficial if they are applied in the classroom. These themes were found in data from all participants. Chapter 6 describes in detail the themes across all cases.

Chapter VI

CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

Conducting a cross-case analysis enhances generalizability to other contexts and deepens understanding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Similarities and differences among multiple cases strengthens findings to apply them beyond just these cases (Miles et al., 2014). To conduct this cross-case analysis, I used variable-oriented strategies described by Miles et al. (2014). For variable-oriented cross case analysis strategies, multiple cases are analyzed across the themes determined during data analysis (Miles et al., 2014). As indicated in the data analysis section, my participants' narratives were the multiple cases described by Miles' et al. (2014). In my study, there were four themes constructed during the data analysis: working to reach ALL students, building positive relationships, embracing cultural responsiveness, and learning from others. Those themes are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Themes determined from data analysis.

Participants' transcripts were analyzed to find passages to clarify and demonstrate the themes. To show similarities and differences among the themes and subcategories, Table 4 is provided. Subcategories are the original labels for groups of in vivo codes, and they allowed me to easily locate passages demonstrating the themes. The X means the idea was supported in the participant's data. The themes were present in all participant's experiences; however, every subcategory was not.

Table 4

Themes and Subcategories Present from Each Participant

Theme/Subcategory	Anthony	Brian	Johnny	Chad	Manny
Building Positive Relationships/	X	X	X	X	X
Care and compassion	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher and student	X	X	X	X	X
Student and student	X	X	X	X	X
Embracing Cultural Responsiveness/	X	X	X	X	X
Family role	X		X	X	X
Music and sports dreams		X	X	X	X
Different treatment	X			X	X
Low expectations	X	X	X	X	X
Learning from Others/	X	X	X	X	X
Felt unheard	X		X	X	X
Know students personally	X	X	X		X
Elementary was lit/Good teachers	X	X	X	X	
Working to Reach ALL Students/	X	X	X	X	X
Continuous bad grades	X	X	X		
Interests and experiences	X	X	X	X	X
Fight for children	X	X	X	X	X

Building Positive Relationships

Every positive school experience of Black male participants, in some way, reflected the presence of positive relationships. Chad, Brian, Johnny, Anthony, and Manny all described positive experiences with teachers, peers, or mentors with whom they connected and had caring and compassionate interactions. Increased achievement and more favorable school experiences were reported by the young men when respectful and encouraging relationships were present.

A positive caring relationship with a White female teacher was reported by five of the five students. Anthony's elementary school teacher played kickball with the class at recess, and Anthony thought that was fun. Her actions encouraged positive student and teacher relationships. Then, Anthony had Ms. Blackson in middle school who was kind, treated all students fairly, and helped him with his math. He cared about her so much that when she died, he contacted her husband. She cared about him, and he cared about her. Even though she left during the middle of the year, Brian's first grade teacher made students a book about achieving and being successful and included each student in the book. She left a copy for each student, and Brian still remembers that book and how everyone loved Ms. Fisher. Additionally, Brian had a middle school band teacher who provided him with reeds for his instrument, and a high school teacher that was like a mom because she refused to let him fail. Providing supplies needed by Brian and staying after school to provide extra help demonstrated teachers caring about students and their learning. Likewise, Johnny had a teacher who cared about him and showed that she cared by helping him with his writing even after he went to another school. Next, Manny's fifth grade teacher allowed choice. She

gave students a choice of books to read about topics of interest to them. He was able to form his own group for cooperative learning resulting in him participating more on assignments and thinking they were fun. The teacher built positive relationships by caring about her students' interests in order to provide instruction with topics interesting to them. Finally, Chad also loved hanging out in a White female teacher's classroom in high school just talking. Talking about girls he was dating and sports he was involved in, the teacher cared about what was happening in his life both in school and out. Across all participants, the most fun and memorable activities in school were provided by the teachers with which they had positive caring relationships. These little bits of interactions created lifelong positive school memories. From the experiences of Black males, caring and helpful relationships increased positive school experiences in the classrooms of White female teachers.

In addition to White female teachers, there were positive caring interactions with peers that were impactful. While interactions with peers is not the focus of my study, a brief mention of their outside interactions are important because these experiences influenced Black males' beliefs and interactions in school. Three of the five Black male participants described positive and caring interactions with peers or mentors that influenced their school experiences and life today. Chad said many times that sports built relationships. He had a group of friends that checked on him and encouraged him. Even though he had some good experiences with teachers, Chad had more impactful relationships with his friend group that kept him working toward his goal of finishing school. Likewise, Johnny and Brian both had an interest in music. From an early age, Brian hung out at a studio near where he lived, and Johnny met

some artists who helped with his music. These interactions influenced both men to want to pursue music rather than school. Johnny specifically stated in tenth grade, "Okay, I made it to high school. I can drop out now. At least I made it to high school." They are currently still interested in the music industry. Therefore, the building of relationships with peers was highly beneficial for school success indicating students need opportunities to create and strengthen all relationships in the classroom.

While positive relationships are beneficial, negative relationships can be harmful. When interviewing participants, negative relationships by all participants were remembered and articulated the quickest. Anthony reported difficult experiences after elementary school causing him to quit school at the age of 17 in eighth grade. Repeated retentions, suspension for allegedly cutting the bus seat, lack of instruction due to missed classes with an administrator, interaction with a teacher saying he threatened to kill her, and home challenges led to alcohol and drug abuse during the school day throughout his almost five years in middle school. With the exception of the teacher saying he threatened to kill her and his home challenges, Anthony's other experiences were with White female teachers. He did not receive appropriate instruction based on his needs leading to him feel "unwanted." Likewise, Johnny readily remembered his White female first-grade teacher who wrongly reported him cussing in class to his parents which caused him to miss his football game and get a spanking. Interestingly, he believed it was all a mistake at the time. During our conversation, he began questioning whether it was actually a mistake. Then, being placed by White administration as a sophomore in a senior British Literature class with a White female teacher not providing help to prevent him from failing, Johnny still

hates “the hell out of British Lit” today. Next, Chad was suspended for gang activity after mimicking handshakes he saw in pop culture. With no understanding from the White administration, he believed it was something to suspend him over because “they didn’t like it, so we all got suspended.” Another participant, Brian, was shut out of class for taking too long to finish his slushy in the hallway, and his White female teacher wrote him up for being tardy. It eventually led to suspension. Finally, Manny acted out causing frequent redirection when reading beginner books in fourth grade because he was in the low reading group. These are a few of the negative experiences. Throughout the profiles, negative experiences faced at school were presented. While negatively impacting educational experiences, they all occurred with teachers that students reported not to like. Therefore, bad relationships made for bad experiences.

All experiences influence people. Teachers are a major influence on students’ lives. While positive experiences were beneficial, negative experiences were detrimental and memorable. Therefore, positive caring relationships are important. Along with building positive relationships, integrating Black culture is effective.

