THE INVISIBLE STRUGGLE: AN EXPLORATION OF BLACK TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES WITH RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

A Dissertation by

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This dissertation is dedicated to God, my Father and then to all of my ancestors of African and Native American heritage, who suffered, labored, and endured that I may have the opportunities God promised and set before us. I am one of many that they have waited for. I also dedicate this dissertation to my children – my daughter, Alexandria and to my sons, Daryl, Jonathan, and Timothy. To my children, I pray that this may serve as an example of the keeping power and provision of my God and how He will give you the desires of your heart if you have faith in Him, obey Him, and remain in Him. Always remember to fight the good fight of faith in Him and know that no weapon formed against you [while in Him] shall prosper.
I never would have made it without you, Lord Jehovah –
My God…my Provider, Strength, Refuge, Peace, and Keeper! Thank you for knowing my name!
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ABSTRACT

While anti-discrimination laws and policies have existed for decades, they have not been clearly proven to detect, prevent, or eliminate implicit acts of racism in the workplace. Using the Critical Race Theory and a Narrative Inquiry methodology, this study focused on the workplace experiences of six Black educators to explore how they describe racism manifesting as racial microaggressions and how it is allowed to persist in the workplace.

The six study participants shared their counternarratives, which contributed to this study’s findings. The participants, for example, reported racism as being a normalized part of their work environment’s culture and resulted in them feeling excluded, devalued, and isolated. Their experiential reality with racial microaggressions was often rejected leaving the professionals silenced or to challenge the status quo alone. The study’s discussion and implications can support the need to better understand how racism manifests as racial microaggressions and how it affects Black professionals’ experiences and perceptions of their workplaces.

Keywords: Black teachers, Black educators, Black professionals, racial microaggressions, workplace microaggressions, racism in the workplace, diversity, qualitative research
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I.</strong> INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Race Theory (CRT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose and Research Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II.</strong> LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Racism in Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre- and Post-Brown vs. the Board of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Levels of Racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Black Teachers’ Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmental Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Racial Microaggressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forms of Racial Microaggressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stereotypes and Hidden Messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consequences of Racial Microaggressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III.</strong> RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counternarratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Collection Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative Analysis and Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restorying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative Analysis Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transferability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verisimilitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethical Considerations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV. FINDINGS</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Participants</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason’s Perception of Racial Microaggressions</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koloraye</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koloraye’s Perception of Racial Microaggressions</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empress</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empress’ Perception of the Angry Black Woman</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra’s Perception of Racial Microaggressions</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zilla</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zilla’s Perception of Stereotypes</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical’s Perception About Being a Black Teacher</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Teacher Participant Findings</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normalcy of Racism and Racial Microaggressions</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging the Dominant Ideology</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrality of Experiential Knowledge</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and Social Justice Commitment</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normalcy of Racism and Racial Microaggressions</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging the Dominant Ideology</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrality of Experiential Knowledge</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and Social Justice Commitment</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Practice, Policy, and Research</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Thoughts</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Four Tenets of CRT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Participant Experiences with Racial Microaggressions and Reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>CRT Analysis of Jason’s Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>CRT Analysis of Koloraye’s Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>CRT Analysis of Empress’ Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>CRT Analysis of Sierra’s Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>CRT Analysis of Zilla’s Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>CRT Analysis of Practical’s Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Study Participants’ Experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Racial microaggressions relationship model</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Narrative analysis process</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The five domains</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of the United States (U.S.), citizens have experienced different realities within society and its institutions based upon race. These experiences have been influenced by narratives of inferiority and the manifestation of inequitable practices and behaviors. During the 1993 Presidential Inauguration, civil rights activist, poet, and educator Maya Angelou read her poem, *On the Pulse of Morning* (Benjaminoc, 1993). In it, she said, “History, despite its wrenching pain cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again” (Benjaminoc, 1993). With this sentiment, there appeared to be a call and challenge to move forward, look at the lived experience, and learn the pitfalls of racism so not to repeat the mistakes of yesteryear.

In May 2020, the United States was confronted once again with the same long-standing narrative referenced in Angelou’s poem, a narrative which challenged the nation, its institutions, and its Black and White citizens. This narrative has been systemic and structurally rooted in the fiber of this nation’s history, and its name is racism. *Racism*, the ideology of White superiority and Black inferiority, is the methodical maltreatment of people that perpetuates negative racial attitudes, views, and disparities (Alismail, 2016; Rollock, 2012; Singleton, 2015; Sue, 2010a). This maltreatment, on an individual level, is a forged in prejudice, stereotypes, racial attitudes, and discrimination, and it manifests as implicit and explicit biased behaviors and communication (Ahmed et al., 2007). Institutionally, the maltreatment via policies, procedures, ideologies, and norms manifests as biased practices and curriculum that favors White Americans and their interests while yielding negative disparities towards those deemed inferior (Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2015b; Scheurich & Young, 1997).
Studies have suggested that there has been a shift in racial bias manifestation over time (Sue et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2007). Historically, blatant or explicit bias manifested in behaviors of mistreatment and degradation of Black Americans (Singleton, 2015). These behaviors including school segregation, racial slurs, inappropriate symbolic epithets, and other violent acts have plagued this country openly, reflected the conscious mindset of people, and was normalized in society (Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Gullo et al., 2018; Jones, 1997; Moule, 2009; Wise, 2010). Implicit bias is defined as a stereotypical categorization, prejudice, or association of people based on race, which may be undetectable or unrealized by the person possessing it (Dovidio et al., 2018). Implicit bias impacts how people interact and communicate verbally and non-verbally and can be found in microinsults, microinvalidations, and microassaults (Solorzano, 1998; Sue et al., 2007). Racism, particularly in the form of implicit bias, can be likened to carbon monoxide, which manifests in subtle ways, is present in everyday life, is invisible, and can be detrimental to those exposed to it (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Jones, 1997; Overland et al., 2019; Pierce et al., 1977; Quillian, 2008; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Torino et al., 2018; Wieck & Hamilton, 2012).

Racial microaggressions are described as the commonplace occurrence phenomena of behaviors and communications that are elusive, striking, and often instinctive in nature and intended to degrade the recipient because of their race (Pierce et al., 1977; Solorzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2007; Sue & Spanierman, 2020). Racial microaggressive incidents are often overlooked as an act done unknowingly and with no harm intended (Sue et al., 2007). Recently, the nation was confronted with several public incidents of microaggressions. Congressman Yoho, for instance, was accused of harassing and using degrading language toward Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez while at the Capitol Building (Lynch, 2020). Another
set of public incidents involved the so-called “Karens,” characterized as White women who weaponized the police by calling the authorities and at times communicate that they fear for their safety whenever Black Americans displease them. For instance, on May 25, 2020, Amy Cooper was recorded calling the police on Christian Cooper, a Black man in Central Park, because he informed Amy that her dog was required to wear a leash (Goldberg, 2020; Stempel, 2020). There has also been a recent national public discourse focused on the brutalization of Black Americans in the community along with the shooting of Jacob Blake, and the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and numerous other victims. While these national public discourses are occurring, there is an increased value in understanding the persistence of racism in the work environment, specifically for Black educational professionals. Black teachers are one of several professionals that have an ability to influence the long-standing narrative of racism. Black teachers have an opportunity to help shape the mindsets and attitudes of students who later could affect the continuation of racism in society. As a parent of four children and a Black professional, I found this topic to be critical to influence the racial attitudes of current and future generations.

Schools in the U.S., both as an educational space and workspace, have a long history with racism (Gullo et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016; Land, 2005; Pérez Huber et al., 2006; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Studies have demonstrated that implicit bias towards Black Americans continues to persist in K-12 educational environments and often manifests as racial microaggressions (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2018; Kohli, 2018; Kohli et al., 2017). With a growing discourse about racial diversification and discrimination in education, it is more important than ever to include the racialized experiences of teachers and the adverse effects of racial microaggressions to a person’s well-being (Ahmed et al., 2007; Al-Khatib &
Implicit racial bias is problematic when not detected and addressed and has been found to impact performance and relations (Allen, 2012; Gullo et al., 2018; Solorzano et al., 2000; Wise, 2010). Implicit racial bias typically begins with a sequence of prejudiced thoughts or stereotype associations that can transform into an action or behavior and manifests as racial microaggressions (Dovidio et al., 2018; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Hall & Fields, 2015; Torino et al., 2018).

Research Problem

Schools have espoused desire to recruit and retain Black teachers and to enact policies intended to be supportive and promote bias-free environments where teachers do not experience racism. Schools work to adhere to existing laws and state-level non-discrimination policies by implementing aligned compliance policies and diversity training (Fronius et al., 2019; Gullo et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995). With these actions, it may be believed that school environments are bias-free and racial microaggressions will be detected, addressed, and prevented from existing in the workplace (Avery & Walker, 1993; Gullo et al., 2018; Singleton, 2015). Black teachers have sought to rely on schools to be committed to upholding laws and policies, and creating a work environment free from racism (Kohli, 2018; Singleton, 2015).

In spite of policies and laws that do not permit overt racism and discrimination, Black teachers may experience more subtle or covert forms of racism manifesting as racial microaggressions that make their experiences difficult and challenging (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Solorzano, 1998; Torino et al., 2018). The current laws and school policies address explicit racial bias such as hate crimes, bullying, and other tangible types of harassment. However, they do not tend to detect, prevent, or eliminate racial microaggressions resulting from covert or implicit bias; thus, rendering traditional anti-racism tactics geared for overt behaviors ineffective (Allen, 2017; Frost & Regehr, 2013; Jackson & Kohli, 2016; Nadal et al., 2014).
We know this because racism has been extensively researched on both institutional and interpersonal levels (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Corbin et al., 2018; Gómez, 2015; Kohli, 2018; Pérez Huber et al., 2006; Pyke, 2018; Scheurich & Young, 1997; Steele, 2018; Wise, 2010). Studies have demonstrated that issues exist in the education field at K-12 and post-secondary levels as it related to Black educators experiencing racial microaggressions (Achinstein et al., 2010; D'Amico et al., 2017; de Brey et al., 2019; Farinde-Wu & Fitchett, 2018; Frazier, 2011; Kohli, 2018; Steele, 2018). A recent study conducted by Kohli (2018) with 218 self-selected teachers of Color comprised of Black, Latina/o, Asian American, and multi-racial educational professionals found that participants had been repeatedly exposed to racial bias. This racial bias manifested as racial microaggressions, which highlighted how educators’ racial/ethnic identity was negated and they were discounted as valuable. This finding was supported by earlier research conducted by Pérez Huber and Solorzano (2015a) who found that the nullifying and devaluing of a person is common when racial microaggressions manifest. These microaggressions have an adverse effect on their well-being and the schools’ ability to maintain a bias-free workplace (Kohli, 2018; Kohli et al., 2018; Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2015a).

Black educators offer culturally diverse instruction and provide encouraging expectations for children, serving as role models reflecting not only positive racial images, but specifically, professionalism and examples of higher education attainment (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lawrence, 1997; Madkins, 2011; Patterson et al., 2008; Steele, 2018). Since racial bias is engrained in institutions in the United States, it continues to be implicitly reinforced by societal beliefs and norms which counter the positive contributions of Black educators.
In the workplace, individuals may not exhibit explicit racial bias behaviors, but instead, retain implicit thoughts about Black educators that reflect unconsciously the external viewpoints of society (Hunn et al., 2015; Torino et al., 2018). The persistence of racism manifesting as microaggressions tend to produce uncomfortable and at times possibly hostile workplaces. These environments then can yield adverse relational experiences for Black teachers involving thoughts of institutional betrayal or feelings of not being supported (Farinde-Wu & Fitchett, 2018; Frazier, 2011). Such experiences may be linked to teacher turnover, disengagement, and/or low performance (Achinstein et al., 2010; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Madkins, 2011; Sun, 2018). This study explored workplace racial microaggressions as experienced by Black teachers.

**Theoretical Framework**

If a school is to have a workplace where Black teachers can feel safe and be free from racism, then a commitment to make the invisible “visible” through the narrative of Black teachers’ experiences would be beneficial (Sue et al., 2008). According to Solorzano (1998), using a theoretical lens that considers race and racism challenges the governing discourse by forcing an examination of how school policy, procedures, and traditions impose inferiority upon certain racial groups. Critical Race Theory affords researchers a broad lens to examine the persistence and effects of race and racism (Allen et al., 2013). The primary reason for choosing this theory was that it gives race and racism center attention and demonstrates how White superiority, power, and privilege are preserved and reflected in microaggressions (Torino et al., 2018).
Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory has its roots as in the Civil Rights efforts of the 1960s and applied to legal studies, and later to education and other disciplines. It has been used to advocate for a change in the relationship between policy and the dominant group’s racial supremacy with the goal of racial freedom and anti-inferiority attainment (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016; Marx, 2008; Torino et al., 2018). This theory is centered on the view that racism and racial discrimination are inescapable, socially prevalent, and manifest in everyday interactions and experiences. Opposing the dominant ideology is a critical aspect of attempting to understand racial microaggression (Hall & Fields, 2015; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016; Marx, 2008).

Critical Race theorists are essentially concerned with the origins and systemic nature of societal inequality and oppression, which includes the manifestation of oppressive behaviors, language, and communication (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lapan et al., 2012).

In education, CRT challenges the dominant racial narrative of White superiority and Black inferiority by exploring how educational policies and practices are employed to marginalize specific racial groups, like Black Americans (Solorzano, 1998). More specifically, CRT rejects the dominant discourse regarding the intrinsic inferiority of Black educators and the normative supremacy of White educators. With this application, it is possible to understand how microaggressions persist.

Literature describes at least four CRT fundamental tenets that are useful when exploring educators’ perception of the persistence of microaggressions as shown in Table 1.
The tenets selected for this study are adapted from the work of Donnor (2005) and Tate (1997). As part of the first tenet, race and racism need the lens of centrality and intersectionality to be understood because they possess a natural look and feel and intersect with other identities (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Jones & Rolon-Dow, 2018; Kohli, 2012; Solorzano, 1998; Yosso et al., 2009). Second, dominant ideology claims of color-blindness, meritocracy, dominant group privilege, and other master narratives need to be challenged (DiAquoi, 2018; Kohli, 2012, 2018; Solorzano, 1998; Yosso et al., 2009). The notion that microaggressions do not occur resonates with White Americans because these experiences are viewed as insignificant, irrelevant, and invisible; by dismissing the experience, one then justifies White privilege and supremacy and inequality as normal (Allen, 2012; Delgado & Stefancic, 1998; Sue, 2010a; Torino et al., 2018). Third, centrality of experiential knowledge embraces the lived experiences of Black Americans as authentic, apposite, and essential to exploring racial subservience; their narratives through counter-storytelling are vital to analyzing race and racism (Allen, 2012; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; DiAquoi, 2018; Jones & Rolon-Dow, 2018; Kohli, 2012;
Solorzano, 1998; Yosso et al., 2009). Fourth, CRT is committed to racial and social justice with a goal of exposing interest convergence and eliminating all forms of oppression that plague U.S. society and its institutions (DiAquoi, 2018; Kohli, 2012; Solorzano, 1998).

