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Searching for greener grass: the experiences of African-American educators who left high-poverty, high-minority schools for employment in middle- and upper-class suburban schools

Natalie Young

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SEARCHING FOR GREENER GRASS: THE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN EDUCATORS WHO LEFT HIGH-POVERTY, HIGH-MINORITY SCHOOLS FOR EMPLOYMENT IN MIDDLE- AND UPPER-CLASS SUBURBAN SCHOOLS

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Northern Illinois University, 2018
Dr. Joseph E. Flynn, Director

Frequently plagued by high teacher turnover rates, schools in urban areas serving high populations of minority students become labeled as “hard-to-staff schools. Research reflects that African-American teachers are highly populated within these schools. In contrast, the number of African-American teachers employed in suburban schools with smaller numbers of minority students are significantly lower. There is a deficit in the literature examining the experiences of teachers, specifically African-American teachers, who leave urban schools and gain employment in suburban, middle- and upper-class schools.

Teachers who leave high-minority, high-poverty urban schools and gain employment in middle- and upper-class schools in suburban settings have unique experiences. Most research does not explore teachers’ experiences in their new school setting. In contrast, this study examines the unique experiences of African-American teachers who left high-poverty, high-minority (HPHM) schools to serve in middle- and upper-class (MUC) schools.

A qualitative approach, specifically a comparative case study model, is used to examine the experiences of participants. The participants are six veteran African-American teachers who have had experiences in both HPHM schools and MUC schools. Their personal narratives were
collected through one-on-one interviews, letter writing, and a focus group meeting. The data collected was transcribed and openly coded using NVivo.

Using Critical Race Theory and concepts found in Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice, this research investigates the inequities experienced by participants. Utilizing critical race theory allows this study to investigate the ways in which race plays a role in the experiences of participants situated within predominately White workspaces. Applying the ideas of cultural capital helps this study to investigate the ways in which participants’ non-dominate cultural capital is valued and/or devalued within HPHM and MUC schools.

The purpose of this research is to explore how race impacts the experiences of African-American teachers that transitioned from HPHM settings to MUC school settings. Exploring their stories show that racism is not an issue of the past, instead it is embedded in our society and in our day-to-day interactions. Common institutional practices exhibited in schools continue to reproduce inequities between the dominant culture and minorities. This study explores these common practices through examining first-hand experiences of African-American educators in today’s classrooms.
SEARCHING FOR GREENER GRASS: THE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN EDUCATORS WHO LEFT HIGH-POVERTY, HIGH-MINORITY SCHOOLS FOR EMPLOYMENT IN MIDDLE- AND UPPER-CLASS SUBURBAN SCHOOLS

BY

NATALIE YOUNG
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND FOUNDATIONS

Doctoral Director:
Dr. Joseph E. Flynn
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, as most African-Americans with faithful grandmothers often do, I must start these acknowledgements by giving glory and honor to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the head of my house, my protector, my provider, my way maker, my everything, who without Him there would be no me. Also, to my grandmothers, two of the most selfless women I have ever known, I miss you immensely.

Secondly, I would like to thank my “front row” cheerleaders. As I have heard multiple preachers and pastors say, “You can’t let everybody on your front row.” So, the people that have been here with me on the front row of my life I would just like to take a moment and thank from the deepest parts of my heart. To my husband, an imperfect man who married an imperfect woman and created our own definition of perfection. Thank you for always supporting me in every educational endeavor I have shown interest in for the past 15 years; I promise this is the last degree. To my two absolutely amazing daughters that would tell me I could leap tall buildings in a single bound, and that I could write 25 dissertation pages in one day. My daughters that would bring me water with “I love you” and “you got this” notes attached to the cups when I had to stay up late writing, I absolutely and unconditionally love and adore you two. To my mom who literally sacrificed more than I could ever put into words to provide me with the educational opportunities I needed to have to get me to where I am now. Your sacrifice and unwavering love and support has never
gone unnoticed or unappreciated. You have been a cheerleader on my front row as long as I can remember. Thank you, mom, for instilling in me a love for God, and a love for learning.

To my youngest brother and sister who I put on my front row just to keep an eye on them. You two bring me joy in a way that is indescribable. Thank you for being everything I could ever ask for. To my entire family who shared me with this research day and night, thank you for tolerating my hectic schedule. To my father who always did what he thought was right and to my faraway brother and sister thank you for loving me many miles over, I love you two.

To my lifelong friends, thanks for always being in my corner and helping grow from the shy, embarrassed, unknowing, junior high-schooler with braces and acne, into the woman people see today. I love you my sisters! To my new lifelong friends that have watched me grow from a classroom teacher, to a university instructor, into a Dr. and official professor! Thank you all for being in my corner and always encouraging me. To a host of other supportive family and friends thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your support and words of encouragement. To two very special neighbors, thank you for helping me with my girls and always checking in on me to make sure I hadn’t gone completely delirious with research.

A special thank you to my participants, this study would not be what it blossomed into without you. I appreciate you allowing me and the readers of this study the opportunity to peer into your lives and hear the voices of African-American educators in today’s classrooms. Thanks for putting up with all my calls, emails, and meetings. Thank you to my mentors and NIU colleagues for being a listening ear when I just had to share my doubts, frustrations, and accomplishments. To my mentors thank you for reaching back to help me navigate my way along this road less travelled. To my colleagues, thank you for all your support. To my extra
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To my amazing and extremely intelligent committee members, thank you. I truly appreciate all your time and support. Thank you for taking this journey with me and guiding me through one of the most intense, stressful, and rewarding journeys of my life. An especially heartfelt thank you to Dr. Amy Stich for responding to my incoherent and panicked dissertation emails day or night.

Thank you to all Black teachers who work tirelessly to positively impact the lives of their students. Without teachers like you, I would not be where I am today. A deep, heartfelt thank you of appreciation and adoration is reserved for the strong Black female teachers that poured into me throughout my life. Teachers like Helen Edmonds-Yarbro and Annie Humphrey; you will never know what your advice and words of wisdom meant to me as a young Black teacher trying to find my place in the field of education. Thank you for taking the time to pour into not only my life, but the lives of countless teachers, students, parents, and families.

Last, but not least, thank you to all my students and their families. Each of you inspire me in unique ways and offer me the opportunity to do what I love the most; teach. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of this journey. So many individuals have been rooting for my success and I whole heartedly appreciate all your thoughts, prayers, and well wishes. We made it!
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother, Callie Britton, a praying grandmother educated in the 1930s in a small segregated school house in Nashville, Tennessee
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Teacher attrition has been thoroughly researched throughout the past decade (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Ingersoll, 2001, 2003, 2004; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; Warshauer-Freedman & Appleman, 2009). Teacher attrition and retention have drawn the attention of administrators, researchers, and policymakers (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Each year in the United States tens of thousands of teachers leave schools for a variety of reasons, including low salaries, lack of administrative support, student discipline problems, and a lack of influence over decision making procedures (Kelly, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001). In Illinois alone, forty-four percent of teachers leave their initial schools within the first two years of teaching, and six percent of Illinois teachers leave their teaching positions within the first five years (DeAngelis & Presley, 2007).

Most people in the field of education are aware of this phenomenon and understand that the rate of teacher turnover appears to be higher than in other professions (Ingersoll, 2001). However, the general public may not be as aware of the even greater number of teachers leaving urban schools that serve predominantly minority populations. Research has shown that teacher attrition must be addressed in schools across America, particularly in urban settings (Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2004; Jones & Sandidge, 1997; Kelly, 2004). Teacher turnover rates in urban schools tend to be higher than the average rate of turnover, and particularly higher in large urban areas (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). Teacher retention and attrition have become more associated with the characteristics of a school than with the location of the school (Shen,
In fact, Scafidi, Sjoquist, and Stinebrickner (2007), researchers on race, poverty, and teacher mobility, found strong evidence that schools with large percentages of Black students have much higher attrition rates than other schools.

As a former elementary school teacher in a high-poverty, majority African-American, urban school setting, I witnessed many friends and colleagues leave the district after only a few years of service. Data shows that my former school district loses about twenty-four percent of its teaching staff from year to year (Illinois Report Card, 2017). These findings tell us that African-American students in that district return to a school setting in which twenty percent of the teachers are strangers to them. When experiencing this phenomenon first hand I saw that many of my colleagues who decided to leave were typically replaced by novice teachers. The high amount of turnover leaves lasting effects on the school, its community, and student achievement.

Teachers typically need to have at least five years of teaching experience to become fully effective at improving student performance (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Schools with high turnover rates, like those in schools serving African-American students, typically fill vacant positions with inexperienced teachers. Staffing schools with inexperienced teachers in high-minority schools lead to disproportionate concentrations of less effective teachers in these schools (Lankford et al., 2002; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Students in urban areas are disproportionately served by novice teachers who lack training and the wherewithal to service minority students and their communities.

Teachers leaving the classroom typically are classified into two categories: leavers and movers (Ingersoll, 2001; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Leavers are teachers who decided to leave the field of education entirely. Movers, on the other hand are teachers who leave their current school
setting to pursue a teaching position typically in another school district (Ingersoll, 2001). The focus of this study is teachers that are categorized as “movers”.

The number of movers can be studied through attrition data; however, research falls short in identifying the experiences movers have in their new school settings. Are movers satisfied in their new school settings? Do they feel they made the right choice? What were some of the qualities of the schools from which they resigned? To which new school environments are they attracted? Are there characteristics of their previous setting that are missing in their new positions? Questions like these seem to be missing from the literature surrounding teacher attrition.

There is a common understanding that when people are unhappy or dissatisfied in a job, they typically seek other employment; teachers are no different. Most movers seek employment in other school districts for the very same reasons. Movers have reported several reasons for leaving urban school settings, including low pay, student behavior issues, missing or lack of administrative support, and lack of classroom autonomy (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009).

Due to the gap in literature, most people can only speculate that teachers feel like they made the right decision to move on to a new and different school setting. However, speculation cannot be a part of research. The need to explore movers’ experiences is evident in the lack of literature available specifically addressing movers’ personal accounts regarding their new school settings. The purpose of this research is to contribute to the literature by researching the experiences of tenured African-American educators who left high-poverty, high-minority schools and accepted teaching positions in schools where minority students do not make up much of the student body.
Conceptual Frameworks

Research frameworks are typically used to guide research and help answer identified research questions. This study explores the lived experiences of African-American educators to help answer its research questions. Utilizing Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977, 1989) concepts of capital to help in exploring the work settings of my participants and the populations they serve. Additionally, I will use Critical Race Theory (CRT) in conjunction with Bourdieu’s concepts to more fully explore the participants’ experiences in American educational institutions as African-American educators. Critical race theory aids in analyzing and bringing to light the inequities as well as racism people of color experience in American institutions. Bourdieu’s ideas aid in understanding how the existing social structures, including the field of public schools, continue to perpetuate these inequities. Therefore, these two ideas used conjunctively as a theoretical framework helps in the analysis of this study.

Pierre Bourdieu’s Cultural Capital Concept

Throughout my research of Bourdieu and his theory of cultural capital, many definitions were cited throughout the literature (Barrett & Martina, 2012; Lee & Bowen, 2006; McKnight & Chandler, 2012; Strickfaden & Heylighen, 2010; Throsby, 1999; Vryonides, 2007; Yosso, 2005). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) have described cultural capital as attitudes, tastes, preferences, and behaviors an individual has. Cultural capital is the means by which people in society gain certain privileges and power (Strickfaden & Heylighen, 2010). Bourdieu’s cultural capital concept argues that parents who possess this capital invest time and effort in transmitting cultural capital to their children. In turn, their children become privileged in education because they
possess the knowledge and language skills valued by the educational system (DiMaggio, 1979; Dumais, 2006; Jaeger, 2009). Bourdieu (1977) states,

   By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture. (p. 494)

Participation in, and familiarity with the dominant culture’s knowledge, practices, and traditions influences one’s social mobility in society (Sullivan, 2001; Vryonides, 2007). Upper class parents work to ensure the capital they have is passed on and preserved from generation to generation. Parents from non-dominant classes possess less dominant cultural capital and typically need to make a much more extensive effort to ensure their child’s academic success (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Bourdieu’s concept helps to position this study as a framework because it directly addresses the inequities minorities face in today's society. Each of my participants are African-American educators in the United States, with lifelong experiences in American culture as well as multiple years of experience in the American education system. Race has historically been a defining part of American society and has been a key issue in how the United States and its institutions were created and shaped (Chandler & McKnight, 2009, Yosso, 2005). Bourdieu asserts that as minorities, my participants do not possess a lot of dominate cultural capital and Whites, as the dominant culture, are not inclined to willingly give up the cultural capital they possess (Dumais, 2006; Chandler & McKnight, 2009; Yosso, 2005). Dominant cultural capital in schools have been found to mostly benefit the privileged in society because the privileged are more likely to understand the elite practices employed throughout the educational system in America (Kingston, 2001). Minorities, like myself and my participants, must contend with the
idea that our educational institutions perpetuate the marginalization of minority cultures (Chandler & McKnight, 2009; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). School curricula throughout the United States silences and erases the stories of minorities (Yosso, 2005) and the cultural capital of people of color.

The participants in this study are not only U.S. citizens, but they are also educators operating within an educational system designed to ensure that students who look like them are more likely to be unsuccessful in school. Bourdieu’s concept addresses the role that schools play in sustaining and perpetuating social inequality for marginalized students (Barrett & Martina, 2012). The teaching field is dominated by White Americans and the cultural capital which they believe is important (Lee, 2013). The cultural capital deemed important by the dominant class is intrinsically etched into the field of education; schools value and reward students who possess that cultural capital (Barrett & Martina, 2012; Jaeger, 2009). The participants in this study work every day in an educational system where White upper- and middle-class values are respected and valued above their own.

Bourdieu’s work identified education as a “fundamental institution in the reproduction of class inequality from generation to generation” (DiMaggio, 1979, p. 1463). Bourdieu asserts that schools often suppress and marginalize minorities while at the same time nurture and maintain the values held by upper-class privileged individuals in society (Yosso, 2005; Kingston, 2001). These ideas directly impact this study because of the racial identities of the participants and the American schooling system in which they are employed.
**Critical Race Theory**

This study uses more than one framework to explore the narratives of teachers that left urban school settings. Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) in conjunction with Bourdieu’s concepts to study movers’ experiences provides an opportunity to deeply analyze data and findings. In recent years, critical race theory has become more prevalent in studying our American system of education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The theory asserts that racism is real and inherently apart of American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Critical race theory has been used to challenge traditional research models and to explore the counterstories and lived experiences of people of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002). CRT is used to better understand the “effects of racism, sexism, and classism on people of color” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p.27). Recognizing that as African-Americans my participants are directly involved in an educational system in which critical race theorists explore as another context in which this group is unfairly treated. I believe this theory is well suited as a supporting lens.

Critical race theory is best described in Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic’s (2012) book, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. The authors define the theory as a movement in which a collection of activists and scholars are interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power. The foundations of CRT rest in the understanding that racism is normal in American society (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT began in the 1970s as people began to notice that the significant gains and the momentum of the Civil Rights Movement began to slow, and in some aspects, were stopped, and taken away (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Lawyers, activists, and legal scholars across the country began to realize that
new theories and strategies were needed to combat the subtler forms of racism that were becoming more predominate across America.

Since the start of CRT, the theory has become increasingly prominent in the field of education. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) point out that many in the field of education consider themselves critical race theorists. They use CRT-centered ideas to understand issues of school discipline and hierarchy, tracking, affirmative action, high stakes testing, controversies over curriculum, and alternative and charter schools. In education, CRT highlights the idea that African-Americans are marginalized through the curricula offered in high-poverty, high-minority schools, the instruction implemented by teachers employed in schools, the assessments used that are required by law, and the educational system's inequitable school funding (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT scholars like Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) take the position that:

While some might argue that poor children, regardless of race, do worse in school, and that the high proportion of African-American poor contributes to their dismal school performance, we argue that the cause of their poverty in conjunction with the condition of their schools and schooling is institutional and structural racism. (p. 55)

Ladson-Billings (1998) also argues that a dysfunctional curriculum and a lack of instructional persistence leads to poor student performance. My belief is that CRT fits well as an additional framework in which to study the narratives of teachers leaving schools serving predominantly African-American students. According to CRT, schools are an institution in which race and poverty are factors that typically influence the success of a school (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

This study addresses the school culture of districts serving a large proportion of African-American students. Through partnering Bourdieu’s cultural capital concept and the ideas situated in critical race theory, I aim to investigate the perspectives and explore the narratives of teachers
who left high-minority schools to pursue educational roles and opportunities in contrary school settings.

**Problem Statement**

The majority of studies used in my review of literature focus on the high amount of teacher turnover in today’s educational system, and why a significant amount of turnover occurs in schools serving African-American students and other minorities living in impoverished communities (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Lankford et al., 2002; Scafidi, et al, 2007). Notable researchers like Richard Ingersoll (2001, 2003, 2004) report attrition rates have been increasing over the past decade. High attrition rates, especially in high-poverty, high-minority schools, can lead to a negative impact for students, administration, parents, and the community (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Rivkin, et al, 2005).

Even though there is a solid understanding of teacher attrition rates in impoverished schools serving high populations of African-American students, researchers have yet to significantly explore the experiences of teachers who leave these schools to pursue employment in school settings where African-Americans do not make up most the student body. Data has shown the high rates in which teachers leave high-minority school settings; however, the research does not particularly address elementary school teachers’ experiences in their new school environment (Ingersoll, 2001).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of tenured African-American elementary school teachers who have resigned from high-poverty, high-minority school districts
to alternatively accept employment where minority students are not the majority of the student body.

This study aims to fill the gap in the literature through applying a qualitative study of tenured African-American elementary school teachers “moved” to a new school district where children of color do not make up the vast majority of the student population.

Research Questions

1. What factors influenced participants’ decisions to resign from high-poverty schools largely serving minority students?
   
   a. How are these factors experienced in their current setting, if at all?

2. What are the experiences of African-American teachers who resign from high-poverty schools that largely serve minority students to accept positions in schools where that same population do not make up the majority of the student body?

3. What are some of the challenges African-American “movers” face within their new school context?

Significance of Study

In my research on attrition rates, I found the vast amount of literature focuses on data related to the number of teachers who leave urban schools (Ingersoll, 2004; Jones & Sandidge, 1997; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). When addressing teacher attrition, most literature addresses three main topics: 1) Teacher attrition rates are higher than ever before, 2) Teachers mostly leave schools because of workplace conditions and low pay, and 3) Teachers leave high-poverty, high-minority, urban schools at a higher rate than other schools (Jones & Sandidge, 1997; Kelly,
2004; Scafidi et al., 2007). Most research does not explore teachers’ experiences in their new positions.

There is a significant gap in exploring the narratives and experiences of African-American teachers who move from high-poverty, high-minority schools to more affluent school districts. Further research in this area will help inform fellow researchers, school administration, and teachers (Warshauer-Freedman & Appleman, 2009). Through understanding the perceptions of “movers”, researchers and school administration may be better able to implement school procedures and routines that seem to be successful in other schools (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). This study can benefit teachers considering resigning from high-poverty, high-minority school districts by revealing the experiences and personal narratives of teachers who faced similar decisions at one point in their teaching career.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research method. In particular, a cross-comparison case study approach is implemented to investigate the lived experiences and personal stories of six African-American teachers. The data collection strategies used are interviews, focus groups, and letter writing.

The analysis of qualitative data involves making sense of the data collected, analyzing the material for themes, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009). The data collected for this study through interviews, focus groups, letter writing, and audio recordings are analyzed qualitatively using open coding. Coding the data will help generate themes for interpretation for within-case and cross case comparisons (Creswell, 2009). A detailed description of the methodology can be found in Chapter Three.
Limitations

All participants in this study have been employed at one time in school districts in and around Chicago. A limitation is that the research is confined to the experiences of a handful of African-American teachers in the Chicagoland area. Thus, this study does not allow for a wide scope of narratives collected from across the United States.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to examine the changes African-American elementary school teachers experience when they resign from high-minority, high-poverty urban school districts to accept employment in more affluent suburbs. All teaching contexts have their challenges, but urban contexts have particularly high rates of teacher turnover (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). Teacher turnover has disproportionately affected urban schools and the students and families they serve. Urban schools are typically made up of high populations of minority students and students living in poverty. Teachers in urban schools leave at more than double the rate of other teachers (Ingersoll, 2001).

The participants in this study will share their views and the experiences they have had while teaching in both urban and suburban school settings. In most teacher research studies, the voices of African-American educators are neglected or ignored (Foster, 1990). Examining the participants’ experiences will allow for the voices of minority educators to be examined and added to the literature.

In this review of literature, I will first examine the literature surrounding attrition and retention rates in urban schools serving high populations of minority students. I then examine the research surrounding how to increase teacher retention rates, followed by an examination of the experiences of African-American teachers in the United States. Subsequently, I examine literature highlighting the challenges faced by African-American teachers in the U.S, and finally
provide an in-depth review of the theoretical frameworks used in this research: cultural capital and critical race theory.

Teacher Retention in Urban Schools

Teacher retention in the United States has become an important issue throughout the last few decades (Ingersoll 2001, 2003, 2004; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Loeb et. al, 2005, Scafidi et. al, 2007). Many factors for teacher attrition in urban schools have been identified throughout research, such as low wages, unsatisfactory working conditions, poor school facilities, high crime rates, low student achievement, and student discipline issues (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Duncan & Murnane, 2014; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Jones & Sandidge, 1997; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Snipes, Williams, Petteruti, & Casserly, 2006).

While the common notion that teachers are more likely to leave high poverty schools is correct, it occurs because teachers are more likely to leave a particular type of poor school - one with a large population of minority students (Scafidi et. al, 2007, & Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Teacher turnover is one of the largest problems affecting schools in urban communities. Retaining teachers in urban school districts have become an increasingly difficult challenge (Hunter-Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003). Educational research shows that teachers are moving “from poor to wealthier schools, from high-minority, to low minority schools, and from urban to suburban schools” (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010 p. 19).

One factor affecting teacher attrition in high-minority, urban schools is teacher salary (Massey, Warrington & Holmes, 2014). Wages play a significant role in attracting and retaining teachers. Disparities in pay is a significant reason experienced teachers leave urban districts and accept positions in more affluent districts (Massey et al., 2014). Teachers with higher salaries
have been found to more likely stay in their assigned teaching position (Kelly, 2004). Urban schools typically do not offer great pay incentives; therefore, teachers are not as likely to stay in their assigned positions. Research shows the best paid teachers in high poverty areas earn 35% less on average than the best paid teachers in more affluent districts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).

Another factor attributed to the low retention of teachers in urban schools is the idea that urban schools characteristically operate in poor school facilities (Kozol, 2005). Jonathan Kozol (1991), who is well known for his books addressing urban education in the U.S., found many urban schools operating in inadequate facilities and serving a high number of students well beyond the school’s capacity limits. Urban schools in high poverty areas characteristically do not receive the same amount of funding as schools in more affluent suburban communities. For example, schools located in affluent New York communities spend almost twice as much per pupil than their urban counterparts located within the city of New York (Kozol, 2005).

Disparities like these can be found across the country. In fact, Jones & Sandidge (1997), urban education researchers, found that teachers in urban school settings are more likely to work in deplorable conditions than teachers who work in more affluent suburban schools. Teachers in high-poverty schools reported feeling much less likely to have the necessary materials to do their job (Loeb et al., 2005, p. 47).

Additionally, teachers in urban schools typically work in areas with increased rates of crime. Crime rates and violence in cities and their surroundings typically receive negative press attention in the media. In contrast, racial inequalities and a lack of access in urban communities receive much less attention in the media (Massey et al. 2014). Unfortunately, violence is a serious issue in urban communities; research shows that safety and violence are typically
community issues that concern teachers in urban areas (Jones & Sandidge, 1997). Exposure to community violence is emerging as one of “the most significant public health issues facing American youth, and low-income, urban African-Americans are identified as having the greatest risk” (Velsor-Friedrich, Richards, Militello, Dean, Scott, Gross, & Romeo, 2015, p. 397). Students in urban areas are more likely to live below the poverty line. Students living below the poverty line are more likely to be stressed by violence around them and in their community (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Urban areas typically have higher crime rates; threats of violence and issues of safety are real concerns for teacher and students in urban schools. Researchers suggest that successful schools should address violence by treating students as individuals, creating welcoming and supportive environments, involving parents in the school, and emphasizing relationships instead of rules (Jones & Sandidge, 1997). Hunter-Quartz & The TEP Research Group (2003) emphasizes that we must learn to build on the strengths of urban communities and not overwhelmingly focus on the violence within the community.

Many urban schools face other significant challenges as well: shortages of highly qualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms, low student achievement, and increasing achievement gaps (Snipes, et al, 2006). These challenges have been identified in research as factors influencing teachers' decisions to leave urban schools systems (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Duncan & Murnane, 2014; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Jones & Sandidge, 1997; Snipes et al., 2006). A higher amount of inexperienced, untrained, or underprepared teachers is a common issue in urban school settings. To address staffing issues urban schools have resorted to hiring uncertified, “mis assigned, or emergency-credentialed teachers that are unprepared to assume the teaching responsibilities of city schools” (Jones & Sandidge, 1997, p.193). Urban schools have historically suffered from a severe shortage of highly-qualified teachers and
typically fill vacancies with unlicensed teachers or full-time substitutes (Hunter-Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003). High rates of turnover have been found to compromise student learning (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Studies suggest that “the pivotal causes of inadequate school performance are the inability of schools to adequately staff classrooms with qualified teachers, as a result of teacher shortages” (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 682). If high attrition rates are concentrated in high-minority, high-poverty urban schools, then these students have a much greater risk of receiving a lower quality education than other non-minority, affluent schools (Scafidi et al., 2007). Students in urban areas are more likely to encounter a string of teachers, and in turn, experience a cumulative effect that is more damaging to their learning than one year of poor teaching (Loeb et al., 2005 p. 49).

Unfortunately, vacant teaching positions, in urban school districts, are being filled by inexperienced teachers new to the field of education (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). As a result, schools with high populations of African-American students and other minorities have little chance of employing teachers with five or more years of experience (Warshauer-Freedman & Appleman, 2008). Teachers are not only leaving urban schools, they are leaving the students. Teachers teaching in high-poverty, high-minority schools typically serve a “student population that is extremely poor, racially marginalized” academically low, difficult to educationally motivate, “and from families that have little or no social power” (Anyon, 1995b, p. 83).

Moreover, student discipline issues have also been identified as a factor of teacher retention in urban settings (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Multiple studies have found that lack of student motivation and student discipline problems in urban settings have also been linked to teacher dissatisfaction and increasing teacher attrition rates (Ingersoll, 2001; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015; Hunter-Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003). High minority schools in urban
schools are routinely characterized as disadvantaged and often plagued by higher levels of student discipline problems (Kelly, 2004). Teachers report student misbehavior as a “major cause of stress” within the classroom (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009, p. 443). This research finding becomes an even more prevalent issue when we recognize that first year teachers are nearly 16 times more likely to leave teaching when student behavior issues are prevalent in the school (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Overall, teachers serving in high-poverty urban schools are more likely than other teachers to cite student discipline and lack of student motivation as their reason for leaving urban schools (Hunter-Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003).