Embracing Cultural Responsiveness

To be culturally responsive, students’ home and community culture needs to be integrated in the curriculum and instructional practices by beginning with what students already know and moving them to what they need to know (Sobel & Taylor, 2011). Each race, geographic area, classroom, and family have their own culture. With education being a field with a majority minority clientele (United States Census Bureau, 2018) taught mostly by White females (Walker, 2018), there is a mix of cultures in the classroom. Teachers guide the classroom culture, so cultural awareness

is a necessity for integrating all cultures and increasing effectiveness. In my study, data from all five participants supported the theme of embracing cultural responsiveness because cultural misunderstandings were found in the role of family, music and sports aspirations, differences in treatment, and the presence of low expectations. Explicit knowledge of Black culture is vital and that includes characteristics of culture, contributions, traditions, values, communication, and relationships (Gay, 2002).

Role of Family

Puchner and Markowitz (2015) studied the stereotype believed by many White teachers that Black families do not value education. Murray et al. (2014) used parents' statements about work issues and transportation barriers to support reasons for lack of school involvement, which many White teachers misinterpreted as apathy and lack of educational value (Puchner & Markowitz, 2015). Cultural differences in familial roles were evident. After coding the data, the category of family was created because the family of four out of five of the young men played a role in their education. Though there were many hardships at home and his parents rarely interacted with staff at his schools, Anthony's parents attended conferences and questioned the school about him not learning and being retained. His mother called the teacher saying, "Anthony ain't learning nothing. Anthony needs to go to class." When the school was planning to retain him for a third year in seventh grade, Anthony said, "It took my daddy to keep coming up there, to keep cussing these people out, for them to pass me on. That's how I ended up getting sent to eighth grade." Contrary to the stereotype, his family cared about his education. Like Anthony, Johnny's family was concerned about his education and

supported the school by reinforcing the teachers' expectations at home with discipline. Johnny admitted, "In elementary school I got in trouble a lot." When he got "home [*pause*] that belt was ready." Eventually, he "cleaned up [his] act" because he got "tired of getting whoopings." There was no need to come to school because he was "not saying school didn't matter to them [*pause*] after first grade I wasn't a bad child like that [*pause*] At home, I was their son. At school, they were Pat and JR. I already got enough quality time at home with them. Why bring them to school?" Additionally, from an early age, Johnny knew his parents were adamant that "You're **going** to graduate." That was the expectation, and that expectation reflected caring about his education. Even though they were not at school, the school was supported. Like Johnny's family, Chad's family also had a supportive role in his education. He stated, "My mom's a teacher, so she always kept me in line and doing something. I was either at a program learning or playing sports." They did not need to come to the school frequently. Similarly, Manny struggled in reading, so his mom enrolled him in reading tutoring. Like the other participants, she rarely visited the school. Brian lived mostly with his grandmother who had no car. During middle school, his mother would drive him to school sometimes because he was out of district, but he did not report that his mother nor grandmother interacted with the school or provided any educational support at home. Other than Brian, the other four participants had parents who supported their education in their own ways. Therefore, the stereotype that Black families do not care about education proved invalid. The next section discusses the importance of music and sports in the lives of Black males.

Music and Sports at the Core of Their Memories

During interviews, more discussions focused on the benefit of activities outside of school rather than inside, with music and sports being a major part of each interview. All participants played sports, loved sports with recess being one of their favorite subjects, or coached sports in their complex. However, four out of the five young Black males dreamed of or had goals involving sports or music. Even though Anthony mentioned that playing kickball outside with his elementary teacher was fun, he did not have goals or dreams of playing sports. Likewise, he did not dream of a future in music. Developing "a passion for music when [he] was seven," Brian was involved in music saying, "I work. I also deal with music. I'm a music manager. I got involved with music management because I was an artist myself." Transitioning from rapping himself, he now works with managing artists, which he described as "more of knowing how to market or manage people. Managers [*pause*] help the artists develop what they're trying to do in their rap music career, so that's what I do as far as the management." Like Brian, Johnny has aspirations for the music industry. However, throughout school, he dreamed of writing and performing rap songs about his life thinking, "Forget school. I don't want to do this no more. I just want to sit in the studio and rap. Instead of taking notes, I was writing raps. I would write whatever came." Having one rap out, Johnny still goes to the studio and hopes to drop another song soon. Similar to music with Brian and Johnny, Chad and Manny were steadfast that sports helped them through school. Chad's best and most memorable experiences centered on sports, specifically winning the talent show with a basketball demonstration was "a good experience and the time I knew I loved sports." As he got

older, he competed in middle school and high school sports: middle school football, high school football, high school baseball, and rec basketball. Struggling with motivation for reading, Chad said, "Honestly, if I would've thought about reading [sports], I think I would have liked reading a lot more." Finally, Manny's basketball talent led him to a college basketball scholarship. Like Chad, he wished sports was more of a focus academically. Sports and music played a major role in the life of these young Black males. These are interests different from those of the mostly White female teachers guiding students through school. The next section discusses the different treatment of students. Though all students should enjoy equal treatment and opportunities, participants' experiences show the continued presence of differential treatment by White female teachers.

Different Treatment

Three of the five Black male participants reported being treated differently than White students by their White female teachers because of their skin color, as surmised from their mention of being Black in their stories. Specifically, Manny was "in the lowest reading group" in fourth grade saying, "Oh, they didn't tell me I was, but I knew I was because I was with all the kids that obviously had problems, mostly Black [*pause*] I was active." Another example lies with Anthony. One of Anthony's White female teachers "spun around and started talking to" a White girl when she left the hallway line to talk to the teacher, yet when a Black student got out of line and walked up to her, she yelled, "Stand in line behind everybody else." Another instance of differential treatment from Anthony's experiences occurred when he was required to pay $200 and was suspended for 10 days for cutting the bus seat. The White girl who

did the cutting was suspended for 3 days and paid no restitution. Consequences were more severe for Black students. Finally, occurring with a White male baseball coach, White females can learn from and institutional racism is exposed in the experience. Chad was one of two Black players on the high school baseball team and was used only as a pinch runner because "you know African Americans [*pause*] we're fast." Even though he was a good player, he remained a pinch runner. He eventually quit playing. Additionally, Chad was suspended for alleged gang activity by an all-White administration because "White people hear gang, and it scares them." Mimicking what he saw in pop culture, he had no gang affiliation. He never knew a White student suspended for copying what was popular in their culture. While Johnny did not say being placed in a senior class as a sophomore was because he was Black, I believe his race influenced that decision because White administration believed his family would not complain, and Black males scored low; therefore, other students were able to stay in the class they needed. Because it was based on my belief, this was not included in my data comparison. Overall, instances of Black males being treated differently than White students were present in the experiences of Black male students. With different treatment, different expectations arise. Expectations held by teachers are different for White and Black students, especially Black males. Low expectations remain a threat to the education of Black male students.