Critical Race Theory scholars continue to contribute and extend the use of CRT as a beneficial tool for exploring and understanding the persistence of racism in the form of microaggressions in school environments. The legal aspect of CRT provides a perspective as one of the foundations from which educational professionals may develop an expectation that their workplaces are environments where laws and policies are upheld and racism does not manifest (Kohli, 2018; Singleton, 2015). Donnor (2005) introduced a similar application, which promoted this notion as an expectation or a type of established social contract between the school and its employees. Donnor determined that the promised social relationship consists of expectations and benefits each party and makes it possible for the collective goals to be accomplished. Using the social expectation described by Donnor (2005) and Ladson-Billings (2005) as a basis, educational institutions are expected to provide a work environment free from racism and other forms of discrimination. Teachers agree to provide educational services to the schools’ students with the expectation that the workplace will be free of discrimination and practices promoting racial bias. When racism is persistent in educational work environments, this expectation of being able to teach in a bias-free workplace is not met.

Jones (1998), drawing from the work of CRT and social psychology scholars, extended CRT to include psychological processes and developed two tenets that may account for the persistence of racism. The objective of these tenets is to help make visible the affective and behavioral costs associated with racial attitudes and beliefs, which result in and promote the persistence of racial discrimination. The first tenet reflects the notion that race is instinctively a
result of normalized social views and stereotypes and continues to shape unconsciously the direction and meaning of behaviors, interactions, and experiences. In the workplace, the concept of race reflects information, including stereotypes about Black Americans, from society and affects the development and meaning of Black teachers’ relationships with leadership, colleagues, and/or students and ultimately their experiences (Torino et al., 2018). The second tenet suggests fairness is not a natural outcome of abstract ethical or plausible decisions but is a consequence of the collection of connotations that differ by our shared and personal histories. In an article entitled Whiteness and Ethnocentric Monoculturalism: Making the “Invisible” Visible, Sue (2004) observed that fairness is difficult to manifest because of the insidious nature of Whiteness and White Privilege. Whiteness, as Sue described, is the notion that being a White American can be equated to what is deemed normal, pure, and human while White Privilege reflects the associated benefits of Whiteness. Many White teachers are conditioned to view the world through a White European American narrative (Sue, 2004). This narrative’s existence is often denied by White Americans and Whiteness and White Privilege remain as invisible forces that afford White teachers benefits that often result in Black teachers being treated unfairly. Because we are often unconscious about our notions of race and do not share a universal conceptualization of what constitutes “fairness,” the dominant White culture creates the norm. For Black educational professionals, the way the concepts of Whiteness, White Privilege, and fairness shape the workplace culture may be a real source of racial microaggressions.

The Psychological CRT approach helped develop an understanding of the basis and manifestations of racial microaggressions as experienced by Black teachers in the workplace. By applying legal and psychological CRT discourses to this research, the voices of Black teachers who are typically silenced on matters of racism and microaggressions had an opportunity to be
heard as they “name their own reality” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016, p. 56). This use of a narrative voice offers a means to reveal their experience and lives and the factors they perceive as contributing to maintained racism.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

This study explored Black teachers’ perceptions of and experience with racial microaggressions in their educational workplace settings. I was interested in assisting existing scholarship making further visible how racial microaggressions manifest in the workplace. This study could provide educational administrators and other professionals with a critical view about the presence and persistence of racial microaggressions and the impact on Black educators. The experiences of Black teachers should be recognized and valued by all educational professionals, including administrators, to support schools with efforts to provide a racially bias-free work environment and improve recruiting and retention of Black teachers. Telling their stories, in the form of counternarratives, could provide educational administrators and other professionals with a critical view about the presence of implicit racial bias and microaggressions.

Capturing these personal narratives is a vital CRT element. Critical Race Theory coupled with a Narrative Inquiry methodology was used as the foundation of the study, with the purpose of describing the experiences of Black teachers and the persistent racism manifesting as racial microaggressions that may be present in their work environments. This theory and methodology strengthened the study and provided an awareness of Black teachers’ perceptions about the presence of and specifically their experience with racial microaggressions. Critical Race Theory provided a way to challenge any existing master narratives about persistence of racism and policies, which could hinder schools from ensuring workplaces are bias-free. Study participants were asked to share recollections of their experiences with racial microaggression.
The research study questions that were utilized to guide and inform this project were:

1. How do Black teachers describe racial microaggressions from their own lived experience as a professional educator?

2. What do participants identify as existing in the structure of their work environments that allows racism to persist as racial microaggressions?
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will discuss the applicable research and literature to demonstrate this study’s relevance and is based on the research problem and purpose (Creswell, 2002; Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). It grew from a methodical database search to understand the breadth of existing literature as part of this review (Lilienfeld, 2017a, 2017b; Wong et al., 2014). This process helped to identify ideas to be used as part of the conceptual framework for the purpose of relating this work and guiding this study’s analysis of the Black teachers’ experiential narratives. It began with a collection of studies, articles, and dissertations related to implicit bias, racism, and Black teachers to better understand Black teachers’ experience with racial microaggressions in the workplace. This literature review reflects largely the reading of both speculative and experiential studies and the following themes emerged: (a) racism in schools, the Black teachers’ experience, and racial microaggressions. These themes guided me to also explore literature related to pre- and post-Brown vs. the Board of Education, levels of racism, environmental conditions, professional identity, the forms of racial microaggressions, and consequences of racial microaggressions. The literature related to racism in schools, for instance, led me to a historical view and empirical studies about the levels of racism in the school system. This chapter, the terms Black American, African American, and Black/African American will be used in alignment with each study’s use of the terms.

Racism in Schools

Racism in schools is not a new concept or discussion. Although racial inequity has been the focal point of school reform for more than four decades, studies and literature have suggested that racism exists in schools and is not easy to eliminate (Allen, 2010, 2012; Boysen & Vogel,
Empirical studies have illustrated that racism, in the form of implicit bias, can be found in academic achievement, resource availability, Euro-centric curriculum, discipline practice disparities, and teacher cultural preparedness and effectiveness (Avery & Walker, 1993; Boysen & Vogel, 2009; Norman, 2016; Tobias, 1982; Warikoo et al., 2016; Williams, 2012). Much of the existing scholarship is focused on K-12 students of Color. Williams (2012), for instance, investigated contributing factors to Black students’ achievement gap and found that teachers unconsciously had lower expectations of Blacks students and engaged in racially biased behaviors. Researchers have also demonstrated that administrators and educators’ prejudice attitudes and embraced stereotypes manifest as microaggressive behaviors and communications, which have been shown to contribute to disparities in schools (Downey, 2004; Fronius et al., 2019; Gullo et al., 2018; Gutshall, 2013; Sue, 2010a; Tobias, 1982).

According to Quinn (2017), some educators holding racial or racist attitudes can result in manifested racial microaggressions at work. Quinn thus concluded that that educators who discriminate or exhibit racial microaggressions against Black students, are likely to discriminate against Black teachers as well.

Racism is a social construct resulting in the oppression of a group of people and promotion of the white privilege and power (Dover, 2016). Studies have shown that racialized systems have been constructed and presented in schools in different ways, creating a type of culture of racism (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Hall & Fields, 2015; Quinn, 2017). First, this is accomplished with the presence of microaggressions. Sue et al. (2007) and Sue (2010a) revealed that racism manifests daily for African Americans in the form of microaggressions. Sue (2010) describes microaggressions to denigrate Black Americans and communicates the dominant narrative of White superiority and Black inferiority to Black teachers and students alike. Racial
microaggressions manifest subtle language and acts of exclusion present in school policies that treat Black educators unfairly during recruiting, hiring, promoting, and disciplinary actions taken. This also includes racial exclusion within teacher development and student curricula and classroom instruction. Although the perpetuators of microaggressive incidents are at times unaware of these promotions of non-inclusivity, the effects remain detrimental to the recipients.

**Pre- and Post-Brown vs. the Board of Education**

There are two significant periods along the racial continuum in schools which are the pre- and post-Brown vs. the Board of Education eras. The pre-Brown vs. the Board of Education period consisted of racism in the form of school segregation. During this segregation era, racism was both explicit and implicit in nature and could inflict experiential harm on Black children (Dingus, 2006; Johnson Jr, 2014). There is little evidence that school segregation was originally viewed as something that could adversely affect Black teachers as well. African American educators were the preferred educational professionals by many communities (Fairclough, 2007). They taught in segregated schools where the facilities were considered inadequate and with outdated resources discarded by predominantly White schools (Madsen & Hollins, 2000). Yet, Black educators remained committed to their students to provide a high-quality education.

In 1954, the Brown vs. the Board of Education case served as the national landmark that called for the integration of U. S. schools but did not end racism or stop explicit or implicit bias behaviors from manifesting (Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014; Smith, 2001). In addition, it did not focus on the equitable integration of Black educators (Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014). This decision to desegregate schools also posed a different set of challenges including the shift later to a re-segregation of schools (Madsen & Hollins, 2000). Blacks teachers were allowed to teach all White schools, but they were often met with racial violence and other forms of resistance.
(Parham & Clauss-Ehlers, 2016). It was not until 1964 that the Civil Rights Act was passed that racial discrimination became illegal for schools and other public places; and the desegregation of schools was enforced.

Black educators were not easily welcomed in desegregated schools. In addition to racial violence initially, they were faced with their White peers’ assumptions of inferiority and incompetence (Madsen & Hollins, 2000). In a study of the journey of one African American teacher during this desegregation period, Lash and Ratcliffe (2014) found that the decision to desegregate schools had a positive and adverse effect on African American teachers’ professional development. The research shared that colorism afforded the study participant and other light-skinned African American educators the opportunity to have positive experiences. Some educators were displaced as schools closed their doors, rezoned school districts, and/or community members sued to prevent White students from having to be bused, which continued into the 1970s. The teachers and Black students experienced a loss of cultural aptitude as White maintained their Euro-centric curricula and instruction. In some states, teachers, for instance, were financially penalized for teaching integrated classes. By the mid- to late 1970s, predominantly African American schools’ student population dropped to less than 20% from previously being more than 95% (Johnson Jr, 2014).

With this shift in legislation, the explicit incidents of racism began to be concealed from the public eye as it was no longer legally acceptable and the more subtle form of racism emerged (Wise, 2010). As part of Carter’s (1968) reflection of Brown vs. the Board of Education, he insisted that this segregation was not the disease in the schools but the symptom of white superiority. A similar conclusion was observed by Pierce et al. (1977), who referred to racism as a public mental health infirmity where the color of Black Americans’ skin dictated whether they
were able to function from a place of superiority or inferiority. Thus, *Brown vs. the Board of Education* did not eliminate this disease. Rather, Carter (1968) argued that White superiority and racism were left rooted in the educational institutional structure. Early scholars of racism and CRT echoed this sentiment and argued that racism remains as a pervasive obstacle to institutions racial advancement, as it shields and serves interests of White Americans (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016; Pierce et al., 1977). Since then, researchers have discussed and examined the varying levels of racism in schools and other environments ((Brooks et al., 2013; Dickens & Chavez, 2018; Duncan, 2019; Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Hall et al., 2012; Kelly, 2007; Kohli et al., 2017; Lambert et al., 2009; Lightweis, 2014; Wiecek & Hamilton, 2012).

**Levels of Racism**

Racism is present the U.S. education institutions on different levels (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Jones, 1997; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014; Scheurich & Young, 1997). In a qualitative study, Pizarro and Kohli (2018) conducted a study that began with 441 administered questionnaires completed by K-12 educators and concluded with the counternarratives of three urban-based educators. From their narratives, Pizarro and Kohli discovered the levels of racism and described them as a “chronic, layered manifestations of institutionalized racism” (p. 18). Scheurich and Young (1997) introduced four levels of racism: individual, institutional, societal, and civilizational. The interaction of these levels contributes to the persistent and evolving nature of racism in schools (Scheurich & Young, 1997). According to Brooks and Watson (2019), few researchers have focused on the persistence of racism in terms of how these levels contribute to Blacks teachers’ experience in the workplace. Drawing on Scheurich and Young (1997) discussion of levels of racism, Brooks and Watson (2019) found that educational institutions are
changeable settings that progress as their institutional and individual racial ecosystems shift and interact.

*Institutional racism*, or environmental racism, manifests as prejudice on the macro-level of society and its organizations and thrives when the culture, systems, or symbols are biased toward a group of people (Scheurich & Young, 1997). In the book *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, Carmichael and Hamilton (2011) argued that the operation of active and influential anti-black viewpoints birth, promote, and aid in maintaining institutional racism. This racism is then rooted in the educational institution as policies, procedures, and traditions and unintentionally or intentionally have consequences for Black teachers and other people of Color (POC) in that environment that include experiencing microaggressions (Scheurich & Young, 1997; Sue, 2010a, 2010b).

When institutional policies and norms promote an environment where racial microaggressions are normalized, hard to report, complaints are mishandled, or retaliation is permitted, a hostile workplace exists and educators may feel betrayed by the school (Gómez, 2015; Pinciotti & Orcutt, 2018; Pyke, 2018; Smith & Freyd, 2013, 2014). Findings from a study conducted by Gómez (2015) illustrated the relationship between microaggressions and institutional betrayal. Drawing on the work of Smith and Freyd (2014), Gomez argued that microaggressions may be a type of institutional betrayal due to normalized racism and the lack of accountability for microaggressive incidents. A qualitative study conducted by White et al. (2019) of three educators and five policy researchers supported Gomez’s (2015) findings. Five of White’s et al. (2019) eight participants described that the reviewed accountability policies were harmful with varying impact on Black educators. Three out of five participants believed this adverse impact was unintentional while the remaining viewed the policies as complicit in
preserving racist views about educators and was a form of institutional racism. Institutional racism can operate in an individual school setting, a school district, or the entire national educational system. The impact can result in reinforced prejudiced attitudes and actions throughout a Black teachers’ professional experience in the workplace (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Sue et al., 2008).

Studies reveal that institutional racism is influenced by individual racism involving leadership, employees, and students (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Duncan, 2019; Pérez Huber et al., 2006). Each of these factors are significant in the changing culture of racism in schools (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Scheurich & Young, 1997). Individual racism can be described as individual acts of explicit or implicit racial prejudice, discrimination, and aggression that manifest on a micro-level of society and its institutions (Scheurich & Young, 1997; Sue, 2010a). Individual racism is rooted in socially taught and reinforced assignments of groups of people and the application of stereotypes and negative attitudes (Jones, 1997; Moule, 2009; Quillian, 2008). Researchers have illustrated that stereotypes are insidious, affect one’s views and decision-making, and results in predictable behaviors (Banaji, 1993; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Gullo et al., 2018; Sue et al., 2007; Westerberg, 2016; Wiecek & Hamilton, 2012). Implicitly, negative attitudes, like anti-black views, manifest automatically without conscious effort and shape one’s cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions during individual interactions (Amodio & Devine, 2006; Dovidio et al., 2018; Lassiter & Ballantyne, 2017; Moule, 2009; Sue & Spanierman, 2020). This is even true of educators who openly renounce negative racial attitudes and support anti-racism work (Dovidio et al., 2017). In a school environment, administrators, teachers, other staff, and students can possess individual racist attitudes and contribute to the persistence of microaggressions. In the context of workplace relations, microaggressions are generally
associated with individual acts (Torino et al., 2018). Those employed by the school, for instance, are able to influence how racism persists and manifests with face-to-face incidents of racialized communications and behaviors (Jones, 1997; Torino et al., 2018). Student microaggressive acts against teachers were problematic as they eroded educators’ authority in the classroom and created disruptions in the learning process (Land, 2005).