With so much attention focused on the failure of urban education, urban students and the issues they face, their strengths are often overlooked (Massey et al., 2014). Students in urban schools should not be seen as the “problem” but rather as the reason for teachers’ commitment to education (Warshauer-Freedman & Appleman, 2009, p. 334). By connecting with students and parents and showing respect to the stakeholders, urban teachers can transform their classrooms into more just and caring places for the community (Hunter-Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003).

Increasing Teacher Retention

Researchers have also studied ways in which schools can work to retain teachers in urban communities (Warshauer-Freedman & Appleman, 2008, Hunter-Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). Preparation for serving students in high poverty, high-minority schools begin before teacher graduate (Warshauer-Freedman & Appleman, 2009). Studies addressing teacher preparation programs found:
Issues of power are particularly relevant for programs that most often prepare White, middle-class teachers from small towns or suburbs to teach in communities of color in high-poverty, urban schools. Studies show that such teachers generally have “limited experience with those from cultures or areas different from their own”; many have “negative attitudes and beliefs about those different from themselves.” (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009, p. 21)

Teacher preparation programs have historically given little attention to preparing and developing teachers who will remain teaching in urban school settings (Hunter-Quartz & TEP Group, 2003). Teachers are underprepared to serve in hard-to-staff urban schools. As a result, teacher certification programs are looking to improve teacher retention rates by changing the ways teachers are prepared, “explicitly focusing on urban environments and giving teachers the support, they need to succeed and remain in schools with underserved student populations” (Massey et al., 2014, p. 1778). A focus on urban education should be infused throughout teacher preparation programs. Teacher education programs that focus on teaching in high-poverty, high-minority school settings, can provide ways to support educators through challenges they may encounter. Urban school and social justice researchers recommend teacher preparation programs help future teachers prepare for serving urban schools by requiring students to participate in model field placement classrooms. These settings not only allow candidates to be involved with teachers and students, but families and the community as well (Khalil & Brown, 2015). Teacher candidates with coursework tailored to address the needs of urban populations and field experiences in urban schools are more likely to continue to teach in urban schools longer than teachers in traditional programs (Warshauer-Freedman & Appleman, 2008; Hunter-Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003).

Offering mentor support for teachers during their first year or years of teaching has also been identified as a teacher retention strategy (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Specific types of
mentoring activities appear to be more effective than others in reducing turnover. Induction programs can “fluctuate from a single orientation meeting at the beginning of the year to a highly-structured program involving multiple activities and frequent meetings over a period of several years” (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 683). The most influential factors in having a successful mentoring experience were “having a mentor from the same field, having common plan time with other teachers in the same subject or collaboration with other teachers on instruction, and being part of an external network of teachers” (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 706). Mentoring and opportunities to observe other experienced teachers is important for new teachers (Grant, 2006). Thus, many schools have implemented mentoring programs for teachers during their induction year (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001, pg. 802). Mentoring programs have also been found to be a cost-effective way for schools to reduce teacher turnover (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Weekly meetings with faculty, regular classroom visits, intentional assignment, and frequent feedback are all parts of a strong mentoring program. Such programs can strengthen a novice teacher’s knowledge base and ability to deal with difficulties both inside and outside of the classroom (Warshauer-Freedman & Appleman, 2008).

Administrative support of teachers also has a critical impact on teacher retention (Hughes, Matt, & O’Reilly, 2015). The quality of leadership contributes to the development and maintenance of effective schools (Bandura, 1993). Strong principals excel in their ability to have staff work together with a “strong sense of purpose to believe in their capabilities to surmount obstacles” faced in urban education (Bandura, 1993, p.141). Administration should support teachers in their instruction, be responsive to teachers concerns and encourage them to try new ideas. Unfortunately, “teachers in urban schools often work in schools with unsupportive administration and inadequate facilities” (Hunter-Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003, p. 99).
Principals have the power and opportunity to create and maintain a positive school culture and climate which can ensure a reduction in the need for teachers in hard-to-staff schools (Hughes, et al, 2015). Teachers are less likely to quit schools when they feel supported by administrators. The odds of a teacher leaving are reduced by 23 percent when administrative support is increased (Ingersoll, 2001).

Receiving positive feedback was identified as an important factor regarding teacher retention in urban schools (Hughes et al., 2015). Teachers reported feeling valued and supported when principals recognized their work and efforts. Novice teachers “need a cheerleader, they need support, they need to hear they can do it, and consistently need constructive feedback on what they are doing well, as well as what they could doing better” (Grant, 2006, p. 53). If administration tells a novice teacher he or she can deal with a specific classroom issue, but does not provide resources or support, then “the administrator fails to cultivate trust and credibility with the novice teacher, thus affecting the teacher's perceived ability in handling difficult situations” (Grant, 2006, p. 53).

Like administrative support, workplace conditions have also been found to play a major role in teacher retention. American schools report having “larger class sizes, teachers spending more hours engaged in direct instruction, teachers working more hours total each week, and they are afforded less time in their schedules for planning, collaboration, and professional development than teachers elsewhere in the industrialized world” (Darling-Hammond, 2015, p. 16). Multiple studies have shown workplace conditions, such as class size, workload, and teacher autonomy, significantly affect an individual's decision to leave or stay in their workplace (Ingersoll, 2001; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Howes & Goodman-Delahunt, 2015). Research has also found that the presence of very large class sizes significantly influences teacher turnover.
rates (Kelly, 2004; Loeb et al., 2005). Regrettably, urban schools are disproportionately understaffed and employ overworked teachers that have excessive class sizes (Jones & Sandidge, 1997).

In the same way as class size, teachers’ feelings of autonomy influence employment decisions. Feelings of autonomy are significantly important in urban education classrooms. Urban teachers report having “little or no influence over how the school is run, they have no knowledge of the school budget, and they do not contribute to administrative decisions” (Anyon, 1995a, p. 63). Classroom autonomy and freedom to make instructional and curricular decisions result in lower levels of stress. Unfortunately, procedures commonly used in urban schools typically are described as “mechanical, involving rote behavior and very little decision making or choice” (Anyon, 1980, p. 73). Furthermore, the greater amount of freedom and autonomy experienced by urban teachers, the greater their belief that they can be successful in their schools (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). In contrast, lack of classroom control can cause feelings of stress, ineffectiveness, and can lead teachers to pursue other employment opportunities (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009).

Much like the importance of autonomy, teachers value being treated as professionals in the field and leaders in the school. Assertions suggest that to create real change in urban schools, we need leaders both in and out of the classroom (Warshauer-Freedman & Appleman, 2009). Creating teacher leadership opportunities and building bonds of trust can improve teacher retention rates in urban schools (Hughes et al., 2015). Farris-Berg (2014), nationally recognized author and researcher addressing teacher autonomy and teacher-led schools, reports that:

Pioneering groups of public school teachers across the United States are already advancing a new definition of teacher leadership: teacher partnerships. As such they’re securing autonomy to collectively make decisions that influence their
whole school's success. They have the opportunity to choose- even invent- their school’s approach to student learning. (p. 32)

In line with this same school of thought, Giroux (1985) believed teachers should be actively involved in producing curricula materials suited to the cultural and social context in which they teach. Giroux (1985) argues that “by viewing teachers as intellectuals, those persons concerned with education can begin to rethink and reform the traditions and conditions that have prevented schools and teachers from assuming their full potential as active, reflective scholars, and practitioners” (p. 380).

Experiences of African-American Educators

African-Americans have historically taught in schools serving large populations of African-American students (King, 1993). Research regarding the African-American educator experience typically falls within three specific U.S. time periods: before desegregation, during desegregation, and after desegregation (Foster, 1990). Before the desegregation of public schools, schools were typically segregated. Segregated schools in the south were inherently unequal (Foster, 1990). Schools serving White students were in better condition and had more resources than schools attended by Black students. Even with the inequality of the schools, African-American teachers and students were resilient. Black teachers worked hard to find meaningful ways to provide black students with a quality education, even with very little to no resources (Walker, 2013). Despite the fact that Black schools were underfunded and under resourced, Black teachers felt free to express and teach their students to have pride in their culture and where they came from (Foster, 1990).

On May 17, 1954, in the landmark case Brown vs. the Board of Education, the Supreme Court declared segregation and the doctrine of separate but equal no longer had a place within
the American school system; segregation in schools was declared unconstitutional (Goldstein, 2014). *Brown vs. the Board of Education* was meant to be a step in the right direction for the equality of people across the United States. Unfortunately, the decision that was instituted to support and uplift the Black community and provide better educational opportunities for African-American children, instead had detrimental effects in the lives of both African-American teachers and students (Foster, 1990).

The problem resided in the fact that the responsibility of organizing the desegregation of schools were given to the same people who fought hard to maintain segregation and lost (Butler, 1974). The desegregation of public schools drastically affected Black educators in the 1950s and 60s (Irvine, 2002; Morris, 2001). Black schools were demolished or closed, and Black educators were relocated, fired, or displaced (Foster, 1990; Fultz, 2004). The term displacement was the political expression used by politicians, school boards, and superintendents to justify the injustice of the dismissal, demotion, or removal of the vast majority of Black teachers during desegregation (Fultz, 2004). Over 31,000 African-American educators were dismissed from their positions in preparation for desegregation (Walker, 2013). After the integration of schools, new tactics were used at the federal, state, and local levels to continue to remove African-American teachers from the public educational system.

African-Americans fought hard and long to gain the same rights as their White counterparts in the United States. At the turn of the century, only one predominantly Black school received significant federal funding (Goldstein, 2014). The highest office in the land even seemed to be against the success of African-American educators and students. Presidents Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, and Roosevelt refused to listen when African-Americans sought federal legislation to receive protective rights against White racist groups (Evans & Evans, 1982).
During his campaign for the Presidency, President Ronald Reagan promised to stop the use of federal funds to support disadvantaged minority groups (Goldstein, 2014).

A national teachers’ examination was implemented at the state level in many southern states as a means to justify the firing of Black teachers if they failed to pass the national test (Butler, 1974; Goldstein, 2014). National teacher exams typically resulted in higher scores among White teachers and lower and failing scores among African-American teachers (Goldstein, 2014). Black teachers were forced by their respective states to take the national exam. If they failed they were labeled as incompetent and dismissed from their teaching positions (Butler, 1974; Morris, 2001). Many southern states also began to implement laws that revoked the teaching licenses of any teacher who participated in political actions or members of political parties that fought for the equality of people of color (Goldstein, 2014). Many black teachers were forced to refrain from equal rights participation for fear of their lives as well as their livelihoods (Foster, 1990). Teachers typically never reported what organizations they belonged to in order to keep their jobs; however, in some states teachers were required to identify all organizations they belonged to as well as any donations they made to organizations within recent years (Foster, 1990; Fultz, 2004).

During desegregation, the local level schools participated in the same injustices as the state and federal offices. The local schools continued to implement ways that allowed for the unethical removal of African-American teachers from their schools. Many teachers were outright dismissed without explanation and others even fired while teaching students (Foster, 1990; Fultz, 2004). Black teachers were placed in teaching positions in which they had no expertise (Butler, 1974). Their lack of expertise in unjust placements would produce negative, unfair evaluations necessary to terminate black teachers (Foster, 1990). Black teachers were placed in positions in
which they were untrained and in which White people assumed they would do well because of racial stereotypes. African-American male teachers were forced into stereotypical roles, such as football and basketball coaches (Foster, 1990).

As a result of the Brown decision, Black teachers became more concerned for black students. During segregation, African-American teachers were able to present meaningful curricula that instilled a sense of pride for the Black culture (Foster, 1990). Teachers held a sense of purpose and obligation to give back to their communities and prepare the next generation with the tools they needed to succeed in a racially unjust world (Irvine, 2002). Black educators supplied the next generation with these tools through education. After desegregation, African-American teachers no longer had a voice regarding the curricula provided to African-American students (King, 1993). Black teachers were forced to witness their students torn away from their schools and bussed into predominantly White schools (Foster, 1990). If Black teacher became one of the few teachers able to secure employment in the predominately White schools, they often witnessed many Black students labeled as immature, incompetent, uneducable, or simply ignored altogether by White teachers (Foster, 1990: Goldstein, 2014). Teachers during this time reported that integration helped in some ways but hurt in a lot of other ways (Foster, 1990). Desegregation created a disconnect between African-American students and their neighborhoods, which continue to affect communities of color today (Morris, 2001).

Today the numbers of African-American teachers serving in public schools throughout the United States are low and drastically declining (Foster, 1997; King, 1993). Data reflects that African-American teachers only make up seven percent of the teaching force in the United States (Morris, 2014). According to the Chicago Teachers' Union in 2002, 40 percent of its teaching force identified as African-American; in 2010 only 30 percent were identified as African-
American (Goldstein, 2014). Low wages for teachers, the lack of respect held by society for the teaching profession, higher debt to pay off after graduation, and the implementation of difficult state examinations for teacher licensure, have become deterrents for black teacher candidates (Foster, 1997; Goldstein, 2014; King, 1993).

Challenges Faced by African-American Educators

Discrimination against African-Americans did not stop at the schoolhouse doors. Instead, it affected and continues to affect the everyday lives of African-American educators. African-Americans who work in education have been and continue to experience discriminatory practices against them (Foster, 1990; Goldstein, 2014). As mentioned earlier, Black educators had to fight against discrimination at the highest levels (Evans & Evans, 1982). Due to the decisions made at federal, state, and local levels, Black teachers deal with discrimination outside as well as inside their own schools and classrooms (Goldstein, 2014).

A notable researcher of African-American educators, Michele Foster (1997), interviewed and gathered the oral histories of Black teachers that experienced both segregated and desegregated schools, teachers who have been teaching for over a decade in schools, and teachers who are just starting out in their careers. Throughout her research teachers shared many stories of the challenges they faced while working in schools. These teachers shared with Foster (1990) that before desegregation many Black schools were targeted by White supremacists; it was not uncommon for Black schools in the south to be unexplainably closed or even burned down. Others shared stories after desegregation that they were not allowed to teach White children, use the same faculty restrooms as the White staff and even told by White colleagues to wash their face and brush their teeth (Foster, 1997; Goldstein, 2014). Other interviews reveal that
parents, staff, colleagues and administration within newly integrated schools treated African-American teachers unfairly (Mabokela & Madsen, 2007). Participants reported that White parents did not want them teaching their children, administration would walk past them in the hallways without acknowledging them, and fellow teachers would avoid them (Foster, 1997; Milner & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2003; Mabokela & Madsen, 2007).

African-American educators have first-hand knowledge of the difficulties encountered in teaching that are uniquely experienced by Black teachers. African-American teachers have to constantly fight against stereotypes portrayed in the media of African-American people (Mabokela & Madsen, 2007). Students and colleagues of Black teachers typically have limited interactions with Black people and usually rely on what is seen or heard in the media (Milner & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2003). Black teachers report that their individuality is often overshadowed by their colleagues’ stereotypical beliefs about African-Americans, including those that African-Americans are “lazy, unreliable, irresponsible, and not intellectually driven” (Mabokela & Madsen, 2007, p. 1193). Educational researchers recognized for their research of African-American teachers, Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela & Jean Madsen (2007) argue that:

The automatic notice of ‘tokens’ result in their becoming the subject of conversation, gossip, and careful scrutiny...because of their small numbers they [African-American teachers] are expected to fulfill stereotypical roles when different standards are applied to them. Thus, all their actions are public, and everything they do in their classrooms is examined and discussed by the European-American teachers. (p. 1182)

When stereotyped individuals are in situations in which people expect them to act in a certain manner, the individual tends to bear the extra burden of confirming the stereotypical beliefs held by others. African-American teachers often feel a sense of pressure to positively represent their race (Milner & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2003). Mabokela & Madsen (2007) argue that the pressure felt by
Black teachers to represent their race can be referred to as a “symbolic consequence” (p. 1187). Other researchers identify this pressure as a form of symbolic violence or symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1989; Kitalong, 1998; Toshalis, 2010). The unfair practices of removing Black teachers from their positions and placing them in positions for which they are not trained are examples of symbolic violence. These practices are identified as symbolic violence because they were actions taken by the dominant, powerful, White people in society to keep the minority, less powerful and powerless. These symbolic acts and the pressure of positively representing the African-American race created and continues to create even more stressful work conditions for Black teachers.

African-American educators and other marginalized people of color like the participants in this study must also contend with microaggressions within their individual workplace. The term “microaggressions” was first introduced by Harvard professor, Chester Pierce in 1969 (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Microaggressions are subtle insults both verbally and non-verbally that are directed toward people of color in society (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). These subtle forms of racism have been shown to take on multiple forms, including negative assumptions and lowered expectations regarding African-Americans (Solórzano et al., 2000). These microaggressions are an additional stressor in the lives of African-American educators.

The educational field of teaching and learning by itself is stressful for African-American teachers and educators. Teachers juggle students, their parents, administration, and curriculum demand on a daily basis. The focus of this study is to address not only the pressures experienced by a typical classroom teacher, but the unique added pressures and stress that African-American teachers deal with in today's educational system. Due to their own life experiences, Black
teachers have different way of seeing the world than their White counterparts. Because of their different views, Black teachers are often criticized and seen as outsiders within their own schools (Milner, 2012). African-American teachers in schools also report feelings of isolation as well as a loss of self-efficacy beliefs when they are one of a few minority teachers within a school (Milner & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2003; Mabokela & Madsen, 2007).

Even with these added stressors African-American teachers continue to work every day to educate students. African-American teachers most often describe their work as “a calling, a caring, a believing, a demanding for the best” (Irvine, 2002, p. 141). The literature on African-American teachers reflect that many of them have similar attributes. Black teachers tend to show great care and concern for their students as well as provide a sense of family and community within their classrooms (Cooper, 2002). African-American teachers report that the 3C’s: care, concern, and connection are just as important as the 3 R’s: reading, writing, and arithmetic (Irvine, 2002). The care and concern Black teachers have for their students has often been described as “othermothering”, a term used to characterize teachers who treat their students as if they were their own children (Milner, 2012). Teachers that participated in Foster’s (1997) study reported it is important to them as teachers that their students understood they cared about them. Providing affection as well as discipline created a respect between the students and teacher (Foster, 1997). This mutual respect between teacher and student allowed African-American teachers to instill in their students not only book learning, but a sense of self-respect as well (Goldstein, 2014). Teachers play an important role in helping students of color develop positive self-identities apart from the negative images they are constantly bombarded with through the television and other media outlets (Lee, 2013). African-American teachers are seen as authorities in the classroom who have high expectations for their students (Cooper, 2002). Foster (1997)
found that many Black children have benefitted and continue to benefit today when they are learning from kind, caring, disciplined, and well-respected Black teachers.

Theoretical Frameworks

Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice revolves around three core concepts: field, habitus, and capital. Although this study utilized Bourdieu's ideas of symbolic capital, specifically cultural capital, to examine the experiences of participants within different contexts, this work also acknowledges the relational importance of habitus and field to his larger framework.

Bourdieu's (1977) concept of field is described as a social location or site in which individuals compete for valued resources (see also Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Swartz, 1997). Fields can exist both “physically and organisationally” (Grenfell, 2003, p. 8). A person's position or status in a field is determined by his/her ability to understand the “rules of the game” to possess certain types and amounts of cultural capital valued within that social space (Bourdieu, 1989). The amount of capital one possesses is dependent on their habitus (McKnight & Chandler, 2012).

Habitus is defined by Bourdieu (1977) as "systems of durable, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (p. 72). This set of internalized dispositions, practices, ways of thinking, tastes, and behaviors (Jaeger, 2009; Nash, 1990) are introduced during early childhood by way of socialization into the family and are continually shaped by personal experiences within various social institutions (DiMaggio, 1979; Lee & Bowen, 2006). An individual's habitus defines what feels natural, thereby influencing what they perceive is possible in society (McKnight & Chandler, 2012).
In addition to this study's focus on the concept of capital, the concepts of habitus and field are equally important because collectively these ideas create the foundation for Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice. Even though this research specifically focuses on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital within the field of education, it is important to acknowledge the relational aspect of these three concepts. Within this study, race and class play a critical role in defining each African-American teacher’s habitus within the field of secondary education. As demonstrated within the findings, the most valuable cultural capital can look different within various subfields of education.

**Pierre Bourdieu’s Concepts of Capital**

**Symbolic Capital**

Researchers credit Pierre Bourdieu as the founder of symbolic capital and its concepts (DiMaggio, 1979; Dumais, 2006; Grenfell, 2003; Jaeger, 2009; Nash, 1990; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Strickfaden & Heylighen, 2010; Yosso, 2005). Bourdieu was a French sociologist who researched capital in different forms for over 40 years (Grenfell, 2003).

Prior to Bourdieu’s research, ‘capital’ generally referred to economic capital; however, Bourdieu argued that “capital need not be strictly economic” (DiMaggio, 1979, p. 1463). Bourdieu (1989) identified three forms of capital: economic, social, and cultural. Economic capital generally refers to goods, money, property, and other material items, social capital mostly refers to social systems and economic situations that can provide access to valued goods, and cultural capital identifies itself as knowledge present in a home which allows parents and children to secure advantages. Invisible symbolic capitals like social and cultural capital are also important in American society; particularly, when one possesses large amounts of symbolic
capital that is highly valued by the dominant culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Hinton, 2015; Kingston, 2001; Strickfaden & Heylighen, 2010). This study focuses on Bourdieu’s ideas of cultural capital.

Cultural Capital

In a review of literature regarding Bourdieu and his concepts of capital, multiple definitions of cultural capital were cited (Barrett & Martina, 2012; Lee & Bowen, 2006; McKnight & Chandler, 2012; Strickfaden & Heylighen, 2010; Throsby, 1999; Yosso, 2005). Lee & Bowen (2006) describe cultural capital as “the advantage gained by middle-class, educated, European-American parents from knowing, preferring, and experiencing a lifestyle congruent with the culture that is dominant in American schools” (p. 198). Yosso (2005) refers to cultural capital as “an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society.” (p. 76). Other researchers described cultural capital as a set of rules defined by the dominant culture in society that includes the various forms of knowledge and skills deemed important by privileged individuals in the dominant culture (McKnight & Chandler, 2012; Throsby, 1999). Participation in and familiarity with the dominant culture’s knowledge, practices, and traditions is what builds one’s cultural capital in society (Sullivan, 2001; Vryonides, 2007). Understanding these ideas, and for the purposes of this study, cultural capital can be easily understood as the knowledge and skills one possesses about a culture that can be used to successfully operate within a particular field or setting.

Cultural capital is considered very valuable and the most influential type of capital because it can be used to gain and produce power (Hinton, 2015; Strickfaden & Heylighen, 2010). Like money, cultural capital can be “saved, invested, and used to obtain other resources”
Cultural capital can also be transferred from one generation to the next and can be thought of in terms of the resources that a person can inherit from simply being a member of a specific class (McKnight & Chandler, 2012; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999).

In the United States the privileged in society are recognized as high-class, European, White Anglo-Saxon males (Dumais, 2006). White Anglo-Saxon children are the ones most likely to inherit the cultural capital identified as important in society. They are more likely to possess the language, abilities, and characteristics that are valued and rewarded in the educational system and job market (DiMaggio, 1979). The cultural capital of the dominant, privileged, White society is deemed important in the U.S. (McKnight & Chandler, 2012). Bourdieu’s concepts have provided researchers with tools to analyze the characteristics of cultural capital observed in the United States (Vryonides, 2007).

Cultural capital researchers assert that cultural capital is how people in society gain certain privileges and power (Strickfaden & Heylighen, 2010). Bourdieu argues that parents who possess this capital invest time and effort in transmitting cultural capital to their children; in turn, their children become privileged in education because they possess the knowledge and language skills valued by the educational system (DiMaggio, 1979; Dumais, 2006; Jaeger, 2009). Upper-class parents who hold large amounts of capital work to ensure the capital they gained is reproduced, passed on, and preserved from generation to generation. Parents in the dominant society understand that cultural capital is gained through education and life experiences (Strickfaden & Heylighen, 2010). Parents from non-dominant classes possess less valued cultural capital and typically need to make a much more extensive effort to ensure their child’s academic success and provide them with a variety of life experiences (Lee & Bowen, 2006). With studies showing the enormous potential of what cultural capital can provide for individuals who possess
large amounts of it, it is not surprising that elite classes work to ensure their offspring understand it, have it, and know how to use it.

**Cultural capital in research.** Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital, including cultural capital, has become increasingly used as a framework to study the inequalities in the U.S. public schooling system because of its potential to explain the achievement gap that exists in education today (Nash, 1990; Vryonides, 2007). However, in researching cultural capital there is also literature that argues against the use of cultural capital as a framework in educational research. One flaw addressed in the literature is that Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory is too vague and can be widely interpreted in multiple ways (Nash, 1990; Vryonides, 2007). Another flaw mentioned in the literature is the idea that the class cultures studied in France by Bourdieu do not show a clear parallel to the class cultures that exist within American society today (Kingston, 2001).

My belief is that even without clear parallels to American society or the idea that Bourdieu’s cultural concept theory is too vague, Bourdieu's understanding of cultural capital fits well into this study as a framework. Using cultural capital to understand injustice and discrimination in educational systems remains a popular framework (Dumais, 2006; Sullivan, 2001). Research suggests teachers of color are pressured to minimize their own cultural capital to adjust and fit in with the capital identified as important to the dominant, White culture (Lee, 2013). The participants in this study are operating in an educational system that does not respect or identify their cultural capital as important. Bourdieu’s ideas allow their experiences to be analyzed in a way that validates cultural capital theorists’ ideas that racial and class prejudices are innate, and our educational institution system was created to only sustain existing inequalities and reward the capital held by the dominant culture (Dumais, 2006; Kingston, 2001).
Other researchers have also used cultural capital theory as a framework. One such researcher, Annette Lareau (1989), notable sociologist and author, used Bourdieu’s cultural capital theory to understand family-school relations and its impact on children’s experiences in school. Lareau found that parents that had professional and managerial positions were involved in their children’s education at a higher level than non-professional working-class parents (Vryonides, 2007). These professional parents used resources available to them, because of their social status, to advance their children’s education more than working-class parents. Lareau (1989) found that effectively used class resources allowed upper-class parents to positively impact the experiences their children had in schools.

Using cultural capital as a framework, Lareau (1989) found that upper-class parents are typically more involved in the education of their children and do well in navigating the schooling system because they hold the cultural capital valued by the education system (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Vryonides, 2007). Bourdieu argued that schools nurture privilege because they understand the elite practices employed in schools (Kingston, 2001). Lareau’s study and Bourdieu’s ideas directly affect this study’s participants since they were less likely to have parents involved in ways that secured educational advances for their children (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Now in their current positions, the participants will more likely encounter parents that are more involved than in their former school settings. Also, as African-Americans serving mostly African-American students, the participants most likely identified with parents in their former setting because they share the same cultural capital. The participants are now likely to encounter upper-class parents and may not be able to make connections as easily as they had previously (Foster, 1990).
Gewirtz, Ball, and Bowe’s (1995) study found that privileged parents used their cultural capital to make better informed decisions regarding their children’s schooling. These same elite parents also used their cultural capital to gain access, request wants, maintain pressure, and be remembered by those with influence in the school’s selection process (Vryonides, 2007). The elite in society possess the desired cultural capital and gain benefits from schools because they understand the elite practices embedded within our educational system. In turn, schools reward those who hold certain forms of cultural capital (Barrett & Martina, 2012; Kingston, 2001). Using Bourdieu as a framework, Gewirtz et al. (1995) helped theorists to explore the idea that elite parents may be more likely to use cultural capital to gain access and request wants from administration. Through the same cultural capital lens, the experiences of the participants are analyzed to discover ways in which cultural capital has played a role in their experiences within the field of education.