Low Expectations

Love (2014) agreed that Black males will not perform well in the absence of high expectations. All five participants retold experiences where low expectations were evident by school staff. "Boy, you gonna make the same damn thing this year,"

Anthony's sixth grade teacher told him after looking at his low test scores. He indeed scored low meeting her expectations. After repeating seventh and eighth grade twice, he dropped out of school in his second year of eighth grade. Anthony and Johnny reported assignment grades of 20% and 18%, respectively, and no additional help was given; consequently, they failed and met expectations. When Brian was outside of his high school classroom finishing his slushy after lunch, he asked his teacher for a couple extra minutes to finish it, but she shut the door saying, "Nah, I told you. I gave you enough time. You're just wasting time to miss class." He left and met her expectations. Another experience showing the presence of low expectations was Manny's fourth grade teacher placing him in the lowest reading group because he was so active. He stated, "I was in the lowest reading group. Oh, they didn't tell me I was, but I knew I was because I was with all the kids that obviously had problems, mostly Black." Because Manny was active and did not read material he did not like, his fourth-grade teacher expected him to be a low reader and placed him in the lowest reading group that happened to have all Black students. On the other hand, his fifth-grade teacher assigned him books that interested him rather than placing him in the lowest group, and he met her expectation proving he could read. Finally, assuming Chad was part of a gang showed the low expectations administration held for him and his friends. While he did not join a gang, the expectation that he was in a gang still bothers him. Therefore, the presence of low expectations was seen throughout the experiences of all participants and negatively impacted all participants.

Summary

The role of the family, involvement in sports and music, differential treatment, and low expectations all reflect aspects related to culture. For that reason, embracing cultural responsiveness became a theme. Data collected across all participants' cases supported the importance of understanding and embracing Black culture.

Learning from Others

Everyone is constantly learning from experiences and from others. All five Black male participants relayed experiences where intentional learning from others was important. Participants' experiences showed they did not feel they heard, there was a need to know each student personally, and elementary school was lit because of good teachers.

Students Unheard

Black males have endured a quiet presence in schools. Four of the five participants told of experiences that included a lack of being heard or that even provided an opportunity to articulate ideas to be heard. When Johnny was in third grade, he lacked the opportunity to be heard when his White teacher falsely accused him of cussing. Knowing the White "kid next to [him], Hunter, said it," Johnny had no idea the teacher thought it was him that cussed saying, "[The teacher] didn't even talk to me about it." She did not give him the opportunity to tell her it was not him because no conversation was held. After calling his parents, he missed his football game and got a spanking, which could have been avoided. Likewise, suspended for gang activity, Chad and his friends had a paper with graffiti art and had been doing a gun shaped handshake for a while, but the teachers nor administration "ain't really

mentioned it [or talked] to [them] until they found [their] picture." The boys tried to explain or articulate they were not a gang and developed the handshake and graffiti like they had seen in pop culture, but the all-White administration "pretty much had their mind set of what they was going to do, suspension." In this instance, the boys explained or articulated their side of the story, but their voice did not matter (Zero tolerance policies likely played a role also). In the lowest reading group, Manny was consistently in trouble for behavior and frequently sent away as a consequence. He intentionally tried to get sent away because he did not like the baby books he was having to read. Not finishing his interviews, I was unable to obtain further details; however, based on the data gathered, his teacher never had a conversation with him about his thoughts on and behavior in reading group. Therefore, he was never given the opportunity to speak on his own behalf. His fifth-grade teacher was the opposite. She listened and embraced his interests, resulting in increased achievement and better behavior. Finally, Anthony was suspended for cutting a bus seat. Having it on video, he said, "You could see clear as day that I did not cut that doggone seat." Even after seeing the video with administration, he articulated his side of the story, admitting he held the knife but denying he cut the seat. For lying that he did not do it, he paid restitution and was suspended longer than the White girl who actually cut the seat. Upset the White administration did not listen to him after seeing the video, he "called [his] dad and checked out because [he] was tired of hearing it." Being unheard includes both not being given the opportunity to speak and not listening (or caring) what someone has to say. I strongly believe Brian experienced not having his voice heard when finishing his slushy, and I wish I had more details to definitively include him in this section. From the

interviews, students having a positive relationship with their White female teacher had their voice heard more because they communicated got to know each other personally.

Know Students Personally

Anthony, Johnny, and Manny fondly remembered experiences involving a teacher getting to know them or knowing about them outside of the classroom. Anthony explicitly said he felt unwanted because he kept being retained, did not receive extra help, and teachers lacked concern about his frequent missing of class being with the administrator. Also, a White health teacher with "a room full of Black kids" asked a dumb question like, "Who in here knows how to roll some marijuana up?" After thanking him for telling on himself, she continued saying, "I wouldn't put it past you that you know that. You smoke. I was wondering why your eyes be so low and you be up in here asleep all the time. You be high?" Denying being high, he admitted being drunk at school. This was an opportunity for the teacher to get to know Anthony personally to learn about his needs at school. Anthony had an elementary teacher who took him to see a high school mechanic's class after learning he wanted to live in a cardboard box in his mother's backyard, and she played kickball with students. He loved elementary teachers because they knew their students, and he wanted them to show others how to teach. Additionally, Johnny wanted to write and rap his own songs from an early age and "tried to use what [he] learned in writing, like words from a thesaurus to sound more intellectual." He once tried to use haikus like he had learned in class, but it did not work. His teacher did not know he was interested in being a rap artist, but by knowing him personally, assistance could have been provided in an area he was interested in as a future career. Finally, Manny knew he was very active and that it

irritated his teachers, yet he remembers his best teacher coming to his basketball games and using books in which he was interested. She knew him personally and supported him in his interest. Knowing what is happening in the lives of students outside of school created positive experiences in school. Brian lived in a housing project with frequent murders where his father threw a brick through the window trying to get inside. Then, his mother died when he was in high school. Anthony spent time living on the streets. These are examples of issues outside of school that impact school performance. While these are specific examples found in the interviews, there were countless other times, I believe, that personally knowing students likely would have positively impact students. Learning about students from students built a relationship that appeared to be characteristic of several participants' elementary school teachers.

Elementary was Lit with Good Teachers

Common throughout each interview was Johnny's belief that "elementary was lit." This belief made me look at the elementary school experiences of the other participants. Four of the five participants reported positive experiences in elementary school. In addition to learning a lot, participants felt elementary was fun and found elementary school teachers to be caring and compassionate in actions and words. Brian remembers his first-grade teacher giving a difficult child a big hug saying, "Don't worry, you're my big baby. It's okay. You're going to learn one day." Then, she gave each student in the class a personalized book about being successful before she left her teaching position. Chad realized his passion for sports practicing and preparing for the elementary talent show, and he loved completing his Black history

project. Anthony wanted to take his elementary school teachers to middle school. Finally, Johnny enjoyed the field trips taken in elementary school. While students had positive experiences at all levels, most fun or memorable experiences with teachers occurred in elementary school. I understand elementary is geared toward children, but there are ideas and strategies to be learned from teachers at all school levels.