**The Black Teachers’ Experience**

Black teachers’ experience with racism in the work environment has been one of change but not necessarily one of elimination. In an *Education Week* article, it was reported that by 2012 an estimated 1,400 schools across the country had been under investigation for racial discrimination and microaggressions (Sparks, 2015). At the end of 2019, there were 78 racial harassment pending cases (out of 1288 Title VI total cases) across the country currently under investigation for either elementary-secondary or post-secondary institutions (Office of Civil Rights, 2019). Although many of the reported cases are not submitted by teachers, studies and journalists have revealed that Black educators are experiencing racism and microaggressions in the workplace from administrators, peers and/or students (Allen, 2010, 2012; Layton, 2017; Rand, 2019; Solorzano, 1998; Sue et al., 2007; Sue et al., 2009). In this next section, we will look at the literature focused on Black teachers’ work environmental conditions and their professional identity. Both help to understand the placement and influences of racism manifesting as workplace racial microaggressions.

**Environmental Conditions**

The environmental conditions of K-12 educational institutions may vary from school to school and district to district. For more than four decades, the field of education has been dominated by White teachers that self-identify as female and has lacked racial diversity (de Brey
et al., 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Black teachers have remained immensely underrepresented in the U.S. school system despite the goals of many schools to diversify their personnel base. The Black teacher populace has remained less than 9% of the total teacher population. Prior to Brown vs. the Board of Education, there were large numbers of Black teachers, mostly female. Originally, the Black teacher’s role was birthed out of a need to educate a vast number of Black children only, well before desegregation (Madkins, 2011). Between 1950 and 1954, there were approximately 82,000 Black teachers educating almost two million students of the same race (Kohli, 2018; Madkins, 2011).

Across 17 states, an estimated 39,000 Black teachers would lose their jobs between 1954 to 1965. Teachers who continued to teach began to experience a different type of racism. These teachers had been only afforded the opportunity to educate students of their same race. It would not be until the 1970s and 1980s that school districts would be legally required to recruit and hire minority teachers. Even then not all school districts voluntarily participated. By 1978, African Americans were only 12% of the U.S. teacher population and continued to decline to 8% where it hovers nearly to date (de Brey et al., 2019; Madkins, 2011; Tompkins, 2010). Research showed that this was the beginning of the decline of the presence of Black teachers in the schools (Jackson & Kohli, 2016; Kohli, 2018; Madkins, 2011). For the 2003-2004 school year, African Americans represented 8% of the teaching profession body compared to 83 percent White teachers. Nearly 12 years later, the African American teacher population in the U.S. dropped by one percent to 7%, whereas, the White teacher population dropped three percent in the same timeframe (de Brey et al., 2019). Literature suggested that the drop in Black educators may result from a working condition which include manifested lack of support and microaggressions (Jackson & Kohli, 2016).
Research suggested that Black educators often serve in hard-to-staff schools that are predominantly filled with students of Color (Achinstein et al., 2010). These schools are at times deemed as low performing. Despite this, these educational professionals serve as cultural translators for their students and communities (Ladson-Billings, 2011). Research has suggested that some Black teachers are drawn to these schools because they are committed to promoting students of Color academic success and racial justice (Quinn, 2017). In a qualitative study, Osei-Twumasi and Pinetta (2019) found that Black educators display effective cultural practices in their classrooms which aided in Black students’ scholastic progression and helped to dismantle stereotypes of Black people held by White students. Research also has shown that the teachers did not remain at these schools unless there was strong leadership, quality professional development, and effective mentoring opportunities (Quinn, 2017). In addition, studies have demonstrated that these schools are not always able to retain the teachers due to lack of support from leadership (Jackson & Kohli, 2016; Steele, 2018).

Black teachers experience racial microaggressions in the workplace from three different sources: administrators, peers, and students (Boysen & Vogel, 2009; Hall & Fields, 2015; Norman, 2016; Quinn, 2017; Williams, 2012). Researchers have observed that educational professionals, for instance, have not prevented their biases from entering the school environment and that racial attitudes are often held by people who may not embrace racism consciously (Boysen & Vogel, 2009; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Norman, 2016; Quinn, 2017; Williams, 2012). In a narrative study, Hall and Fields (2015) explored Black men and women’s experiences with racial microaggressions in the urban areas in the U. S. southeastern region. They discovered that many teachers were unaware of the invisible nature of implicit racial bias which prevents them from grasping their own involvement in the continuation of racial discrimination. Research
further suggested that many educators are also unaware that implicit racial bias impacts a person’s perceptions, assumptions, biases, and decision-making, and then manifests as behaviors and communications that can have harmful outcomes on its recipients (Downey, 2004; Kohli, 2012; McKenzie, 2009; Moule, 2009; Sue, 2010b; Sue et al., 2008). At a Midwestern predominantly White institution, Steele (2018) conducted a qualitative study and found that non-Black educational professionals and students manifested microaggressive behaviors and communications in the school environment. Although participants expressed experiencing more incidents with colleagues than students, students demonstrated a lack of respect, viewed Black educators as incompetent, and challenged their authority in the classroom. They also shared that their leadership and colleagues were unresponsive and complicit concerning reported issues with students. This can make it difficult for Black teachers to have bias-free experiences in their work environments.

In predominantly White work environments, Black male and Black female educators can experience racial microaggressions differently; thus, contributing to a difference in their work condition experience. Hall and Fields (2015) found that there are some commonalities between the experiences of Black males and females. Studies have shown that both Black male and female professionals can experience racial microaggressions in hiring, promotions, and mentoring pursuits; and results in feelings of isolation, defensiveness, and possibly identity negotiating or assimilation (Alabi, 2015; Hall et al., 2012; Hall & Fields, 2015; Sue, 2010a; Weiner et al., 2019). However, Hall and Fields (2015) also discovered that gender differences exist as well and incidents of microaggressions most often occurred in the workplace. The study highlighted that Black male participants experienced being associated with a criminal background more than Black women. There is a growing body of literature focused on the
working condition of Black male educators. A large part of the research is concentrated on Black educators in higher education. In a study focused on Black males’ experiences with racial microaggressions in predominantly White organizations, Pitcan et al. (2018) argued that predominantly White work environments serve as microcosms where both racism and sexism thrive. Black male teachers, like other Black male professionals in Pitcan et al. (2018) work, may be held to a double standard and experience hypervisibility. With the hypervisibility, the men are assumed to be inferior to female teachers and their performance is often scrutinized; both of which can be problematic and contribute to manifested racial microaggressions. This is consistent with Turner and Grauerholz’s (2017) qualitative study with Black male educators in higher education, who found that these professionals’ credentials and authority were unfailingly doubted or opposed. In contrast, Dickens et al. (2019) explored the premise and research on the workplace experiences of Black women and shared that they may experience either invisibility or hypervisibility depending on whether tokenism is applied. Racial microaggressions can be linked stereotypes and result in these educational professionals experiencing some form of exclusion in the workplace (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Holder et al., 2015).

When microaggressions are present in the work environment, they can impact Black teachers’ perception of their workplace because the racism appears to remain persistent and unacknowledged (Offermann et al., 2014; Pitcan et al., 2018). As part of Pitcan et al. (2018) study, it was discovered that the ambiguity of microaggressions posed a challenge regarding whether to confront, ignore, and how to cope with an incident. In a quantitative study of 195 White college students, Kaiser et al. (2006) highlighted one aspect of this challenge arising from educators who hold views that their institutions and racial group’s integrity are being unnecessarily challenged by claims of microaggressions. As their perceptions are being
challenged, their response may become a justification of their racial groups’ behaviors. The result may prompt microaggressive behaviors toward Black educators who confronted or reported the microaggressive behaviors. Participants held negative racial attitudes because they viewed the Black educators as having different values or perceived that the Black educators did not take responsibility for their actions that led to the microaggressions. Findings from Hall and Fields’ (2015) study indicated an invisible double standard appeared to be imposed on Black educators working within predominantly White environments. In these dual worlds, there can be a set of different racial attitudes, standards, or unspoken rules that are subtly imposed on Black Americans and other personnel of Color.

**Professional Identity**

Literature reviewed on the perceptions about the professional identity of Black teachers were utilized to inform this research. First, research has revealed that Black/African American educational professionals are valuable and bring a wealth of cultural knowledge and competency to the field (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Jackson & Kohli, 2016; Kohli, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Literature has also shown that there are positive outcomes when children and their teacher are of the matching race or ethnicity (Alismail, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2011). These outcomes include better attitudes, enthusiasm, and student achievement. One reason for this may be that Black educational professionals may possess more encouraging expectations for African American students and their achievements than their White teacher counterparts (de Brey et al., 2019). African American teachers also may serve as role models reflecting not only positive racial images but specifically professionalism and examples of higher education. Their cultural experiences are at times closer to the students that they serve (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Madkins,
2011; Patterson et al., 2008). This does not mean that African Americans are the only teachers that can be effective role models, but they do play an important role (Achinstein et al., 2010). Educational institutions at times have operated in a manner that may alienate its Black educational professionals. In his article, “She Can’t Teach Us: Exploring the Complexities of Diversifying the U.S. Teaching Force,” Childs (2019) illuminated problems in these institutions that result in fewer Black educators. One problem stem from how society associates blackness with danger, a nuisance, or something or someone that is cursed, making it difficult for educational institutions to be comfortable with Black educators. Studies have revealed that these Black professionals are overlooked for advancement opportunities or positions in some schools, culturally devalued, and concerns about acts of exclusion and bullying disregarded (Dickens & Chavez, 2018; Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Hall et al., 2012; Kelly, 2007; Pitcan et al., 2018; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Wieck & Hamilton, 2012). Researchers Pizarro and Kohli (2018) discovered that Black educators experience pressure to be a type of supernatural professional. Birthed out of verbal or nonverbal cues, pressure may be felt to have much higher performance than peers, resulting in a constant self-questioning about one’s performance. Steele (2018) found that Black educational professionals are also confronted with tokenism and perceptions that they were illegitimate due assumptions that the educators were hired only because of affirmative action. As perceived token employees, study participants described feeling like they were representatives and the sole spokesperson for their race and diversity, which served as a pressure on them as professionals.

**Racial Microaggressions**

Studies in higher educational institutions have indicated that racial microaggressions can serve as a barrier to Black teachers in the workplace (Pittman, 2012; Quinn, 2017; Siegel et al.,
microaggressions are subtle acts, including behaviors and/or communications of racism that occur on an individual relational level (Sue et al., 2007). Researchers have also described them as racial bullying (Fox & Stallworth, 2005; McTernan, 2018; Miller, 2012). These microaggressions are described as a commonplace manifestation of explicit and implicit behaviors and communications stemming from prejudice and discrimination in society (Hall & Fields, 2015; Sue et al., 2007). As the number of studies focused on microaggressions continues to grow, there appears to be a growing interest in making visible in varying institutional systems with the primary emphasis being in higher education institutions (Pitcan et al., 2018; Quinn, 2017; Solorzano et al., 2000; Steele, 2018; Sue et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2007). The next section presents a synopsis of racial microaggressions gleaned from theoretical and empirical studies.

Scholars have advanced the theoretical literature by explaining the origin and nature of microaggressions. Harvard psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce introduced the term microaggressions, as a way to describe the elusive, striking, and often instinctive in nature racial language intended to degrade its recipients (Pierce et al., 1977; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Wong et al., 2014). Such microaggressive incidents were found to manifest daily in people’s behaviors and are often overlooked as an act done unknowingly and with no harm intended (Allen et al., 2013; Dover, 2016; Hunn et al., 2015; Schmidt, 2018; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Torino et al., 2018). The basis for these manifestations can be stereotype threat, which can be developed from any number of sources like media and educational curricula (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). For example, Pierce et al. (1977) media literacy quantitative experiment explored the relationship between television content and racism. The research team highlighted that microaggressions are the primary instrument for pro-racist attitudes and behaviors and its cumulative weight can be a burden on
race relationships. This experiment was intended to discover whether varying forms of media provide viewers frequently with an extreme number of negative depictions of Black Americans. Theresearchers determined that television can serve as a powerful tool to shape social beliefs about Black Americans and how they should be viewed and treated.

Solorzano et al. (2000) studied the scholastic racial climate and the consequence of racial microaggressions and argued that racial stereotype threat can influence African American’s academic achievements. This study provided evidence that racial microaggressions can include ascriptions of inferiority via decreased expectations and assumptions made about Black Americans. Study participants brought to light their experiences of invisibility, isolation, and being confronted with Euro-centric curricula which negated their experiences and imposed stereotypes. Solorzano et al. (2000) research brought to light two consequences of racial microaggressions that can be applied to students and educators: a negative racial climate and an inner struggle. The negative racial climate is reflective of the experiences of the on campus Black Americans and manifests as negative perceptions about the predominantly White educational institutions. The second consequence is an inner struggle that results from attempting to psychologically process the microaggressive incident. Like African American students, Black educators experience doubt about the details of the incident and frustration with the cumulative nature of microaggressions (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Friedlaender, 2018; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018).

The discourse about microaggressions was progressed with the work of psychologist Derald W. Sue, who introduced another level of its definition. Sue (2010a) and Sue et al. (2019) continued to promote the examination of microaggressions and exposing its insidious invisible nature. According to Sue et al. (2019), any marginalized group of people regardless of profession
can be subjected to microaggressions. It is often thought to be something that the recipient perceived. Microaggressions usually take place between a dominant group’s member(s) and a devalued or marginalized person as it relates to the person’s race, gender, age, and/or sexual orientation, for instance (Sue, 2010a). As part of this expanded definition of microaggressions, Sue et al. (2007) introduced a racial microaggressions taxonomy and a research program that was grounded in empirical and observed evidence for clinical practice. In a qualitative study with New York City educators, Sue et al. (2008) explored Black Americans’ lived experiences with racial microaggressions. This study suggested that Black Americans in the U.S. are constantly assailed, and they are placed in a position of trying to assign meaning to incidents of racial microaggressions. The work of Sue et al. (2008) helped to expose the common nature of microaggression as they discovered that African Americans have life experiences with racial microaggressions.