**Cultural capital in the field of education.** Cultural capital in schools have been found to mostly benefit the privileged in society (Kingston, 2001). The participants in this study are not only African-American, but they are also educators operating within an educational system designed to ensure that students who look like them are more likely to be unsuccessful in school. Bourdieu’s concepts of capital address the role that schools play in sustaining and perpetuating social inequality for marginalized students (Barrett & Martina, 2012). Education is supposed to be setup as a way to fight against poverty and inequality, but the problem lies in the idea that inequality is deeply embedded within the American school system (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Society makes claims to provide an education for all, but the education received by the public ignores the cultural capital in non-dominant classes and perpetuates elite’s self-worth (Grenfell, 2003; Nash, 1990).
The cultural capital deemed important by the dominant class is intrinsically etched into the field of education and schools value and reward students who possess that cultural capital (Barrett & Martina, 2012; Jaeger, 2009). Possessing the cultural capital deemed important in American society results in a greater likelihood of educational success in school (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). The teaching field is dominated by White Americans and the cultural capital which they believe is important (Lee, 2013). The participants in this study work every day in an educational system where White class values are respected and valued above their own. The students they serve that belong to the dominant class are rewarded simply because of their race (Kingston, 2001; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999).

The structure of the American school system reproduces and cultivates privileges provided to the dominant culture while slowly eliminating minorities who do not possess large amounts of elite cultural capital (Lakomski, 1984). The American public-school system has been used as a vehicle to reproduce the social norms and relationships of the upper, middle, and lower classes (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Christopher Doob (2015), author of Social Inequality & Social Stratification in U.S. Society, defines social reproduction as “activities that transmit social inequity from one generation to the next.” (p. 10). The social and class relationships reinforced in schools work to sustain the set of beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, experiences, and the habitus of the dominant culture (Doob, 2015; Herr & Anderson, 2003). A person’s cultural capital depends on their class habitus, and their habitus creates an understanding of their place in the world and the place of others (Bourdieu, 1989).

Bourdieu’s work identified education as a “fundamental institution in the reproduction of class inequality from generation to generation” (DiMaggio, 1979, p. 1463). Bourdieu’s research has led to studies examining the inequalities said to exist within our schools (Anderson, 2013;
Burch, 2014; Dumais, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2003; Kingston, 2001; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Lakomski, 1984; Luke, 1981; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Sullivan, 2001). For the past 20 years researchers have studied cultural capital and the effect it has on students (Dumais, 2006). One such researcher, Paul Kingston (2001) found that education is the path that will most likely lead to economic success. In his studies he also found that privileged students are more likely than minority students to succeed in American schools and pursue higher education opportunities (Kingston, 2001). Jung-Sook Lee and Natasha Bowen (2006) found that parents from non-dominant classes were less likely to visit schools, and thus less likely to gain the same rewards as parents from the dominant culture. Additionally, Alice Sullivan (2001) found that some lower-class individuals will still succeed in our U.S. educational system even with the institutionalized way it is organized against them. Sullivan (2001) found that when lower-class students do succeed, the result is typically a sense that other lower-class citizens simply fail because they do not strive to do their best or put forth as much effort. But the lack of success they experience can be also attributed to social reproduction in schools and personal experiences with symbolic violence (Toshalis, 2010).

**Cultural capital and African-Americans.** Bourdieu’s concepts situate this study as a framework because it directly addresses the inequities minorities face in today's society. Each of the participants are African-Americans educators, with lifelong experiences in American culture and multiple years of experience as educators in the American school system. Social theorists assert that as minorities, the participants do not possess a lot of dominant cultural capital; the elite are not inclined to willingly give up the cultural capital they possess even if doing so would allow fellow citizens the opportunity to gain power and privilege (Dumais, 2006; Chandler & McKnight, 2009; Yosso, 2005). Theorists argue that the privileged in society are taught they are
somehow “inherently deserving” of social and economic benefits, while minorities are taught that it is their “own fault if they do not succeed” (Chandler & McKnight, 2009, p. 90). Whites as the dominant culture in America strive to maintain their cultural status and exacerbate existing inequalities by historically creating harsh conditions for other races (Dumais, 2006; Chandler & McKnight, 2009; Nash, 1990).

African-Americans have historically been caught between trying to maintain their own cultural capital and self-identities and giving up their capital in order to succeed in White establishments, including schools. W.E.B. DuBois (1903) speaks directly to this conflict in his book *The Souls of Black Folk*. He identifies this internal strife as a “double consciousness” under which black people must exist in attempts to become successful in society (p. 3). DuBois (1903) describes double consciousness as “a sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others”, requiring African-Americans to “ever feel his twoness—an American, a negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body…” (p. 3). As DuBois (1903) so eloquently summarizes, the ability to successfully operate in a White dominated society comes at a high cost. African-American educators, like the participants in this study must relinquish their own cultural capital—which allows them to operate well within their own communities - to be successful in U.S. schools (McKnight & Chandler, 2012).

Minorities, like myself and the participants, have to contend with the idea that educational institutions perpetuate the marginalization of minority cultures (Chandler & McKnight, 2009). School curricula throughout the United States silences and erases the stories of minorities and the cultural capital of people of color. The curriculum provided often marginalizes or completely ignores the cultural capital of Black people (Hinton, 2015; Chandler & McKnight, 2009). One study addresses the idea that on one hand the school curriculum may highlight the
achievements of African-Americans such as the Tuskegee Airmen, however, the same curriculum fails to discuss how the Tuskegee Airmen were also subjected to unethical medical experiments administered to them by the American government (Chandler & McKnight, 2009).

The participants in this study are well-educated Black men and women who operate daily in a school structure that maintains and cultivates a habitus unlike their own. The dominant group in society create the idea that being White and following their cultural values is the natural way of the world and these ideas are consistently reinforced (Anderson, 2013). In turn, African-American children and teachers are expected to conform to society’s ways of thinking.

Symbolic Violence

Related to his ideas of symbolic forms of capital, Bourdieu (1989) also argues symbolic forms of power exist in society (see also Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) define symbolic power as "every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations" (p. 4). These power relations internalize a belief throughout society that the dominant culture’s beliefs, values, and ideas are distinguished and preferred over other cultures’. These powers can be used to oppress any members of society who do not possess larger amounts of dominant cultural capital.

One such symbolic form of power highlighted in Bourdieu’s (1989) research is symbolic violence, which is described as an external, intangible, negative force used by the dominant in society against minorities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This violence occurs when minorities accept the ideas, values, and beliefs of the dominate class as normal, legitimate, and superior to their own values (Herr & Anderson, 2003). Incidents of symbolic violence are exacerbated when
minorities internalize the oppressive ideas of the dominant and accept them as true without question (Anderson, 2013; Burch, 2014). Simply put, symbolic violence is a form of power used by the powerful against the oppressed. In this study, symbolic violence was analyzed as a tool used by powerful White Americans to establish and maintain the oppression of African-Americans and other people of color operating in American society.

The dominant possess the power to dictate which cultural capital is valuable for upward mobility in American society (Herr & Anderson, 2003). As a result, Blacks’ and other minorities’ cultural capital becomes devalued. Symbolic violence presents itself when people of color begin to buy into the notion that the cultural capital they possess is inadequate and illegitimate. As a result, African-Americans operating in a White-dominated society can experience negative effects including DuBois’s (1903) earlier description of double consciousness. By maintaining the importance of White cultural capital through the use of symbolic power, the dominant in society continues to sustain the inequities between the powerful and the oppressed (Bourdieu, 1989; Herr & Anderson, 2003; Lakomski, 1984).

Symbolic violence experienced in the field of education perpetuates social class reproduction and limits the access of resources available to people of color (Toshalis, 2010). In schools, symbolic violence works to facilitate the belief that minority students should just accept their position at the bottom of the social order (Lakomski, 1984). Herr and Anderson (2003) found that minority students frustrated with acts of symbolic violence in education leave schools and are commonly channeled into “at best, low wage work, or at worst, the juvenile justice system” (p. 432). Richard Waters (2017), a researcher working with students placed in alternative schools reports:
The experiences of young people...seem to support Bourdieu & Passeron’s concept of symbolic violence: these students, without the advantage of a middle-class upbringing and accompanying cultural capital and habitus, struggle to achieve educational success and find the whole process alienating. (p. 32)

Symbolic violence and its connection to how individuals view and place value on their cultural capital is an important part of Bourdieu’s (1989) ideas and were important to this research. Each participant in this study is African-American. As such, they regularly operate in an institution where because of symbolic acts of violence, their capital is considered substandard.

**Analysis of Bourdieu’s Ideas**

This study also explores participant experiences with White middle- and upper-class parents and administration serving these communities. Bourdieu’s ideas aids in analyzing participant experiences while working in urban and suburban school settings. Power, race, and privilege continue to exist in today’s schools (McKnight & Chandler, 2012). These same issues are addressed in frameworks like cultural capital and critical race theory (McKnight & Chandler, 2012; Milner & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2003; Strickfaden & Heylighen, 2010). In educational settings, teachers’ “Whiteness” often serves as the norm by which others are judged (McKnight & Chandler, 2012). As African-American teachers in educational settings, participants’ performance will likely be judged by the established norm of White teachers. Teachers who are White often enter the profession with an understanding that their views go largely unquestioned; whereas African-American teachers are not afforded the same luxury (McKnight & Chandler, 2012). Teachers of color tend to feel a need to act a certain way to gain inclusion into the school system (Grenfell, 2003). School practices and minority experiences within these institutions deserve further research, and frameworks like critical race theory and cultural capital allow researchers to conduct such research.
Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is one theory used in this research to explore the experiences and ideas of the participants included in this study. The theory implies that it “is critical of social organization that privileges some at the expense of others” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 22). In this study the dominant culture, White Americans, represent the “some” and African-Americans represent the “others” mentioned by Bogdan & Biklen (2007). The ideas of critical theories are important because such theories recognize and acknowledge the inequality experienced by marginalized individuals. The participants in this study as well as the African-American students they serve are among the marginalized (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Using a critical lens in this qualitative study fits well because critical theories rely on the shared stories of marginalized individuals, and qualitative methodologies seek to accurately capture participants’ perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Critical race theory began in the 1970s with the work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, legal scholars that were not satisfied with the minimum gains achieved for people of color during the civil rights movement, or with the ways critical legal studies researched the injustices of African-Americans and other minorities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). During the 1970’s, researchers relied heavily on Critical Legal Studies (CLS) to address the rights of minorities. Critical legal study scholars’ role at the time was to study legal doctrine to expose and uncover inconsistencies in the American legal system (Ladson-Billings, 1998). However, CLS scholars consistently failed in its efforts to address the issue of how race and racism embedded in the American legal system affects people of color in America (Crenshaw, 1988; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). In turn, a group of scholars, researchers, attorneys, and civil rights activists, including
Bell and Freeman, developed CRT as a way for researchers to critically look at and address racism in their analyses (Crenshaw, 1988).

Critical race theory begins with the fundamental belief that race and racism are normal and permanent characteristics of American society (Bell, 1992; Russell, 1992). Critical race scholars research and highlight ways in which the dominant culture, White people, use race to gain and maintain advantages in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Several scholars (Bell, 1980; DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matsuda, 1991; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002) have researched and identified multiple tenets important to CRT and its researchers. Some of the tenets identified are 1) racism is deeply embedded into our society and is a part of normal everyday life-systemic racism and microaggressions, 2) people of color have unique experiences and these experiences must be shared through the telling of their own personal stories-counterstories, 3) Whites in the dominant culture help people of color when it supports their interests as well-interest convergence, 4) race is a socially constructed concept, 5) like property, being White has value and White people can use their Whiteness for personal gain - Whiteness as property (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This study explores how the ideals of critical race theorists offers insight into the experiences of its participants.

Critical Race Theory in Educational Research

Theorists have been using the principles of CRT to aid in understanding prejudices, discrimination, and racism experienced by people of color in American schools (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Lynn & Adams, 2002). Schools in America maintain and support racial biases (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Since schooling in the United States maintains that public education
exists to prepare its citizens, CRT analyzes how race factors into African-American experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Today, education continues to be one of the areas in which the negative influence of racism is most often felt. As a result of the subtle ways racism operates inside schools CRT is a necessary tool needed to examine the educational experiences of African-Americans operating in the American school system (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004).

Important tenets identified by CRT scholars are used in this study to help analyze the racial issues faced by the African-American participants in this research. Looking at their experiences through the lenses of racism, microaggressions, counterstory, counterspaces, and interest convergence aid in the analysis of the data collected for this study.

Racism

Throughout the literature, CRT researchers and scholars highlight the idea that race has and will continue to be an endemic, permanent part of American society (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lawrence, 1987; Yosso, Parker, Solorzano & Lynn, 2004). Race continues to play a significant role in the United States (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). As Africans-Americans, my participants and I have experienced racism. According to Delgado & Stefancic (2012), well known critical race theorists, American society prefers to categorize its citizens based on their physical attributes and cultural norms. The idea of “race” is a manmade concept that lacks the support of scientific evidence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Research asserts that people of color, like the participants involved in this study, are constantly bombarded with negative, racially charged words, messages, stories, and stereotypic
images produced by members of the dominant group as a means to maintain power over minorities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998). These negative messages and images are used to sustain cultural racism and create feelings of inferiority among people of color (Calmore, 1991). Even though the Civil Rights Movement had effected some change on racial interactions in American society, in 1998 President Clinton had a team explore the racial climate of American Society. President Clinton’s Racial Advisory Board found that 1) racism is one of the most divisive forces in our society, 2) racial legacies of the past continue to affect current policies and practices, 3) inequities and injustices between racial groups in our society is deeply ingrained, and 4) most members of the dominant society are unaware they enjoy the benefits of White privilege (Advisory Board to the President’s Initiative on Race, 1998).

**Microaggressions**

In today’s society, racism experienced by minorities is much more likely to be covert and subtle (Sue et al., 2007). Subtle and aversive racism is potentially harmful to the overall well-being of people of color (Berk, 2017). One such form of subtle racism are microaggressions. The term “microaggressions” was first introduced by Harvard professor Charles Pierce (1995) in 1970 when he identified microaggressions as subtle, negative insults minorities experience by Whites (Berk, 2017; Sue et al., 2007). These brief, often commonplace put-downs can be verbal or non-verbal as well as intentional or unintentional and are typically expressed as a slip of the tongue (Lawrence, 1987; Sue et al., 2007). The participants in this study operate in a workplace environment overwhelmingly consisting of White colleagues. Therefore, they are more likely to have experiences with racial microaggressions.
There are three types of microaggressions (Sue et al. 2007; Sue, Nadal, Capodilupo, Lin, Torino, & Rivera, 2008; Yosso et al., 2009). The first type, microassaults, are described as deliberate, explicit, verbal or nonverbal attacks used to intentionally hurt people of color (Berk, 2017; DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016; Sue et al., 2007). Microassaults can be easily identified as “old fashioned racism” (Sue & Constantine, 2007). The use of racial slurs, name calling, racially charged symbols, avoidant behavior, and willful discrimination are examples of microassaults (Berk, 2017; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Sue et al., 2007, 2008).

The second type of microaggression, microinsults, are subtle, rude, insensitive communications that demean a person’s race (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016; Sue et al., 2007). Microinsults convey a hidden insulting message about people of color typically attacking their intelligence, competence, or cultural style and are often communicated under the guise of humor (Berk, 2017; Sue & Constantine, 2007).

The third type, microinvalidations, are communications that dismiss, negate, or ignore the thoughts feelings, or realities and experiences of people of color (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Sue et al., 2007). Microinvalidations promotes colorblindness and asserts the myth that the same opportunities are provided for all, but that some do not succeed only because they are mediocre (Berk, 2017).

When experiencing microaggressions people of color often convey vague feelings of being attacked, discredited, or feelings of something being wrong. These subtle attacks are detrimental to minorities because they negatively affect their well-being (Sue et al., 2007). Understanding the types of microaggressions help to inform this particular study because they allow the experiences of the participants to be examined for possible microaggressive actions perpetrated by White stakeholders in school settings. The additional stress African-Americans
experience from microaggressions in the workplace can create a hostile work environment, leaving minorities feeling unwelcome and alienated (Berk, 2017; Pierce, 1995). Overtime, racial microaggressions can lead to negative physical, mental, and emotional stress and drain minorities of their energy and enthusiasm (Yosso et al., 2009).

Exploring racial microaggressions allows researchers to examine the impact racism has on African-Americans and other minorities in American society (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016). The importance of recognizing and combating racial microaggressions was mentioned by First Lady Michelle Obama in her 2015 commencement address to the graduates of Tuskegee University. She instructed the graduates, “Don’t be daunted by the slights and indignities of microaggressions.” (CSPAN, 2015). Her commencement speech at the Historically Black University reflects how important it is for African-Americans to be aware of microaggressions and to continue to move forward despite their experiences with microaggressive behaviors.

**Counterstory**

Counterstory is a method used by qualitative researchers that shares the personal stories of marginalized individuals that are often left untold (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Counterstories are used in research to allow people to see the reality of the lives of marginalized people and challenge the dominant discourse about race and racism (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Marginalized individuals often have experiences that are very different from the dominant society. The dominant group in American society, White males, use their majoritarian stories to create the dominant narrative which distorts and silences the experiences of people of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Majoritarian stories are narratives that reinforce White privilege and claim to be objective in nature. However, these stories frequently make
assumptions and form conclusions based on race. Privileged White Americans maintain racism through majoritarian stories by discounting the experiences of minorities and not acknowledging the past and present systemic and institutionalized racism experienced by African-Americans (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso et al., 2004). In turn, critical race theorists use counterstory to challenge the majoritarian narrative that is mass produced by the dominant culture in American society (Yosso et al., 2004).

Counterstory is important because it allows minority individuals the opportunity to share their personal experiences in a society deeply rooted in racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998). As African-Americans operating in the American educational system, each participant in this study provides their own counterstory to the majoritarian narrative. People of color typically have drastically different experiences from people operating in the dominant culture. Consequently, privileged White Americans cannot easily understand what it means to be non-White in America (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Counterstory is used in this research to challenge the common discourse and share the experiential stories of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Yosso et al., 2004).

Counterstory has been an important part of critical race theory since its inception (Matsuda, 1991). One of CRT’s chief characteristics is the use of storytelling to examine race and explicitly listen to the lived experiences of people of color (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Yosso et al., 2009). Since counterstory is used to examine race and racism it is essential in education when using CRT as a framework of study (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). It is important to give voice to the realities of oppressed people in order to gain a better understanding of the educational system (Ladson-Billings, 1998). And, the experiential knowledge of people of color is critical to understanding and analyzing how race affects people of color in their everyday lives (Solorzano
& Yosso, 2002). Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) describe storytelling as “a kind of medicine to heal the wounds of pain caused by oppression” (p. 57). When victims of racist injuries find their voice and share their stories they discover they are not alone; they become empowered participants through hearing their own stories and the stories of others (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000; Yosso et. al., 2009).

Counterspace

Counterspace is an additional tool that minorities use to cope with racism in the workplace (Carter, 2007; DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016). Carter (2007) describes counterspaces as physical spaces in which same-race individuals gather to share and express their concerns, frustrations, and experiences of racism and discrimination in a safe environment. Counterspaces allow African-Americans a supportive, positive, collegiate environment in which their experiences are often validated and viewed as important (Carter, 2007; Solorzano et al., 2000). More specifically, African-American educators who experience microaggressions in their school settings benefit from having a safe place to share their feelings (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016).

Interest Convergence

An additional tenet of critical race theory is the idea of interest convergence. Interest convergence is the idea that the interests of blacks are only taken into consideration and accommodated when Whites are benefited by the accommodations as well (Bell, 1980; 2004). Bell (1980) made this assertion during the inception of critical race theory; his hypothesis was met with harsh criticism and denial, eventually being dismissed by scholars as “the jaded speculation of a civil rights warrior who had given up” on the promises of an equal America (Delgado, 2000, p. 373) Later documents revealed Bell’s assertion of interest convergence was
proved to be true. The U.S. Department of Justice and the Department of State documents revealed the United States needed to do something to combat the negative backlash segregation and other civil rights issues were creating on a global scale (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Policy makers during the Civil Rights Movement were more concerned with their global image and its effect on their economy than the civil rights of African-Americans (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Research on interest convergence shows that Whites were the primary beneficiaries after the abandonment of segregation (Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1998). After approving civil rights legislation, America experienced both economic and political advances (Bell, 1980).

Critical Race Theory Conclusions

Critical race theory’s tenets and methods are often used as a framework utilized to challenge the ways race and racism can impact societal institutions and challenges the ways in which minorities’ voices are silenced (Yosso, 2005). The theory recognizes ways in which social policies and larger systems in American society, including public education institutions, operate in a system where racism is normal, natural, and permanently woven into American society (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Morris, 2001). Critical race theorists in the field of education use CRT’s ideas to highlight the idea that people of color are marginalized in American institutions of education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This marginalization manifests itself through the curriculum offered in high-minority schools, the instruction implemented by teachers employed in schools, the assessments used that are required by law, and the educational system inequitable school funding (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

The participants involved in this study have experiences in schools highly populated by African-American students and schools where African-American children do not represent most
of its student body population. Having lived experiences in both situations gives voice to the unique experiences of the participants. Recognizing that participants are directly involved in an educational system which critical race theorists explore as another means in which African-Americans are unfairly treated, this theory is well suited for this study.

The aim of this comparative case study is to use critical race theory by which to analyze the lived stories of African-American educators. Due to the nature of this research, themes like race, racism, and inequity are likely to present themselves throughout this investigation, as the participants in this study operate in an American institution which historically is rooted in inequity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

One important CRT objective is to present stories “about discrimination from the perspectives of minorities (Creswell, 2013). Commonly used CRT methods implemented in this comparative case study allows the voices of the participants in this study to be heard. Researchers engaged in CRT are interested in the issue of race because they consider race to be one of the prime means of differentiating power in American society (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). When applying CRT as a lens, it is recognized that African-Americans have unique experiences. This theory helps to analyze and understand the life experiences of people of color and is well suited to aid in understanding how the socially constructed idea of race impacts the daily life of an African-American educator (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016). CRT also asserts that the personal experiences of minorities are authentic, credible, pertinent, and add critical understanding in analyzing racial issues (Carrasco, 1996).
Summary of Theoretical Frameworks

Understanding the frameworks used to analyze the experiences of African-Americans aid in qualitatively analyzing personal experiences in education in the United States. Exploring the ideas of social theorists like Bourdieu (1977; 1989) and critical race theorists like Bell (1980; 1992; 2004) allows for an in-depth investigation of the perspectives and lived experiences of the participants.

Summary of the Review of Literature

Working to understand urban school families and its community must be done in order to understand increased attrition rates in urban schools serving high-populations of minority students. The overwhelming research regarding teacher attrition rates and the effect it has on students in high-poverty, high-minority schools is discouraging to say the least. Bandura (1993) maintains the “goal of formal education should be to equip students with the intellectual tools, self-beliefs, and self-regulatory capabilities to educate themselves throughout their lifetime” (p. 136). Too many of our urban schools are not fulfilling students’ needs as described by Bandura (1993).

African-American teachers have and continue to face many challenges. The high turnover rates experienced by a vast majority of students in urban school settings is a sad reality for many young African-American students. The aim of this study is to specifically research the experiences of African-American teachers who left schools with high populations of African-American students to accept positions in schools where African-American students are not the majority population served. The preceding review of literature provided a glimpse into previously conducted research that highlighted the characteristics of urban schools, identified
factors that influenced the reasons that teachers leave urban settings, revealed some of the challenges and experiences African-American educators have faced, and provided an understanding of the background and unique characteristics of cultural capital and critical race theory.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of African-American elementary school teachers who resigned from school districts that serve African-American students predominately to accept employment in more affluent suburban schools.

This chapter addresses the methods for which I will collect and analyze the data gathered. The analysis and data collection will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors influenced participants’ decisions to resign from high-poverty schools largely serving minority students?
   a. How are these factors experienced in their current setting, if at all?

2. What are the experiences of African-American teachers who resign from high-poverty schools that largely serve minority students, to accept positions in schools where that same population do not make up the majority of the student body?

3. What are some of the challenges African-American “movers” face within their new school context?

The aim of this study and its research questions is to examine the experiences of tenured African-American elementary school teachers who have experiences in underprivileged urban areas and privileged suburban areas.
Methodological Overview

Researchers typically use one of three research methodologies to examine research questions: a qualitative methodological approach, a quantitative methodological approach, or a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2009). For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research methodology is used to examine the experiences of African-American educators currently employed in school districts in which the student body is not primarily composed of African-American students.

John W. Creswell (2009), a leading expert in the field of methodological studies, describes qualitative studies as simply “using words rather than numbers” in order to research a problem (p. 3). Bogdan & Biklen (2007), two qualitative methodologists, state that a qualitative researcher’s goal is to examine “human behavior and experience” (p. 43). Sharon B. Merriam (2009), author of *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, writes that qualitative researchers are interested in making sense of participant’s personal experiences, how they interpret their environment, and the significance their experiences hold for them.

Essentially qualitative research seeks to examine what happened or is currently happening to individuals in particular settings of which the general public typically may not be aware of, have access to, or encounter. In this study, the lived experiences of participants involved in this research are studied and described. A qualitative methodology fits well with this study because qualitative research allows the stories and lived experiences of the participants in this study of African-American teachers to be closely examined.
Methodological Approach

Creswell (2013) identifies five approaches researchers can take when conducting research using a qualitative methodology: narrative approach, phenomenological approach, grounded theory approach, an ethnographic study approach, or a case study approach. Each of the five approaches aim to understand participants’ beliefs, perspectives, and experiences; however, after thorough consideration, a case study approach is well suited to examine the lived experiences of African-American teachers participating in this study. More specifically, a comparative case study of the participants personal experiences informs the research questions this study seeks to answer.

A case study approach is used when a researcher seeks to examine a particular setting, subject, event, or phenomenon that occurs in a real-life context in which the boundaries of the phenomenon are clearly evident and multiple methods of data collection are used (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009). I chose a case study approach for several reasons. The most significant reason being that a case study approach fits well as an approach to answer the identified research questions. The in-depth analysis and methods like interviews and focus groups typically involved throughout a case study (Creswell, 2013; Simons, 2009) allow me to answer my identified research questions.

A case study approach has been also selected because a case study examines a phenomenon bounded by particular attributes, typically within a specific time or place (Creswell, 2013). The phenomenon studied in this research is bounded by the characteristics of its participants (e.g., tenured African-American elementary school teachers formerly employed in schools serving high-populations of African-American students) and their current employment
settings (e.g., schools in which African-American students are the minority student population). In a bounded system, you can “fence in” the phenomenon you are particularly examining (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). The identified boundaries in this research allow this study to specifically focus on the phenomenon being examined.