Summary

Four of the five Black male participants provided data supporting the theme of Learning from Others. That includes listening to students to get to know them personally and learning from other teachers. While there are many different experiences presented, a commonality remains the constant interaction and learning from others. Listening leads to being able to teach all students.

Working to Reach ALL Children

According to test data, White students continue to outperform Black students, especially Black males, academically (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018b; Puchner & Markowitz, 2015). However, ALL children have a right to an appropriate and fair education, not just students in the teacher's own comfort or culture zone. All participant data supported the theme of Working to Reach ALL Children. This theme was constructed because ALL children are not being taught effectively because of continuous bad grades, the absence of students' interests and outside experiences in the classroom, and the lack of advocacy for students of color to receive an effective education.

Continuous Bad Grades

Bad grades represent one of two ideas: students did not understand the material or teacher instruction was inadequate. Either idea reflects the need for change. Four of the five Black male participants spoke of earning bad grades or struggling in certain subjects. Anthony earned low grades and was retained frequently. He said, "After I got in middle school, all my grades was 20s. I wasn't really making nothing but 20s all through school with these teachers." He continued, "Well that's y'all fault. Y'all not teaching us. All y'all want to do is show us a video then going to sit at y'all desk." In another class, he reported, "Ms. Dixson gave me a 19 [assignment grade] one time. What is a 19? Dang, how can you get a 19? I never seen that before." His experiences show he struggled with understanding and felt he had inadequate instruction. Likewise, Brian struggled in school because his "grades was never real good except math." That was all he said about grades except when he did well with a teacher. Looking at paperwork he brought, a psychological exam given after he left high school reported his IQ as a 68 with him scoring as expected of a typical fourth grade student. Knowing 68 is a low IQ, his grades were likely low in all subject areas. He described receiving extra help from only one teacher in high school. It was interesting that Brian was suspended for frequent tardies requiring him to miss even more instruction. As a sophomore in a senior level British literature class, Johnny "had turned in a writing composition, and she graded [him] an 18." However, he remained in the class and failed it. His mother told him, "Bring me home anything above an F." He tried, but "that was what [he] could seem not to do." Bad grades appeared common for Johnny, but he only described one teacher providing assistance. Finally, Chad knew he needed help in math in order to

pass and graduate. Not receiving extra help, he resorted to having friends do it for him so he could pass. Participants earning low grades was evident throughout the interviews; however, extra assistance was rarely provided. For most of the work, students felt no relevance to their lives. Therefore, knowing students and their interests and experiences can provide more engaging instruction to increase achievement.

Interests and Experiences

As Allen, Scott, and Lewis (2013) found, the interests of the White culture were predominantly found in educational institutions. The interests of Black males are different than the interests of their White female teachers. All five Black male participants either verbalized their belief that including their interests in the curriculum would have been beneficial or their experiences showed that inclusion of their interests would have been advantageous. Regarding music played sometimes in class, Anthony said, "We couldn't even listen to our music in school. For real. We had to listen to Beethoven. The only time I ever heard real music was in elementary." Music was also the major interest of Brian and Johnny. Specifically, they both were interested in the rap music industry. Johnny wrote rap songs and attempted writing strategies, like haiku, he learned in class. Brian had many experiences from childhood different from White culture: living in a housing project, father breaking into his apartment, and seeing murders at his complex. This was the background he brought to school. Finally, sports were important to Chad and Manny. Chad explicitly said, "I didn't like to read stuff I wasn't interested in. Honestly, if I would've thought about reading [sports], I think I would have liked reading a lot more." In addition, Chad believed, "You're not going to

use all that you're taught in school. Stuff that you're using now [*pause*] I wish they would teach stuff like finance and balancing your money or taxes. That's what's more in the real world when you grow up." Like Chad, Manny believed, "If it is something I want to read, no problem! Most of the stuff we had to read was boring [*pause*] feel good stuff or stories that were kind of stupid. I couldn't read stuff that I didn't care about. I need interesting things to read." In fourth grade, he was in the lowest reading group, and he said, "Thinking back now, I was probably in the low group because I didn't read the stuff that I was made to read." All participants were aware they would have been more motivated if their interests were valued in the classroom. To include more interests for students, teachers can advocate or fight for the kids to provide them with instruction they need.

Fight for Children

This subcategory of Working to Reach all Students is different from the others. As I read and reread the transcripts, there were instances I believe Black male students needed an adult at the school to stand up for them. This is based not only on the transcripts but also on my perspective as a White female teacher with 24 years of experience teaching in a racially diverse school in the geographic area of the study. All five Black male participants described school experiences where I believe a positive impact could have resulted if they had a teacher to fight for them. Anthony was 17 years old in the eighth grade and sat in an administrator's office for much of the school year. No one pursued why he was out of class so much, why he was retained so many times, or why he was not receiving services or programs specific to his needs. Not interested in reading until he began texting and reading from his phone,

he believed he learned more on the streets than he ever learned at school. He had no advocate at school. Brian was written up for being tardy to class after asking for a couple of minutes to finish his slushy. Then, he was suspended for having so many tardies. Therefore, his consequence was to miss instruction because he had missed instruction. That does not make sense. He had no advocate to fight for his best interest. Johnny was placed in a senior level British literature class when he was only a sophomore. He failed the class and still hates "the hell out of British lit." Johnny was not ready for this class, but no one advocated for the education or class best for him. Chad was suspended from middle school for gang activity, part of a zero-tolerance policy, stemming from a handshake and paper with graffiti naming his club called Mafia. Mimicking pop culture, he was not a gang member. He also never received individualized help in math leading to others doing his work for him and having to be retaught in college. Chad had no one at school to stand up for him regarding his suspension for gang activity or to advocate for individualized help academically. I wonder if there was an expectation for him to struggle. Finally, Manny was in the lowest reading group in fourth grade, and they had the little "square books about half the size of real books. They was about some frog or talking animals or robots, stupid stuff." A student that old does not want to read baby books even though they were on his level. Even though he misbehaved in the group, his teacher did not attempt to figure out why. He had no advocate to fight for an education best for him. These are just a few of the examples from each participant where an advocate could have increased educational effectiveness. In all of these experiences, the outcomes could have been different if they had a staff member advocate for them.

Summary

ALL children go to school to learn. Students consistently making bad grades are not learning. Instruction of little interest or having little background in the lives of the students does not promote learning. Finally, instances needing intervention are frequent. Students are children. Sometimes children need an adult to fight for them.