Sue et al. (2007), Sue et al. (2008), and Sue (2010a) explored the presence of microaggressions in post-secondary environments as experienced by students and educators. There is an extensive amount of microaggressions research that is based on the work of Sue and his colleagues (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Torres et al., 2010; Watkins, 2012; Weiner et al., 2019; Yosso et al., 2009). The contributions of their research enlarged the racial bias and discrimination discussion to include the associated psychological consequences. However, critics of the work around microaggressions have expressed varied views. In a review of Sue et al. (2007) work, Lilienfeld (2017a) argued that the term racial microaggressions exaggerated the experiences of recipients and that perhaps a less aggressive term should be used instead. Lilienfeld (2017a) also suggested that since the inception of the microaggressions research that there has not been enough empirical evidence to prove claims of existence and its impact on
recipients. Sue (2017) addressed Lilienfeld’s (2017a) conclusions with a follow-up article that argued that depending solely on a quantifiable truth puts capturing the real phenomena at risk. Sue (2017) also presented that the complexity associated with studying microaggressions due to its explicit and implicit nature; and cannot be easily handled like a chemistry project with control variables. Williams (2019), on the other hand, argued that there is sufficient empirical evidence to settle arguments about whether microaggressions, in general, are real, detrimental, and to necessitate action. These critiques appear to demonstrate concerns around and reasons for further examination of issues linked to microaggressions. The lack of understanding or rejection from those who have not experienced microaggression incidents may explain or contribute to the persistence of microaggressions (Sue & Spanierman, 2020; Williams, 2019). The question is not whether racism as experienced in microaggression exists but rather how it continues to manifest as microaggressions in the work environments.

**Forms of Racial Microaggressions**

The taxonomy developed by Sue et al. (2007) identified three forms or ways that racial microaggressions manifest – microinsults, microinvalidations, and microassaults. *Microinsults* involve the use of insensitivities or rudeness. *Microinvalidations* entail ignoring a person’s viewpoints, feelings, and/or contributions. These are unconsciously done, expressed implicitly, and the messaging is subtle and demeaning (Dovidio et al., 2017; Sue et al., 2019; Sue et al., 2008). The third type of racial microaggression, *microassaults*, are acts of name-calling, explicit discrimination, and excluding. Microaggressive behaviors communicate prejudice and can manifest in different verbal and nonverbal ways, as well as distributed either implicitly or blatantly.
As shown in Figure 1, this adaptation of Sue et al. (2007) taxonomy of racial microaggressions illustrates a relationship between the manifestations of racial microaggressions and how they manifest on an institutional level (macro-level) and individual (micro-level).

![Racial Microaggressions - Manifestations Diagram](image)

Figure 1. Racial microaggressions relationship model

The prefixes micro and macro used by Sue (2010a) do not reflect the size of the manifested racial bias. Rather, the prefixes denote the level in which the racism and discrimination occurs. For this study, microassaults will not be the primary focus due to its overt or explicit nature.

Racial microaggression generally occurs between White people and POC but can occur within racial groups. Research suggests that they manifest in everyday life for POC, in the context of this study specifically African Americans, and occur in different forms and places, like the workplace (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Hall & Fields, 2015). These insidious behaviors result in the invalidating, quieting, and embarrassing of Black Teachers’ individuality and/or voices. Despite these behaviors, Sue et al. (2007) and (Sue, 2010a) argued that well-intentioned White Americans are the perpetrators and are unaware of the biased nature of their actions or
communications. Sue (2010a) also contended they are unaware they are exposing African Americans to offensive, demeaning, negative, and hostile racial messages. The power of racial microaggression lies in its “unconscious transmittal” and its immersed presence in the color blindness philosophy (Schmidt, 2018). The lethal attribute of racial microaggressions is not as visible as some blatant physical racial attacks. However, Sue (2010a) discovered they do adversely impact Black Teachers and bring about despondency. Based on a growing body of literature, when racial microaggression is experienced, its recipients are most likely to experience stress. This stress may manifest in their life in different ways. What has not been clearly understood in research is whether certain incidents of incidents trigger more detrimental effects. Studies have discovered that examples of microaggressive acts or incidents include but are not limited to stereotyping, condescending behaviors, pervasive racial slights, and discounting people (Schmidt, 2018; Sue et al., 2007).

**Stereotypes and Hidden Messages**

Drawing on the works of Pierce et al. (1977), Sue et al. (2007), and Sue et al. (2019), microaggressions have been found to be associated with stereotypes and hidden messages about Black Americans. Stereotypes are a set of societal beliefs based on distorted information concerning Blacks’ attributes or characteristics (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Stereotypes become engrained via a variety of images, messages, and systems that contain societal constructs of racism and inequality and result in Blacks being viewed with negative connotations such as linkage to criminality, inferior intelligence, and laziness (Moule, 2009; Quillian, 2008; Wieck & Hamilton, 2012). They may be rooted in a partial truth or completely unfounded. They can be as extreme as Blacks have tails like monkeys and brains the size of a pea, or, Black male teachers are inferior in their knowledge and education and probably have a criminal background. Sue
identified eight common hidden messages to further increase the visibility of microaggressions and its effects, which are all rooted in racial stereotypes.

The hidden messages are themes that have been divided between microinsults and microinvalidations by Sue et al. (2008). They include being treated as a foreigner, attribution of intelligence, inferior citizen, assumptions of criminality, color blindness, rejection of individual racism, myth of meritocracy, and pathologize cultural values/communication styles (Sue, 2010a).

The first theme, foreigner in own land, infers that one’s visual identity or accent define their nationality. This could be experienced when a brown-skinned Black professional has a regional accent which is not representative of the area where they work. Attributions of intelligence infer that the person is a credit to their race for their displayed intelligence, as an example. The second-class or inferior citizen theme infers that POC are inferior to other races. Black professionals being questioned about their knowledge and ability to teach can be an example of both second-class citizen and attribution of intelligence. The assumptions of criminality theme suggest that Black Americans are to be feared and can be associated with crime and violence. Examples of assumptions of criminality are a person being followed around a store by security or when a White female teacher displays fear when alone with an African American male student.

The color blindness theme promotes the rejection of an employee’s race or color and the pretense that either are inconsequential and unseen. This theme can be observed when a White teacher says to their Black co-worker that they do not see color when they see the Black educator or their students. Rejection of individual racism means that a person pretends or is in denial about holding or exhibiting racism. This can be observed when racial microaggressions occur in terms of the perpetrator’s rationale for why the incident did not occur or was misunderstood. Another hidden message theme, myth of meritocracy, describes the notion that race, or color is...
insignificant or minor in one’s success in life. Those who assert this view may say that all Black Americans can find success if they just work hard and stop blaming racism or slavery on what they cannot achieve. Finally, pathologize cultural values/communication styles can be described as the viewpoint that Black Americans’ values and communications are abnormal and being devalued. Although some of these common themes are related to racial microaggressions, researchers have discovered applicability to other focuses of microaggressions.

With the use of various words and/or actions, microinsults are relational and ecological messages that convey disrespect, insensitivity, or condescending attitudes toward Blacks teachers (Sue & Constantine, 2007). For instance, a White administrator or peer accuses a Black teacher of getting their position because the district had to meet its diversity quota. Another example occurs when faculty or peers assign lower levels of intelligence to Blacks (Allen, 2010; Solorzano, 1998; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Whitted & Dupper, 2008). Microinvalidations, on the other hand, occur when the lived reality, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of African Americans are excluded, negated, or nullified (Sue & Constantine, 2007). A common example of microinvalidation may occur when African American teachers are in a staff meeting and their comments are ignored and treated as unheard. Microinvalidation has been described as the most insidious micro-aggressive behavior (Sue & Constantine, 2007).

Consequences of Racial Microaggressions

Research has indicated that implicit bias manifested as racial microaggressions is detrimental in nature and forms social injustices and health challenges (Baston, 2016; Bertrand et al., 2005; Dover, 2016; Downey, 2004; Gutshall, 2013; Halvorsen et al., 2009; Marx, 2008; Perry et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2007; Williams, 2012). The consequences could include how the educational professionals navigated their work environments, perceived their schools’ racial
climate, and experienced psychological or physical trauma. According to Pizarro and Kohli (2018), the struggle with navigation of the work environment was more about the Black professional being in a predominantly White workplace than it was about the location of the workplace, that is, whether it was located in an urban, suburban, or rural community setting. Some consequences influence how Black teachers present themselves or function at work. Researcher Pitcan et al. (2018) found that in a predominantly White organizations, racial microaggressions produced a workplace where Black professionals were excluded, where they isolated themselves, and where they suppressed a presentation of their authentic self was suppressed. Black male teachers, for example, may feel a pressure to adapt to norms reflecting White masculine as a defense and survival tactic (Pitcan et al., 2018).

Other researchers discovered that microaggressions can adversely affect teachers’ well-being (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018). A study found that some Black educators experience racial microaggressions in the workplace often cumulatively and the effects are detrimental to their health and retention in the profession (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018). Psychologically, Black teachers may feel a heightened sense of worry or concern about the next possible microaggression incident (Deitch et al., 2003; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018). Hall and Fields (2015) suggested that racial microaggressions are traumatic incidents for those that experience them. Although this study’s focus included the effects of microaggressions on Black adults’ well-being, their examination of effects on health was limited. Despite this limitation, the researchers demonstrated that Black adults believed that microaggressions can be linked to cumulative health-related consequences and was not conducive to their well-being. Racial trauma, for instance, affects Black educators’ overall well-being, professional success, and sense of safety and belonging in the workplace (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019). Racial trauma also affects the schools’ racial climate and teacher
recruitment and retention efforts. Studies revealed that some Black Americans, regardless of profession, suffer depression, chronic illnesses, or other conditions; and experience institutional betrayal when dealing with microaggressions (Gómez, 2015; Pinciotti & Orcutt, 2018; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Pyke, 2018).

Besides the social and emotional consequences for Black teachers experiencing microaggressions, there are external costs as well. Work performance and critical thinking skills of people experiencing microaggressions can be affected negatively (Solorzano et al., 2000; Sue & Rivera, 2010). Studies have illustrated that Black professionals suffer self-doubt and other emotions when experiencing racial microaggressions and begin to behave in ways that affect their work performance or character (Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Pyke, 2018; Sue et al., 2008). Black educators’ classroom instruction could be impacted by the psychological stress and racial trauma experienced (Hall et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2011; Steele, 1997; Sue et al., 2008). Poor or low work performance could result in students not receiving the expected level of classroom instruction and support. Research suggests that the cumulative effect of microaggressions could alter Black educators’ relations with students and other relationships by rendering them unable to effectively interact others or withdrawn (Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Kohli, 2018; Steele, 2018; Sue et al., 2008). When microaggressions are present in a workplace, the workspace is uncomfortable for Black educators and promotes the need to be isolated or withdrawn mentally and physically from others in the environments (Dickens et al., 2019; Pittman, 2012; Steele, 2018).

Another external consequence of racial microaggressions is the departure of Black educators from their school, the profession altogether, and could include the prevention of Black Americans from desiring to enter the field of education. Siegel et al. (2015) explored the factors that influence Black educators’ decisions to leave their jobs and discovered that educators may
experience an array of microaggressions in predominantly White workplaces. These experiences can make workplace environments difficult to perform in. Another result can be Black educators becoming less engaged, having low morale, and possibly leaving their jobs. Some studies have found that Black educators leave their jobs or the profession altogether due to dissatisfaction with their salary, lack of support, and/or lack of advancement opportunities (Farinde-Wu & Fitchett, 2018; Frazier, 2011; Ingersoll & May, 2011).

Racial implicit bias manifested as microaggressions may be playing a larger role in Black teacher profession departure and shortage (Dovidio et al., 2017; Farinde-Wu & Fitchett, 2018). The manifested microaggressions have the ability to prevent the entry or retention of teachers and reduction of job satisfaction. Kohli (2018) study found that when educational professionals experience incidents of racial microaggressions, their job satisfaction can be decreased. D'Amico et al. (2017) examined the possibility of racial discrimination being a contributing factor for low volumes of Black educators and concluded that racialized norms and beliefs informed a school district’s institutional logic. This logic serves as a type of microaggression and resulted in adverse impact for Black teachers, as they were less likely to be hired. They also discovered that Black teachers were more likely to be hired by Black administrators. This was consistent with data gathered by Zerillo and Osterman (2011), which highlighted that racial/ethnic diversity schools were more inclined to have a larger racial/ethnic teacher base.

In summary, this literature review utilized a methodical approach to understand the Black teachers’ experience with racial microaggressions in the workplace, which included an exploration of existing literature and empirical studies. Each helped to understand the presence, persistence, and effects of microaggressions. Microaggressions are not easy to combat due to their ambiguous and subtle nature (Deitch et al., 2003). Based on existing literature,
microaggressions are also difficult to detect (Kelly, 2007; Kohli, 2018; Nadal et al., 2015; Patton & Catching, 2009; Pittman, 2012; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Solorzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2008; Sue et al., 2007; Wong et al., 2014). Many of the studies reviewed relied on the recollections of study participants perceived to have experienced microaggressions. Many of the studies reviewed were in urban or suburban areas (Allen et al., 2013; Allen, 2010, 2012; Brooks et al., 2013; Kohli, 2018; Kohli et al., 2018; Marx, 2008; Pérez Huber et al., 2006; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Smith et al., 2007). It is unclear whether experiences of Black teachers in regions like that of the Midwest have different experiences than educators in other areas. This study will extend the literature by adding knowledge about the lived experiences of Black PK-12 teachers from one state in the Midwest. In the next chapter, the study’s methodology and research design will be presented.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study was to explore Black teachers’ experience with racial microaggressions in the workplace. To ensure the study was couched in meaningful context, I conducted a qualitative study utilizing narrative inquiry as the design approach using counternarratives through storytelling as the methodology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Racial microaggressions have been associated with stress and trauma (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Corbin et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2007). Due to the nature of racial microaggressions, narrative inquiry was suitable for this study because it involves a focus on researcher-participant relationship and is useful for the exploration of sensitive topics (Lewis, 2017; Patton & Catching, 2009). This design offered the opportunity to build the rapport and trust needed for the participants to feel comfortable to retell their whole stories (Clandinin, 2013). Hearing their whole stories was critical to understand the context of the specific racial microaggressions shared and the constructed meanings the participants assigned to their experiences (Clandinin, 2013; Moen, 2006). Giving thought to the research problem, study purpose, and theoretical framework, this study design was expected to afford me the ability to study Black teachers’ experiences with race and racial microaggressions at the center of the analysis. This was important because I speculated that microaggressions were being experienced due to the persistence of racism in the form of implicit racial bias in the workplace. The selected research design and methodology provided a meaningful, rich description of participant’s experiences and perceptions because it centered the participants’ voices and allowed their stories to be told by them. This chapter provides details of the selected research method and procedures, data collection, analysis, research quality, positionality, and ethical considerations.
**Narrative Inquiry**

The Narrative Inquiry design approach was chosen for this study because it provided a valuable means to explore people’s lives through them telling their own stories (Bell, 2002; Clandinin, 2013). This was critical to understanding how the teachers perceived their lived experiences in the workplace. Since Narrative Inquiry has been defined as the study of experiences through stories, it aided in exploring situations experienced, meanings given to situations, and the effects of racial microaggressions that they faced in their workplaces (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Each story consisted of a plot, characters, had a location and time, and revealed the storyteller’s viewpoint, and was structured with a beginning, middle, and an ending (Kramp, 2004). The participants’ stories essentially preserved their memories, prompted self-reflection, connected them with their past and present events and actions, and assist with envisioning the future (Kramp, 2004). The term story was frequently used interchangeably with the word narrative throughout this study. The narratives captured reflect personal accounts and the constructed meanings were extracted from the collected stories to answer the study’s research questions (Lewis, 2017). Ultimately, the shared stories via narratives helped me to uncover the meaning of study participants’ experiences and inform readers (Bell, 2002).