A case study approach was also a viable choice because it allows for multiple cases to be examined (Simmons, 2009). There are three types of intent that exist within a case study approach: a single case study, a multiple case study, or an intrinsic case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013). This research investigates more than one case study; therefore, a multiple case study approach is well-suited. Literature reflects that when a researcher examines more than one case, this type of study can be referred to as a collective case study or a comparative case study (Bogdan & Biklen 2007; Merriam, 2009). This study analyzes more than one case and fits well into the understanding of a multi-case study approach. For the purposes of this study the use of a multi-case study approach is also referred to as a comparative case study. A comparative case study is performed when two or more participants and settings are examined then compared for themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Researchers in a comparative case study focus on a phenomenon and selects multiple cases to investigate the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2013). The experiences of the participants in this study is the phenomenon being explored. This phenomenon is investigated using multiple participants operating across multiple settings.

In addition, a case study approach also fits well because a case study approach is anchored in real-life experiences (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2013). Examining real life experiences allows the participants to share their stories and counterstories. According to notable critical race researchers, Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso (2002):
...the counter-story as a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e. those on the margins of society). The counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform. (p. 32)

Through counterstories researchers are able to examine the lives of marginalized people and discover how they may experience racism and classism on a daily basis (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The participants in this case study have lived experiences in school settings where class and race look very different. Uncovering their experiences through a comprehensive analysis of their stories aids in answering this study’s research questions.

Overall a case study approach and its unique characteristics and attributes is a viable approach to study the lived experiences of the participants in this study. A case study approach and its methods that require a thorough analysis, allows readers to explore a phenomenon without having to have lived the experience (Weiss, 1995). The goal of this research is to utilize a comparative case study approach to investigate the phenomenon being explored in this research.

Participant Selection and Criteria

Qualitative studies often use purposeful or criterion-based sampling to deliberately select settings or people that are particularly relevant to the research (Maxwell, 2013). Selecting individuals that can provide researchers with the information to best help interpret the problem presented is one of the most important considerations in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2013). This study used both a criterion sampling method and a snowball sampling method to identify possible participants for this study.
In criterion-based selection a list of attributes is created prior to data collection. The researcher then proceeds to find participants and/or settings that match the established criteria (Merriam, 2009). The criteria that must be met for this study includes:

- African-American school teachers
- Formerly tenured in a school where African-American students were the majority
- Willingly resigned from a school predominantly serving African-American students
- Currently employed in a school in which African-American students do not make up the majority of its student body

In snowball sampling the researcher asks for identified participants to recommend other possible participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Utilizing these two methods six participants agreed to participate. A full description of participants is provided in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Years in the field of education</th>
<th>Years in HPHM schools</th>
<th>Years in MUC schools</th>
<th>Current position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claudia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Masters +</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kionna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fine Arts Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamara</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Masters +</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Classroom Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vice Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latoya</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Masters +</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reading Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamal</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2 Masters</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Special Ed Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection Methods

In qualitative studies researchers accumulate multiple forms of data (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2013). Case study research data collection is extensive and typically draws from several sources of information (Creswell, 2013). Studies using a qualitative methodology approach characteristically employ the use of specific methods to research topics of interest. Some methods typically used are: interviews, observations, focus groups, official documents, photographs, and journaling (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Qualitative methods used in a case study approach such as in-depth interviewing, focus groups, and letter writing are implemented to examine participant’s lived experiences. These tools allow the researcher to deeply understand the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and experiences of participants (Simons, 2009). This research is interested in uncovering the experiences and hearing the voices of African-American teachers in today's classrooms.

Interviews

Data gathered for qualitative research purposes are typically collected through interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Case studies require extensive interviewing (Creswell, 2013). Collecting the stories of participants requires a dialogue between the researcher and the participants to occur; these stories are gathered using interviews (Creswell, 2013: VanManen, 2014).

The participants involved in this study were interviewed three times individually. Whenever available these individual interviews occurred face-to-face; however, at times a phone interview would be conducted based on participant’s availability and schedule. Each individual interview consisted of an initial interview to gather background information and to introduce the
participant to the study. The second individual interview conducted was a more in-depth interview about their specific experiences in both school settings. The final interview was a follow-up interview addressing any new experiences, final thoughts, and/or any questions or comments to add to the research.

Researchers cannot observe the internal thoughts, feelings, and understandings of participants and the world around them (Merriam, 2009). The main purpose of an interview is to find out what is in someone else's mind (Patton, 2005). In-depth interviews are most appropriate for this research to examine the thoughts and feelings of participants (Simons, 2009). Patton (2005) asserts:

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe...We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer...We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. (pp. 340-341)

Participants personal experiences and the thoughts and feelings that accompany these experiences can only be gathered through interviews. The fact that the participants are African-American allow their counterstories to be shared in contrast to the majoritarian narrative commonly heard in research.

Merriam (2009) acknowledges three types of interviews that are typically conducted in qualitative research: highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Highly structured interviews are very structured and standardized with researchers asking questions in a predetermined order with very little to no deviation away from the specific question and perceived order. Unstructured interviews are very informal are primarily used when the researcher does not know enough about a particular phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 2009).
Semi-structured interviews seem to be the happy medium between the two previously described interview styles. Semi-structured interviews included a mix of flexible structured and unstructured interview questions (Merriam, 2009). Semi-structured interviews are used in this study because they allow for a flow of conversation between the researcher and the participants and a focus on the specific topic of their experiences in contrary school settings.

**Focus Groups**

In qualitative research, focus groups are described as group interviews of participants that are designed to foster talk among the participants and highlight a particular phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Focus groups are guided group discussions around a central topic that allow researchers to obtain data and experiences from multiple participants at once (Solórzano et al., 2000). Focus groups generally consist of a small group of individuals and a facilitator. The facilitator's role is to stimulate discussion from group participants that will allow for multiple perspectives to be heard in one setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Group participants in focus groups have been known to help each other articulate their own ideas about a topic and even formulate new ideas (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Merriam (2009) reminds researchers that focus groups should be used as a way to gather data that will best answer research questions.

This comparative case study uses a focus group as another method to gather the perspectives and experiences of multiple participants that moved from HPHM schools to MUC schools. Each participant was asked if they would participate in the focus group. Only four of the six participants agreed. Of the four that agreed only three were able to find a common meeting time during a four-week timeframe. Therefore, half of the participants involved in this research were able to participate in the focus group and further investigate their multiple school
experiences. Because focus groups stimulate talk among participants, a focus group is considered a viable and useful method for this study to gather data regarding life experiences participants may have not otherwise shared in a one-on-one individual setting.

**Letter Writing**

Research says documents in case studies can be used to triangulate data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). The term *document* is typically used as an all-purpose term covering a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the research being examined (Merriam, 2009). Research identifies letter writing as a form of documentation that can be used to investigate a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Letter writing is described by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) as “a way of engaging in written dialogue between the researcher and participants” (p. 6). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert that letters can create and maintain relationships between participants and researchers. Researcher and participant generated letter writing through emails are used to complete the triangulation of data for this research study. Two emails were sent out for participant responses. The first email was distributed toward the start of this investigation. The second email was sent near the end of the investigation. Each email contained separate questions and was designed to gather information about the phenomenon being examined. Utilizing letter writing in this study will allow the researcher and participants to continue to engage in meaningful dialogue even when not physically in each other’s presence.
Table 2
Alignment of Research Questions and Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question:</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Letter Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What factors influenced participants’ decisions to resign from high-poverty schools largely serving minority students?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. How are these factors experienced in their current setting, if at all?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are the experiences of African-American teachers who resign from high-poverty schools that largely serve minority students, to accept positions in schools where that same population do not make up the majority of the student body?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are some of the challenges African-American “movers” face within their new school context?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis and Coding

Data analysis is the way in which researchers make sense of the collected data. Making sense of the data includes reducing the data through consolidation, deciphering what participants have said, and interpreting everything the researchers have seen and read (Merriam, 2009). The collected data analyzed in this study includes interview transcripts, focus group transcripts, and participant and researcher generated documents and emails.

The analysis of data in qualitative research generally begins with a coding process (Creswell, 2009). Coding is the process of searching through collected data for patterns and organizing those patterns into categories to help bring meaning to the collected data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Weiss, 1995). These patterns can be developed through an open coding process which involves the examination of the data and constructing categories from the investigation (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2013). Reading through data and searching for
regularities and patterns allow researchers to create words and phrases that represent discovered patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). NVivo, a computer program that supports researchers in coding was also used to examine the collected data.

The multiple codes were identified and were subsequently analyzed for commonalties across all cases. Identifying these codes through an open coding method allows for patterns and categories to emerge (Creswell, 2009). The resulting cross-case codes were developed into themes that highlight recurring patterns found within the data (Merriam, 2009). The identified themes are: the African-American educator experience in high-poverty, high-minority schools, the African-American educator experience in middle- and upper-class schools, and critical race theory in middle- and upper-class schools. Subsequently, this research makes connections between the research questions, the identified conceptual framework, and the collected data through data analysis. See Table 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA Parents</td>
<td>Administration Issues</td>
<td>The African-American educator experience in high-poverty, high-minority schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration, positive</td>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration, negative</td>
<td>Safety Concerns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration, general</td>
<td>Low wages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPHM school attributes</td>
<td>Feeling like family</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HPHM parents</td>
<td>Low Parent involvement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HPHM students</td>
<td>Ineffective School Operations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences in Leaving HPHM</td>
<td>Professional Development in HPHM</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MUC school attributes</td>
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<td>The African-American educator experience in middle- and upper-class schools</td>
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<td>MUC students</td>
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<td>Advice to future AA educators</td>
<td>Counterstory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity trainings</td>
<td>Deficiencies in staff diversity</td>
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Limitations in Analysis

Analysis in qualitative research varies based on the researcher and the lens in which the phenomenon is studied, and researchers sometimes disagree on patterns or codes identified by other researchers (Creswell, 2009). These large variations in qualitative research studies can create a limitation on the reliability, validity, and generalizability of qualitative studies (Merriam, 2009). The extent to which research findings can be replicated and applied to other situations has been recognized as a limitation in qualitative studies (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). In order to address limitations of validity and reliability, Creswell (2009) suggests researchers triangulate data, use member checking, provide thick description, report and clarify any researcher biases, present information that may contradict findings, spend a sufficient amount of time in the field, and debrief to enhance accuracy.

Conclusion of Methodology

This chapter discussed research design, how it applies to this study, research participants, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and identified limitations in qualitative data analysis. In summary, this research uses a qualitative research methodology, specifically utilizing a comparative case study approach, to explore the experiences of the participants. Interviews, focus groups, and letter writing, are collected to triangulate data and assist in answering the identified research questions regarding the participants’ experiences and the factors that influenced their decision. The collected data has been openly coded and analyzed for patterns, categories, and/or themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009).
CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of African-American educators leaving high-minority, high-poverty schools for positions in more affluent suburban communities. The participants of this study are African-American educators who resigned from Title 1 schools serving predominantly minority students from low socioeconomic households and gaining employment in middle- and upper-class schools. Each participant’s experience is unique; however, they also share some similarities. The participants’ uniqueness and similarities are discussed in this section.

The purpose of the data analysis is to introduce the participants, share their experiences, report research findings, and disclose themes discovered through the research and coding of the data. The data collected includes three interview transcripts per participant, one focus group transcript, and correspondence emails between the researcher and participants. All data collected was subsequently coded through NVivo, a computer coding software program commonly used in data analysis (Creswell, 2013). Initial codes were identified then consolidated to form common themes found among participants.

The data analysis in this comparative case study begins with a description of participants, a description of the findings with supporting evidence, a summary of the findings, the importance of hearing the black voice, sharing of participants’ counterstory, and a conclusion of the data analysis.
Description of Participants

Each participant has self-identified as either Black or African-American. Each participant has over 10 years of experience in the field of education and has been employed in high-poverty, high-minority (HPHM) school districts as well as middle- and upper-class (MUC) school districts. Participant involvement in this study is deemed confidential; therefore, pseudonyms are used in place of any identifiable characteristics.

Claudia

Claudia is a 35-year-old African-American female who has worked in the field of education for 12 years. Claudia received her undergraduate degree in elementary education and is currently working toward her Master’s degree in reading. She began her career working in HPHM schools in Alaska, Florida, and Texas. For eight years she worked in HPHM schools until her spouse accepted employment in Illinois. After relocating with her family to Illinois in 2014, Claudia accepted a teaching position in a MUC school district in New Creek, Illinois. New Creek, Illinois stands out in the state of Illinois as a nationally recognized school district for its above average testing scores.

Claudia feels that being an African-American educator is important in both HMHP and MUC school settings.

I just feel like Black people as a culture are under fire right now. And I feel like a lot of black teachers, it feels like you have to give back. You have to be a part of this career because it matters...And when I look at my students I feel like I am looking into the future. These kids, you know, you have such precious time with them. You have seven hours with them every day. The amount of impact you have on them is unbelievable.

(Personal Communication, October 10, 2017)
Kionna

Kionna Robinson is a 39-year-old African-American female who has been in the field of education for 16 years. She currently works in the state of Georgia in an affluent suburb. Kionna is very personable, with an infectious personality and has successfully thrived in a wide variety of settings. She has worked in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and charter schools. She has worked in multiple schools in Chicago and its surrounding areas. Kionna has a master’s degree in Elementary Education with a concentration in English and Language Arts (ELA), social sciences, and fine arts. She also has a master’s degree in Educational Leadership. I would describe Kionna as a self-motivated, very passionate, hardworking individual and entrepreneur who likes a challenge.

Kionna has the unique experience of serving a different dynamic of student in her current MUC community. Her community consists of very rural White families who have lived in the community for generations; as well as affluent Black families who are buying land and building new homes in the same community. Kionna shared:

I have a wide range, I have a wide range of student. You have those students that are affluent, then you have those students that are borderline poverty. So, it makes it harder for those students because they see the range. It was easier on the Westside [of Chicago] when everybody was broke. But down here [Georgia] you now have these groups that are wearing $1,000 outfits to school in the same class with kids who are [financially] struggling. (Personal Communication, June 4, 2017)

Kamara

Kamara is a 35-year old African-American female who has worked in the field of education for 14 years. Of those 14 years, 12 years were spent serving HPHM students in Title 1 schools and two years were spent serving MUC students. Kamara received her undergraduate degree in Elementary Education in 2004 and her master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction
in 2007. Like Kionna, Kamara has taught in a variety of settings. She has taught in a public middle school, a public elementary school, an affluent charter school, and a private preschool. Kamara is a caring teacher who advocates for her students.

Similar to Claudia and Kionna, Kamara has had experience teaching in the south. She taught at Cadence Elementary, an affluent charter school in Arizona for two years. In 2011, at the end of her second-year teaching in Arizona, her husband accepted new employment in the Midwest and they relocated back to their home state of Illinois. Currently Kamara teaches in a public elementary school in a middle-class community in Cornhill, Illinois.

Kamara shares that while working in the affluent neighborhood she had very different experiences than any of her other teaching assignments:

Living in Arizona with big houses and big pools in the backyard. They [elementary charter school students] did not have really that much exposure to anything else, and by no fault of their own. I just really think that it [affluence] is kind of like all they really knew...Like in Arizona the parents would give these over the top gifts. A Coach purse, huge gift cards. I didn’t have to buy my own Starbucks for a year. That type of thing. So, you know, you know such a different experience. Very different. (Personal Communication, June 21, 2017)

Brandi

Brandi is a 38-year-old African-American Vice Principal in Voit, Illinois. She has been in the field of education for ten years. She worked in the field of finance before deciding to make a career change to education and obtaining her master’s degree in Elementary Education as well as a second master’s degree in Educational Leadership. Brandi began her teaching career at a Title I school outside of Chicago. She has worked in the Chicagoland suburbs as an educator for six years before resigning to teach in a more diverse setting. Brandi is the embodiment of a strong Black woman. She earned her undergraduate degree and two master’s degree while raising two
young girls and working. In 2017, she accepted a role in administration and now continues to be a fierce advocate for students, parents, and teachers.

Brandi can be described as a no-nonsense, yet passionate educator who easily connects with her students and their families. Throughout her interviews, Brandi expressed that she feels she made the right choice in transitioning to a MUC school:

I left the district and never looked back. I feel valued and appreciated here. My voice is heard, and my salary, my salary, it was a $10,000 raise just because I moved from one district to the next. I’m doing the same job and I have more support. I had to work harder in the old district doing clerical, tedious stuff, I was my own secretary, but in this district, I have support staff for that and it makes a big difference. Because of it [support staff assistance] I am able to focus more on my students. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2017)

**Latoya**

Latoya is a 35-year old African-American female who has worked in education for 11 years. She graduated with enough credentials to become licensed to teach grades K-12. She continued her education and went on to receive her master’s degree in Reading and completed her English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement in 2017. Latoya values education and is looking forward to beginning a leadership and administration program in the near future. The majority of her teaching career has been at one particular HPHM school, Jefferson Elementary in Broadside, Illinois. In her current upper-class school setting, Latoya works to protect her very few minority students from injustice and discrimination. During each interview Latoya shared multiple stories of encouraging and building up the self-esteem of many young minority students in her school.

As a classroom teacher, Latoya has taught kindergarten, second, and fourth grade. As a Reading Specialist, Latoya has taught at middle and elementary school levels. In 2016, she
resigned from Broadside and accepted a Reading Specialist position at Willow Grove Elementary in LaPorte, Illinois, an affluent Chicago suburb.

Latoya has had trouble adjusting to the new, unfamiliar experiences in LaPorte where only a handful of African-American teachers are employed throughout the district:

Right now, I am the only African-American educator in my building. There is one other African-American and she is the social worker...I have heard stories they [Willow Grove] have had African-Americans over the years, but they left. And to be honest I’m to that point. I’m not sure if I see myself making tenure there. I’m almost positive...I may give it another year, but after that I think I will probably go on to something else, because I just don’t know. Every day is a struggle. (Personal Communication, June 5, 2017)

Jamal

Jamal is the only male participant. Jamal is a 38-year old African-American educator. He has worked in the field of education for 11 years. Jamal has taught elementary, middle, and high school students. Similar to Brandi, Jamal began his career in business and later returned to school to obtain a master’s in Elementary Education. In 2016, Jamal graduated with his second master’s degree in Special Education and accepted a teaching position in Oakdale, Illinois, an affluent Chicago suburb.

Jamal can be described as having a commanding presence with a passion for teaching and connecting with students. Jamal consistently shows caring and compassion for his students. He strives to get to know and understand them through discussions and meaningful connections with both the students and their families. Jamal shared in his interviews the importance of having experience in HPHM communities. When asked in his third interview if there was some additional information he would like to add and/or expand on, Jamal said:

You know one thing I will say is that I don’t want people to think that Jefferson
Elementary [in Broadside, IL] is a bad school, because it’s not. It's where I developed my foundation for teaching and its really some wonderful teachers there; they just aren’t getting the support that they need. (Personal Communication, October 22, 2017)

The participants in this study are all well-educated African-American educators with a wide variety of experiences. Each participant has experiences in both HPHM schools as well as MUC school. A brief overview of the participants can be found in revisiting Table 1.

Findings

While researching and collecting data for this study similar characteristics between participants’ experiences began to surface throughout the investigation. Participants shared similar ideas and experiences in the following areas: factors influencing leaving high-poverty, high-minority (HPHM) schools, differences in operating in middle- and upper-class (MUC) schools, being a part of the minority population in MUC settings, dealing with racial issues as the minority in a MUC setting, having responsibilities to minority students and families in MUC settings. These factors and the number of participants who experienced each factor can be found in Table 4.
### Table 4

**Findings in Analysis of the Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th># of participants reporting this finding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factors influencing resignation</strong></td>
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<td>Administration issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack resources</td>
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<td>Safety concerns</td>
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<td>Low Wages</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Comparing Communities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling like family</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent Involvement in each community</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>School operations and procedures in each community</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pressure to perform in MUC schools</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lack of staff diversity</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Encountering racial issues</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Microaggressions</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
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<td>White Privilege</td>
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<td>Unfair treatment of black students</td>
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<td>Counterspace</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sense of responsibility to AA students and families</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Role Models</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate and Ally</td>
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**Factors Influencing Resignation**

Teachers leave schools for a variety of reasons (Ingersoll, 2001). Data reflects that participants in this study left HPHM schools because of negative issues with administration, the
lack of resources available in HPHM schools, community safety concerns about gun and gang violence, and low pay received by educators in HPHM schools.

Participants revealed multiple factors influencing their decisions to leave HPHM schools. All participants highlighted areas of dissatisfaction when working in HPHM schools, however Kamara, Kionna, and Claudia’s resignations were also influenced by immediate family members decisions to relocate. Latoya, Jamal, and Brandi accepted positions in MUC schools as a direct result of frustration and dissatisfaction with teaching in a HPHM school. Participants reported issues of dissatisfaction with upper-administration, a lack of resources, community safety concerns, and low wages as influences on their decisions to leave HPHM school settings.

Issues with upper administration as an influence in leaving HPHM schools were reported by four participants. Bandura (1993) reports his research has shown that the quality of leadership is essential in the development and maintenance of an effective school. Administrative support has a meaningful impact on teacher retention and a positive leadership experience can have a positive impact on teacher turnover rates (Hughes et al., 2015). Kionna described that in her experience, “Title 1 schools in Illinois typically only had one principal and one assistant principal. And you really don’t have the opportunity to get feedback on your teaching right away. Administration has a lot on their plate, so they don’t have time” (Personal Communication, August 16, 2017).

When asked to share reasons he decided to seek employment in another district, Jamal shared:

Administration...I really felt like it was because of administration. I loved my co-workers…I had a good rapport with all the teachers. I didn’t have issues with the administration I reported directly to, it was more so the superintendent and the people at the administration building. It always seemed like the kids weren’t their priority. You
could tell by the moves that were made and the way resources were allocated, and the ways money was spent. (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017)

Similarly, Latoya shared:

I remember there was a good principal that they fired in January shortly after classes resumed. Parents protested [the principal's firing], teachers protested, kids protested, to no avail. They never told us why he was let go. They just quickly replaced him. And they [upper administration] just kept it moving. (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017)

Brandi was the most outspoken participant when discussing issues of frustration with upper administration in her former district:

I felt like leadership in Broadside were more like managers at Walmart, they were just managing. They didn’t support you or your craft. They didn’t help you develop or grow into the best teacher you could be... And the poor leadership started at the administrative center level with the superintendent and the board [Broadsie Board of Education], it was ever changing. And change is not a bad thing, especially in education, change is good. But their change was not good, it was not healthy, it was inconsistent. In four years I worked under three superintendents...So if the administration is unorganized, then unfortunately it trickles down to the schools, the school leaders, the teachers, and the students. There was never consistency. (Personal Communication, June 28, 2017)

Similarly, Latoya revealed, “The moral acts of the leadership ultimately affected the morale and work ethics of the staff, which was not good and made for an unhealthy and unproductive work environment” (Email to Author, February 11, 2018).

Another influence on participants decisions to leave was the lack of resources available in HPHM districts. Three participants mentioned the lack of resources available to them as teachers in their HPHM schools. Urban schools disproportionally suffer from a lack of resources and materials (Kelly, 2004; Loeb et al., 2005; Massey et al., 2014). Claudia reported relocating with her family was not the only reason she left her former HPHM school:

The main reason I left was not only due to moving, but because I was frustrated with the lack of support and resources. Without the proper amount of support this job can become extremely draining. High minority schools are almost always struggling with resources and finances... It can be a lot to put on a teacher. (Email to Author, November 2, 2017)
Jamal said, “Even something as small as a SMART board lightbulb. Every SMART board needs a lightbulb to illuminate the screen and once that goes out that was it. Basically, your SMART board was gone. In Broadside they would always run out of SMART board lightbulbs and I would have to wait weeks to get it replaced and back working” (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017). When addressing the lack of resources, Latoya reported an abundance of materials available in her new district:

At my new school we have so many resources I haven’t been able to get to them all. … In my previous school [HPHM] there was one kit for all the reading interventionists in the school; here we each have our own kit. And the kit I used in Broadside is considered old here… It’s is just unbelievable really, the materials and resources here when I think back to what was available to me back then. (Personal Communication, October 18, 2017)

When employed by her new district she was immediately provided with an Apple MacBook as a work computer. In her upper-class school district resources are readily available for teachers and students:

We have a multitude of programs and resources to meet the needs of all students at all levels. The district works to make sure each classroom and support staff has up-to-date resources as well as adequate training to support implementation [of resources]. (Email to Author, February 11, 2018)

Another common factor participants identified as influencing their decision to leave was the issue of safety concerns in their former districts. Two participants discussed concerns regarding issues of violence in their former schools. Safety concerns and increased issues of violence are frequently highlighted in HPHM communities (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Jones & Sandidge, 1997). Latoya shared:

I can go walking during my lunch break now and I don’t have to worry about getting shot you know. Whereas in my former district we had multiple shootings within blocks of the school. Even on the same block. (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017)
Kionna was the only participant who worked in the City of Chicago. She worked on the westside of Chicago in an extremely impoverished neighborhood. Kionna shared:

Well Chicago Public Schools, you know, you’re dealing with low income, you’re dealing with a high rate of single parents, you’re dealing with students living in an area that’s stricken with violence. You’re dealing with an area that is stricken with drugs and alcohol, and unsafe conditions. And it’s all right in the neighborhood, right around the school….you face challenges just going to school and work each day...I actually loved working at Lowe School [pseudonym] in Chicago. The kids were amazing. But the neighborhood was just rough. Working there was rough. I felt like I was taking a lot of risk just traveling there every day. (Telephone Conversation, August 16, 2017)

Both Kionna and Latoya have witnessed gun violence while teaching. Kionna recalls a particular incident while teaching on the westside of Chicago:

One day there was a shooting while I was outside for recess with my students. And what was really disheartening was that they [students] were used to it, and that hurt. But when the shooting happened they watched and immediately pulled out their cell phones to record it. They were only in 8th grade...It [shooting] happened right outside of the gated off area where the kids have recess. The person got shot and they saw it all. He was bleeding and they saw it. But like I said it hurt because it didn’t seem out of the ordinary to them… it was hard. (Telephone Conversation, August 16, 2017)

Unfortunately, like Kionna, Latoya has also witnessed a gun victim immediately after a shooting. Latoya recalled:

I saw a shooting right outside of my classroom window. I did not know what the shot was, but one of my [4th grade] students yelled at me saying, “Get down Ms. Means that’s a gunshot!” I was in disbelief, but he and half of my class were already on the floor. So, I went to look outside, and I see somebody fall on the sidewalk. And I realized somebody really did get shot! And the guy that fell just stayed down, he didn’t get up. (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017)

Teachers operating in HPHM neighborhoods with high rates of violent crimes have additional stresses beyond the yearly academic progress gains on the annual statewide test.

Claudia mentioned multiple conversations she has had with African-American parents who share that they work multiple jobs to get away from the city and the violence because they “want something more for their kids”. One mom shared with her “I’d work three and four jobs to have
my kids be able to play outside without me having to worry” (Personal Communication, October 10, 2017).