Conclusion

Even though participants had unique stories and experiences, each theme was supported in each case. Most of the subsections were also found in each case. The themes determined provide guidance for White female teachers to increase effectiveness when teaching Black males. A summary list of an effective White female teacher is provided in Appendix E. Presented using bullet points, the summary list of an effective White female teacher was created in a quick and easy-to-read format in hopes it will be read and reflected upon by those reading my study. Constructed from the perceptions and experiences of Black males themselves, I believe these characteristics are important for White female teachers of Black male students to understand and internalize. The next and final chapter provides the limitations, areas for further study, and my final thoughts.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

Black males have historically been identified as at-risk both academically and behaviorally (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Payne & Brown, 2017). In the specific geographic area of the county in which this research was conducted, one commonality, like school systems throughout the United States, was being educated by White female teachers in schools controlled by the White privileged population operating on the same White norms of which public schools began (Stacy, 2010; Taylor, 2016). I believe White female teachers are not maliciously denying Black males an equal education; rather, they do not understand them. The fact that many White female teachers are not being trained to recognize a cultural disconnect between themselves and Black males has resulted in their committing microaggressions in their interactions with Black male students (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016).

Being a permanent part of United States' society, racism has evolved over the years with White Americans proclaiming to have overcome racism by being colorblind (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016). Ladson-Billings (2016) and Taylor (2016) both agree that claiming to be colorblind is unjust and minimizes experiences of the marginalized. Likewise, Delpit (1995) explains that not seeing color denies who students really are and overlooks microaggressions. Teacher colorblindness unintentionally suppresses Black male students (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016). Many teachers are blind to Black culture because they only experience their own, blind to the interests

of Black male students causing microaggressions because they lack positive relationships and are unaware of what Black males are doing, blind to the struggles of students because they expect Black males to score low as a result of stereotypes, blind to how students learn because they are uninformed causing teachers to teach how they were taught and expecting students to behave in the same manner set forth throughout school history (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016). Through becoming culturally aware, listening to others, building relationships, and consciously working to reach all students wherever they are in their learning process, White female teachers can become advocates of change for Black male students and increase effectiveness in the classroom.

Creating narratives or stories from the participants' experiences provided increased engagement and a meaningful way for teachers to learn about educating Black males. With many White female teachers being unaware of microaggressions and institutional racism, this study provided relatable stories that exposed the practices in schools that continue to marginalize Black male students many years after desegregation. While the focus of the study was specifically set in a community bordering a large urban area, the study could potentially impact teachers and students everywhere because the aforementioned problem is widespread. The research questions are summarized in the next section.

Research Questions Revisited

Three research questions guided the completion of my study. The first question asked about the school-related experiences of five Black males from an urban area in the south with at least 50% of their teachers classified as White females. A mix of positive

and negative school related experiences from all participants were gathered from interviews. As a positive example, having a White female band teacher who provided reeds for an instrument kept Brian in the band. On the other hand, Chad was suspended for gang activity because of graffiti on a piece of paper and mimicking a handshake seen in pop culture. While most participants initially said they had "good" experiences, I believe, after hearing their stories, they learned to accept the normality of racism as proposed in critical race theory. However, positive or negative, the participants' experiences provided valuable information for increasing the effectiveness of White female teachers. These experiences were presented in Chapter 4 where participants were introduced and profiles were presented.

The second research question concerned how Black male students made sense of their school-related experiences in the context of their place in society, their value in schools, their culture, and their lifetime plans. In school, many of their experiences were steeped with microaggressions and unequal treatment. Although participants recognized inequalities and White privilege in school and society, it was accepted because there was nothing they could do about it. Additionally, culture on the part of most teachers and administrators at school does not embrace or understand Black culture and negatively impacts the progress of these five Black male students. Although these five Black male students formed positive relationships with some White female teachers, the curriculum was geared toward White norms with most trade books, for example, containing White characters and most teachers expecting students to behave according to behaviors representative of White culture. With the exception of Chad, participants experiencing the most inequalities and microaggressions at school, in turn, experienced difficulties in

life after school. Details and support for this question were found in the data in Chapter 4 and the themes in Chapter 5.

The final research question sought to use the data gathered to describe an effective White female teacher from the Black males' perspectives. Using themes determined from the data analysis, four main strategies with detailed support were constructed from Black males' experiences. The description of an effective White female teacher was provided in Chapter 7.

My research questions were answered and answered thoroughly. While I am pleased with the information obtained from my study, there were some deviations from my plan that impacted the data gathered. Those limitations are discussed in the next section.

Limitations

When designing my study, I planned every detail exactly how I wanted it to unfold. Conducting a qualitative study where many interviews were held, there were a small number of participants. Even though valuable data was gathered, the small number of both Black male participants and White female teacher participants limited the amount of data collected and the conclusions that could be drawn from that data. Hence, the detailed descriptive approach used in the dissertation in order to allow readers to interpret its connection to their situations. Additionally, I was interested in the experiences in my specific geographical area; therefore, the data was limited to a few small schools in a specific district. Branching out into other districts and geographical areas would provide more experiences to analyze and help determine if the themes I found with my participants may be similar to ones found elsewhere and

expand the circle of whom may benefit from the study. Finally, another study limitation was the experience of the researcher. Truly searching for answers to my research questions to improve my own effectiveness with Black male students, this work represents the first qualitative study on which I embarked as an academic. While I am pleased with the process, findings, and overall stories that were shared, I know having more experience could add detail and thoughts I have yet to realize. While thinking about these limitations, I realized other questions arose from my data that need further study.

Further Study

Using the experiences of Black male students in the classrooms of White female teachers in a specific area bordering the large urban city of this study, the purpose of my study was to provide voice to a marginalized group of students while providing strategies to teachers to increase effectiveness in the classroom. As the study progressed, it was evident further research was needed on some peripheral findings in the study. Interestingly, participants seemed to lose interest in school after elementary school because it became irrelevant, boring, and hard. Further study on Black male achievement after leaving elementary school may yield valuable information into instructional methods that could be most beneficial as they progress through school. Additionally, the lack of instructional support for struggling students was particularly disturbing. Further study on institutional racism in specific areas of the school, like the special education process or small group instruction, can shed more attention on racism that many stakeholders deny in favor of the belief that everyone receives an equal education. Finally, while discussions were held with White female

educators, further study focusing on White female teachers may provide information about obstacles they face trying to effectively teach minority students. These ideas for further study would add to the literature for effectively educating Black males and bring to light changes needed within the institution of education. Only with recognition of a problem will progress toward social justice be made.

Final Thoughts

Throughout the conduction of this study, I realized my own shortcomings. While I was raised in a nonracist household, we were still White, and we still unknowingly enjoyed the privileges of being White. White privilege is a controversial phrase that is not understood by many White people. Having ideas like "schools are the way they have always been, and it's not that hard to sit down and listen," many White people do not understand how schools or other institutions privilege White people. When talking about my study with others, a common paraphrased response was that the study was interesting, but they (referring to Black male students) just need to sit down, listen, and do what they are supposed to do. I wrestle in my mind whether that thinking is because of beliefs and experiences ingrained throughout life, a lack of understanding of Black culture, or a combination of both. What I do know is that inequalities abound.