Clandinin (2013) described narrative inquiry as an effective method for exploring “social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional” stories within which the experiences “were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted” (p.18). These story structures illustrate people’s beliefs and lived experiences and the intricacy and richness of them (Bell, 2002). This helped to establish narrative inquiry as the most appropriate method for the studying of racial microaggressions and Black teachers’ complex experiences and how they understand the dynamic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kramp, 2004). According to Connelly and Clandinin
(1990), one advantage to using narrative inquiry is its ability to deliver lived experiences in significant and relevant ways.

Narrative inquiry also offered a means to honor the Black teachers’ lived experiences and engage the educators as important resources to glean knowledge and understanding from and explain the phenomenon (Clandinin, 2013; Farinde-Wu & Fitchett, 2018; Patton, 2014). To know how a specific experience was intertwined in their life, narrative inquiry method often dictates inquiring “about the life rather than the experience” (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004; Josseslson, 2012, p. 4). Narrative Inquiry served as means to gain and reflect on lived experience, which was innately an interpersonal effort (Josseslson, 2012). Researchers have expressed that the furtherance of making visible the invisible and better understanding the manifestation, dynamics, and impact of racial microaggressions was needed (Hall & Fields, 2015; Sue, 2010a; Sue et al., 2019; Sue et al., 2008).

My role as a narrative inquiry researcher was that of a storyteller, who listened, relistened, interpreted, and then shared the Black teachers’ stories with accuracy and respect (Clandinin, 2013; deMarrais & Lapan, 2004). Since this approach afforded me the ability to organize narratives by connecting experiences, incidents, and perceptions, it made it possible for the readers and me to learn and understand Black teachers’ experiences with microaggressions (Josseslson, 2012).

**Counternarratives**

Explorations of race and racism tend to be better understood with the aid of emergent narratives that capture individual experiences, which become counternarratives as they challenge the master narratives reflecting the persistence of racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Torino et al., 2018). Literature describes CRT counternarratives in education as a powerful tool and
source of data that aids in giving voices to those who are racially oppressed (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Hall & Fields, 2015; Miller et al., 2020). The concept of counternarratives is a key element of CRT; one that helps individuals construct their own experience and helps to challenge master narratives (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Counternarratives gives voice to the oppressed through stories that describe their life condition and reality and are informative and useful for illustrating the manifestations and oppressive nature of racism. In the context of this study, they were also useful for making visible the resilience of Black teachers through their shared stories of how they responded to racism and inequality.

**Storytelling**

The vehicle used to gather counternarratives was storytelling. Through the storytelling process, each storyteller illustrated their own realities along with an interpretation or commentary on the event discussed (Feldman et al., 2004). According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), storytelling, in general, has historically served as a type of medicine to those who share their stories; one that has offered healing for the painful wounds resulting from oppression. Through these stories, a realization occurs about how the individual became oppressed and subjugated and affords them the chance to stop any self-inflicted psychological violence. Drawing on Delgado’s (1989) work, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) further argued that oppression appears to be invisible to or not viewed as oppression by the perpetrators. The perpetrators and overarching dominant group justify their position of power with a master narrative, or stories, which perpetuates the socially constructed racism and maintains their supremacy and privilege.
Participants

The primary criterion for participant selection for this study was status as a current Pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade (PK-12) teacher within the Midwest who self-identified as Black or African American. This participant sample was appropriate because I was interested in exploring the experiences of PK-12 educators. Additionally, participants were required to have at least one full year of service completed. The rationale for this was to improve the likelihood that participants had the opportunity to interact with leadership, colleagues, students, and families, which may not occur for teachers with less than one year in the profession. Although a variation in length of professional service was welcomed and may have provided additional rich data, teachers meeting this service criteria were recruited. The desired sample size was four to six because with Narrative Inquiry a large number of participants is not required to study and honor the experiences of Black teachers (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Josseslson, 2012). There were no criteria established regarding the type of school that the teachers had to teach at because the focus for this study was concentrated on the experiences of teachers regardless of their school type. The final participant group criteria were gender-balanced, which equated to three teachers who identified as male and three that identified as female. This criterion afforded me the opportunity to explore and compare the experiences of male and female teachers. Although the experiences of teachers of other sexual orientations are also valuable, it was expected that the intersectionality of their multiple identities may need to be explored independently from this study. In qualitative study focused on transgender educators’ experiences with microaggressions, Pitcher (2017) found that the professionals had unique experiences and stressors that non-transgender may not be confronted with like being misgendered. I believe their sexual orientation was an important aspect of their experience but to
retain focus on racial microaggressions, was not being included in the selection criteria for this present study.

**Sampling**

Purposeful and snowball sampling was utilized for the study participant selection. A purposeful selection approach offered me the means to identify and select participants who have first-hand experience with the phenomena being studied (Patton, 2014). The snowball sampling was used to identify additional participants through referrals that resulted from existing interview participants. It was used during the initial recruitment phase and as a contingency measure to increase the participant pool and ensure that the desired number of participants were obtained. This was necessary because I believed this study’s topic and the small number of PK through 12th grade Black teachers in the selected Midwest state may make it difficult to recruit enough teachers for the desired participant pool. At the end of the screening interviews, each participant was asked to suggest or refer other Black educators. Persons who desire to refer potential participants were asked to forward the flyer to the individuals of interest who then responded to me with an email or text indicating their interest in participating in the research. These prospective participants formed the snowball sample and were used along with the primary method of recruitment described below which did not initially yield the sample desired. This overall sampling plan afforded this study a set of diverse experiences (Lapan et al., 2012; Patton, 2014).

**Recruitment**

Prior to the start of this study, the research plan details were submitted and approved by the Wichita State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Study recruitment was accomplished by contacting online social media groups and personal contacts across the Midwest
via referrals. I also contacted educational professionals who I was acquainted with and people that I had established relationships with who might have been able to make referrals. From the invitation responses, the pool was narrowed to six participants. The remaining pool of participants were reserved in case of attrition.

For the online Facebook groups, the administrators of the respective groups were contacted by either phone, email, or Facebook Messenger and asked for permission to solicit participants within the group’s social media space. One racial justice group was the only group that required pre-approval, which was demonstrated by the administer posting the information on my behalf (see Appendix A and B). Another Facebook space that was utilized was a local newspaper that catered an African American community, and it did not require pre-approval to post. In addition to these groups, I shared the recruitment flyer with my own Facebook friend body, who reposted in groups that they are associated with or on their own personal pages. Potential participants were asked to send an email to my Wichita State University email address to demonstrate interest in being a study participant. No participants resulted from any of the online recruitment.

Personal contacts providing referrals included members of sororities, fraternities, churches, schools, and other organizations where educational professionals may be associated. Using personal contacts, I established a connection and requested assistance with participant referrals and the sharing of the recruitment information via email (see Appendix A and B). Some personal contacts recommended specific schools or school districts were Black teachers worked or where Black administrators might be willing to make referrals based upon their own personal contacts. I also had a contact person with a major teachers’ association in the state where this study occurred. This person agreed to assist with distribution of recruitment flyers to teachers
and was not a part of the selection or interview process. The sign-up process was the same for all recruited participants. Potential participants were asked to send an email to my Wichita State University email address or text me to express their interest in being interviewed as part of this study. Persons who referred potential participants were asked to forward the flyer to the individuals that may be interested. This recruitment effort yielded the majority of the participant pool.

Standard practices were established and followed during the recruiting and screening phases of this study. During these phases of this study, forming a rapport and trust were focused on to ensure that participants felt comfortable sharing their stories with someone whom they were unfamiliar with, which was critical to being able to gather and honor their lived experiences. In the recruitment phase, confirmation emails were sent whenever potential participants were referred. The confirmations assured the status of their participation, and that they had willfully volunteered for the study and did not feel forced or were referred unknowingly. The referring contacts helped establish credibility and a level of trust based upon their own interaction and/or knowledge of me and my study. All potential interview participants were contacted via email with a brief description of the study, a copy of the Informed Consent form, details of what their participation in the study would entail, and a request for their participation (see Appendix D). Potential participants were required to return the signed consent forms prior to participating in study interviews.

Upon receiving potential participant interest, a screening virtual interview meeting was scheduled (see Appendix C). The purpose of this screening was to verify that interested participants meet the study criteria and begin developing the researcher-participant relationship needed to create a comfortable space where open and real dialogues can occur (Merriam &
In the screening interviews, both Zoom, and Microsoft Teams platforms were used in accordance with teachers’ preferences. During this meeting, a few things proved helpful for establishing immediate connection with my participants.

Once the interviews began, introductions occurred. There appeared to be an immediate connection with most of the potential participants. The first thing that seemed useful was that I, myself, am a Black American. I believe my race made it possible for the participants to feel at ease and comfortable talking about their experiences regarding race, racism, and discrimination in the workplace. Race matching has been utilized by other researchers such as Pittman (2012) to lower the possibility that study participants would repress the race-related stories they were requested to share during the interviews. The other factors that helped were my gender, parental, and professional identities. After introductions occurred, all participants were thanked for their interest and there was a review of the informed consent details. Other information covered included the use of audio-recording for the interview and collecting basic demographics and teaching experience questions (e.g., name, years of teaching service, gender, educational background).

Using the screening interview protocol, study eligibility was verified for each participant (see Appendix C). Study participants were also asked to select a pseudonym to use in place of their actual names. Some selected favorite character names or terms as their pseudonym that related to something meaningful to them, while others created names. The use of pseudonyms during and after the study helped to maintain confidentiality and continued to build upon our initially established trust. Five of the six participants selected their own pseudonyms. The last teacher asked me to select a pseudonym for them. Their pseudonyms were selected during the screening interviews to identify them and were used from the screening interview until the
completion of the study. Empowering them to select their own names contributed to their ownership and feelings of connectedness to their stories. Those who selected their own names chose names that resonated with them either because it was a personal attribute or a favorite character. During the interviews, the use of the pseudonyms and active listening further supported creation of a trusting environment in which participants were more apt to share.

After pseudonyms were selected, each teacher’s eligibility for the study was verified using the screening protocol (see Appendix C). Once the target sample size was achieved, each participant received more information about the study and meeting arrangements were coordinated. Subsequent communications consisted of participation confirmations, scheduling emails, and meeting reminders. Using their personal emails instead of their work email initially provided by the participants, helped to protect their identities, and make them feel more comfortable in sharing their experiences.

**Data Collection Plan**

During the data collection process, narratives were collected as one-on-one interviews occurring between December and March. The interviews offered participants opportunities to share their stories regarding their experiences of racial microaggressions in their schools in a safe venue. During the first interviews, the teachers were asked to describe what it was like to be a Black/African American teacher in their school workplace. Although participants identified as either Black or African American, all used the terms interchangeably during the interview. Thus, their narratives reflect the use of both identifications. It was unclear whether teachers would need any or a lot of ice-breaking conversation prior to sharing their experiences. I quickly learned that three participants were not reserved or shy about sharing their lived experiences with me.
Between each interview, participants had an opportunity to reflect upon our interviews. The second meetings and subsequent member checks allowed us the opportunity to revisit, clarify, and extend information shared. This process was collaborative, and I served as the instrument to collect their stories. I gathered the participants’ narratives and we worked together to construct their stories. Each incident of racial microaggression, the teachers’ reactions and interpretation of it, and consequences were considered when verifying and organizing these stories. From the stories, I developed each narrative. These narratives then became a product of our collaboration.

**Interviews**

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) described interviews as an effective method of gathering comprehensive information about the personal lived experiences. Interviews were held at a time mutually agreed upon. In accordance with the health policies regarding social and physical distance, participants were offered the opportunity to meet face to face or conduct some of all the interviews remotely. However, all participants selected remotely conducted interviews. The interviews focused on gaining an understanding about the Black teachers’ experiences with the racial microaggressions, via their stories illustrating significant occurrences and experiences associated with racial microaggressions. Data was collected through one or more open-ended, audio-recorded individual interviews. The interviews followed a semi-structured question protocol with open-ended questions that facilitated dialogue and allowed me to prompt the participant for additional details or clarification. Interviews lasted for approximately 60–90 minutes. Study participants were asked to participate in additional interviews to ensure that each narrative was accurate, organized, and complete. The ongoing study interviews were conducted using the Zoom software only. Although the contingency plan, in accordance with the prescribed
university pandemic safeguards, for participants who are unable or unwilling to participate have a virtual meeting was developed, the plan was never needed.

It was my goal to schedule the interviews on days most beneficial for the study participants, which occurred over the course of two academic semesters from December through March. I attempted to avoid times when the teachers were focused and time was being consumed by special programming and/or standardized test preparation (Farinde-Wu & Fitchett, 2018). Protocol interview questions were used to guide the interview and help focus the storytelling of the participants’ narrative. The interview session flowed more like a conversation than a ridged, scripted exchange, which allowed for attaining a complete understanding of participants’ responses (Yin, 2015). A copy of the interview protocol can be found in Appendix E.

Field notes were taken during some meetings to support the audio recording and included documentation of nonverbal communications (e.g., body language), a description of the interview environment, and any other information that will provide rich, descriptive detail for the narrative. The audio-recorded interview and field notes were used during the transcription process to reduce the likelihood of possible issues with accuracy and capture items needing follow-up (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The notes were able to add information that further clarifies statements.

Upon completion of the data collection process, the audio-recordings were transcribed using the Otter transcription service. I followed a multi-method process as described in the next section to ensure that each narrative was an accurate story account, and any bias was rejected for the purpose of gaining a rounded understanding of each narrative. Compensation was offered to participants for participating with a gift card of $50. The gift cards were distributed at the end of the study. The cards were paid for from the researcher’s personal resources. The following
section describes the method to be used for the interpretation and analysis of the collected data.

**Narrative Analysis and Interpretation**

Literature offered various approaches and methods for narrative analysis across disciplines; there are varying ways stories are told and retold (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Since there was no single method for narrative analysis, a multi-step process was utilized for this study to assist with the transition from the interview transcripts to meaningful stories of Black teacher’s experiences. As part of this framework, phrases, terms, or whole passages were used to explain each story in relation to the circumstances in which incidents and occurrences transpire (Beal, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1995).

**Restorying**

The narrative inquiry design served as a guide and provides definition to the restorying process (Lewis, 2017). Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) described restorying as a retelling of a person’s story. The process of restorying entails the reorganization, analysis, and chronological order formatting of the critical aspects of a story (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). The interview data was the central element of this restorying activity. Listening, reading, locating elements of, and chronologically organizing the story were critical parts of the process. Another key aspect of restorying was maintaining the wholeness of the story and avoiding any deconstructing of it (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Although Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggested researchers should avoid coding of narrative data, other researchers have found ways to assign themes without lessening or losing the meaning of the story (Beal, 2013; Labov & Waletzky, 1997; Lewis, 2017; Marsh et al., 2018). Data was manually managed, and themes were initially assigned to help analyze the stories. During this study’s analysis, the review of language and
story context were included in the selected narrative analysis process; unit of analysis included discrete stories and vignettes as shared.