Additionally, low wages were identified as a factor influencing participant’s decisions to resign. Three participants described issues of low wages during data collection. Brandi was the most outspoken participant regarding the negative affect low pay has on teachers’ morale; low salary was one of the most influential factors in her decision to leave her former school:

The main reason I left my former district was because of the low salary. The pay was an insult. I put my heart and soul into that job because I had so much passion as a new teacher. Unfortunately, I did not feel like I was compensated or recognized for my hard work and education. I left that district as a teacher and went to my new district and received a 10K increase. I feel appreciated in my new district and my pay reflects that appreciation. (Email to Author, November 4, 2017)

When asked if he received a pay increase when accepting a position in Oakdale Jamal said, “Let me put it like this, they have special ed teachers there making six figures. There was never a special ed teacher in Broadside making six figures. They could retire at 99 and still wouldn’t be making six figures” (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017). Similarly, Latoya mentioned:

I even get paid more extra money during summer school. I collect my regular check then collect additional summer school money. Now, yes, I did the same thing in my last district and would earn extra pay each year during summer school, but here I get paid $35 dollars per hour for summer school. There I only got paid $24 dollars an hour. (Personal Communication, September 3, 2017)

Identifying administration issues, lack of resources, safety concerns, and low wages as reasons of resigning supports previous research findings (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). Participants described these findings as reasons why they began to seek out employment in MUC school systems. Researchers like Ingersoll (2001) and Kozol (2005) describe the high rate of teacher turnover and dismal school conditions associated with HPHM schools. To avoid negative issues
with administration, community violence, lower wages, and a lack of resources, participants sought out opportunities in MUC school districts. In the following section participants describe what happened once they arrived in their new school setting.

Comparing Contrasting Communities

After obtaining employment in a MUC setting, participants had to adjust to a new school culture and the overall operations of the new school. Participants revealed significant differences when comparing the two school settings. One community, the MUC community, holds large amounts of cultural capital deemed valuable by the dominant culture in power (Kingston, 2001; Nash, 1990). The second community, the HPHM community also has cultural capital of which participants are more familiar with and share personal experiences. However, this capital is not recognized as legitimate in the field of education (Chandler & McKnight, 2009).

One noticeable aspect when comparing these different communities was the sense of family. Participants described being a part of a family when working in their previous school. They describe this sense of family missing within their MUC school settings. Brandi mentioned:

I have been fortunate to have colleagues in both schools that were team players, but I have seen a difference. In my previous district we build a camaraderie, a camaraderie of family. We weren't just colleagues, we were family. Here [MUC school] I am professional and continue to work with my colleagues, but we do our job, and that’s it. In my previous district [HPHM] we talked after work, we attended events together outside of work, we would go to our children's birthday parties. In this district I haven’t even met most of my colleagues’ children. They keep work and family completely separated. And in a way I feel like a part of it is because of who I am [African-American]. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2017)

Similarly, Claudia said, “Here [MUC school] you don’t go anywhere. There [HPHM school] it was very community centered. It was like everybody was supportive…There was just a very strong sense of community” (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017).
In addressing the lack of a sense of community Latoya shared, “It’s really different. I really don’t fraternize, I try to keep to myself. And that’s just because I know I’m not welcomed, I don’t feel that sense of community” (Personal Communication October 7, 2017).

Kamara and Jamal reported that not only was there a lack of a sense of family, but instead it was replaced with a sense of contention in their MUC settings. Kamara said:

In Freeman [HPHM school] we were more like family. In Arizona [MUC school] there seemed to be more of a competition among staff… I feel like there was more staff cohesiveness [in HPHM school] than there was in Arizona. You know you need to be able to ask questions of other teachers… in Arizona it was like everybody was on their own. (Personal Communication August 7, 2017)

Jamal commented:

In Oakdale [MUC] it's really kind of like a dog-eat-dog world. It could be a cultural thing too, but the majority of the staff is Caucasian and they just kind of stay in their own lane. There isn’t much of a relationship with them. In fact, it's more like a competition. It’s like you have to get your own successes for yourself, because they are sure going to get theirs with or without you. (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017)

Another noticeable difference when comparing communities was the difference in parent involvement in each setting. Characteristically more often parents are more involved in MUC school districts, however, there are many factors influencing parent involvement in these contrasting communities (Valencia & Solorzano, 1997). Participants discussed how parent involvement looked different when comparing school settings. Kamara and Brandi both mentioned feelings of shock when they had 100 percent parent participation at their first parent-teacher conferences in MUC schools. Brandi expressed feelings of excitement when recalling her first parent/teacher conference experience in her new district, “For the first time ever I had 100% parent/teacher conference participation. There was 100% attendance rate. I met with someone from every family” (Personal Communication, June 28, 2017). Similarly, Kamara also shared; “When I was in Arizona I had 100% parent teacher conference participation. And I also had
people getting into arguments, real arguments about who was going to get to be the room mom” (Personal Communication, August 7, 2017). During conversations with Kamara regarding her experiences with parent involvement she shared:

I got more involvement from parents in Arizona, but my parents in the Title 1 schools were working. Yeah, they [HPHM school students] maybe don’t get to see their mom as much because she works. And that doesn't mean he doesn’t have a mom, and that doesn’t mean he doesn’t have a good mom. What it does mean is that as a teacher you do not have the right to make him feel like his home life is somehow wrong just because that isn’t the way you were brought up. (Telephone Conversation, October 18, 2017)

Kamara also warns, “You know you go from having to hunt parents down for conferences and that kind of thing, to always having a parent in your face asking things like, “Why isn’t my first grader reading at a fifth-grade level?” In like manner Claudia reported, “You know I didn’t always have a big presence of parents. Whereas in these suburban schools there are parents everywhere, all the time. And sometimes it’s a good thing, and sometimes you know it’s not. It depends on the situation” (Personal Communication, June 13, 2017).

When addressing differences in parent participation at his MUC, Jamal reported, “At Jefferson [HPHM school] you had your parents that really cared. But in Oakdale you’d see a lot more parent participation. The parents even have a club that’s separate from the PTA. They meet and discuss issues collectively and these meetings are packed” (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017).

Additionally, school operations and management procedures were identified as a noticeable difference when comparing HPHM schools and MUC schools. School operations are an important part of the success of the school and its employees. It is important that schools provide supports for teachers and staff (Duncan & Murnane, 2014). Brandi expressed feelings of
frustration when recalling the lack of effective operating procedures and management in her former district:

I don’t even know how to describe management in that district... Incompetent, unorganized, and dysfunctional. I had to wait two weeks after the beginning of school to even start teaching in my own classroom. When I was hired the HR department didn’t realize they never sent me to have my background test or a drug test...So, the powers that be decided that until they received those results back I could not teach my assigned classroom. I even informed them I had my substitute license in Illinois and would be willing to teach my class as a temporary sub … but they rejected that proposal as an option. Instead they paid a different substitute teacher to teach my students for the first two weeks of school. That just goes back to how dysfunctional and unorganized the administration in charge of that district was. It was absolutely frustrating to say the least. (Focus Group Conversation, October 7, 2017)

Brandi also reported:

Not having to focus on all the extra clerical stuff my old district made me do is so wonderful. For example, in my other district we were using outdated attendance logs that were hand recorded daily and monthly hand recorded logs too. In this district all we have to do is just take attendance electronically in the morning and then I’m done. (Personal Communication, June 28, 2017)

Similarly, in her MUC school, Latoya reports that operations allow her the freedom to effectively carry out her duties as a Reading Specialist:

Here [MUC] I am not pulled away from my students to sub in a classroom teacher’s absence. If there is no sub to cover they use other options. The principal will even come in to sub. They appreciate and respect my role here. (Personal Communication October 7, 2017)

When asked about his experiences with school operations in contrasting districts Jamal said:

I had never seen what a well-oiled machine looked like. Here I see the superintendent working hand in hand with the principal, the principal working hand in hand with the departments. They work in concert...The teachers ask for something and it's on their desk right away, within a few hours or the next day. Computer goes out, you call the tech department and five minutes later somebody from the tech department is knocking on your door. He’s there to diagnose the problem and if he can’t fix it he goes downstairs, gets you another computer from the onsite storage facility and put it in your room. They send your old computer out to the manufacturer, cause see they have an arrangement with them that if any computers go out they get a brand new one for free. In Broadside…I had
Chromebooks with viruses on them … I’d ask for them to get fixed, and nothing would get done. The summer would pass, I’d come back to school the next year and they would have the same viruses on them. (Personal Communication, June 10, 2017)

Noticeable differences in security practices and procedures were also mentioned by Kamara and Brandi. Kamara said, “I will say in Arizona [MUC] had a top-notch building and security for the school. In this school [MUC] the leadership has worked to improve the building and make it safer” (Email to Author, February 10, 2018). In the same way Brandi described:

There is a huge difference in security when comparing my two experiences; my former district and my current district. Money has been allocated to make sure there are two secure doors and a glass window separating the front office from visitors. In my former district there was just a doornbell that visitors rang, the staff at the desk would let them in, and visitors would walk down the hallway passing students, offices, and bathrooms before arriving at the main office. (Brandi, Email to Author, February 19, 2018)

Also, when comparing communities, participants talked about feelings of pressure to perform in MUC schools. These feelings were not reported in the same way when operating in HPHM schools. Another similarity reported by participants in this study, is the shared feeling of a need to perform extremely well as Black professionals in education. In prior research, African-American educators have reported feelings of pressure to positively represent their race and the need to constantly fight against negative stereotypes about Black people that overshadow individual accomplishments (Mabokela & Madsen, 2007; Milner & Woolfolk-Hoy 2003). As mentioned in the review of literature, Mabokela and Madsen (2007) argue that the pressure felt by Black teachers to represent their race can be referred to as a “symbolic consequence” (p. 1187). Other researchers identify this pressure as a form of symbolic violence or symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1989; Kitalong, 1998; Toshalis, 2010). Brandi discussed this type of symbolic violence when she shared:

They [White colleagues] don’t assume you’re going to do well. You always have to look the part and be confident in every, every realm of this profession. I missed my whole
summer this past summer because I was so busy preparing for a new role [Vice Principal] that I was going to take on. I feel like White colleagues wouldn’t have to work that hard to prepare in the same way. Because I have to go above and beyond what is expected...I worked and pushed myself. They [White colleagues] don’t have to do that. And they’re just accepted, but I feel like if I didn't do it, it's like oh look there’s a Black chick slacking...So you have to push and there is never relax time. Unfortunately, it’s unfair. It’s unfair, our paycheck looks the same, but I have to stay on my A game at all times. (Focus Group Conversation, October 7, 2017)

Kamara also supports this same idea regarding feelings of pressure to perform when she shared;

I mean I hated it [pressure to perform], and on top of that I was the new girl at the school [Arizona MUC]. It was hard. You know...Am I doing things, right? Am I talking the right way? Am I too, you know? Do I sound intelligent enough? You know you always feel like you’re not good enough. At the time I had first graders and we were reading *Cam Jansen* [popular early education picture chapter book] and I remember wondering, should I be reading this with them or *Harry Potter*? I just felt like I didn’t have any room to make mistakes. I felt like I had to hit the ground running. (Personal Communication, August 7, 2017)

When asked what cautionary advice she would tell her former colleagues seeking employment in a school like hers, Latoya said,

I would tell them cross your t’s and dot your i’s and try to stay one step ahead of everybody. Don’t put your trust in them [new colleagues], don’t think they’ll do right by you. Instead put your trust in God. But if it were a White former colleague I would tell them “Hey great! Enjoy, you’re in a great school district!”... For real that’s what I would tell them because they would be accepted, they wouldn’t be judged by their peers. That internalized negative perception wouldn’t be there. They would embrace them. So, I would just say, “Welcome”. (Telephone Conversation, October 18, 2017)

In comparing HPHM school districts and MUC school districts the participants highlighted multiple differences during data collection. In these highlighted findings participants shared how they felt like family in HPHM schools but did not experience familial feelings in MUC schools. They shared how parental involvement in each school community looked different. Participants described a difference in school operations and management when comparing the two communities. Finishing their comparisons of the two school communities, the participants disclosed of having to bear the extra burden of having to perform above what is
typically asked of White MUC teachers. In this new setting, White teachers represented the majority of the employed staff.

**Lack of Staff Diversity**

In addition to adjusting to a new community, participants had to adjust to a change in demographics. In their new school communities participants become part of the minority population in the MUC setting; contrary to their experience of being part of the majority population in a HPHM school setting. The lack of diversity among teachers has historically been a lingering concern in American public education institutions (Foster, 1997). The implementation of desegregation brought about dramatic changes in the lives of African-American teachers. The scars of these decisions still reverberate in today’s classrooms. In the book *Black Stats*, Morris (2014) writes that only seven percent of the total teaching workforce in U.S. public schools are Black.

Participants in this study shared that they are one of a very few African-Americans employed within MUC school settings. Brandi mentioned, “I’m coming from a district where the majority of the staff were African-American and then I went to a school where there are two of us. There are two of us in the whole school” (Personal Communication, June 28, 2017).

Most participants always had at least one other African-American in the school to connect to, with the exception of Claudia and Kamara. When Claudia began her position in her current MUC she was the only African-American individual employed at her school for three years before Mr. Washington began in 2016 (Personal Communication, June 13, 2017). Claudia revealed:

I wish there were more of us [African-American educators]. It's kind of hard being the only one. But I think that is unique to Black teachers in affluent suburbs. In these areas
there are usually one or two in the whole building. You know that's hard. It's hard because then you don't have anyone else to relate to. (Personal Communication, October 10, 2017)

Kamara recounted that while working in an MUC in Arizona, she was the only African-American employed in her entire school. Kamara shared, “I was absolutely the only one. There was nobody I could connect to. At least no other adult and very few children either” (Personal Communication, August 7, 2017). Latoya mentioned multiple experiences in LaPorte that bring light to what is really happening in schools that employ very low numbers of minorities as well as serve low numbers of minority students. Latoya shared an experience in which she felt isolated in her MUC school:

At my very first district wide meeting at the beginning of the year I just looked up and everyone was talking and laughing you know, and I looked around and there were only four African-Americans in the whole room. There were like 300 teachers in total, but only four African-Americans and I sat there like, “Oh my God”. And I thought back to my old institute days where I’d be sitting next to people laughing and roasting [joking about] each other and there you know, I felt welcomed from day one...Here everybody had their own cliques and so you know, I literally just went into the bathroom and I cried. (Focus Group Conversation, October 7, 2017)

Being one of a very few African-Americans in your place of employment can be stressful. As a result, participants report an increase in dealing with racial issues. Combating stereotypes and dealing with racism and microaggressions became a familiar part of their workday in their MUC school experience.

**Encountering Racial Issues**

Faced with being the minority in their new MUC school settings, participants also had to deal with a new set of issues, racial issues. Participants reported having to deal with microaggressions, racism, stereotypes of Black people, White privilege, student inequalities, and finding a counterspace to be themselves.
Microaggressions are described by Pierce as “subtle, innocuous, pre-conscious, or unconscious degradations and putdowns” (Pierce, 1995, p. 281). Each participant shared forms of microaggressions they experienced while working in a MUC school setting. Latoya summed it up well when she exclaimed during the focus group, “You know it's the little things they do, the small subtle things to throw you off your game” (Focus Group Conversation, October 7, 2017).

Latoya shared many instances in which her co-workers would ask her, “Are you angry? Are you mad? Are you upset?” (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017), as if to feed into the stereotype of an angry Black woman. They would also ask her questions like, “Why does your weave move your whole scalp when you scratch your hair” (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017)? Additionally, Latoya disclosed that many of her White colleagues simply would not speak to her. “I ran into some of my coworkers this summer when turning in my laptop and I spoke to her and she didn’t even look up to acknowledge me. It was crazy. But it's like anywhere you go you have to deal with the color of your skin” (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017).

In a separate incident involving microaggressions, Latoya overheard a White teacher making fun of a young Hispanic boy during an end-of-the-year school assembly. The young student was receiving an award for outstanding citizenship, and one White teacher leaned over to other White teachers and said, “I hope he doesn’t think that means he’s a citizen now” (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017).

Similar to Latoya’s experience, other participants shared they had experienced multiple instances in which White colleagues refused to speak to them or acknowledge them. In each of these participant’s experiences, however, they confronted their colleagues. Brandi shared:
At my current, every morning I would speak to a few of my co-workers and they would never speak back. Eventually I just ignored it until one day one of these same coworkers walked into my room and started asking me questions without first saying hello. I immediately took that opportunity to rectify the greeting issue that I was having. I stopped her mid-sentence and simply said, "Good Morning" her face turned red and she said, "I'm sorry, I didn't speak?" I replied, "No, you didn't." We finished our conversation and from that day she spoke every morning. (Email to Author, November 4, 2017)

In like manner, Jamal shared:

There was this one young White teacher that never spoke to me. We worked together in special ed you know. I saw her every morning. And I would say hi to her, she wouldn't say a word. So, after like a week or two weeks of me saying hi and she just walked past, one day while we were in class I walked up to her and was like, “Ms. Such and Such, you know I say hi to you every morning?” And she was like, “Sometimes I’m in a zone I don’t hear.” And I’m like but I’m very loud when I talk so I know she hears me, but she was like, “Oh no I just be in a zone”. But sure enough, the next day when I said hi she was like, “Hi Mr. Jackson.” (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017)

Kionna mentioned that this year is unique to her school because for the first time in the schools’ history they have a Black principal, Dr. Johnson. Dr. Johnson is an African-American female that served as an Assistant Principal in the same school for several years before the Principal retired last year. Dr. Johnson then replaced her as principal. Kionna recalled that Dr. Johnson has to deal with microaggressions as well. Kionna described a district meeting:

Once Dr. Johnson was speaking at a meeting and someone raised their hand and said, “Um, Ms. Johnson…” but Dr. Johnson quickly corrected them and then allowed them to continue their questioning. Well later on in the meeting the same lady was commenting to a question and referred to the previous principal [White], who had not earned her doctorate, as Dr. Hastings. She then snarkly corrected herself saying, “Oops I mean Mrs. Hastings.” (Telephone Conversation, February 18, 2018)

Claudia and Kionna have experienced much more egregious acts of racism, microassaults while working in the south. Claudia recalled an incident in which a White colleague invited every teacher in the building to her annual Halloween party, but neglected to invite the handful of Black teachers who also worked at the school. Claudia shared during her second interview:
My co-worker, had this Halloween party every single year we were there. So, me and my other Black co-worker that was on the same team we know she's has this Halloween party every single year, okay. So, we never, I mean we never got invited. The rest of the entire school would go because they were invited, but not us...People would talk about it.... All of the staff and their kids would go. ...And it was just kinda like that’s just is what it is. Everybody would just function around it. (Personal Communication, October 10, 2017)

Claudia also has recently experienced racism outside of the south, in her current affluent MUC school. She described:

I had a student last year that was assigned to Mr. Washington’s [Black teacher] class this year, but she hadn’t reported to school yet. After a while my principal approached me and asked did I have any issues with this particular student last year. I told her I had not, but I had also never met the parents because they never came to school for anything....I asked if there was an issue? But I already knew it was a race issue, I already knew. After pulling the principal aside and pressing the issue, I was told, “Well, the dad is really upset that you know, that he’s having two Black teachers in a row.” …The parents went all the way to the superintendent to get the girls class changed, but they were told she had to stay in there [Mr. Washington’s class]. (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017)

Like Claudia's unsettling experience, Kionna, who also currently teaches in the south shared multiple, equally jarring experiences with microaggressions while working in Georgia. Kionna shared in a written correspondence:

I am currently at a school that, less than 10 years ago, was primarily White. Now the district is starting to change ... The secretary is White and has been with the school since it opened. She told me once that the school is changing and it’s not good…. She told me that before kids were cool, calm, and collective, and then these “aggressive Black kids” started moving in… I was also told that I shouldn’t wear my hair in braids because she can’t tell us [other African-American teachers] apart. I’ve witnessed a parent tell a minority teacher that she can’t teach her child proper English because she was not from America. I’ve overheard a teacher tell another teacher that a particular Black boy “looks like he is going to prison with that haircut.” (Email to Author, November 6, 2017)

When asked to describe her current school using only one or two words Latoya said:

Institutionalized racism…. Institutionalized racism because it’s now way that out of hundreds of teachers, hundreds of teachers you only have one black social worker, 1 Black reading specialist, and two Black classroom teachers. Out of some 300 teachers! And that’s it? (Personal Communication June 15, 2017)
As identified in the literature review, there are three types of microaggressions: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue et al. 2007; Sue et al., 2008; Yosso et al., 2009). The above section reports participants’ experiences with microaggressions and blatant racism.

Comparatively, participants also reported dealing with stereotypes of Black people in their MUC schools. The most commonly identified stereotype identified across participants’ constitutions is the idea of the “angry Black woman”. Kionna points out that “as an African-American woman I’m already perceived as an aggressor, I’m already perceived as having an attitude, were perceived as having only being that, you know” (Telephone Conversation, June 4, 2017). As mentioned previously, Latoya was routinely asked by White colleagues if she was angry:

You can never say the right thing… I watched how they talked about African-American parents. So, I see how they perceive us. When were strong and we raise up and we speak with the base in our voice that were born with then were automatically assumed to be angry or upset, as opposed to as just strong or confident, or just articulate, you know. You know, I mean this is all the time “Are you angry” Are you upset? …So now, I have had to have meetings with the principal and he’s like you know you do have a strong personality and you know Jamie is really sad and you know she's the team lead. To myself I am thinking Jamie is a 60-year-old Reading Specialist that has been there for nine years. I know what I’m doing. I've been doing this for too long and when I pull up on the ISBE website I have more experience than her. …What we need to do, as I told my Principal, my job is not to come here and make friends with these women, my job is to come here and do what's best for these kids. … that’s what's important to me.
(Personal Communication, June 5, 2017)

Claudia shared experiences in her MUC school in which Black moms were labeled by White teachers as aggressive or angry. Claudia revealed:

I tell them [White colleagues] you have to work together with his mom. You can’t be afraid of her, but you just can’t call them all the time when something is wrong. I’m like if you would have sat down and had a decent conversation with her instead of having that prejudgment that she is a strong, confident Black woman, which for them translates into angry Black woman, then things would be different… They’re going to ask questions,
and you have to be okay with that. And just because she’s Black and confident doesn’t mean she's Black and mean. (Personal Communication, June 13, 2017)

Jamal Jackson can be described as a large, darker skin, Black male with a deep voice. As such, he shared he had personally experienced automatic prejudice because of the way he looks and sounds. In his second interview Jamal recounted:

I had a parent in Oakdale [MUC school] remove her kid out of my class. And I don’t know for sure if it was because I was Black. But the parent had never talked to me, she just looked at me and was like, “I don’t want my child in his class.” We never had a conversation together, her kid never stepped foot in my class. She just looked and was like I don’t want my kid in his class. But I have had that happen in Broadside [HPHM school] too. It was a little Indian boy and his dad looked at me, the mom looked at me and the dad said, “Nope I don’t want my son in his class.” He turned and went out and went straight to the secretary and the assistant principal and said, “I don’t want my son in his class.” They took his name off my list and he went to the other second grade class. So, I don’t know…You can’t judge a book by its cover you know. (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017)

In a similar fashion Claudia describe how parents, teachers, and staff were afraid of William Washington when he started at the school last year. Claudia recounted White people’s attitudes during Mr. Washington’s first year:

I could tell you this, one of my former parents got into Mr. Washington’s classroom and I overheard them saying who is this Mr. Washington and where did he come from. Mr. Washington got it a lot, I am being 100% honest, the parents were terrified of this Black male teacher. They were like what did he do? His first year everyone was scared of him. The staff and the parents. I mean like off top. They love him now They are like “oh he can keep these children together?! Yes!” (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017)

Like Black parents, Black students were also stereotypically viewed by White teachers. Latoya revealed:

I’m sitting in a book study about diversity [in MUC school]. [I’m] the only African-American, fifty Caucasians. While I’m sitting here the presenter says, “You know everyone stereotypes girls as well behaved and boys as misbehavers. But guess what, I was in a classroom and do you know who the behavior student was?” Right after she asked that an elderly Caucasian woman yells out, “The Negros!” Now everyone’s
looking [at me] at this point and I’m just sitting there like…this can’t be real. (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017)

Participants also revealed that dealing with issues of White privilege is a racial issue they commonly encounter within their MUC settings. Participants shared instances where White people in MUC schools were privileged simply because they had the luxury of not having to think about their race. They moved about in daily activities never once considering how race played a part. Claudia recalled a time when her administer told her, “You know I don’t see color.” When she was receiving multiple requests from Black parents to place their children in Claudia’s class (Personal Communication, June 13, 2017). Brandi described in greater detail an experience she had in an administration only diversity training:

I had this whole proficiency and diversity training meeting and we all had and on the back of your card was a word and definition. It might have been um, a definition of ethnocentrism. It may have been race. It may have been prejudice. It may have been stereotypes…Then the presenter called for us to pair up. So, it just so happened that the person I paired with had the exact same card I had, and the card was “race.” I'm stopping with a White man and it's me… I said so, what is your thoughts on the word and the definition provided to this word? And he said, “you know I don't look at race. I feel like race is just a word on paper. That's the only time that I kinda refer to on the word race.” Now please remember, I'm in cultural proficiency for administrators only. There are only leaders in this room and he’s telling me as a principal he sees it when it's on a piece of paper? He says that's the only time it comes into play in his life? That's a problem. That's a huge problem. I said being an African-American woman, race is something I see in my everyday life. I'm facing this word race every day. Every day. I said I guess we have two different spins on it. You know, we’re looking at this word, but for me it was just so out of it for somebody to say they only look at this word when it’s on a piece of paper. (Focus Group Conversation, October 7, 2017)

Similar to Brandi, Kionna divulged that White people have the privilege of not thinking about race in a way that Black people cannot afford to do. Kionna expressed: “I don’t know what other races learn while growing up, but I know in other races they don’t have to wear different hats in the same way people of color do. They can just be who they are, and they are accepted. But as a
Black person, that’s what people see first; first you are Black, then you are a teacher” (Telephone Conversation, June 4, 2017).

Participants also mentioned multiple instances in which the money held by elite Whites in the [MUC] school created privileges for certain students and families. In his written correspondence when reflecting on experiences with White privilege, Jamal wrote:

Yes, the students come from privilege. They believe things are to be given instead of earned. Then you have the parents that try to intimidate you by threatening to tell the school board or administration. You know the “I’m a tax paying citizen and I don’t appreciate you treating my son/daughter like this!” attitude if their son or daughter isn’t making the grade they want them to make. White privilege is real and it’s not going anywhere, because White people benefit from it. (Email to Author, February 21, 2017)

When addressing her experiences with White privilege in a separate email correspondence, Kionna wrote:

The parents who had a name in the community, or who donated to the school from their business.... those were the families who pretty much got whatever they wanted. From having certain positions in PTO to being able to request a certain teacher - which other families were not able to do...Definitely the more money or prestige a family had the more influence they had. (Email to Author, February 10, 2018)

Another racial issue reported in MUC schools is the unfair treatment of African-American students in these settings. All participants shared witnessing unfair school practices against minority students, especially Black students. During her first interview, Claudia reported feelings of being “fed up” and “done” with the treatment of African-American students in her school, vowing to be more vocal in advocating for her “Black and Brown students” (Personal Communication, June 13, 2017).