I learned so much about myself throughout this study. As much as I hate to admit it, I was one of those people claiming to be colorblind—honestly thinking skin color made no difference. I expected the same out of all my students, but those expectations were White expectations. As I began to realize these things about my own self, I went through stages: denial, embarrassment, and growth. I denied any type

of racism or differential treatment came from me. When I realized it did, I was embarrassed. Finally, growth occurred when I admitted my guilt and sought to change. Now, I am not hesitant to admit that I may unintentionally say or do something that offends a person of color, and when I do, please teach me and help me understand!

Beginning the interviews, I was nervous. I was nervous about discussing race with a Black person, but that is how I learned. More conversations are needed. After the first interview, I became more comfortable and looked forward to the other interviews. My very favorite part was conversing with the participants. It was so much fun! We shared stories, laughed, and once I actually cried. Conducting the interviews at the participant's residence appeared to make them more comfortable because they were in their territory. Therefore, I would suggest a future researcher consider doing the same. The part of the study I dreaded most was the long hours of transcription. I suggest having the recordings transcribed. Finally, the part of the study most confusing (initially) was the coding. After coding the first set of data, it became faster and more comfortable but certainly not easier! Overall, this was a great learning experience that provided valuable information even if no one else reads it.

So many years have passed since the Civil Rights Movement and the fight for equality began, and yet still more change is needed. Specifically, progress is needed with understanding Black culture and reflecting on personal beliefs. Then, change will come. All we can expect and hope for is progress, and progress starts within. Embrace progress to inspire change!

References

Allen, Q. (2010). Racial microaggressions: The schooling experiences of Black middle-class males in Arizona's secondary schools. *Journal of African American Males in Education, 1*(2), 125-143.

Allen, Q., & White-Smith, K. A. (2014). "Just as bad as prisons": The challenge of dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline through teacher and community education. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 47*, 445-460. doi:10.1080/10665684.2014.958961

Allen, A., Scott, L. M., & Lewis, C. W. (2013). Racial microaggressions and African American and Hispanic Students in urban schools: A call for culturally affirming education. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning, 3*(2), 117-129.

Battey, D. (2013). "Good" mathematics teaching for students of color and those in poverty: The importance of relational interactions within instruction. *Educational Studies in Mathematics, 82*, 125-144. doi:10.1007/s10649-012-9412-z

Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. New York, NY: BasicBooks.

Boucher, M. L. (2016). More than an ally: A successful white teacher who builds solidarity with his African American students. *Urban Education, 51*(1), 82-107. doi:10.1177/0042085914542982

Broughton, A. (2017). Being hipped to their hop: Tapping into young minds through hip hop play. *International Journal of Early Years Education, 25*, 323-325.

Byrd, M. (2016). "Negro Harry's School": A monument to equal rights to education. *Social Service Review, 90*, 434–463.

Caine, V., Steeves, P., & Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Composing lives in transition: A narrative inquiry into the experiences of early school leavers* [Adobe Digital Editions]. https://www.ebscohost.com/ebooks/academic

Cates, D., & Armstrong, M. (2013). *Plessy V. Ferguson: Segregation and the separate but equal policy*. Minneapolis, MN: Abdo Publishing.

Chapman, T. K. (2013). You can't erase race! Using CRT to explain the presence of race and racism in majority white suburban schools. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 34*, 611-627. doi:10.1080/01596306.2013.822619

Clandinin, D. J. (2016). *Engaging in narrative inquiry.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco, CA: Jossy-Bass.

DeCuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004). "So When It Comes Out, They Aren't That Surprised That It Is There": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher, 33*(5), 26-31.

Delgado, R., Stefancic, J., & Liendo, E. (2012). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: New York University Press. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5441df7ee4b02f59465d2869/t/5d8e9fdec6720c0557cf55fa/1569628126531/DELGADO++Critical+Race+Theory.pdf

Delpit, L. D. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: New Press.

Diette, T. (2012). The Whiter the better? Racial composition and access to school resources for Black students. *Review of Black Politician Economist, 39*, 321-334. doi:10.1007/s1211401109101

Douglas, B., Lewis, C. W., Douglas, A., Scott, M. E., & Garrison-Wade, D. (2008). The impact of White teachers on the academic achievement of Black students: An exploratory qualitative analysis. *Educational Foundations, 22*(1-2), 47-62.

Emdin, C. (2017). *For white folks who teach in the hood--and the rest of y'all too: Reality pedagogy and urban education*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Forman, J. (2017). *Locking up our own: Crime and punishment in Black America*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Friend, T. (1989, July 2). The education of Dexter Manley. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/magazine/1989/07/02/the-education-of-dexter-manley/84ba83c2-cbf0-45f2-b636-d644c5224d4a/

Ganim, S. (2014, January 8). CNN analysis: Some college athletes play like adults, read like 5th-graders. *CNN*. https://www.cnn.com/2014/01/07/us/ncaa-athletes-reading-scores/index.html

Garrett, T., Barr, J., & Rothman, T. (2009). Perspectives on caring in the classroom: Do they vary according to ethnicity or grade level? *Adolescence, 44*, 505-521.

Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53*(2), 106-116.

Georgia Department of Education. (n.d.a.). *Quick Facts about Georgia Public Education* [Data File]. https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Documents/Quick%20Facts%20About%20Georgia%20Public%20K-12%20Education%202012.pdf

Georgia Department of Education. (n.d.b). *Georgia Milestones 2017-2018 Statewide Scores* [Data File]. http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-

Assessment/Assessment/Pages/Georgia-Milestones-2017-2018-Statewide-Scores.aspx

Georgia Department of Education. (n.d.c). *Student Discipline* [Data File]. http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/Student-Discipline.aspx

Henfield, M. S. (2011). Black male adolescents navigating microaggressions in a traditionally White middle school: A qualitative study. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 39*, 141-155.

Hill, M. (1992). Training African-American parents for success: An Afrocentric parenting guide. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED357092)

Howard, T. C. (2001). Telling their side of the story: African-American students' perceptions of culturally relevant teaching. *The Urban Review, 33*(2), 149.

Irby, D. J., Hill, H. B., & Hill, M. L. (2013). Schooling teachers, schooling ourselves: Insights and reflections from teaching K-12 teachers how to use Hip-Hop to educate students. *International Journal of Multicultural Education, 15*(1), 1-18.

Kim, J. H. (2016). *Understanding narrative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Kunjufu, J. (2010). *Reducing the Black male dropout rate*. Chicago: African American Images.

Kunjufu, J. (2013). *Changing school culture for Black males.* Chicago, IL: African American Images.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*, 465-491.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2016). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a *nice* field like education? In E. Taylor et al. (Eds.). *Foundations of critical race theory in education* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Ladson-Billings, G. J. (1999). Preparing teachers for diverse student populations: A critical race theory perspective. *Review of Research in Education, 24*, 211-247. doi:10.2307/1167271

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate IV, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47-68.