**Narrative Analysis Process**

This study’s narrative analysis process was developed by drawing on the work of Beal (2013), Labov and Waletzky (1997), Lewis (2017), Marsh et al. (2018), Nasheeda et al. (2019) and Sue et al. (2008). As shown in Figure 2, this narrative analysis approach was a four-step process that was used to manage, arrange the narratives, interpret the data, analyze the stories, and use to draw conclusions from each interview.

![Figure 2. Narrative analysis process.](image)

As the researcher, I was responsible for interpreting the Black teachers’ stories that reveal their experiences and related events as shared by them (Kramp, 2004). It was expected that each participant would have a viewpoint that could differ from other participants’ experiences. The audio-recorded stories were transcribed into a text form verbatim.

Step one involved data management and reconnecting to each Black teacher through listening to these audio-recorded stories and reviewing the transcripts. This was not a single review but rather a continuous listening and looking at the data for emerging ideas, sub-stories
within, and themes about what was being heard. This step also included the extraction of the salient pieces of the data, which occurred with the elimination of all recording time stamps, interview questions, comments, or other items that undermined the teachers’ story. During step two, the most important aspects or what seems important to the storyteller began to be highlighted. A repeated review, which included the participant, was performed to improve the understandability; one that was coherent and ensured nothing was lost. Step three was focused on the interpretation of the stories. Each study participant’s story was reviewed, organized by dates and event types, and interpreted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2014; Sue et al., 2008). Participants’ stories were compared to the stories of the other participants to identify similarities and differences, leading to the development of the findings. In addition to the screening and data collecting interviews, study participants were asked to participate in two or more member checks of the transcript along with additional virtual meetings to collaborate on the construction of story.

Drawing on the work of Sue et al. (2008), a five-domain psychological process shown in Figure 3 was followed during an analysis of microaggressions and utilized to interpret the participants’ experiences with racial microaggressions. The five domains were adapted from description of the psychological processing.

![Figure 3. The five domains]
Research conducted by Sue et al. (2008) revealed this five-step psychological process as a useful means to organize and interpret experiences with racial microaggressions. If sequenced, they are the incident, perception, reaction, interpretation, and consequence. However, Sue and colleagues (2008) suggested that these steps may not happen in a specific order, and may be recursive.

During step four, each story was analyzed through the CRT framework. The identification of themes occurred with the use of the work of Sue et al. (2008) and conclusions were drawn from the findings in the narratives.

The transcripts were used to identify incident characteristics and occurrences and identify any factors of racial microaggressions and was referred to frequently during the analysis phase of the study to ensure that interpretation was faithful to the words of the participants (Sue et al., 2008). The analysis of the findings from the stories continued with a comparison of the themes of the narratives and reviewed literature from the field. Parallels and variances between the experiences of the study participants were explored to better understand the broader context of racial microaggression and Black teachers. To accomplish this, the counternarratives were analyzed through the lens provided by the four tenets of the CRT theoretical framework: normalcy and intersectionality of race and racism, dominant ideology challenged, centrality of experiential knowledge, and racial and social justice commitment.

**Research Quality**

It was the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that credibility, dependability, and transferability are given proper attention in Narrative Inquiry research (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The quality of the research was dependent upon the use of an established strategy and practices for the sound data collection, analysis, and construction of meaning of the participant stories (Lapan et al., 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This plan included disclosing one’s own
positionality. Successful research studies must be solid and trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Attention to trustworthiness assisted with ensuring that the study was rigorous and was a quality effort, which should also be reflected in research findings and conclusions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). An example of this occurred with the use of existing literature to support this study’s data validity, which helped to increase this research’s trustworthiness. In this section, the trustworthiness strategies used to assure the quality of this research was outlined.

**Credibility**

All qualitative research needs to be performed with the highest level of data accuracy and integrity. It was my ethical responsibility to guard the confidentiality and dignity of the participating individuals whose lived experiences I studied to contribute to knowledge in existing scholarship (Josseslson, 2012). Ensuring an ethical system was established and followed was important. Because honesty and trust were critical factors when conducting interviews, it was imperative they were established early in the process. It was equally important that I remained neutral and ensured that subjectivity did not enter the data analysis process resulting in less meaningful data (Lapan et al., 2012). This continued throughout the interview sessions and even until the end of the study. During the sessions, using active listening skills was helpful coupled with appropriate interaction skills to gain participant’s trust. I personally endeavored to attain data from a sincere, compassionate, and respectful connection to the participant about noteworthy and telling parts of each individual’s life (Josseslson, 2012).

The raw narratives were handled as data and in a manner that the participants’ stories accurately mirror what was shared during the interview sessions. Study participants were given the chance to review their transcribed stories for accuracy via member checking. The goal of the member checking was to ensure that the narrative correctly represents the participant’s lived
experience and maintain the data integrity. To further manage data integrity, one peer from Wichita State University’s Educational Leadership program served as volunteer autonomous debriefer. They were provided the data for review and provided feedback that aided in enhancing the trustworthiness of the interpretation of the data (Sue et al., 2008). The study participants were also involved in each phase of the analysis and interpretation of their counternarratives.

**Transferability**

Transferability entails the ability to apply the research findings in other contexts and be useful to other researchers. An in-depth description of the topic studied aides with determining whether the findings and conclusions are transferable (Lapan et al., 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Guba and Lincoln (1989) argued that Narrative Inquiry studies give up on generalization as an end goal. Rather, they suggested that transferability be the objective and that findings focus on broader conceptual implications. Yin (2015) echoed this notion and suggested that such practice helps to determine whether there are any similarities with existing scholarship and adds to it. It was my belief that due to the nature of the data that the rich stories will help readers to identify its relevance with ease. The counternarratives provides and informs future researchers with data rich experiences of Black teachers, which may not have been fully captured with the use of surveys and focus groups (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Sue et al., 2008). Thus, I believe this research’s findings are applicable to other contexts and enhance existing scholarship (Patton, 2002). It may also inform future studies about the presence and persistence of racial microaggressions and the impact on other professionals.

**Verisimilitude**

The use of verisimilitude becomes more appropriate than data verification or proof of truth (Kramp, 2004). It, like dependability, ensures that consistency was established and
sustained throughout the study. There are a few different practices that were used to produce consistency. Examples included using interview protocols, capturing the audio-recorded transcriptions verbatim, and documenting of member communications. Another way that consistency was maintained was during the review of participants’ stories, when participants were asked to confirm details or sequence of events. This was important because participants’ recollections may not be shared in a linear manner or elements of the story may be recalled differently at different points in the interviews. I also checked my interpretations of the stories with the participants to make sure that my re-storying of their stories was reliable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2014; Sue et al., 2008). It was important for me as the researcher to remain aware of how I saw, heard, analyzed, and interpreted the participant stories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Each practice drove standardized work and auditable trails from onset of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

**Positionality**

To maintain integrity throughout the research process, ensuring that all stories and participants were handled with as little subjectivity as possible was important. To accomplish this, being aware of my positionality was needed to prevent an adverse impact on the complete study (Creswell, 2002; Patton, 2014). Due to my role as principal researcher instrument, it was necessary to explore my own positionality, assumptions, and biases prior to beginning the data collection process (Lapan et al., 2012). This practice is not only helpful for the researcher, but also for the study’s readers as it affords them the ability to understand the way the data was explored, interpreted, and presented. In this section, I describe my profession, positionality, assumptions, and biases related to racial microaggressions, and relationship to the site and its participants.
Like the study participants, I identify as a Black/African American, who is also a female, parent, professional, Midwest state resident, and a Wichita State University doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program. I am also a mother of four Black children; two of them, one male and one female, were in a midwestern state PK-12 space that was pursuing a more culturally responsive, bias-free, and reflective educational environment. My identification as a Black/African American, as expressed by some of the participants, made sharing their narratives more comfortable. When introducing myself during the screening interviews, I shared that I was not a school educator but was a parent and found this topic important to the overall discussion of how to address racism. Three study participants commented that they would have spoken to a non-Black researcher but would not have shared their stories to the same level that they had with me. They felt that I could relate to the things that they may share even though I was not an educational professional but because I was a Black American. There also seemed to be an immediate connection for the participants that identified as female or parents. However, based on our interactions, I suspect one of the chief reasons why there was an immediate connection was that as a professional I too have experienced racial microaggressions. I have worked in Corporate America for more than 20 years in different industries and roles and have experienced microaggressions in each work environment. I found the participants’ narratives to be informative, because I saw parallels between their experiential reality and my work environments. As a parent of school-aged children, who have also encountered similar situations, I am dedicated to contributing to the needed change with this research. However, this positionality was managed with the use of journaling, a peer debriefer, and discussions with my advisor. Making racial microaggressions visible could change the trajectory of racism in the workplace not only for these six educators, but other Black professionals and our children could
potentially be positively affected as well (Smith et al., 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Sue et al., 2019; Sue et al., 2007; Sue & Spanierman, 2020).

Through a self-reflective process, the following potential areas of bias were identified. I have experienced and witnessed microaggressions resulting from implicit and explicit racial bias in my children’s and my own educational and workplace experiences. My experiences as a Black American allowed me to have a better understanding of the stories shared by the Black teachers. These experiences assisted me with building trust and being attentive to the participant’s shared stories, especially if it became uncomfortable for some as they shared. This rapport also proved to be advantageous because it positioned me to ask additional open-ended questions during the interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

My assumptions and biases included the following: My first assumption was that all Black Americans experience racial microaggressions during the course of life and was willing to share them (Sue, 2010a; Sue & Constantine, 2007). However, they may not identify or describe their experiences as racial microaggressions (Sue, 2010a). Black teachers have experienced racial microaggressions possibly throughout their own K-12 school and college years, as well as in the workplace. Black teachers who live in predominantly White communities may be less aware or more willing to dismiss or abate experienced racial microaggressions. Black teachers who work in predominantly White staffed schools with predominantly White student populations find little to no support among their workplace peers when they experience racial microaggressions. Many White teachers are genuinely unaware that they hold racial prejudices and practice racial microaggressions in everyday conversations with Black peers. White teachers might question the legitimacy of the Black teachers’ experiences, perceptions, and responses to racial microaggressions and impose a different narrative based on the perceived perpetrator’s
intent. White educators might try to negate the experiences of the Black teachers and deem them as being overly sensitive and minimize the impact. Some Black teachers feel obliged to represent their race or hide their race in the workplace. Black teachers may not respond to racial microaggressions due to fear of being misunderstood, accused of ruining a person’s career, falsely accuse the perpetrator of being a racist, and/or labeled as being oversensitive.

My relationship to potential participants was limited. Since I resided and worked in the Midwest, it was possible for me have participants who I had at least seen or attended an event with prior to the study. However, I purposely excluded educators from the schools where my children attended to reduce any concerns of bias. Besides possible interactions within the community, I had no other relations with potential participants. It was possible that a teacher whom I had met prior to the study could have accepted the solicitation for participants. I did not believe this would pose an issue because my interaction was most likely brief, and no further relations were maintained.

Through this self-reflection, I also recognized that there are potential risks that I must remain aware of. With my past experiences, it was possible to analyze the data with an inaccurate understanding of the counternarrative. However, as shared earlier, having a robust design and procedures assisted with minimizing the subjectivity. As highlighted in other sections, the use of member checks, advisor guidance, and a peer debriefer helped to address this possible bias and increased the credibility of findings and conclusions.

**Ethical Considerations**

It was my ethical responsibility to guard the confidentiality and dignity of the participating individuals whose lived experiences I studied to contribute to existing scholarship (Josseslson, 2012). Ensuring that an ethical system of practices was established and followed
was important. In support of this, I have completed the applicable ethics modules, which prepare doctoral students to conduct research. Personal bias has been examined and captured with the positionality section; mitigation steps are identified (Lewis, 2017). Researchers’ ethical attitude toward Narrative Inquiry should be a posture that encompasses considering how “best to honor and protect” the study participants while upholding standards for responsible research (Josseslson, 2012, p. 2). The absence of this may have resulted in an adverse effect on the study participation and findings.

To aid with addressing ethical considerations, a research quality plan was developed and submitted to the Wichita State’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to review and approve prior to starting the study. This plan included details about how the study was performed, how integrity was maintained, and how ethical issues was avoided. For instance, due to the nature of this topic, each participant’s personal information was handled in a matter that offered and preserved confidentiality for the study participants. Participants were offered the opportunity to select their pseudonyms for the study, which were used to conceal their identity. No personal information, including the name of their school district, was included in the study. All personal identifiers were removed from the data during transcription and will not be included in any report or presentation. All hardcopy research records and files are being kept in accordance with the IRB retention policy for five years in a locked and secure location. Data that was recorded or kept digitally during the course of the research has been stored on a password protected drive on my personal computer. After the end of the fifth year, the data will be destroyed by paper shredding and erasing digital data files.

For this study, I recognized that a privacy and confidentiality assurance was essential (Josseslson, 2012). Prior to each initial interview, study participants were given a consent form
to read and sign. A copy of the consent form was given to them for their reference. This consent form also covered interview follow-up meetings. In addition, the research process was handled in a manner that there was an auditable trail. This trail included auditable documents, which include the signed consent forms, transcripts, field notes, and all audio-recorded files. All research related digital and hard copy documents were always handled in a manner that concealed the participants’ identification via the use of pseudonyms and the removal of any identifying information.

Another ethical consideration was the level of risk for study participants. The Informed Consent form described for potential participants any risk associated with sharing their experiences. One risk that could have possibly developed when participants recall racial microaggressive exchanges. These recollections may have triggered psychological, emotional, and/or physical difficulties for the researcher or a participant. However, no participant indicated that they had psychological or physical difficulties during the study, but participants did display and communicate their frustration, sadness, and/or anger as some stories were shared. It was also possible for the researcher to recall their own experiences with racial microaggressions, which could have had an adverse effect on them and influence the integrity of the research (Clandinin, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To maintain awareness of the possible intrusion of my own experiences with racial microaggressions into the research, I kept a journal (e.g., written, recorded) and discussed my experiences and arising thoughts with my advisor. This provided an outlet for the researcher. Recognizing and remaining awareness of one’s own positionality was beneficial for reducing potentially their lived experiences from interfering with any portion of the study. The peer debriefer and advisor were used to process the experience, along with personal self-reflection.
Participants were fully informed of the nature of the research and what their role as participant entailed. They were able to skip questions or prompts if necessary due to discomfort and understood that participation was entirely voluntary. They were also able to withdraw from the research at any time without fear of reprisal from their school, Wichita State University, or the researcher. There were no participants that withdrew from this study. Since the desired interview environment was virtual, breaks were offered to the participants during the interviews.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter details research study findings based upon my analysis of interviews with the six study participants. Their lived experiences as Black/African American teachers highlights their encounters with racial microaggressions in the workplace. Across their shared stories, commonalities were found and became study findings. The findings have been organized using four Critical Race Theory tenets as a framework.