Claudia reported that even though Black students are the lowest population of students in her school, they have the highest rate of referrals to the office and she believes there needs to be something done about those statistics (Personal Communication, June 13, 2017). She also shared
that an overwhelming number of Black children placed into special education are handled with kid gloves, and teachers and support staff overcompensate using strategies and materials that do not resolve behavior issues. Instead they reproduce the same behaviors. Claudia described:

Teachers here, I feel like they just give up. It's like they’re saying to the students, “I don’t want you to go off on me, I don’t want you to do this behavior, I don’t want to talk to your angry mom. So, I’m just gonna give you what you want so you can stop doing whatever it is you're doing. Why don’t you go have iPad time? Hey friend, if you do this then I’ll do that. If you turn it around a bit then you’ll get this.” and you know that's not really how reality works. And it's especially not how reality works for people of color. And I do not like it at all. Because you know, it just feeds the behavior. The kids keep doing what they are doing in order to get exactly what they want. And in the end, they are setting them up for failure. Because that's not how life works. It just isn’t. (Personal Communication, June 13, 2017)

As a special education teacher Jamal has a lot to say about the inequities he sees in special education when concerning African-American students. He disclosed that the special education classrooms in his MUC school primarily consist of African-American students, even though Black students do not make up much of the student body:

This summer [2017] there were 18 kids in special education...Now out of these 18 kids, two were of Asian descent, two were what I would consider of European decent or White, and the other 14 were Black. Now you already know how ludicrous that sounds, but it's true. That was the makeup of the class. And now honestly speaking, if those same 14 Black students were evaluated in Broadside [HPHM school] I would have to say only 3 of them would have probably been in special ed. (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017)

Jamal went on to reveal:

You got kids who are in special ed because a lot of teachers don't have the classroom management to deal with them. So there way to handle it is “Oh I can't deal with them, put em in special ed.” In Oakdale you have a type of one-size-must-fit-all process where if I don’t relate to the kid or if the kid don’t listen to me, oh they must be special ed… And its Black kids all the time. I’m telling you, it’s an epidemic…And I’m just going to be honest. The teachers are all White. They are White women, they are from the suburbs. For most of them they're only interaction with Black people have been later in life in college or what they have seen on T.V. and what they hear on the news. So, they already start with a picture; with a kind of flawed way of seeing the [Black] student…. And now
they’re in special ed… And once you’re in, it's not easy to get out. (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017)

Kionna disclosed in her southern MUC, adults speak negatively about the growing population of African-American students and that the African-American students are afraid of the gun owning White families that call them the n-word (Telephone Conversation, February 18, 2018). She also added that Black students are suspended and expelled at alarming rates in her MUC school setting:

Teachers here are sending Black kids to ISS [In School Suspension] left and right. They will write them up for looking at them funny. And down here [Georgia MUC community] these students get expelled. There is a zero-tolerance policy in place and they don’t play. I had one African-American middle schooler who showed a cell phone picture of his penis to other students and he got expelled. Expelled. When I tell you, they will get rid of a Black student in a heartbeat. I have been teaching 16 years and I have never experienced anything like this. (Telephone Conversation, August 16, 2017)

Latoya shared multiple stories of Black students being kicked out of the classroom and sent into the hallway instead of inside of classrooms receiving instruction with the other mostly White students (Personal Communication, June 5, 2017). She revealed:

They [White educators] sit them [Black students] in the hall all the time. I’m always stopping to check on a Black kid in the hallway. And they label them “oppositionally defiant”. That’s what they label them. They say they do the opposite. And if I were a parent I wouldn’t go for that. But you can’t really expect a parent to know that. You expect them to do what’s best for your child. You think they doing what’s best for your child, but we know, we know. (Telephone Conversation, October 18, 2017)

Like Latoya, Kamara shared that in her MUC school in Arizona if Black students displayed behavior problems their solution was to just simply give him a one-on-one aid (Kamara, Personal Communication, August 7, 2017; Latoya, Personal Communication, September 3, 2017). Similar to other participants, Brandi also shared the reality that most Black students, especially Black boys, were sent to her or other African-American teachers when they misbehaved in class and as a Black teacher they were expected to handle and or fix the situation
or behavior of the Black student; “It’s mostly Black students sent to my classroom when their teachers can’t handle them, and mostly Black boys” (Personal Communication, August 3, 2017).

Lastly, the final racial issue identified across cases during data collection was the identification and need for counterspace within MUC settings. Counterspaces can be described as a safe space or area in which minorities can gather individually or with other minorities to share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions regarding issues that affect them as people of color. These spaces allow African-Americans the opportunity to successfully operate in a racial environment while maintaining their racial cultural connection (Carter, 2007).

Claudia, Latoya, and Kamara all revealed positive experiences with counterspaces in their current MUC district. Claudia shared that luckily during her first few years at Morris there was an African-American interventionist, Karen, who traveled from school to school that would often service students in Morris. During Karen’s time at Claudia's school they would eat lunch together or talk during breaks:

When Karen was there, there were just times we would go into one of our rooms, shut the door and just vent. We could be ourselves. And it was good. You know, we were safe. And we got each other! When she would come in and shut the door, that was it we were gonna talk. I don’t care what it was we could share it with each other. It was like, “Girl let me tell you these people are crazy!” And we would just laugh and talk, but I needed that. It was like nobody understood, nobody gets it. But she gets it. She would understand… I feel like we need that because there are certain things I could say, and she would get, that I couldn’t say to anyone else in that building because they wouldn’t understand. (Personal Communication, October 10, 2017)

A small group of minority teachers gather weekly at Latoya’s school to pray for the students and families at Willow Grove (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017). In addition, Kamara revealed through a written response that a group of African-American teachers would meet at a table in the teachers’ lounge during lunch hour. Kamara also mentioned: “The district only has about 10 certified Black teachers and most of us happen to work in the same building. You can
always find us in one another’s classrooms as a safe place to vent” (Email to Author, February 10, 2018). These counterspaces often serve as a safe space for people of color to relax and collect their thoughts (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016).

Encountering racial issues while working in a MUC setting was reported by every participant. This data continues to support CRT notions that race, and racism are a permanent and endemic part of American institutions (Bell, 1992). Participants shared personal experiences that were racially motivated. Additionally, participants in MUC schools also began to notice inequalities between the treatment of White students and minority students. This reality led participants to feel a sense of responsibility to protect African-American students and their families.

Sense of Responsibility to Black Students and Families

Even after dealing with the extra burden of racial issues, participants still reported finding time to support the other few African-Americans in MUC schools, including students and their families. African-American teachers carry a sense of responsibility to other African-Americans and a duty to the next generation of students (Irvine, 2002). Black teachers continue to play a significant role in the lives of children of color (Lee, 2013). Many participants in this study reported a need to be a positive role model in all school settings but emphasized the importance of this responsibility when operating in MUC schools. Brandi explained:

At my former school it was nothing to have a Black teacher. I’m a jewel in this district, it’s like I am a diamond...Black parents, it's like their eyes light up. It’s like, “my child can see someone who looks like them in a professional position.” They get to see that every day and I try to be that positive role model every day. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2017)
Claudia shared feelings of having to “pour into them” having to “talk to them and tell them who they really are” (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017). Jamal mentioned, “I think I am necessary. I think that kids of color need to see Black women and Black men doing positive things” (Personal Communication, June 10, 2017). Kamara disclosed about how working in her new district makes her feel bolder; “I speak up more now. I feel more emboldened because I have to speak up. I’m going to do what’s right for these kids. I can’t just tell them how to behave and speak up for themselves, I have to model it” (Personal Communication, August 7, 2017).

Similarly, Kionna added that as an African-American educator “you will have to make decisions and your race will play a part in how you decide to respond. You have to be a representation of what you want them to be” (Telephone Conversation, October 15, 2017).

As Black teachers decrease in number, the likelihood of African-American students having experiences with teachers that look like them is also declining (Goldstein, 2014; King, 1993; Morris, 2014). Research reflects that African-American students need to see that teachers of color exist (King, 1993). The participants are in positions that allow Black students to see positive African-American role models on a consistent basis. Jamal shared in his second interview:

“I just try to be the best Mr. Jackson I could be, and I try to be the best example for these young boys and girls. Especially the girls and I want them to be like I want somebody like that in my life when I get older and for my guys I want them to be like I want to do things like him, like go to college, grow up get a job, get married. You know. I just want to be a good role model for both the girls and the boys. (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017)

Like Jamal and the other participants in this study, Black teachers often hold a sense of responsibility for their students’ academic and social successes (Milner, 2012). Participants
report being an advocate for Black students as well as an ally for Black parents as an important part of being an African-American educator. Claudia said:

I will say I feel very needed. Not that I didn’t feel needed before, but because I see the mistreatment sometimes and it’s just like I feel I need to be there, be there to protect them in a way...or advocate for them, to thankfully be one Black teacher that they will have. (Personal Communication, June 13, 2017)

Navigating the U.S. public education school system can be a formidable task for African-American parents. Having the support and assistance of African-American teachers helps Black parents to understand the rules of education that typically benefit the White privileged families (Barrett & Martina, 2012; Dumais, 2006; Grenfell, 2003; Kingston, 2001). African-Americans value Black educators as allies in MUC schools. Brandi expressed:

I feel like [Black] parents are more comfortable when talking with me. They feel that I’m on the same team as they are. I’ve heard the conversations White teachers have with Black parents, and sometimes, not all the time, but sometimes it can come off as more of an attack. If a parent feels like you’re attacking them, they aren’t going to be on your side. A parent has to feel like you’re on their side. (Personal Communication, June 28, 2017)

Black teachers are routinely described by Black families as an extended family member who helped fellow African-Americans succeed at school and beyond (Foster, 1997; Irvine, 2002). The importance of being an advocate and ally was highlighted when Brandi shared a particular story about an African-American young man in her school [MUC] that could have been heading for very severe consequences if Brandi had not intervened. She understood what the student was saying, but it was misinterpreted by his White teacher:

One teacher mentioned to me in passing, she was very upset, that a student’s [African-American] just told her, “Man, you blowing me.” Well “blowing me” means something very different in her mind and cultural than what it meant to him. For her it was totally unacceptable and highly inappropriate. She was all up in arms and heading to talk to the principal. Luckily, she vented to me and I was able to tell her what he actually meant. I was able to tell her he did not mean it in the same way she thought he had. I told her what he really meant was that she was tripping and taking things overboard. I told her, Yes, it
was disrespectful and distasteful, but it was not on the level she was thinking. I told her he simply was saying she was tripping. So, because I am Black I was able to make that connection. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2017)

In an email response Brandi goes on to discuss the important role she has in her MUC school:

I would love to say that it's easy and color has no factor in education but unfortunately that’s a lie. Color still plays a huge role in our education system. I feel as though I am always defending our little Black boys and girls more often than not. I feel as if the conversations in the lounge usually begins with a student of color being absent a lot or not doing his/her homework, or complaints about the parents not picking up his/her report card. I don’t like hearing these things, but I feel I am here for a reason. It’s part of my purpose. (Email to Author, February 19, 2018)

In MUC settings, where African-American children are the minority population, it is important that minority students see teachers that look like them and share similar cultural experiences (King, 1993). In the above section participants described being a role model, advocate, and ally for young Black students and their families. Many educators, like these participants go above and beyond the call of duty to help ensure a successful future for the students they serve.

Summary of Findings

The cross-case analysis of the data revealed commonalities between participants’ experience with the phenomenon of working in HPHM schools and MUC schools. Participants’ reasons for resigning, their experiences in both settings, the lack of teacher diversity, dealing with racial issues, and feeling a sense of responsibility to minority students were identified as common attributes among participants.

 Teachers are leaving HPHM schools for positions in MUC schools (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). While other studies provide a list of factors that may influence a variety of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Duncan & Murnane, 2014; Jones & Sandidge, 1997), this study
uncovers that the most influential reason these African-American educators left were because of dissatisfaction with administration.

In their MUC settings participants experienced a variety of changes. These changes were identified across cases. Participants reported that in their HPHM schools there was a sense of family and connection between themselves and colleagues that was no longer present in a MUC settings. Participants disclosed that parent involvement increased in MUC schools. Participants also mentioned school operations and procedures seemed to run more efficiently in MUC schools. Furthermore, it was found across cases that in HPHM schools participants worked hard and were supported and encouraged by colleagues. In MUC schools participants worked hard, but in addition, they had to look out for themselves because the same peer support was no longer available.

Once part of these settings, participants also noticed that they were typically one of a few, if not the only African-American teacher in the school. Not only were African-Americans the minority among teachers, but participants reported the Black student population were low in MUC schools. Minority populations continued to decline as affluence increased. Over 60 years after the Brown v. Board decision these findings show U.S. schools are still segregated.

Being part of the minority population, participants reported an increased amount of encountering racial issues. The collected data shows that in MUC schools participants experienced a noticeable increase in the amount of microaggressions, racism, stereotypes of African-Americans, White privilege, and unfair practices against Black students.

Lastly, participants shared that as the minority population in an MUC school, they felt a shared responsibility for the success of African-American students. The findings revealed that all participants felt like an advocate and ally to Black students and their families.
The findings of this study reveal that even though all types of teachers move from HPHM schools, Black teachers have unique experiences in their transitions. Because their cultural capital is not valued in the same way as their White counterparts (Grenfell, 2003; Jaeger, 2009; Kingston, 2001), participants’ experiences in MUC schools are unequal to the experiences of White teachers in the same position. Participants’ disclosed feelings of marginalization in White dominated educational institutions support previous findings of critical race researchers (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso, 2005). The overall findings of this study support the importance of qualitative data analysis and hearing the personal narratives of African-Americans. The findings show the participants seem to trade one set of professional challenges in HPHM schools for a different set of racial challenges in MUC schools.

The Black Voice

The preceding findings allow us to hear the voice of the participants. Hearing the voice of African-Americans in education research is critical to understanding the way in which the American school system typically exerts the power, privileges, and preferences of the dominant class into every aspect of teaching and learning (Coulter, Michael, and Poyner, 2007). Stories capture more than just statistics; stories provide a way to understand the gravity and complexity of teaching (Carter, 1993). The Black voice often goes unheard in a world of majoritarian stories. This study sought out the voices of Black educators to give them the opportunity to name their own realities.

Kamara’s Voice

Kamara’s voice revealed the pressure she faced to prove her intelligence as the only African-American faculty or staff in her particular MUC setting. Administration and others
seemed amazed by her awareness and explicit knowledge about current and new instructional strategies, methods, and curriculum used in today’s classroom.

Kamara’s story also revealed the negative stereotypical beliefs held by non-minorities regarding schools that serve large populations of minorities and their families. These deeply embedded beliefs became evident one year when her district rezoned school boundary lines, moving her school away from a large population of minority students to a more diverse school setting serving multiple cultural backgrounds; including a larger White student population. Kamara shared in her second interview that after rezoning and becoming more diverse, concerned [White] parents began constantly contacting her school to confirm the negative rumors they had heard about the school when the student population consisted mostly of children or color (Personal Communication, August 7, 2017). Her administrator’s experience with hesitant, anxious White parents and families reflect the negative impact stereotypes create about people of color.

Furthermore, Kamara’s experiences support CRT beliefs that racism, including subtle forms, are embedded into society and operates throughout the American school system (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). If the American school purports to prepare children to become productive US citizens (Ladson-Billings, 1998) then the police presence in Kamara’s HPHM school setting relays to those children of color a message of a police state and an understanding that officers are present to police and control, not serve and protect. The reality that police officers were used to patrol during student recess when her school was predominately serving HPHM students, and subsequently removed when the student body became more diverse is very concerning. Teachers play an important role in helping students of color develop positive self identifies apart from the negative identities portrayed in the media by elite Whites in power
Lee, 2013). As such, it is important for educators like the participants in this study to combat the negative narrative supported by majoritarian stories and the dominant in society.

Kamara continues to work in a more diverse school setting than her former HPHM schools and more diverse than her former affluent school in Arizona. She reports that she continues to enjoy teaching and feels supported in her school by her colleagues as well as her African-American principal (Telephone Conversation, October 18, 2017). Kamara reports feelings of being appreciated and needed in her current setting. She has not shared any intent to resign. Her voice adds to research what experiences minority teachers may have when operating in affluent schools as well as an understanding of teacher experiences when schools become abruptly more diverse.

**Jamal’s Voice**

Jamal’s voice revealed the ways in which prejudice and discrimination affect Black male teachers in education. They are presumed as tough and inflexible. As a Black male with a commanding presence, Jamal continues to face the pressure of having to disarm stereotypical beliefs about sizable, dark-skin, Black males. Jamal shared personal experiences of parents requesting removal of their children from his classroom even though they had never uttered a word to him in conversation. Social researchers Mabokela and Madsen (2007) found that African-American males constantly fight against false stereotypes, and Jamal’s first-hand experiences in education support their findings.

Jamal’s story also reveals another form of prejudgment: assumption. In his second interview, Jamal shares how White administration and colleagues simply assumed he knew how to successfully teach Black students simply because he is Black (Personal Communication,
September 9, 2017). Jamal described that in one particular grouping of special education students; somehow, he ended up with all the African-American students once the grouping was completed. Because of the color of his skin the White lead special education teacher assumed this grouping would work well even though she had only briefly met Jamal. Jamal insightfully shared; “Just because I’m Black doesn’t mean I know how to handle every Black kid in the program. I mean, I can, and I do, but they did know that for sure. Luckily, I am a good teacher and I can, but the assumption was that I automatically would be able to [successfully teach African-American students] and that’s not necessarily true for all Black males” (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017).

Even though Jamal’s story uncovers the stereotypes most African-American males must face daily, in his interviews he also revealed a deep sense of feeling needed in his role (Personal Communication, June 10, 2017). Black students need teachers like Jamal to help them develop positive self-images of themselves, combating the negative image they see on television and in other media (Lee, 2013). Jamal’s experiences in HPHM schools as well as in an upper-class school has allowed him the opportunity to be that positive role model in both settings.

Jamal’s voice is important in this research because his experiences with discrimination and prejudice support researchers’ understanding that African-American educators carry on an extra burden of feeling the pressure to fit in and combat the beliefs of stereotypical threat that the dominant in society can hold against people of color (Lee, 2013; Milner & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2003). Jamal not only brings the legitimate perspective of being Black in a White-dominated field, but his counterstory also gives voice to Black males in the White female-dominated field of education. “Most of the teachers in Oakdale are White, they are White women from the suburbs. Jamal shared that the majority of his colleagues in MUC schools are White females that have had
very few interactions with Black people. He adds that because they have had few experiences with African-Americans these colleagues have a skewed perception of Black people and Black students” (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017).

**Brandi’s Voice**

Brandi’s voice exudes confidence and capability. Brandi is always up for a challenge and using a bit of common sense and grit, she diligently works to figure out the best solutions to any problem. Brandi is an advocate for all students and her caring, yet no nonsense approach demands both respect and admiration. Because of her fierce advocacy for students her voice constantly revealed her impatience and exasperation with administration in her former HPHM school and the effect their actions had on the students. Brandi told how working under administration that did not value her opinion as a professional was one of the major deciding factors in her decision to resign from a high-poverty, high-minority school district (email communication, November 4, 2017). Teacher autonomy and the lack of support from administration are identified as one of the multiple reasons teachers resign from schools (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009).

Brandi’s new position in administration has also allowed her to experience what it means to be a Black administrator in a MUC school district. During a focus group meeting, Brandi shared encounters she has had with an older White custodian nearing retirement who at times tried to challenge her authority. Brandi found a solution to this problem by consulting with her direct report, an African-American male, to discuss possible ways to solve what seemed to be subtle insubordination. After consulting with the school principal they decide the best plan of action would be to be very direct and explicit in all instructions given to this particular custodian
and to report back to the principal if any additional instances happen. Brandi reported during the focus group meeting that providing very explicit instruction without any room for misunderstanding, a need for clarification, or personal interpretation, has helped alleviate the issues between her and the custodian (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017). In her new administrative role Brandi has faced and will likely continue to face push-back from White colleagues who do not prefer to take their orders from a person of color in power (Lawrence, 1987).

In this research, Brandi’s voice allows us to understand the perspectives of strong Black women operating in MUC school settings as both a teacher and an administrator. Brandi’s powerful voice will prove to be an asset to her in an institution in which systemic racism permeates. Her voice will allow her to be clearly heard and not misinterpreted. Her counterstories of poor leadership in HPHM schools and difficulties in combating insubordination as a Black leader in a predominately White workspace are shared in this research and can be beneficial to other people of color in similar positions.

Claudia’s Voice

Claudia’s voice echoes a passion for her African-American students to be given the opportunity to be treated fairly in all schools. Claudia’s experiences in both HPHM schools and MUC schools directly influence her desire for the equality of schools. During her first interview Claudia spoke about feelings of being upset that schools serving high populations of minority students do not provide the same level of quality education to Black and Brown students as they do for White students. Holding back tears she spoke about her frustration in seeing the
differences in resources and opportunities available to students in one district [MUC] but not available in others [HPHM] (Personal Communication, June 13, 2017).

Claudia also shared feelings of frustration about the unequal and unfair treatment of African-American students in her MUC school (Personal Communication, June 13, 2017; September 16, 2017). Claudia’s feelings are echoed across all participant interviews in this study. Each participant at one time has shared a feeling of the need to protect against unfair treatment of the smaller populations of African-American students in their schools. Claudia concisely shared her overall thoughts when she exclaimed “I think they [White educators] think every Black child in the building needs to be saved. They all think they need to be saved, where I think they need to be protected” (Personal Communication, September 16, 2017).

Claudia’s voice calls attention to the plight of African-American students in MUC schools. Effective teachers hold all students, including African-American students to high standards and high expectations (Irvine, 2002). However, educators in Claudia’s MUC school and their willingness to pacify young African-American students in MUC settings instead of providing instruction and discipline in order to avoid confrontations with the student and/or their family seems to be a constant practice in her current MUC setting. Claudia believes this common practice sets up young Black kids for failure in the real world: “It’s not the way the real-world works, it’s just not” (Personal Communication, September 16, 2017). Students instead must understand that in adulthood when an individual, especially a minority individual, breaks the law the result is usually incarceration; and in today’s social climate death is also possible. If schools purport to prepare citizens for society, then MUC schools are a disservice to children of color when they provide special privileges or create exceptions to the rule in order to avoid conflict.
Claudia’s voice in this research creates an opportunity for others to understand the reality of being the only, and now one of only two, African-American teachers in a school dominated by multicultural students and White teachers. Her voice tells about the plight of African-American students as well as the pressures faced by African-American teachers in MUC schools. The pressure to get other teachers to understand the realities faced by African-American students is an unfortunate reality faced by educators like Claudia. Her voice adds to the research the need for the voice of the African-American teacher to be validated and heard.

Latoya’s Voice

Of all the participants, Latoya seemed to be a part of a heavily segregated school community. Latoya’s voice exposed the difficulties her MUC district has with retaining Black educators. Her voice sheds lights on the systemic and institutional racism that still resides in American public schools. Critical race theorists assert that racism is deeply embedded in U.S. public institutions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Latoya’s experiences seem to support CRT beliefs. The microaggressive behavior Latoya reports appear to be common practice in her upper-class school. These practices make minority students, teachers, and staff feel unwanted, shunned, and devalued (Berk, 2017).

Latoya’s voice adds value to this study because it supports the idea of the importance of counterstory. Today’s society tends to believe that racism is an issue of the past. Counterstories like hers challenge and expose the false, yet common belief of the story told by the dominant culture in power. Hearing lived experiences like hers helps other educators of color discover they are not alone in their experiences (Solorzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2004, 2009). Latoya’s friend and only other African-American employee in her school advised her:
She told me that I wasn’t going to stay. That they [African-Americans] never do. She said it’s too much and they just can’t handle it. She is a social worker so I think she would know. And she was right, it is too much. She told me to get all I can get [professional development] while I’m here though. So that’s why I take every training, every workshop, every professional development, every book study. (Personal Communication, September 3, 2017)

Currently Latoya is the only African-American teacher in her school. She attributes the tolerance of the constant microaggressions and blatant racism to the lack of diversity in the school staff. Stressful racial environments like hers result in the loss of African-American representation in MUC schools (Sue et. al., 2007). Teachers, and people in general, are not likely to remain in an environment in which they feel unwelcome (Berk, 2017). Latoya has shared she too will not remain in her current MUC for much longer. In this study, Latoya’s voice adds insight to the experiences African-American educators operating in upper-class, predominately White school settings.

Kionna’s Voice

Kionna's voice continues to be unique not only because of her experiences in some of the poorest neighborhoods in Chicago as well as some of the most affluent neighborhoods around Atlanta; but her voice also stands out because the African-American students she currently works with are typically wealthy Black students. Kionna describes these students as the sheltered children of first generation successful, wealthy Black parents who do not want their children to experience the same financial and racial hardships they experienced growing up in America. These parents instead move their children to the most affluent neighborhoods in hopes of a better life and education for their children (Telephone Conversation, February 18, 2018). However, Kionna reveals that what these parents fail to realize is “that the poorest White kid is still
considered better than the richest Black kid in her school” (Telephone Conversation, February, 18, 2018).

As a veteran teacher and current employee in a MUC school in the south, Kionna’s voice and experiences hold a very unique and important perspective. Kionna reports:

Down here [southern U.S.] things are very different. The White kids do and say things the White kids up there [northern U.S.] would never get away with. They say “nigga” and think it’s cool. The White kids, not all the White kids, but I’ve seen it enough to say; the White kids down here that don’t have [money] bully the black kids that do have. And then if the black kids do get fed up and say beat up a White kid that constantly calls them “niggas”, then the White parents are ready to sue the school for not providing a safe environment and letting black kids beat up on their kid. (Telephone Conversation, February 18, 2018)

Kionna’s shared insight supports Bourdieu’s idea that possessing large amounts of White cultural capital is influential, power producing, advantageous, valuable, and gained simply by belonging to a socially constructed and arbitrary concept like race (Dumais, 2006; Kingston, 2001; McKnight & Chandler, 2012; Strickfaden & Heylighten, 2010). Furthermore, Kionna’s narrative supports CRT’s tenant that Whiteness is a type of property that is valued and possessed by the dominant in society and can be transferred from one generation to the next and used for personal gain (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado & Crenshaw, 1993). As described by Kionna, the African-American students in her current MUC and their experiences support the research of both CRT and Bourdieu’s cultural capital concepts.

Kionna’s voice adds a unique perspective into today’s affluent, southern, diverse classroom. Kionna’s voice adds a perspective that includes the culture of the south, something the other participants are not currently experiencing in their northern MUC schools in the Chicagoland areas. Her voice also creates an urgent cry for African-Americans and all races to
“stay woke” in the fight against injustice and racism, since they do indeed still exist in society as well as in the field of education.