Love, B. L. (2014). "I see Trayvon Martin": What teachers can learn from the tragic death of a young black male. *Urban Review, 46*, 292-306. doi: 10.1007/s11256-013-0260-7

Lynn, M., Benigno, G., Williams, A. D., Park, G., & Mitchell, C. (2006). Critical theories of race, class and gender in urban education. *Encounter, 19*(2), 17-25.

Markowitz, L., & Puchner, L. (2014). Racial diversity in the schools: A necessary evil? *Multicultural Perspectives, 16*(2), 72-78. doi: 10.1080/15210960.2014.889568

Matias, C. E. (2013). Check yo'self before you wreck yo'self and our kids: Counterstories from culturally responsive White teachers? . . . to culturally responsive White teachers! *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning, 3*(2), 68-81.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: SAGE.

McClain, S., & Cokley, K. (2016). Academic disidentification in Black college students: The role of teacher trust and gender. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 23*(1), 125-133. doi:10.1037/cdp0000094

McGrady, P. B., & Reynolds, J. R. (2013). Racial mismatch in the classroom: Beyond Black-White differences. *Sociology of Education, 86*(1), 3-17. doi:10.1177/0038040712444857

McIntosh, P. (1988). *White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies*. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College, Center for Research on Women.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Miller, L. A., & Harris, V. W. (2018). I can't be racist-I teach in an urban school, and I'm a nice White lady! *World Journal of Education, 8*(3), 1-11.

Murray, K. W., Finigan-Carr, N., Jones, V., Copeland-Linder, N., Haynie, D. L., & Cheng, T. L. (2014). Barriers and facilitators to school-based parent involvement for parents of urban public middle school students. *Sage Open, 4*, 1-21. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4833392/pdf/nihms751723.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics. (2018a, April). Characteristics of public school teachers. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_clr.asp

National Center for Education Statistics. (2018b, May). Math performance. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cnc.asp

Patterson, G. A. (2014). Boys from the 'hood—often misunderstood. *Phi Delta Kappan, 96*(2), 31-36. doi:10.1177/0031721714553407

Payne, Y. A., & Brown, T. M. (2017). "It's set up for failure . . . and they know this!": How the school-to-prison pipeline impacts the educational experiences of street identified Black youth and young adults. *Villanova Law Review*, *62*, 307–325.

Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity—One's own. *Educational Researcher*, *17*(7), 17-21. doi:10.3102/0013189X017007017

Puchner, L., & Markowitz, L. (2015). Do Black families value education? White teachers, institutional cultural narratives, & beliefs about African Americans. *Multicultural Education, 23*(1), 9-16.

Rauscher, L., & Wilson, B. D. (2016). Super heroes and lucky duckies: Racialized stressors among teachers. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 23*, 220-229. doi:10.1037/cdp0000114

Ravitch, S. M., & Riggan, M. (2017). *Reason and rigor: How conceptual frameworks guide research* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: SAGE.

Saffold, F., & Longwell-Grice, H. (2008). White women preparing to teach in urban schools: Looking for similarity and finding difference. *Urban Review, 40*, 186-209. doi:10.1007/s11256-007-0069-3

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Schott Foundation for Public Education. (n.d.). *Black lives matter*. http://blackboysreport.org/national-summary/

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (4th ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Sharma, S. A., & Christ, T. (2017). Five steps toward successful culturally relevant text selection and integration. *Reading Teacher, 71*, 295–307. doi:10.1002/trtr.1623

Siwatu, K. O. (2011). Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy-forming experiences: A mixed methods study. *The Journal of Educational Research, 104*, 360-369. doi:10.1080/00220871.2010.487081

Sobel, D. M., & Taylor, S. V. (2011). *Culturally responsive pedagogy: Teaching like our students' lives matter*. Bingley: Emerald Group. doi.10.1163/9781780520315

Stacy, J. (2010). Becoming illuminated: New York City's Public School Society and its religious discontents, 1805-1840. *American Educational History Journal, 37*, 455-471.

Takei, T., & Shouse, R. (2007). Ratings in Black and White: Does racial symmetry or asymmetry influence teacher assessment of a pupil's work habits? *Social Psychology of Education, 11*, 367-368. doi:10.1007/s11218-008-9064

Taylor, E. (2016). The foundations of critical race theory in education: An introduction. In E. Taylor et al. (Eds.). *Foundations of critical race theory in education* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

The Governor's Office of Student Achievement. (n.d.a). *K-12 Student Discipline Dashboard*. https://public.gosa.ga.gov/noauth/extensions/DisciplineDASHV1/DisciplineDASHV1.html

The Governor's Office of Student Achievement. (n.d.b). *2017 Georgia K-12 Teacher and Leader Workforce Report.* https://gosa.georgia.gov/sites/gosa.georgia.gov/files/2017%20K12%20Teacher%20and%20Leader%20Workforce%20Report%2020180105.pdf

Thomas, D. E., Coard, S. I., Stevenson, H. C., Bentley, K., & Zamel, P. (2009). Racial and emotional factors predicting teachers' perceptions of classroom behavioral maladjustment for urban African American male youth. *Psychology in the Schools, 46*, 184-196. doi:10.1002/pits.20362

Tyler, K. M., & Boelter, C. M. (2008). Linking black middle school students' perceptions of teachers' expectations to academic engagement and efficacy. *The Negro Educational Review, 59*(1-2), 27-44. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ819979)

United States Census Bureau. (2018, December 11). *More than 76 million students enrolled in U.S. schools, Census Bureau reports*. https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/school-enrollment.html

Valencia, R. R. (2010). *Dismantling contemporary deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. New York City, NY: Routledge.

Viadero, D. (1996). Culture clash. *Education Week, 15*(29), 39.

Walker, T. (2018, July 30). Who is the average U.S. teacher? *NEA Today*. http://neatoday.org/2018/06/08/who-is-the-average-u-s-teacher/

Young, J., Young, J. Cason, M., Ortiz, N., Foster, M., & Hamilton, C. (2018). Concept raps versus concept maps: A culturally responsive approach to STEM vocabulary development. *Educational Science, 8*, 108-118. doi:10.3390/educsci8030108

APPENDIX A:

Participant Questionnaire

Participant Questionnaire

Name_____ **Age**_____

Email_____ **Phone #**_____

Are you currently enrolled in public school? □ Yes □ No

Did you graduate from high school? □ Yes □ No

Please check the schools attended:

Elementary

Other

Middle

Other

High

Other

If you remember your teachers' names, please list as many as possible indicating Mr. or Ms. Please add a W for White or a B for Black beside each name.