Study Participants

Six public school teachers volunteered to participate in this study and share their stories with me. The participant pool consisted of three female and three male teachers in an effort to obtain a gendered balance sample population and diverse perspectives. Although all of the teachers were people of African descent, three teachers identified as Black, two as African American, and one as both African American and two or more races. The teachers taught at different schools located in the Midwest region of the U.S. Each teacher also taught a different subject and grade. All of the teachers held a graduate level degree and/or at least one credential. Three teachers worked in two or more districts over the course of their careers. Four different school districts were represented across the collection of narratives. Those participants whose lived experiences are being honored as part of this study are Practical, Empress, Koloraye, Sierra, Zilla, and Jason.

The participants and I spent on average four meetings together, including the virtual member checks. During these meetings, I listened and learned about their workplace lived experiences, with a focus on the school environment and culture and the workplace experiences associated with racial microaggressions. Each of their shared experiential reality extended an
additional 10 or more pages beyond the narratives contained in this chapter. Some of the original narratives were as long as 40 – 50 pages. This suggests to me that the participants were comfortable talking about their experiences. Learning about these teachers’ work experiences regarding race, racism, and implicit bias provided an in-depth understanding of their challenges, attitudes, and perceptions about racial microaggressions in the workplace. This information also aided in understanding the effects that racial microaggression has on the teachers and relationships with administration, colleagues, students, and parents. As illustrated on Table 2, all study participants experienced racial microaggressions in the workplace and reacted to the encounter.

TABLE 2
PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES WITH RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS AND REACTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
<th>Microinsults</th>
<th>Microinvalidations</th>
<th>Microassaults</th>
<th>Reactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empress</td>
<td>Lack of staff diversity &amp; different cultures represented</td>
<td>“having my intelligence [being discounted]”</td>
<td>“Well, it’s just natural for us to label things.”</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Internalizing &amp; being silent, reporting, and talking to family &amp; support system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>Lack of staff diversity &amp; different cultures represented</td>
<td>“You’re not qualified.”</td>
<td>“parents move their kids out of my classroom”</td>
<td>“deal with students using the N word continuously”</td>
<td>Internalizing, reporting, talking to mentor &amp; support system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koloraye</td>
<td>Lack of staff diversity</td>
<td>“you don’t have the qualifications”</td>
<td>“Are you Hispanic?”</td>
<td>“they don’t tend to hire minority males unless they have a quota”</td>
<td>Talking to family &amp; support system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>Lack of staff diversity &amp; different cultures represented</td>
<td>“You ought to be a teacher?”</td>
<td>“She wouldn’t try to hurt your feelings”</td>
<td>The use of “famous picture of [the Black army soldier who had whip marks embedded on his back]” as a prompt</td>
<td>Internalizing &amp; being silent, reporting, talking to family, and drinking water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra</td>
<td>Lack of staff diversity</td>
<td>“Do you work in the lunchroom?”</td>
<td>“eye contact is like a six to one”</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Internalizing, reporting, talking to family &amp; support system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zilla</td>
<td>Lack of staff diversity</td>
<td>“all Black males are athletic”</td>
<td>“I am not like that...”</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Reporting &amp; confronting directly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The examples listed provide context for the types of racial microaggressions they experienced. The forms of microaggressions not experienced by participants are denoted as not applicable (N/A).

Each teacher’s final narrative has been included in the next six sections of this chapter. Their words are captured in italics throughout their narrative. Bracketed words and phrases were used to add clarification or further ensure that confidentiality was maintained by masking details.

First, we meet Jason, who appeared to be younger than the other study participants. He was very engaged, friendly, and with a warm demeanor. Jason’s narrative begins this section with a perspective that included how mentorship and promoting diversity played a role in his career.

**Jason**

Jason is a public-school teacher and husband, who has taught at three different schools. He uses the terms Black and African American interchangeably. Jason has been in the field of education for less than twelve years. When asked how he identifies, his response was as a Black man. He was not born in the Midwest. He credits his decision to go into the field of education to the good teachers he had throughout his life. As he reminisced, he smiled and expressed that those small things that educators can stick with you and the educators he had really helped him to learn his value and my worth as a person. He described one math educator as being quite special to him. He laughingly talked how he hated math, but how this educator displayed patience and kindness toward him. He also mentioned that she stayed after school every day to work with him. Afterwards, he became a lover of math and education. This teacher was one of the main reasons why he went into the field of education. Jason first described his school environments and their culture in detail and included a summary from his perspective of what it is like to be a teacher.
Education, in general, is a female dominated field. Most of the teachers are White females. The student population was always predominantly Caucasian and maybe 5% minority students. The teachers weren’t very diverse at either of my first two schools. At my second school, there may have been less than ten White male teachers. The school kids were from a poor community. Once again, I was the only Black teacher, which is just kind of a norm. I knew a lot of teachers at that school. I had some really close friends there and that was a great experience. I was given free rein in terms of the curriculum. I built my curriculum the way that I wanted it to be, but it was still based on the standards.

Coming to where I currently work, it has been overall, great. The principal and I have known each other prior to me working here, and I can talk to him about anything. I already knew people. My first-year teaching, I had kids in my class that I had taught when they were in preschool some time before. I already was familiar with a lot of parents. I was much less guarded. It was a lot simpler of a transition because of how comfortable I was with the people there. So, thinking about my school for instance, we don't have a lot of African American students. We have some students who are multiracial. The majority of our students are Caucasian. Stereotypes were present and were little stuff that people think is small, like, ‘Oh, we know you like chicken.’

When I was in college, my mentor always gave me wisdom and stuff to keep me safe as a new male teacher. He was an older White guy, who was real about stuff, and he said, ‘Look, you're a young Black man. You're good-looking man, and you need to stay out of these places... one of those places was the break room. Don’t eat in teachers’ classrooms. If they’re married teachers, stay out of their space. Don’t be alone with students one-on-one.’ He had held different roles in the education field including being a college professor. He would say, ‘Nothing happens
but gossip in those places and I don’t want you to get sucked into something that could harm you because you have a bright future ahead of you.’

So, coming in as a fresh out of college new teacher, I was very much on guard, because people make preconceived judgments about you automatically when they see your skin color. I really was very guarded. I made sure that I did everything I was supposed to do by the book. Any lesson ideas I had that may jump off of the curriculum map and maybe a little extra activity, I was like, nope. I’m doing everything exactly how they want me to do it because I don’t want to get fired. I have taken everything to heart that my mentor shared and more. My first three or four years of teaching, I tend[ed] to err on the side of caution.

Being an African American male teacher, you always have to be really mindful of what you say and what you do. And you’re sometimes over thinking things, or critically analyzing things and making sure that you don’t say anything that can be taken in a way that could be negative or aggressive or disrespectful. I think the biggest thing is that for probably 90% of my kids, I’m the only Black male teacher that they’ll have and the only Black man that they’ll have conversations with on a regular basis. Every day, there’s a lot of weight on my shoulders because what I do, I feel, affects my entire race. If I make a mistake this reflects on my entire race versus just me making a mistake alone. We, Black people, can’t make a mistake and it just be us or just that person that made the mistake. That’s not the way it works. If you are White, you can do something bad and it’s just you. It isn’t a reflection on everybody. It's like Caucasians don't get the generalizations or stereotypes attached to their name. That's probably what the heaviest weight is.

At the beginning of every school year, I normally ask my students, ‘How many of you have had a Black teacher before?’ I mean you have two hands go up, usually it’s a PE (physical
education) teacher, or a coach. Generally, those are the basic ones. For a lot of my kids, I'm the only Black person that's going to interact with them, especially in places like this that are predominantly Caucasian. I'm the only one that my students are going to interact with outside of what they see in the media, social media, music, and what the news says. The news and movies paint Black people, especially Black men in a specific light. Those stereotypes put us into a box. I want to try to make sure I battle against that every day. That's one of the things that really follows me at every school that I have taught at.

One of the things that I've dealt with is the N-word. I have had to deal with students using the N-word continuously. I had a situation where I had a student who said the N-word in my class. One day, I was going over my diversity unit lesson which included a few different aspects of history. We talked about like different names, things, and ways people were treated just because of where they were from. We got to a point and I said, 'If you look at these different types of people, you can think of a bad word for every ethnicity, except for one.' I said, 'Think about that. All of you here probably know a bad word for each group of people.' I went through every racial/ethnic group and then I got to Black people and said, 'All of you probably know that bad word if we're talking about someone Black?' Then he said, 'Yeah, [N****].' After that, the kids in the classes went, 'Woo' or whatever. I was like, 'What made you think that it's okay for you to say that word?' He paused and didn't say anything. Then he seemed to realize that all of the attention was on him. So, I asked again, 'What makes you think that it's okay?' He replied, 'I don't know. I just…' I just stood there and looked at him. I'm thinking that it made him feel kind of awkward. The rest of the class looked at him as well. I continued with my lesson because the point was to focus on derogatory terms. I know that this kid probably either says this at home all the time or hears it at home. If he is comfortable enough to say it out loud in front of me, then he
has heard it or used it before. I even discussed the derogatory term for White people, which is supposed to be “cracker,” for instance. We talked about all of the words and where they came from. We talked specifically about “cracker” for a long time. I did an education on what that word meant, how it really had to do with slavery times, and how it had to do with cracking the whip over our backs. I shared with them that it isn’t really an actual derogatory term it’s just being used as one nowadays. So, this same kid that said the N-word in my class ended up actually being one of my favorite kids that I ever taught. I made it my mission to make sure he understood things in a different way. Eventually that student got to the point when he would ask me questions that he was kind of ignorant about. So, it turned out to be a good thing.

As a male teacher…but definitely a Black male teacher, you have to be careful of accusations. One year, I had a young lady who was in my class, who made false accusations. I had her sister as a student previously and she still stops by to say hello. I don’t know fully how this happened or what happened here, but apparently something happened. One day, my administrator sent me a communication and asked to meet with me during my planning time. I stopped by his office. He asked me whether I had photos of this female student, [the younger sister], and told me that I was making her uncomfortable. I responded with, ‘What? No.’ I was shocked by what he said. He said that her mom called and said that the student told her mom that I took a picture of her and took it without her permission. I responded with, ‘First off, I do have pictures of kids that are posted on my wall, but all of them were taken with permission. It’s from a project we had in class.’ I said, ‘That project picture is actually the only picture that I have of her.’ He said, ‘Okay and I will look into it.’ I went back to class. Before he met with me the second time, he or someone asked the student and the mom for evidence. The student said
that her best friend had the picture. They pulled her best friend in to ask about the picture, and she didn’t have the picture.

About a couple of days later, the principal called me back to his office and we met again about it. He started talking about basic stuff and making sure that I understood that I’m not supposed to take pictures of children and posting it on social media. He brought up me having to take some training. I felt frustrated because I knew that I didn’t do anything. I was like, ‘I didn’t do this, it simply just didn’t happen.’ He explained the situation to me in more detail, telling me what happened. He said that either I had gotten or took a picture of her and posted it on my social media. Her mom had said some off putting things insinuating that I’m trying to have an inappropriate relationship with her daughter and that she didn’t appreciate me taking pictures of her daughter. She also said that she didn’t want me around her daughter. In my mind, I was thinking you know just forget this and let’s just cut the head off of this. So, I said, ‘That’s fine.’ I then offered a solution, ‘Can we just move her out of my classroom?’ I just thought let’s move her out of my classroom and put her into another teacher’s classroom, so she’ll be in a safe environment and everything will be fine. I left his office, and he called the mom about my idea.

Later that day, I saw the principal again and we talked. He told me that the student said she didn’t want to go. He laughed at this. I said, ‘So let me get this straight. If I’m making her feel uncomfortable and doing these things that are hurtful, I don’t understand why she wants to be in my class?’ My principal didn’t say anything. I continued, ‘If I’m making her feel uncomfortable and her parents are feeling this kind of way then remove her from my class and do an investigation.’ He was like I don’t think this is necessary to do that. He then told me that her mom answered with, ‘No, she doesn't want to leave. She loves being in Mr. Jason’s class.’ I just literally threw my hands up while my principal was laughing at this situation.
At this point, I had had enough. I showed my social media accounts to my principal, I told him that it is public anyway. I said, ‘Anybody can go on my Instagram. I don't have anything to hide.’ My accounts were reviewed, and no pictures were found, but there still seemed to be doubt and no real investigation was ever done. Worse than that is the fact that the student didn’t want to leave my class. Because of the situation, I made sure that I interacted with her only on a need to basis. I don't believe that would have happened to a female teacher. I don't believe it would have happened even if I were a White guy. All these people were jumping to these conclusions and then not even actually checking it out. These are the kinds of situations that can ruin your career. That’s part of the reason why I am overcautious about everything.

I remember one time when I had one interaction with a colleague where I confronted someone about how they treated me at work and accused me of not being qualified. I was teaching subject A that year. There was a White older female teacher who had kind of a history of bullying younger or newer teachers who seemed to be more progressive. One day, this teacher told me in the middle of one of our staff meetings that I wasn't qualified to teach that subject. I was like, ‘What are you talking about?’ She responded with, ‘I looked up your license and there's no subject A certificate on there. That’s public record, you know.’ I knew that I was certified to teach subject A because I took the test and scored an almost perfect score on it. In fact, I’m qualified to teach four different core subjects. So, she said that to me, ‘You’re not qualified.’ I sat there and literally turned my back to the entire group because I was fuming. There were two or three partner teachers who I was really, really close to at the time. One of them was really like socially conscious. She looked at me and was just upset. You could tell because her face was red. Another teacher, she was right next to me and she just patted my leg. Apparently at some point, I was sitting and talking to myself. After the fact, the teacher who had
been sitting next to me told me that I was talking to myself. Basically, I was trying to calm myself
down. I was trying to get some positive energy and try not to blow up and have to ask God to
forgive me for it later. For the whole rest of the meeting, I didn’t say anything about her
comments to me. She then began to criticize other teachers, who were younger female teachers. I
did speak up then and said something like, ‘You have never been in any of our classrooms. You
don’t know what we do with our students and the data supports what we are doing.’ I guess it
was just that instinct in me and I had to speak up, because I can’t stand people that I love or care
about being harmed or attacked in anyway.

Finally, the meeting let out. I was about to storm out of there and go talk to my principal.
I was going to tell him that I wanted to put in my resignation and didn’t want to work there
anymore. I felt like I was done with this, but I didn’t. I sat there and everybody else left out. My
partner teacher friend, as she was heading out of the door, was like, ‘Are you coming?’ I was
like, ‘No.’ So, everybody left out except for me and the teacher that made the statement about me
being unqualified. I said to her, ‘What you said to me was so racist.’ Normally, I’m very well
spoken and explain things to try to help them to understand, but in this instance, I straight up
said it. ‘What you just said to me was so racist and sexist.’ I was like, ‘First off, why are you
looking up my information and trying to figure out if I’m certified to be a teacher. It's not your
job. It's not your responsibility.’ I kind of went off on her, ‘Second off, you have no right to be
disrespectful like that to anybody.’ I was like, ‘For me as a Black man in this field, it is already
hard enough for me and then you say crap like that.’ I told her that was completely out of line
and told her straight up, ‘I'm gonna report you. I'm just letting you know.’ She apologized and
said, ‘You know, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that to you.’ Personally, I don't believe she
meant a single word of it.
Afterwards, I went to one of my partner teachers’ room. The other two teachers that I'm close to were already in there. They began talking to me and said, ‘We have never seen you that mad.’ They were upset as well, and all told me that I needed to report it. If we were in a cartoon, you would have seen smoke coming out of my ears still. So, I had to put my happy, positive teacher face back on and go teach my next class. My students kept asking me whether I was okay and what was wrong. So, I guess I wasn’t doing a good job of that. I thought to myself that was blatantly disrespectful. This was running through my mind continuously throughout the day. I didn’t think that it was a microaggression initially because she didn’t say anything specifically about race. I started thinking to myself, would she have done that if I weren’t a young Black dude?