Summary of The Black Voice

The voices of Kamara, Jamal, Brandi, Claudia, Latoya and Kionna all provide unique perspectives into the lives of the African-American educator. The requirement of recognizing voice as a central category of critical race studies helps the participants communicate the realities of educators of color. This allows their counter narrative to bring attention to the non-majoritarian story (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Sharing Counterstory

Through the examination of minority experiences and hearing their voices, we are also able to hear their counterstory. Counterstory is an essential tenet of CRT (Matsuda, 1991). Counterstories are the personal narratives of people who are not a part of the dominant group. Their stories typically challenge or go against the narrative held by those in power (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). The elite in America use their majoritarian stories to reinforce the dominant narrative that silences the experiences of people of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Counterstories shared by people of color help minority teachers discover they are not alone; and gives voice to the stories that most often go untold (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso et al, 2009). The counterstories shared by all participants in this study reveal many truths that are unknown about the experiences of African-Americans in MUC schools.
Jamal’s Counterstory

Jamal shared counterstories using descriptive metaphors to describe his experiences in two vastly different settings. When comparing administrative supports in MUC settings to a HPHM school setting Jamal said:

In Broadside it was like they [administration] throw you into a lake and they attach a huge rock to your foot and tell you to swim to the top. In Oakdale it may feel like a huge rock is attached to your foot, but they’re gonna give you a life jacket so at least you can float at the top. In Broadside you just struggling, you just struggle to stay afloat. (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017)

When describing the abundance of after school supports in MUC high schools when compared to HPHM high schools Jamal shared:

After school in Oakdale looks very different from after school in King [local feeder high school in HPHM area]. When I worked as an afterschool football coach at King after school I would see a bunch of foolishness. It was nowhere near as structured as after school in Oakdale. At King, you have all these kids, all these kids with a lot of ideas, imagination, creativity, but it's like an electric wire not attached to a pole. If a live wire isn’t attached to anything it's just flopping around full of electric energy. But at the top of a pole there is a harness there that guides that energy into working to give energy to your house, and your neighbor's house and so on and so forth. The problem is that you have King students running around fighting and getting into trouble because they got all that energy but it’s not being harnessed or tapped into something else. (Personal Communication, September 9, 2017)

Kamara’s Counterstory

Kamara’s counterstory focused on the revelation that initially in her HPHM school setting a police presence was commonly used to keep order within the school. Kamara revealed:

“The principal at the time; not my current principal, would have policemen to come and patrol recess because [elementary school] kids were fighting and stuff. I guess he felt like they needed that on the playground. I felt it was a bit too much” (Personal Communication, August 7, 2017).
Latoya’s Counterstory

As an educator in an affluent, upper-class school Latoya is able to share personal experiences unique to working in an elite, majority White school community. Her experiences reflect how difficult it is for educators in similar situations. Research reveals that new employees like Latoya, who are hired into settings where microaggressions are a common practice, typically do not remain in these settings (Berk, 2017). Latoya explained she would not continue in her affluent school district in LaPorte, Illinois much longer. When asked why Latoya stated:

The racism, the racism. I just can’t to it. Too many Caucasians for me. They are operating, just operating in their own little world. In their own little racist world. (Telephone Conversation, October 18, 2017)

She also described a particular incident during a professional development day:

We had a professional development meeting today at the middle school…And there were about 300 individuals there with two African-American individuals there. So, I just go in and grab my seat … Well today our conference was being streamed into another school district. And so, I’m in the meeting sitting on the edge of the row kind of by the front by myself getting ready to listen. I was sitting on the edge and a group of teachers came in and the teachers took some seats very far away from me but in the same row. There was a big space between me and them…They simply opted not to sit in the vicinity that I was, was what I felt. And so, my superintendent came up and walked over and said, “I need for you all to move from over there and move this way.” And you know, they moved and he said, “Thank you.” But you know we were being videotaped, livestreamed you know. So how would that look if one African-American was here, and all the other Caucasians were over there. And there was no explanation given, they just got up and did like they were told. (Telephone Conversation, October 18, 2017)

Latoya mentions feelings of frustrations toward White teachers who seem to attempt to exercise power of a newly hired Latina teacher.

It upsets me when they [Caucasian teachers] talk about her [Latina ESL teacher] methods and the strategies she uses. But I told the ESL teacher, whatever you need from me just let me know… I’m like let’s work together and do what’s best for the child. But my other colleagues were talking bad about her all the time. And I’m like what makes you think you know better than a Mexican, how to teach other Mexicans how to speak English?! You know… What in your mind makes you think you know better? This woman speaks both languages and this little girl needs help connecting the language, but
you know better? And I’m there for the student, not the teachers. (Personal Communication, October 7, 2017)

Unfortunately, these same teachers are leading a charge against the firing of a newly hired Latina principal. In one of her written correspondences, Latoya disclosed that teachers gathered 40 signatures on a petition for removal of the newly hired Latina principal and presented the signatures to the school board at their monthly meeting. The presenter of the petition was a White male married to a White fourth grade teacher employed in Latoya’s school. In passing Latoya has overheard teachers complain by saying, “The only time the principal calls you back is if your last name is Martinez or Ramirez” (Text Message to Author, January 18, 2018).

Once during a diversity professional development meeting Latoya shared a unique encounter with the presenter;

This particular lady was terrible. She literally said in a conference meeting, “I’m married to Black man, his name is Benjamin Williams [pseudonym] and all he knows is that his first name is Benjamin because that’s what his parents named him, and his last name is Williams because that’s the tribe and the plantation that he comes from.” I almost died! I looked at the lady, then I looked at Sheena [African-American colleague] I was done. Just finished. (Focus Group Conversation, October 7, 2017)

Brandi’s Counterstory

In her first interview when asked to share a word that describes her current MUC school Brandi shared: “The word that first comes to mind is unfair. I felt those [HPHM] students had a very unfair disadvantage. Now that I am on this side [MUC district] of education I can clearly see the advantages, the opportunities, the support, the trainings that are offered to teachers, I can see everything now. I see it and it’s unfair” (Personal Communication, June 28, 2017). She also shared that in one African-American student’s behavior management plan one of the rewards he could earn was a chance to shoot hoops with the one Black male in the building, the African-American custodian (Personal Communication, June 28, 2017). When describing this occurrence
Brandi never gave any inkling as whether she considered this practice a positive or negative practice, instead it was presented as just the reality of the school she in which she found herself employed.

**Claudia’s Counterstory**

Claudia shared stories from her time in southern schools in which she worked with a small number of African-American teachers in a majority-White, majority-republican community and teaching staff. As described by Claudia, when President Obama was newly elected and scheduled to address students across America:

So, after Barack Obama became president, he gave this speech to students. He was giving this speech to students and everywhere else in the world was watching this speech about kids staying in school and making good choices. It was nationally televised. So, all these parents started calling their kids absent from school because most of the districts around us were planning on showing it [President Obama’s speech] during school… And so, because it was on the news the night before, sharing what the speech was going to be about and how all these students were going to watch this… The amount of people that called their students out of school that day I can’t even tell you. You know like picking them up before the speech came on. The school ended up sending a letter home saying they weren’t going to show the speech anymore. (Personal Communication, October 10, 2017)

Claudia also shared experiences where she has witnessed William [only other African-American teacher in her current MUC school] being called out of his class to deal with Black students that other teachers, staff, and administration are unable to handle: “I have seen them call William out of his class to get other Black students who are in the hall and refusing to follow directions to actually follow directions. And I just want to scream that William isn’t doing anything special, it’s out of respect. They respect him. You teach children how to treat you” (Personal Communication, October 10, 2017). In addition, Claudia mentioned that White teachers in MUC schools that have never worked in HPHM schools have shared their belief that Title 1 schools
serving high populations of minority students get most of the federal funds, therefore they have abundant resources available to them that are not available in their own current MUC setting.

You go to like a suburban school and they think that high minority and high poverty schools get everything. The teachers really say, “you know they get books and they get this and they get that”. And I am there like, they don’t. They really don’t, they really really don't. And it's stuff like that. It's that disconnect so it's kind of like, no they don’t get everything. But they just don’t get it. (Personal Communication, June 13, 2017)

**Kionna’s Counterstory**

Similar to Claudia, Kionna has also shared how difficult it is working in southern states.

Kionna reported:

Down here the confederate flag flies everywhere. It's the heart of Georgia and its south of Atlanta. They [Whites] come to school entitled and angry. And so, the Black kids don’t want to say anything. They’re like “I don’t want no problems. You know they have guns, they can shoot you.” And so, these Black kids down here aren’t like my Chicago kids. My Chicago kids were looking for a reason to fight for any prejudice. Here is like [whiny voice] “Ms. Robinson they’re messing with me”. And it's like really? Are you serious? Who? Little Timmy? You’re scared or Little Timmy? And it's like, “yes, he said he has a gun at home” and I tell them yeah you right, he got a lot of guns at home cause he hunts. It's just very different. (Personal Communication, February 18, 2018)

When Kionna attempted to gain employment in an affluent predominantly White neighborhood in Illinois she recalled:

There have been job opportunities that I have been passed up for because I don’t think I was what they wanted to be seen at the school or whatever… I had an opportunity to work at a school in Bloontown [pseudonym] and when they saw my resume they were ecstatic. When they read my name [Kionna’s actual name is ambiguous] and saw my resume and spoke to me over the phone they were really excited. They even checked my references before I came in for the face-to-face interview. They told me, I fit the criteria and had the experience. But after the interview I think they were looking for someone a little lighter complexed than myself. Because after the interview I didn’t hear from them at all… But I think they weren’t progressive. The way that they acted about the situation led me to believe that once they saw I was a Black woman and knowing all the responsibilities I would have, in a building were the only other Black woman person was the nurse. I feel like they weren’t ready. I wasn’t, I wasn’t the type of Black that they wanted. There is a type of Black that’s accepted. I’m sure for this particular interview I think I had braids in and that just made me too Black. You know too Black for them.
There is an acceptable Black, but it just didn’t work out for me in that situation. (Telephone Conversation, August 16, 2017)

Conclusion of Data Analysis

This data analysis reveals the unique experiences of African-American educators in HPHM schools and MUC schools. Through the collected data and listening to the Black voice this analysis provides an opportunity for other researchers to explore the personal experiences of African-American educators.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Discussion and Evidence of Bourdieu’s Ideas

Bourdieu (1977, 1989) asserts that there are advantages to possessing large amounts of dominant cultural capital (see also Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Carter, 2003; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Strickfaden & Heylighen, 2010). The personal narratives of the participants in this study support Bourdieu’s ideas about the impact of cultural capital in both HPHM and MUC settings. The next section discusses how the participants’ cultural capital was used in each setting, followed by the participants’ experiences with acts of symbolic violence.

Examining Cultural Capital Experiences

The participants’ experiences highlight the ways in which their cultural capital was both valued and devalued. Data reflect that in HPHM settings, the participants’ cultural capital was described as an asset and valued in the school and community. In MUC settings, the participants’ cultural capital was mostly devalued by White colleagues but valued by minority parents and students. The examination of cultural capital in both settings requires discussion.

The participants reported that in HPHM schools their cultural capital was valued. They shed feelings of being connected to other minorities around them, and sharing a similar habitus to the people in the community fostered a sense of belonging. Like their students in HPHM schools, Jamal and Latoya had early experiences in the Broadside Public Schools. Their backgrounds and upbringing were very similar to the students they served in Broadside. Kionna,
Brandi, and Kamara also reported growing up in neighborhoods similar to the HPHM students they served.

Possessing a similar habitus and similar cultural capital promoted a sense of connection between the participants and the other minorities in the HPHM settings. Most participants shared feelings of being a part of a family in the HPHM schools. Their narratives reflect that possessing similar cultural capital allowed them to connect with other people of color in meaningful ways, including colleagues, parents, and students. Possessing large amounts of non-dominant cultural capital was beneficial to the participants in the HPHM settings.

In the MUC schools, the participants’ cultural capital was valued in some areas and devalued in others. The participants reported the MUC administration valued their cultural capital when needing assistance with Black students, as depicted in multiple narratives. Black students need teachers who understand them (Foster, 1990), and understanding African-American cultural cues and codes created a space in which the participants were able to communicate with Black students in the same linguistic ways their family members communicate. By possessing similar cultural capital, the participants better understood the needs of Black students, which was valuable to the school administration.

The cultural capital of the participants was also valued by the Black parents and students. The participants recounted feelings of love and appreciation expressed by Black parents. The participants shared how they connected with Black parents through their own experiences, how they were able to successfully reach out to mothers previously labeled as the “angry Black women,” and how they received numerous requests from parents to be their child’s teachers each year. These data reflect that the cultural capital possessed by Black teachers was valued by African-American parents with similar cultural capital in the MUC schools.
Like Black parents, Black students also valued the cultural capital of the participants. Latoya reported she would regularly check in on Black students who were kicked out of classrooms and sent into the hall. She developed meaningful relationships with these students and shared that they showed a genuine appreciation for her care and concern. Brandi reported having to intervene and explain the particular language use of an African-American student and inform his teacher that he was not being vulgar (as his White teacher assumed), but instead he was using a culturally identified term that meant something entirely different. Similarly, Kionna used her understanding of Black cultural capital to identify the emotional distress of a black student because of her hair – an important part of Black culture. Black students have and continue to benefit from the cultural capital of Black educators (Foster, 1997).

The participants also found that colleagues in their MUC settings devalued Black cultural capital. Minorities in the MUC settings were more likely to feel pressured to minimize their own cultural capital because their non-dominant capital was not determined important in these settings (Lee, 2013; Nash, 1990). A lack of appreciation of African-American cultural capital was exposed when Kionna revealed staff in her MUC school described young Black males’ hairstyles as “prison hairstyles” and expressed to Kionna she should not wear her hair in braids because they would not be able to tell her apart from other African-American teachers in the school. Instead of celebrating the uniqueness and creativity of African-American hair, White staff members devalued their cultural capital. Similarly, the participants reported White staff devaluing common traits like assertiveness and self-assurance, which are valued in the African-American community. On the contrary, these traits were labeled as angry and domineering in the MUC schools.
Throughout the research, the participants shared multiple ways in which they felt their cultural capital was not valued in predominantly White spaces. The use of their cultural capital seemed to be only valued by White people when it benefited them as well (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012).

**Examining Symbolic Violence Experiences**

The devaluing of Black cultural capital creates real consequences for minorities in MUC schools. These consequences negatively affect African-Americans and create symbolic violence. As mentioned earlier in this research, symbolic violence occurs when the dominant in society name their own cultural capital as superior to others and use this assertion as power against those who do not possess power (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

The data collected reflect the use of symbolic violence in MUC school settings. Focus group participants all shared participating in multiple diversity meetings all led by White presenters in each of their schools. Utilizing only White presenters as experts reinforces the idea that only White people have the power and knowledge to address issues of diversity in elite schools. Participants also shared a pressure to perform in the same way and even better than their White colleagues in order to be accepted as intelligent. Living up to this pressure required the participants give up their own non-dominant cultural capital and instead work to display the dominant cultural capital valued in MUC schools. The lack of staff diversity in MUC schools also reflects symbolic violence. Latoya reported the lack of diversity in her new MUC setting brought her to tears on her first day of district-wide meetings. In each of their settings, the participants were one of a few African-American educators, but research reflects that large numbers of African-American educators exist in HPHM schools (King, 1993). These facts are not coincidental; instead they reflect the use of power to keep teachers who belong to the
dominant culture in MUC schools and teachers who belong to the non-dominant culture in HPHM schools.

These forms of symbolic violence are prevalent in the field of education. These acts of violence are violent because they continue to harm African-American educators by producing inequities among people who possess large qualities of dominant capital and those who do not (Toshalis, 2010). As African-American participating in a predominantly White workforce, the participants experienced symbolic acts of violence, including, but not limited to, the acts described in this section of discussion. Bourdieu’s (1977, 1989) ideas of cultural capital and symbolic violence have been highlighted in this section and support using the personal experiences of participants.

Discussion and Evidence of Themes

After careful analysis of the findings three major themes seem to emerge: African-American educators operating in HPHM schools, African-American educators operating in MUC schools, critical race theory in MUC schools. These three themes highlight the experiences of the participants. Each participant has 1) been employed in a HPHM school, 2) has been employed in a MUC school, and 3) has had experiences with critical race theory ideas like microaggressions and racism in MUC school settings.

Theme 1: African-American Educators Operating in HPHM Schools

The first theme highlights the importance of cultural connections African-American educators have in HPHM schools, the family and community dynamics involved in HPHM school settings, the operations and management of HPHM schools, and the awareness of safety concerns that teachers and students experience in HPHM areas. Therefore, the findings listed
above are discussed below as sub-categories for a more complete understanding of the first identified theme of this research.

Cultural Connections

High-poverty, high-minority schools are more likely to employ minority teachers than middle- and upper-class school districts (King, 1993). When working in HPHM schools, African-American educators are more likely to encounter individuals who look like them and share similar cultural values than in MUC schools. Social research shows that Black educators are more likely to promote a family and community style of teaching (Irvine, 2002). Participants reported deeper relationships and connections to colleagues in HPHM schools. Participants in this study possess larger amounts of cultural capital valued in the Black community, therefore they were able to more effectively use their capital in HPHM schools. In these schools the students and staff possessed similar cultural capital. In MUC schools, the valued capital is possessed by the privileged in society (Dumais, 2006). Consequently, the capital that was effectively utilized in HPHM settings no longer held the same value in MUC settings.

Participants shared similar experiences of connectedness when describing relationships with African-American students as well. In Michele Foster’s (1997) research studying Black educators, she found that Black teachers were more than teachers and role models for Black families and students, they were considered family. The cultural connections Black educators have with Black students, allow them to understand their students’ experiences on a deeper, more meaningful level. Because they share similar experiences, they are more likely to understand what their students are feeling and experiencing.
Family and Community Characteristics

Much like their colleagues and students, the families in HPHM school districts were more likely to look like and have similar cultural experiences as African-American teachers. HPHM students are also more likely to come from single parent, working class or other non-nuclear families (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Non-nuclear single parent families and/or families run by a grandparent(s) were often experienced by participants when working in HPHM school settings.

Participants also reported an increase in the amount of violence in HPHM schools. In these areas participants described feeling less safe. Reporting to and leaving work at the end of the day brought on feelings of anxiety. Increases in community violence were revealed as common attributes in HPHM settings.

School Operations and Management

Educators are not only leaving education at alarming rates, they are leaving HPHM schools at an even more increased rate (Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb et al., 2005). The rate of teacher turnover in HPHM schools can be attributed to many factors, including the practices and procedures commonly implemented in schools. Participants shared that the common day-to-day procedures in MUC schools often increased teacher instructional time. The time once dedicated to tedious clerical procedures in HPHM schools, was instead used for planning, preparation, and instruction.

Participants mostly attribute the lack of professional management by upper administrative officials in HPHM school districts as one of the greatest influences on resigning. They reported the lack of professionalism affected their classrooms, their students, and the families they served.
Participants also shared frustration with the mismanagement of funds within the school district. In my own personal experience in a HPHM school, I regularly witnessed the mismanagement of funds. The superintendent position seemed to be a revolving door. Multiple superintendents were being paid at once due to contract agreements, higher ups in administration would be paid to attend conferences in Hawaii on the district’s dime and even gas pumps intended for police and fire vehicles were being used to fill up the personal vehicles of top administrative school officials. The district was regularly in the local news because of whistleblowers exhausted with the mismanagement of taxpayer funds. The amount of corruption and the mismanagement of funds created an even more exasperated workforce of educators who were already frustrated from ongoing negotiations for a sustainable contract to increase wages in order to deal with the increasing cost of living in Illinois.

Safety Concerns

Issues of school and community safety also plague HPHM schools and their surrounding areas. Safety issues experienced by Black and Latino students in HPHM schools are often not experienced by White students in MUC schools. As a former educator in a HPHM school system, I have personally experienced a second grade student who dealt with the trauma of his dad murdering his mom and placing her body in his trunk, a second grade student whose brother was shot and killed on her porch moments before school was dismissed for the day, a parent who saw an active shooter run directly in front of her car when arriving to pick her daughter up from school, and a former student lost to gun violence before his 21st birthday.
The violence plaguing HPHM school communities is real. Teachers operating in HPHM neighborhoods with high rates of violent crimes have additional stresses beyond reflecting yearly academic progress gains on the annual statewide test.

Conclusion of Theme 1

Research shows there are a significant number of teachers leaving HPHM schools (Ingersoll, 2004). The realities of working in a HPHM school like the experiences of myself and the participants are influential factors in teacher turnover. Participants listed lack of parental support, mismanagement of the school district, low wages, and concerns for safety as factors that influenced their decision to resign from HPHM schools.

Theme 2: African-American Educators Operating in MUC Schools

The second theme highlights the cultural connections African-American educators have experienced in MUC schools, experiences with family and community dynamics involved in MUC school settings, the operations and management of MUC schools, and awareness of what it means to be Black in MUC school settings. The findings listed above are discussed below as sub-categories for a more complete understanding of the second theme of this research.

Cultural Connections in MUC Schools

Participants shared initial feelings of anxiety when beginning positions in MUC schools. They had not had much experience serving families of different backgrounds. Participants described both positive and negative encounters with MUC parents.

Participants describe experiences with Black parents in MUCs to be different than their experiences with black parents in HPHM settings. Participants report feelings of being much
more valued and appreciated by African-American parents. They reported typically being one of a few, if not the only African-American teacher their students will have throughout elementary school. The understanding and relationships between themselves [participants] and their African-American parents in MUC schools was described as easier to navigate.

Even though at times navigating cultural and race issues in MUC communities could be tricky, participants reported the students served in MUC schools did not reflect the same racial biases as other stakeholders in the school. In contrast, participants shared that at the elementary school level, students in MUC settings offered the same expressions of affection and love as the students in HPHM settings. Kids attitudes were the same regardless of the setting. However, due to the lack of diversity among staff, participants did highlight the importance of connecting with African-American students in MUC settings. They reported it was important for African American teachers to be in MUC schools and to give Black students the opportunity to connect with educators that look like them, speak like them, and understand them. Being in MUC schools as an advocate and ally for young Black students was reported as an important role for all participants.

Participants reported an abundance of cultural connections to African-American parents and families in MUCs; however, they also reported a sense of disconnect between themselves and White people connected to MUC schools. As mentioned earlier some participants in communities who only serve very affluent families report they felt unwelcomed and unwanted by White colleagues and families in their schools. Participants also reported an increased amount of diversity programs, trainings, and book studies as a way to bridge the gap between the teachers in MUC schools and the ever-increasing diverse population of students MUC
communities serve. Diversity trainings typically address how to teach African-American students; however, the leaders of these meetings were often not African-American.

Family and Community Characteristics

Family and community dynamics in participants’ MUC schools were vastly different from the HPHM communities in which they previously served. One of the most common attributes shared regarding MUC families was the reality of an increased number of stay at home parents and parents wanting to volunteer in class. Participants pointed out that parent volunteers could be positive or negative depending on the parents’ personality type and their motives. They cautioned teachers seeking employment in MUC schools to be aware of parents’ motives when asking to volunteer in your class.

Participants serving in very affluent, upper-class communities all reported that the affluence experienced by these families were astounding. In some of these communities’ parents paid upwards of $20,000 per year in taxes. Students were living in homes priced from half a million to one million-dollars, regularly taking vacations overseas, and being picked up from school in luxury vehicles. When studying overseas countries Europe, Africa or China, students in very affluent communities are often able to share personal experiences in those countries. Reports of students living in elite communities, having large homes with swimming pools, playgrounds, and basketball courts were common place.

School Operations and Management

Multiple areas of operations and management were also highlighted by participants. They reported that the management of MUC schools were run by quality, professional administration. Furthermore, many participants mentioned having more resources available to them and their
students in MUC settings. The schools’ common procedures and its setup of day-to-day operations and tasks increased feelings of autonomy and professionalism. In addition, participants shared that the protocol in place for school access as well as the low number of violent crimes in the community increased their feelings of safety.

In MUC settings, participants experienced an increased amount of support by administration. They reported relationships with administration were more collaborative. Working together with administration increased participants’ satisfaction. Being treated as a capable colleague and respected professional increased participants satisfaction with administration in MUC schools.

In addition, participants reported more available resources for both students and teachers in MUC settings. An increased amount of materials used to support student learning was often reported. Resources available in special education were also highlighted. Fully staffed special education teams and materials utilized in special education were readily availed. In like manner, materials to increase teacher productivity such as district issued laptops was an added benefit to being employed in an MUC school.

Additionally, increased opportunities for wage earnings were more available. Participants were financially compensated when additional professional development activities were attended. Participating in book studies, attending specified workshops, and joining certain school or district committees were also compensated by additional financial resources for those who participated.

Participants also attributed increased safety in MUCs to the management and procedures required by the school. In MUC schools, participants were provided with secured electronic key cards to gain access to the school. Visitor procedures in MUC settings were more secure.
Security procedures in MUC settings described by participants required visitors to be screened by a computer software program before allowed access to the school. Badges were then provided to visitors identifying their name and the space in the building they were designated to be in. These extra security procedures helped to secure the building, its staff, and its students.

African-Americans in MUC Schools

Being Black in a MUC school where African-Americans are not greatly represented can be challenging for Black teachers and Black students. In this study, the participants shared challenges they face in being one of a few minorities represented in the school and challenges children of color face in MUC schools. This section will address the experiences of Black teachers in MUCs and their observations of Black student experiences in MUC schools.

Research in the field of education supports that White Americans are overwhelmingly represented as teachers in the field of education (King, 1993). African-American educators in turn typically feel isolated and pressured to represent their race well in MUC school settings (Mabokela & Madsen, 2007). The participants discussed experiences of being part of a small population of African-Americans in MUC schools, an increased amount of parent requests from families of color, and experiences of advocacy for Black children in their MUC school. The participants have experiences of being the only African-American in their MUC setting, or one of a few African-Americans. The number of African-Americans typically slowly increased as time progressed. The idea that more African-American teachers are being hired in MUC schools would be a welcomed change since many of the participants described instances of being highly requested by Black families. As a result of the low numbers of Black teachers, parents often
express to administration that they would like their children to be placed in their classrooms, and the need for Black male teachers was identified in both HPHM and MUC schools.

African-American teachers and African-American students are having unique experiences in MUC schools. One of the main purposes identified by participants as the need for Black teachers in MUCs is for the protection of Black children against an unfair educational system. Participants having to stand up for the rights of Black students in MUC settings were common. The unequal amount of African-American student office referrals for behavioral incidents were significantly disproportionate to the amount of referred White students displaying similar behaviors. Like referrals to the office, referrals to and for special education services also increased among Black students in MUC schools.

Because of the treatment of Black students in MUC schools, Black teachers report a sense of obligation to ensure fair treatment of these students. In her studies, Michele Foster (1997) addressed the issue that Black kids need teachers that understand the Black community. The experiences of the participants in MUC schools support Foster’s (1997) findings because these participants have experienced situations where they needed to be present in order to help the rest of the school population understand Black families.

The field of education persists as one area in which racism is most often experienced by people of color (Lynn & Adams, 2002). Participant experiences support these findings. When in the school office Black teachers often see the faces of students who look like them. As a parent of MUC school students, when I visit the school office I too often encounter familiar faces of African-American students. The themes that seemed to cross all cases in this study is the idea that in MUC schools, Black children are being disproportionately labeled as needing special education services and/or receiving harsh punishments for minor infractions.
Even though special education support services are readily available in MUC schools, the services received by Black students are not always beneficial. Black students receiving services are often supported in such a way that the strategies used and materials offered do not resolve behavior issues; instead, they reproduce the same behaviors. Black students are regularly redirected, instead of given consequences for their actions. Black students then learn that consequences are not negative. Instead of receiving negative consequences, Black students are rewarded with extra time for breaks, or occupational therapy manipulatives to play with under the guise of accommodations. However, these types of consequences for breaking the rules do not exist for African-American students in adulthood. The consequences later in life are much more severe.

**Conclusion of Theme 2**

Operating as a Black educator in a MUC school brings its own set of unique experiences for educators, families, and students. African-American teachers working in MUC schools deal with cultural connections between them and their students, different family dynamics, and operate in schools that are likely to have more resources and function differently than in their previous school settings. All of these experiences inform this study and shape the participants’ ideas about education in today's American society.