Elementary		Middle or Other		High or Other	
K					
1st					
2nd					
3rd					
4th					
5th					
others					

APPENDIX B:

IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 03856-2019 **Responsible Researcher:** Joanna Conner

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Richard Schmertzing

Project Title: *A Narrative of African American Males Taught Mostly by White Female Teachers.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **Exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under Exemption **Category 2**. Your research study may begin immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *Upon completion of this research study all data (data list, email correspondence, etc.) must be securely maintained (locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years.*
- *At the start of the recorded interview session the researcher must read aloud the research statement to each participant. The reading of the statement must be part of the audio recording and documented in the transcript.*
- *Exempt protocol guidelines prohibit the collection and/or storage of recordings. Recorded interviews must be deleted immediately upon creating the interview transcript.*

☒ ***If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.***

Elizabeth Ann Olphie *07.15.2019*
Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.

Revised: 06.02.16

APPENDIX C:

Interview Questions for Black Males

Interview Questions for Black Males

Interview 1: Life History and School Background

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about some of your best and worst experiences.
3. What about your family? What are they like?
4. Let's think a bit about school, what has that been like?
5. Describe the best experience you ever had in school.
6. Describe the worst experience you ever had in school.
7. What do you remember about your earliest schooling experiences?
    a. Good and bad
    b. Type of school
    c. Teachers
8. What do you remember about your middle school years.
    a. Good and bad
    b. Type of school
    c. Teachers
9. What do you remember about your high school years.
    a. Good and bad
    b. Type of school
    c. Teachers
10. How did you and your family feel about school?
    a. School Environment
    b. Teachers
    c. Visiting the schools

Interview 2: Fact Gathering and Details

1. Ask about further information from the stories told in the last interview.
    a. More depth regarding stories with White teachers
    b. Clarify any details needed
2. Tell me about your three favorite teachers.
    a. Description
    b. Why you liked them
3. Tell me about your three least favorite teachers of all time.
    a. Description
    b. Why you didn't like them
4. Describe relationships with White teachers.
    a. How did you feel about your White teachers?
    b. What kind of relationships did you have with them?
5. Describe a typical day in elementary school.
    a. Any individual help?
    b. What kind of behavior and consequences?
    c. How did you feel about elementary school?
6. Describe a typical day in middle school.
    a. Any individual help?
    b. What kind of behavior and consequences?
    c. How did you feel about middle school?
7. Describe a typical day in high school.
    a. Any individual help?
    b. What kind of behavior and consequences?
    c. How did you feel about high school?
    d. Extracurricular activities?
8. Describe your best school experience.
9. Describe your worst school experience.

Interview 3: Making Meaning of Experiences

1. What are you doing today?
    a. How did your school career help/hurt you?
    b. How did your interactions with teachers impact who you are and what you do today?
    c. Did their color or ethnicity matter or make a difference one way or the other?
    d. If you had a child ad found out his teacher was going to be White, what would your initial reaction be?
2. How could teachers better teach Black male students?
    a. Experiences offered
    b. Classroom strategies
    c. Support available
3. How was the Black culture embraced or accepted in school?
    a. School environment
    b. Staff
4. Describe how schooling molded you to who you are today.
    a. Beliefs
    b. Actions/nonactions
5. If you could change anything about your schooling or about teachers in the future what would you change? How do those changes map into racial characteristics?

APPENDIX D:

Teacher Interview Questions

Teacher Interview Questions

I. Introduction
    a. Ensure confidentiality
        i. No names or identifying information
        ii. Transcriptions destroyed
II. Questions
    a. How is this class of students the same or different from classrooms you were in?
    b. When you were in school, what was your perception of Black male students?
    c. Tell me some of your experiences with Black males. How did they contribute to your ideas about Black males?
    d. Describe your perceptions of Black males.
    e. How do your school experiences influence you in the classroom?
    f. What are your expectations for behavior and independent work time?
    g. As the teacher, how would you prepare for a class with mostly Black males?
    h. Tell me a time when you had success with a Black male student. What contributed to his success?
    i. What advice would you give to new teachers coming here to work?
III. Read 3 of the experiences of Black male students and discuss
    a. Johnny being falsely accused in first grade
    b. Chad's gang-related suspension
    c. Manny's fourth grade reading group

APPENDIX E:

Characteristics of an Effective White Female Teacher

Characteristics of an Effective White Female Teacher

Build Positive Relationships

- make learning fun, and if students have a need, personal or academic, that can be met, then do so
- give students a chance to begin working with their friends
- provide opportunities to create and strengthen relationships with peers by using cooperative learning activities and giving frequent opportunities for collaboration
- build relationships with students to understand their interests and integrate those interests into instruction
- work with students providing them extra opportunities to master the content
- know students, provide for students, expect them to do well, eagerly learn about their culture, and fight for students

Embrace Cultural Responsiveness

- build relationships with families early to become familiar with each other and better understand each other's role
- increase knowledge and understanding of Black culture through study and experiences, like attending sporting events of their students
- treat nonacademic issues as important because they are important to the student
- embrace Black culture by getting to know students' friends, incorporating opportunities to talk with peers, respecting the extreme emotions and feelings of students about friendships, and creating a family-like atmosphere in the classroom

- support students' dreams rather than suppress them
- incorporate music of Black culture into classroom instruction
- use rap and Hip Hop music to teach reading skills, practice fluency, model fluent writing, or as a framework for students to write about their content learning
- become aware and understand Black males' involvement with sports and music
- become knowledgeable about students' culture including reflecting on own personal beliefs about people different from themselves
- acknowledge bias by learning about cultural differences in the classroom
- create and practice school routines for ALL students to follow and reduce instances of differential treatment
- examine one's own beliefs
- learn about characteristics of other cultures
- expect all students to do well and provide the help needed to make sure they do
- converse with students about their progress, understanding, or any help needed
- check on students and model expectations
- recognize individual needs and provide instruction needed
- understand, embrace, and value students and their culture through continuous learning, reflection, and action

Learn from Others

- give students the opportunity to speak, and internalize what students say through observing and initiating conversation rather than expecting them to ask questions or for help

- create a personal connection by listening to how they learn best and provide relevant instruction
- have personal conversations and build connections to learn students' interests outside of school and integrate Black males' interests into the curriculum
- attend students' outside events to build relationships with the family, learn of students' interests, and experience Black culture.
- take an interest in students' personal lives and get to know students personally to create an inclusive classroom culture where all students are valued and basic needs are met
- collaborate with other teachers to share strategies that work

Work to Reach ALL Children

- acknowledge stereotypes and use data to make educational decisions
- reflect on data (including grades) and use it to instruct Black males
- increase knowledge of the rap music genre and include lyrics in the classroom
- use student interest to select materials and highly stimulating and varied classroom activities using movement
- choose texts for students to see characters that look like them
- incorporate Black cultural behaviors into the classroom without punishing students for behaviors embraced by Black culture (i.e., call and response)
- stand up for students' needs
- include student culture in the mandated curriculum to reduce punishing students for behaviors characterized by Black culture