**Theme 3: Critical Race Theory in MUC Schools**

The third theme highlights the ideas uniquely found in CRT research: microaggressions, racism, and counterspace. Participants identified these as characteristics of CRT in middle- and upper-class school settings. These characteristics are discussed in the following section.
Participants in MUC schools report encountering an increased amount of racial microaggressions. African-American educators dealing with increased amounts of racial microaggressions feel devalued and often do not remain in the environment (Berk, 2017). Offensive words and behaviors that accompany microaggressions can negatively affect the health and well-being of minorities (Berk, 2017). Microaggressive acts are often not realized by the perpetrator (Sue et al., 2007); therefore, White teachers in MUC guilty of microaggressions often remain unaware of offensive behaviors when interacting with people of color. Berk (2017) recommends minorities speak up against microaggressions when inflicted intentionally or unintentionally to decrease the chance of the same experience reoccurring in the future. However, it is also highlighted that overtime minorities can find standing up against constant microaggressions exhausting and stressful (Yosso et al., 2009).

Like microaggressions, participants had experiences with blatant racism as well in MUC school settings. Experiences with racism support critical race theory ideas of systemic racism embedded within American institutions (Bell, 1992). Participants identified personal experiences with racism while in MUC schools. Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) argue that societal factors affecting minorities in poverty along with substandard educational opportunities provided to children in HPHM schools in a form of structural racism. The descriptions of participants’ experiences and the lack of resources available in HPHM schools when compared to MUC schools support Ladson-Billings & Tate’s (1995) argument of structural racism.

Participating in counterspaces allows minorities an opportunity to distress and express feelings in a safe space. African-American educators need opportunities to freely express themselves in MUC settings. They shared positive feelings of affirmation and approval when apart of counterspaces. Participants in MUC schools with no other African-American teachers
shared feelings of isolation. When participating in counterspaces minorities feel safe and feel like their experiences are valued and validated (Carter, 2007).

Conclusion of Theme 3

Understanding African-American experiences through the lens of critical race theory continues to be a necessary research tool. This tool allows us to look critically at participants’ experiences with microaggressions and racism. The participants’ narratives and experiences in the American public education system supports the need to recognize the ways that racism continues to operate inside schools. The third theme in this investigation, critical race theory in education, allows this research to critically view and focus on how people of color experience and respond to the U.S. education system (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). This research allows us the opportunity to discover the experience of African-American educators in both HPHM educational settings and MUC educational settings.

Summary of Discussion

This chapter of discussion focused on identifying themes and provided discussion around the themes. The identified themes were categorized by examining the findings across cases. The first theme highlighted how African-Americans in education are experiencing teaching in HPHM schools. The second theme discussed how African-Americans in MUC schools experience teaching. The discussion in this chapter concludes by highlighting how African-American experiences in education connect to the ideas of critical race theory.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Research Summary

This research set out to uncover the personal experiences of African-American educators operating in a White dominated field of education - a field which was vastly different from their initial experiences in education. Using critical race theory and understanding the impact of cultural capital, the experiences of the participants were explored to reveal influences in leaving HPHM schools and expose experiences in MUC schools. Participants’ narratives uncovered important counterstories to the often-told majoritarian stories heard in the news and in media. The stories shared in this research help African-American teachers in HPHM schools who are considering positions in MUC schools to answer the question “Is the grass actually greener on the other side?”

Research Questions, Findings, and Interpretations

The research questions described in this study were answered through implementing a case study method and utilizing qualitative research methods of interviewing, collecting documents, and letter writing techniques. The common practice of coding collected qualitative data was then implemented to identify themes and highlight the common experiences between participants engaged in a like phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Simmons, 2009; Stake, 2013). The codes and themes identified in this research were then used to answer the previously identified research questions.
Research Question 1: What factors influenced participants’ decisions to resign from HPHM schools largely serving minority students?

Many participants identified teacher burnout and negative administrative experiences as factors influencing their decision to leave HPHM schools. The collected data reflects the following factors influenced participants’ decisions to seek employment in MUC schools: five participants identified teacher burnout, four identified negative issues with administration (i.e. misappropriation of funds, lack of teacher autonomy, director), four identified safety concern issues, three identified school procedures and operations, two identified resource issues, two identified safety concerns, two sought after more diverse school settings, two identified seeking more professional development and opportunities for professional growth, and one identified seeking better job security (i.e. MUC school having more stable enrollment numbers).

Research Question 1a: How are these factors experienced in middle- and upper-class school settings if at all?

Most participants reported they did not experience these same factors in their MUC school districts, apart from Kionna. Kionna’s experiences again are unique in the fact that her current MUC school is located in the south. Kionna identified low wages as a factor influencing her decision to leave, yet in her current school, because of a lower cost of living in southern states, her wages are now lower than her earnings while employed in the Chicago Public School District.

The factors identified in HPHM schools as negative experiences were subsequently positively experienced in MUC schools. Participants who experienced burnout in HPHM schools reported additional supports embedded in school operations of MUC settings. Participants who
were dissatisfied with administration reported professional, reciprocal relationships with administration. Most participants unsatisfied with wages felt more adequately compensated in their new role. Participants reporting concerns with lack of resources and quality professional development reported feelings of satisfaction in their MUC schools. Participants that reported safety concerns in HPHM communities reported feeling safer in MUC neighborhoods. Participants that identified a lack of diversity in HPHM schools as an influence in resigning reported teaching a more diverse population of students in a MUC school.

Research Question 2: What are the experiences of African-American teachers that resign from HPHM schools to accept positions in schools where minority students living in poverty do not make up the majority of the student body?

Participants offered both negative and positive experiences in high-poverty, high-minority schools as well as in middle- and upper-class school settings.

High-Poverty, High Minority School Experiences

In HPHM settings participants reported multiple negative experiences, including misappropriation of school funds by upper-level administration, poor school operations and management, lower wages and additional duties, lack of school resources and materials, meaningless professional development, and gun and gang violence near the school.

Participants also reported positive experiences in HPHM settings including experiencing positive feelings of working with minority colleagues, community members, students, and families. Participants described a welcoming, friendly, familial environment where they felt accepted and appreciated by peers and co-workers.
Middle- and Upper-Class School Experiences

In MUC settings participants reported multiple negative experiences, including racism, microaggressive behaviors, feelings of isolation, feelings of inferiority, stereotype threat, and being witness to the unfair treatment of African-American students.

Participants also described multiple positive experiences in MUC school settings: a more positive and supportive relationship with administration, more meaningful professional development opportunities, more available resources, more materials for students, more efficient school operations, and increased wages for most participants.

Research Question 3: What are some of the challenges African-American “movers” face within a Middle- and Upper-Class School Context?

Participants identified multiple challenges within their MUC school context. One major challenge identified by all participants was having to deal with overt racism and microaggressions, which are subtle forms of racism. Findings show Claudia was excluded from White-only after school teacher get-togethers. Latoya endured co-workers shouting out “the Negros!” when the audience was asked to identify the worst behaved students in most classes. Brandi encountered insubordination issues from older White men under her charge. Jamal endured parents’ blatant prejudice toward Black men. Kionna repeatedly overheard negative stereotypical comments about young Black males in her school and conversations about their futures or lack thereof. Kamara currently is dealing with a school board that does not value the need for a diversity plan to create more inclusive environments for a growing population of students of color.
Participants also shared feelings of isolation as an additional challenge in MUC school settings. Participants with experiences being the only African-American teacher in their schools reported feelings of isolation. Participants revealed that being the only African-American teacher in a school is difficult. They disclosed feelings of frustration when being the only Black voice in the school trying to advocate for the needs of the few Black children attending their MUC school.

Participants also shared the challenge of having to address the issue of stereotype threat from White colleagues in their MUC settings. Stereotype threat can be easily described as how people expect a person to act based on what they see portrayed in the media about people from a particular race or background. Participants describe having to combat ideas like Black women are loud and mostly angry or Black males are dangerous and ill-tempered. They revealed that colleagues would regularly label multiple Black moms as an “angry Black woman” and simply avoid conversations with those parents as much as they could.

One final challenge all participants shared was witnessing the unfair treatment of Black children in MUC schools. One participant reported feelings of being fed up” with the treatment of African-American students in her school. She vowed to be more vocal in advocating for her minority students in her MUC school. Participants felt like the rate of referrals of Black students to the main office and into special education were disproportionate when compared to White students. Participants also identified experiences in which MUC adults would speak negatively about the growing population of minority students.
Implications for Practice

The findings of this research allow for a qualitative view on how African-American educators experience working in the field of education. These findings help inform both administration and teachers involved in the field of education. Each research question holds a significant implication for current educational practices and experiences.

Implications for HPHM Administration

This research found that African-American educators were influenced by several factors when deciding to resign from HPHM school settings. Teacher burnout, negative relationships with administration, neighborhood safety concerns, and poor school operation and management were among the most frequently identified factors influencing African-American teachers’ decision to resign from HPHM school settings. Current administration in HPHM schools can use these findings and identified influential factors to identify specific areas of improvement needed to retain quality teachers within their districts. These findings suggest that improving teacher autonomy, creating positive administrative relationships, and implementing more successful school operational procedures would help to increase retention rates.

The participants in this study also revealed positive attributes about working in a HPHM school. A sense of community and family was identified by all participants as a positive aspect of working in a HPHM school. Administration in MUC schools can use these findings to help create and continue to foster that sense of community by implementing school activities that promote and develop a familial experience for their teachers.
Implications for Teachers and MUC Administration

Understanding the experiences African-American teachers have within both HPHM schools as well as in MUC schools will aid other teachers who are considering leaving a high-poverty, high-minority school for a more lucrative position in a more affluent school district. The shared experiences of educators of color can aid teachers at similar crossroads in their teaching careers and during their final decision-making process. Understanding the experiences of ‘movers’ like these participants can also inform administration in MUC schools about the importance of being keenly aware of their school culture. Administration should be aware if minority teachers in their schools are being excluded or shown bias based on the color of their skin.

Implications for African-American Educators

Being aware of the challenges African-American educators face in MUC schools can help prepare African-American teachers for the reality of what it can mean to be one of a few African-Americans working among a predominately White staff. The findings of this research show that all participants have experienced racism and/or microaggressive behaviors in their MUC school settings. Understanding what challenges are faced in MUC schools will allow Black educators considering MUC positions an opportunity to better prepare for the challenges specific to African-American educators.

Implications for Future Teachers

With the realization that there are millions of future teachers currently enrolled in teacher preparation programs in colleges and universities across America, we must also address the need for teacher preparation programs to prepare future teachers for today’s classroom. The traditional
one-size-fits-all approach used to prepare teachers in the past no longer sufficiently address the complexities of the field of education in which they are about to enter (Ferfolja, 2008). The findings of this research show teachers can knowingly or unknowingly create an exclusionary atmosphere in which the dominant cultural capital is preferred over non-dominate capital. Open discussions and dialog addressing equity, fairness, and an appreciation of diversity in preservice classrooms must be explicit in coursework and clinical and field studies (Jones & Sandidge, 1997).

Implications for Research

The findings of this research show there is a need for future study on how all African-Americans are experiencing education in today’s society. More research can continue to uncover the experiences of minority teachers, parents, and students. Participants in this study shared their personal experiences in both HPHM schools and MUC schools. They revealed how African-American students who are considered behavior problems are treated behind the closed doors of their MUC school settings. Furthermore, participants disclosed how African-American parents are judged in MUC schools. Future research in these areas will allow for more favorable experiences for all African-Americans operating within a middle- or upper-class school setting.

Identifying Coping Tools for African-Americans in MUC Schools

The impact of racism continues to be most often experienced in the field of education (Lynn & Adams, 2002). Today, decades after the Brown v. Board decision, most Black children still attend public schools where the resources offered in those districts typically do not compare with the resources available in middle- and upper-class schools (Kozol, 1991; 2005). These facts
clearly support CRT beliefs that racism is real and continues to permeate throughout the U.S. education system (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

The findings of this research show that African-American educators experience increased negative racial behaviors in MUC schools. Understanding this fact, research identifying the tools that work to help Black educators cope with racism and be successful in MUC environments would be beneficial. In the field of education, Black teachers bear extra added racial burdens and pressures. African-Americans are constantly bombarded with negative messages that elicit feelings of inferiority. Researched-based, successful coping tools are needed to handle the stress of racial messages and experiences. The pressure to fit in, the pressure of not conforming to the stereotypical beliefs White colleagues may hold about Black people, the pressure to perform or outperform White peers in order to be taken seriously and considered a competent professional in the field are all extra burdens experienced by African-American teachers in today’s American school system.

Extra burdens and pressures experienced because of their race affect the morale of African-American teachers. Participants shared feelings of being overstressed because of microaggressions and racism. Some have also expressed the desire to resign from their current MUC schools in the near future due to increased racial issues and pressure. Future research involving African-American educators who use specific coping tools to help them succeed even when faced with stressors of operating in predominantly White MUC schools would benefit other African-American educators.
Examining Referral Practices Targeting Black Students

The majority of participants involved in this study reported a significant amount of unfair discipline practices for African-American students in MUC school settings. There is a need for researchers to examine the referral practices currently used in schools that seem to unfairly target underrepresented minority students. African-American children having a higher rate of office referrals has been researched (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010; Monroe, 2005; Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2002), but a gap in the research exists in identifying and implementing school procedures that help to decrease these commonly known inequitable practices.

According to a recent congressional report conducted by the United States Government Accountability Office (2018), researchers found that even though African-American students only make up about 15.5 percent of all public school students, they also account for approximately 39 percent of all public school suspensions in the United States. The U.S. Government Accountability Office found these disparities disproportionately affected Black boys and girls. Black girls were found to have been suspended from public schools at higher rates than “every other racial group of girls” (Government Office of Accountability, 2018, p. 14). Research identifying alternative, more equitable discipline procedures in U.S. public schooling institutions is clearly needed to combat unfair practices, the support of the school to prison pipeline, and overall institutional racism.

Identifying Successful School Board Characteristics and Effective Practices

One frequently overlooked stakeholder in education is the Board of Education. High-poverty, high-minority schools and middle and upper-class schools both have Board of
Education members who are elected and make final decisions for the management of a school district. The findings of this study indicate further research into if the operations and decisions of the Board of Education in HPHM schools differ from the decisions of the board of education in MUC school districts and if so, how does it affect the school district as whole?

Most participants shared that while working in HPHM schools, upper-level administrative decisions would negatively affect many aspects of the daily school operations. Decisions made by school board members directly affect principals, teachers, parents and students. There is a gap in literature examining how the characteristics, qualities, and decisions of a school district’s board members affect the success of a school district. Researching the qualities of high-achieving school boards may reveal significant factors, regular procedures, or even certain attributes that may add to the likelihood of success for a struggling district.

**Examining African-American Teachers’ Cultural Capital**

There is a need for future research examining African-American teacher’s cultural capital and the ways in which it is valued and devalued in U.S. schools. Functioning daily in a workplace which devalues your habitus and cultural capital can be harmful to the self-efficacy of African-American educators (Milner & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2003). Milner (2012) states:

Black teachers’ perceptions and instructional practices with their students may be effective, yet inconsistent with their Black colleagues. In this way, Black teachers are sometimes ostracized and considered an outsider within their school community because they have a different way of seeing the world or reacting to a situation. (p. 32)

Research needs to pay attention to the evidence that a large group of teachers in the field of education feel disrespected and isolated in school. Black cultural capital is an asset to supporting and developing young students –especially African-American students. Continuing research on the ways in which the cultural capital of people of color is valued and/or devalued is needed to
understand the impact their cultural capital has within the institution of the American school system.

Strengths

A strength of this study was the use of qualitative methods to capture the personal experiences of an underrepresented group of educators of color. These qualitative methods allowed for the voice of professional African-American educators to be shared and examined within the particular phenomenon of working in contrasting educational settings. Using critical race theory to support the importance of hearing the counterstory of participants and the Black voice was also a strength of this study. Utilizing the ideas of cultural capital and its value in American society helped to examine the experiences of the participants.

An additional strength of this study was the use of multiple interviews with participants. Using three interviews for each participant allowed for an in-depth examination over time addressing and revisiting meaningful participant experiences for clarity and understanding.

Recommendations

This research and its participants highlighted many areas in which school districts could improve in order to support teachers and students of color. As an educator of color, I found some of the personal experiences shared by the participants not surprising, and others shared personal experiences absolutely appalling. The recommendations described in this section involve multiple stakeholders within the field of education. These stakeholders must understand that the current practices of inequity within schools impede the citizenship of minority students. This section identifies recommendations for policymakers, administration, parents, and teachers.
Recommendations for Policymakers

Public schools in essence are ran by the government and the government is controlled by our elected officials. Our elected officials share the responsibility of providing an equal opportunity for employment. Research shows that schools value the cultural capital possessed by elite White society (McKnight & Chandler, 2012). This research seems to be reflected in the hiring practices of middle- and upper-class school districts. School politics and nepotism still play a very big role in gaining employment in a MUC setting.

Participants in this study identified that they are typically one of a very few minorities in MUC schools. In today’s increasingly browning society, the reporting that participants are one of a few African-Americans within a MUC setting but are a part of the majority when employed in a HPHM setting presents a problem of inequality and unfair hiring practices. It is recommended that policy and law makers work to find a solution to the unfair practices of hiring for public positions.

Recommendations for Administration

The findings of this study suggest changes to upper district level administration. Examining the decisions made by school board members and the superintendent in HPHM and MUC settings would be beneficial. One of the most important recommendations would be to review the selection of curricula provided to the students. Does the curriculum provide or offer diverse perspectives and positive representations of people of color? Are all students offered an opportunity to read and learn about positive role models that look like them? Are these opportunities offered more than just during Black History Month, or Hispanic Heritage Month, or discussed during Ramadan? School boards and other upper-level administration personnel
must review curriculum for biases against people of color before purchasing a district wide curriculum.

My own daughter attends an upper middle-class school in a nationally recognized school district. One day while reviewing her social studies curriculum book I came across a section that describes what we know to be “master’s house” as “the planters house”. Initially reading this text, I was taken aback by the publisher’s choice of words. I understood fully what “master’s house” was, and the kinds of atrocities that African-Americans endured both inside and outside of this house. Unfortunately, to me it seemed as if this curriculum was attempting to play down the significance of what we know to be “master's house”. It was unsettling to witness the ways schools are diluting history to young children about times of slavery in America.

In addition, school boards must review qualitative data when working to make decisions for their schools. It is recommended that upper-level administration is provided not only with quantitative data, but qualitative data as well; like the personal experiences of African-American educators shared within this study. School board members and other upper-level administrators must begin looking pass simply raw data and assigned numbers and hear the voices of the people behind the numbers. Allowing these members to utilize qualitative data in conjunction with qualitative data will allow administration to see teachers and student for who they really are - human beings. If allowed more opportunities to examine qualitative data results higher-ups in administration would recognize the importance of qualitative data.

In HPHM schools, administration should offer meaningful professional development choices to teachers. Allowing teachers the opportunity to competently choose the professional development they believe would best benefit their group of students is important. Participants have shared that in HPHM settings they were not provided a choice in professional development
opportunities; instead, they were mandated to attend specific professional development for large groups of educators across the district. In contrast, participants in MUC schools report they can choose from a variety of available high quality professional development.

In HPHM schools it is also important that teachers feel validated by school administration. It is recommended that school administration take the time to show appreciation for their teachers and honor them as professionals. Too often in HPHM school teachers are overlooked and only sought after to keep kids in line. This is not beneficial for teacher morale or student success, and therefore, it is recommended that school administration examine school practices, school culture, and school climate. These practices will ensure that the school is a place they would want their own children or grandchildren to attend.

Recommendations for Parents

The findings of this research offer recommendations for parents in both HPHM settings and parents in MUC school settings. Researching and voting for elected school board members is an important parental responsibility concerning the education of students. As stated earlier, the school board is an entity that yields a lot of power that directly affects all types of public schools regardless of the communities’ socioeconomic status. It is recommended that parents be vigilant in this area and support school board candidates that promote diversity, fairness, are intelligent, collaborative, and open-minded. These described characteristics show that a person who believes in the importance of equality will come with solutions to the challenges of today's school system and is willing to work with others to accomplish this goal.

Parents in both settings also should request the opportunity to review school curriculum. As a parent, I have requested conferences with teachers regarding the curriculum offered in my
MUC school. This year a problem occurred when questions were raised about the lack of acknowledgement of Black History Month. When asked how Black History Month was being celebrated or discussed within this particular teacher’s classroom, I was informed by the teacher that they would not be celebrating Black History Month. Instead, her approach was to “sprinkle” Black history throughout the curriculum, only slightly mentioning Black achievements or Black assistance during White war times and in general history. This experience supports the recommendation for parents to be aware of classroom curriculum and be an advocate for the implementation of meaningful and diverse curriculum throughout the year.

Furthermore, it is recommended that all parents take on the additional responsibility of ensuring their child is educated about the facts and the contributions of people of color that helped to ensure the United States become and remain a strong country.

**Recommendations for Teachers**

In this final section, recommendations for teachers are highlighted and discussed. I recommend that all teachers make a conscious effort to connect with and support students who do not look like them or come from a different background. Public school teachers have a responsibility to educate the public. Our American public has a very different makeup than it did 20 years ago. Today White children only make up 50 percent of all K-12 publicly educated school children, Hispanic children makeup 24.7 percent, Black student makeup is 15.5 percent, Asian student makeup is 5.3 percent, American Indian/Alaskan native children make up is 1.1 percent, and children identifying as having two or more races make up 3.1 percent (United States Government Accountability Office, 2018). These facts show it is important for teachers to connect with a wide variety of students.
One way that teachers can connect with students and provide students with an opportunity to connect with the teachers and the school, is by supplementing their curriculum and displaying positive images of people of color. The internet now provides teachers with access to excellent resources for all ages that help teach the importance of diversity and highlights the meaningful contributions minorities in America have provided this country. Because of the new technological world and the access that teachers and students have, it is recommended that teachers supplement curriculum and display positive images of African-Americans and other minority role models inside classrooms.

It is also recommended for teachers to make the cultural capital of minority students in your classroom valuable. Too often elite Whites in power wittingly or unwittingly diminish the cultural capital of people of color and create roadblocks for the success of minority students and families in today’s classroom (Dumais, 2006; Kingston, 2001; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). It then becomes the teachers’ responsibility to find ways in which students of color in their classroom can showcase and use their own cultural capital to learn and achieve in a system that is strategically setup for the failure of Black students.

Specific recommendations for teachers of color have also been identified. It is understood that typically Whiter, more suburban middle- and upper-class school districts offer higher salaries. Higher wages are one reason teachers tend to resign from HPHM schools. For Black educators looking for a “better” opportunity in a higher paying district, I recommended they do their homework. When looking for new employment opportunities, set aside time to research possible districts. Researching the school’s programs and the past decisions of their Board of Education may reveal what is important to the community and the district in which they are considering employment. Connecting with an African-American educator who is already
employed in a possible future district and discussing their personal experiences in a safe space may also be beneficial to African-American teachers seeking employment in MUC schools.

Conclusions

This research began with a goal to uncover the experiences of African-American teachers who left HPHM schools for more lucrative positions in MUC schools. As a former elementary school teacher in a HPHM school district, I was already privy to the personal experiences and day-to-day realities of working in a hard-to-staff, underfunded, and overworked predominately Black school system. However, as many friends and colleagues continued to leave year after year and gain employment in "better" school districts that offered higher pay and serving larger populations of White students, I became increasingly intrigued about what their experiences look like in their new settings. Was the move worth it? Did they find what they were looking for? Was the grass actually greener on the other side?

I soon discovered as the old adage says, "The grass is not always greener on the other side." The participants did report positive qualities about transitioning to a MUC school, such as, receiving a significant increase in salary and increased feelings of teacher autonomy. On the other hand, participants also reported that race played a much larger role in their new setting that it had in their previous school setting. Being one of a very few African-Americans in the schools; feeling isolation; experiencing microaggressions, both subtle and blatant; fighting stereotypes; coping with the devaluing of their cultural capital; and witnessing inequitable treatment of students and parents who shared a similar habitus were all issues participants commonly experienced in their new predominately White work spaces. Race, a socially
constructed concept, significantly impacted their daily routine of teaching in a way they had never experienced before.

Many in today's society believe that racism is a thing of the past; however, critical race theory begins with the assertion that race and racism have always been and will always continue to be a part of American society (Bell, 1992). The shared experiences of the participants within this study illustrate multiple concrete examples of the ways in which race and racism endure in American society. Collecting the counterstories of the Black educators is critical to understanding racial injustices occurring in the field of education (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). These often untold and silenced stories challenge the majoritarian stories that have a tendency to eliminate or alter the experiences of African-Americans. Creating the opportunity to hear these voices provided a way to examine the hidden institutional practices that reproduce inequality.

In the same manner, Bourdieu's (1977) theory also calls attention to the ways in which society reproduces class and cultural oppression through our established, compulsory, system of education. Like Bourdieu asserts, the participants revealed that the common practices of MUC schools fosters an environment where non-dominant-Black cultural capital is devalued and dominant-White cultural capital is admired. The delegitimization of the cultural capital of people of color and the complacency, either knowingly or unknowingly, of the dominant culture in these spaces allow for prejudicial common practices to be sustained within MUC school environments. The common practice of devaluing the cultural capital of minorities is detrimental to the mentality of people of color and can leave lasting and damaging effects of how they view themselves in the world. Teachers of color in particular can experience a significant loss of self-efficacy when they feel their culture is unwelcomed or devalued in schools. Throughout the collection of data, participants described ways in which the actions, both visible and invisible, of
the dominant culture created negative feelings of being devalued in MUC school spaces. Bourdieu (1989) describes this type of invisible violence as symbolic violence.

In these ways, public schools, which are supposed to promote democracy and social justice, instead contribute to the maintenance of institutional racism. The quiet, invisible, and legitimized ways in which these forms of symbolic violence occur are even more insidious than recent incidents reported in media headlines that call attention to the ways in which racism operates today. For example, a number of racially motived incidents of symbolic violence have been made visible across America. Most recently, police were called on an African-American family barbequing in Oakland (Mezzofiore, 2018), a group of African-American filmmakers leaving an Airbnb rental (Eltagouri, 2018), and an African-American graduate student at Yale who fell asleep in a common area while studying (Caron, 2018). However, the counterstories of African-Americans are now being heard and provided a platform to share and document their experiences through social media.

Through examination of the experiences of my participants I was able to answer the question that initially drove me: Is the grass greener on the other side? My concluding answer, as warned in the famous proverb, was no, the grass is not always greener on the other side. The African-American educators in this study revealed that some negative aspects of teaching in HPHM schools like low pay, safety, and lack of teacher autonomy are reduced in MUC settings; however, they are replaced with issues of racism, microaggressions, devaluing of cultural capital, and symbolic violence. My hope is that through this research individuals can legitimately hear the voices of African-American educators and work to create educational environments where people of color are treated fairly, and their uniqueness and cultural capital is celebrated in schools. My advice to MUC administration is to provide ongoing, meaningful professional
development focusing on research based strategies teachers can use to promote democracy, social justice, and equality in their classroom. In addition, professional development in MUC schools should also provide teachers an opportunity to understand why these ideals are important, pointing out the detrimental effects biases have on learning environments. Implementing policies and practices transforming our schools into positive environments that support the learning styles and cultures of all students is the first step in fighting against racial injustices in our American system of education.
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