I went and talked to my principal in person first. I explained to him word for word what happened. I also believe some other teachers went and talked to him about it as well. Then he said, ‘We need to get this in writing.’ So, I sat down later and wrote the incident up. I'll be honest, it took me a couple days to do it because I wasn’t gonna do it. I didn't think it was gonna go anywhere. I remembered that my partner teacher said, ‘You need to do this because that behavior is just simply not okay.’ I still have that document and after that I never heard anything else about it, except I got investigated about whether I was qualified to teach subject A.

Here’s the thing that bugs me again and my reasons why I tend to not report things. I reported her on that incident. I don’t think anything happened to her. She’s still in the same position. They won't tell us, but I don't believe anything truly happened in the end. Actually, the thing that kind of blew that thing out of proportion was that instead of me being a victim, all of a sudden, I was seen as like the defendant. I had to defend myself and show proof that I had passed my praxis exam and provide my credentials to my principal. I’ll be honest, I'm still not fully
understanding why that happened. Pretty much after I wrote that formal report like the same day or next day, the administrators reached out to me. They said, ‘Well we looked at your license and she’s right. Like, this isn’t on your license.’ I was like, ‘Okay. First off.’ Frustrated at this point, I said, ‘Don’t you look at that stuff before you hire people? Shouldn’t you already know what my credentials are?’ I didn’t even wait for a response before then I said, ‘but I can get you my scores I know what they are. I know I passed them both.’ So, I had to go find and retrieve my scores. I actually had to order some more scores. I paid 25 bucks to get that done and then forwarded the email to my administrators. I look at this now and see that this was a little crappy. After that, I told my principal that if there’s another position that comes open, let me know. There was and so I changed positions the following school year. That was about the end of it after that.

Jason’s Perception of Racial Microaggressions

Jason learned about racial microaggressions by experiencing them before being introduced to the term. He shared that his first experience encountering microaggressions occurred while he was being interviewed as a teacher. He described one interview that went well until the last question, which was a question about whether he would be willing to change his ethnic hairstyle. Jason expressed his frustration about being asked to change his hair and that he did not understand how hair had anything to do with a teacher’s ability to teach. Some years later, Jason was introduced to the term, racial microaggressions. He then began to research the topic and participated in trainings offered by groups.

Racial microaggressions have to do with specific stereotypes that are seen as jokes, little jabs, and little things that don’t seem harmful, but they are. This is especially true if we allow them to continue or permeate in an environment, they become normalized. People think those
stereotypes are like joking things, but they take a little piece of you every time. I feel like then people don't truly get to see you, they just see what they think they want to see.

I have had assumptions made countless times about me. Sometimes, I am thought to be the para educator. Other times, I am thought to be a coach, which is what I get the most. I must be a coach or a PE teacher, never a core subject teacher. I think about when I was in a meeting and this is before I started coaching. The district administrator walked up to me and was like, ‘Are you a new football coach?’ I said, ‘No. I’m a teacher. I’m a subject A teacher.’ He surprisingly said, ‘Oh.’ He didn’t even like walk up and introduce himself to me, but just asked and pointed me out as a coach. That’s a stereotype that most Black men are going to be teaching PE (physical education) or coaching, right? As if we can’t do mathematics or can’t do subject A. It's like we're here in this little box.

In the classroom, it has been hard for me to maybe recognize microaggressions and things outside of some little comments. I recall a conversation I had with one of my co-workers. The co-worker asked, ‘Why is it okay for Black people to say [N****] and the White people can’t say it?’ To me, it's like such a logical thing, but why do you want to say it so bad and why do you care? Before I left that school, I had another kind of experience with microaggressions, but with a parent. There was a little White girl who was in my partner teacher’s class. This one little girl would always come and speak to me. Conferences came around and I had never met this little girl’s parents or anything. Her parents came to the parent-teacher conferences. The little girl and her mother came into my classroom. I noticed that the mom had a lot of tattoos. Her arms, neck, and forehead had tats on them. She had a swastika on her forehead and had a KKK tat on her neck. The little girl ran over excited and gave me a big hug. Her mom froze and had a look of shock on her face. It seemed obvious that she didn’t know that I was Black. The little girl
turned and told her mother that I was her favorite teacher. Her mom looked really mad and left
my room without ever saying a word. The little girl stayed in my class, talked for a little bit, and
then went to her teacher’s class, I guess. After thinking about it, I thought to myself that hate and
racism is something that parents can try to teach, but it doesn’t always work. I would like to
think that because I was so kind to that little girl that the things that her mom or parents tried to
teach didn’t stick.

At my current school, I’ve had parents move their kids out of my classroom when they
learned that I am Black. I don’t know if my administrator always knew why parents were asking
for their kids to be moved. Normally, when they are about to move a student, there has been
some kind of communication by email. The counselor will say that we are about to move student
A to teacher B’s class because of whatever the reason is, like a schedule conflict. I’m never told
by the administrators or the parents why the students are moved out. It kind of hurts a little bit
and it’s frustrating because you don’t know really whether it’s what they think about me as a
teacher, my belief system, or if it just has to do with race. I’ve had some kids to just flat out tell
me that their family didn’t want them in my class because I’m Black. In fact, I had two of my kids
who told me that it was because I was Black and that they were mad about not being in my class
anymore. In my mind, I’m like this parent doesn’t realize I want to help their child be the best
person they can be every single day. If you get to know me, most of the time you’re gonna like me
and you’re going to want your kids to be around me, but my skin tells another story. It tells
people that I’m dangerous, untrustworthy, and that I’m a threat; and none of that is true.

The next thing that I think about with microaggressions is harassment. [At the start of the
year], we had our pre-faculty meeting where you get to meet everybody. I’m the only Black man
in the school. There are zero African Americans at this school. We did this “getting to know
you” activity. Basically, we had to write down three questions on a note card to ask someone in the room that you didn’t know. I wrote things like what do you like to do for fun? What are your hobbies? Where is the farthest place that you’ve travelled? I went around and asked two people questions I didn’t know. I was actually looking around when one of my co-workers walked up to me. I ended up asking her my question. I don’t even remember which question it was that I asked her. I feel like part of me like blocks that moment out. I asked her my question and she answered it and then she said, ‘I wrote this question specifically for you.’ Oh man, it’s like embarrassing now. She told a little story, ‘I enjoy gardening. I grow cucumbers in my garden. I didn’t have any cucumbers growing in my garden this year’ or whatever it was something like that. Then she’s said, ‘How big is your cucumber?’ I didn’t respond to her. I just froze up. I couldn’t believe it. I have no clue how long I stood there but it felt like forever. I think the thing that saved me was that the administrator ended the activity. I went back to my table. I just sat there and stared into space until we were dismissed to our classrooms. My partner teacher came to see me later that day and asked me, ‘What was going on earlier? I really want to know.’ So, I told her, and she started cussing, ‘Are you f-in’ serious?’ I was like, ‘Yeah, that's what she asked me.’ She’s normally like really nice. She got kind of mad and was like, ‘That's not okay. I think you should talk to the principal.’ I asked her, ‘Do you really think I should go talk to the principal?’ I haven’t even really had a first day of school yet. I said, ‘I don’t want to talk to the principal, because I don’t want that attention or drama.’ I came here really to teach. She then brought up to me and said, ‘What if you said something like that to her? You would be fired, have sexual harassment charges, and the whole nine yards.’

At first, I was just gonna let it go. Now, I started to think more about it I was like, ‘What would happen if I would have said this or something like that to her?’ I thought to myself that’s
kind of like sexual harassment. I called my mentor that day after school. I was like, ‘Guess what happened to me today? I don’t even know how to deal with it.’ I told him this story. He said, ‘You need to call your principal right now.’ I said, ‘Are you sure?’ He said, ‘That’s serious. I know you don’t think it’s serious, but you need to call him right now.’ So, I called my principal and asked him if we could talk after school. We met the next morning before school instead. I shared the story and told him exactly what happened. He looked shocked and then he apologized. He said, ‘We need to write this up.’ I was kind of freaking out and pissed off. I didn’t want to get anybody in trouble or cause any problems. I just started here. He told me that this needs to be documented. We filled out the documents, basically like what you would fill out if you went to the police and wrote a statement. Any time after that when I saw her walking towards me in the hallway, I would get nervous. It was an uncomfortable situation for me.

It took maybe a week at the most before she found out that I had reported her. Until she found out, she would still look at me and speak to me, but I wouldn’t respond back. Once she knew that I had reported it, the looks changed, and she averted her eyes for a short time. For the rest of the time that I worked there, it was like this awkward thing that happened. She didn’t get fired or anything like that. I don’t know how she got reprimanded, or anything. It was always like this thing and then of course it’s a small school, so guess what’s gonna happen. Other people found out. So, people started talking about it. Now, it’s this joking thing for other people, but for me it’s like completely uncomfortable. After a year or so, she started talking to me again like nothing had ever happened, but she still never apologized or said anything else about it. I still felt awkward about it and was on edge when I was around her. I would have maybe felt different about it had she apologized or something. So now if you look at what I told you earlier about being guarded, that definitely added to me not trusting anybody.
Racial microaggressions, to me, are a little difficult to report. Generally, I've never had a boss who wasn't a White man. It's hard to report issues with racism to somebody who can't comprehend it. My current administrators are great guys, but I don't believe they have that knowledge and ability to handle racial microaggressive situations. I tend to handle those things myself. It would be hard for me to imagine that administration would understand and then know what to do about it. For all I know, they could believe the same way. So, I know I have to be calculated and know how I handle these difficult or sticky situations.

While telling and reviewing his stories, Jason periodically would stop, sigh, pause, and/or stare at the computer screen. I inquired whether he was okay, needed a break, or whether the story being read was incorrect or missing information. His responses included No...I'm doing all right. I had blocked a lot of this out...this just angers me all over again and makes me really mad that these things happened. I tend to block out these microaggressions because they anger me, and I don't know what to do about them. When I know I've experienced microaggressions, there's a couple of different feelings that I have had. One of them is anger and another is shocked or bewilderment and then confusion as well. Some of this is still difficult and awkward like when I think about the one teacher who did the dirty joke...or how my players have been treated because of me. It's also puzzling when people distanced themselves from me once they learn about my personal views about teachers having guns in school and racial justice. I still struggle with [how people have treated me]. Sometimes as a teacher and in these environments when you're the only Black teacher...you feel alone to some extent...in regard to people understanding you. This study...it gave me a chance to talk about my stories. I want you to understand that you've made me feel empowered...and that my story matter. Before, I haven't always felt like my story mattered to anyone.
Learning about Jason’s lived experience has helped to inform this study in different ways. He acknowledged the pain and anger that remembering experiences he repressed caused, but also expressed his passion for instructing students and encouraging them to pursue knowledge and question discrimination. To accomplish this, even in painful situations, Jason has incorporated diversity into the subjects that he teaches and welcomes students’ inquiries about race. This is exemplified by his response to the racial slur used to his face by a student, an event he described early in his narrative. He used the incident to directly teach the student by requiring that he reframe his thinking, and from it, built a good relationship. The relationships that Jason has with partner teachers are also valuable to him, providing him a level of support along his career. He explained how racial microaggressions has been present along his career and its impact. Using the CRT as a lens, Jason’s experiences are summarized as shown on Table 3. Jason described three different perspectives that he has about racial microaggressions in his workplace.

### TABLE 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenets</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Macro-level Experience</th>
<th>Micro-level Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normalcy and intersectionality</td>
<td>Racism looks normal because it's engrained in society.</td>
<td>Jason assumed that he needed to be guarded to protect himself from stereotypes about Black men both at work and in his community.</td>
<td>Jason did not understand why school practices did not seem to be equitable whenever his character was in question.</td>
<td>Jason experienced implicit bias being expressed during student, parent, and administrator interactions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>of race and racism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominant ideology challenged</td>
<td>Claims of color-blindness and meritocracy are challenged.</td>
<td>Jason believed that the White school staff are unable to comprehend the experience of racism.</td>
<td>Jason challenged the presence of supremacy in the curriculum by instructing his students using relevant diversity lessons.</td>
<td>Jason experienced racial attitudes embraced by colleagues and linked to societal stereotypes of Black men as threats, being unqualified, and about their sexual prowess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrality of experiential</td>
<td>Master narratives hide racial and other forms of discrimination and have rejected them.</td>
<td>Jason believed that White tenured co-workers and parents’ voices were heard above his voice.</td>
<td>Jason thought that the narratives shown in various of media did not correctly depict the realness of racism for White people.</td>
<td>Jason’s experiences were seen as insignificant when assumed not to be a teacher by administration and falsely accused of taking a student's picture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Racial and social justice</td>
<td>Injustice regarding any identity discrimination is targeted for elimination.</td>
<td>Jason believed that the way to eliminate racism is to teach and help people to see and understand racism, including the use of racial slurs like the N-word, is inappropriate and choose justice instead.</td>
<td>Jason did not have confidence that there was a commitment to commit to elimination racism in the workplace.</td>
<td>Jason did not describe any situation that reflected justice being tolerated for the benefit of White interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commitment</td>
<td></td>
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He first depicts microaggressions as hurtful societal stereotypes that he faced prior to coming into the field, and while working as an educator. These hurtful microaggressions were described as encounters that Jason suppressed as a means to practice self-care, but the some of associated emotions resurfaced during the recollection of his experiences. Being aware of the probability of experiencing racial microaggressions has caused him to become and remain guarded throughout much of his career. Jason’s narrative suggests that racism in the form of racial microaggressions seems so common that one can expect to happen. He experienced such racism, for example, from his White students and staff personnel. The use of the N-word, which is a microassault, by his students and colleagues was an example of microaggressions displayed in the environment. In the case of his students, he elected to turn a hurtful moment into a teaching one instead and not report it to the school administration. As he shared, he was uncertain about whether the school personnel would comprehend or be able to identify racial microaggressions when they occurred or how to address them. Jason faced multiple hits to his character, career, and ability to trust the people in his work environment, but never enough to completely distrust his White colleagues or want to stop teaching.

The second perspective that Jason shared is that racial microaggressions are those little jabs that some people may view as “locker room talk” or “jokes,” but rather are subtle acts of racism that harm the recipient that hears them. When microinsults, for instance, are viewed as jokes then Jason perceived that they seem harmless to the perpetuator and a lack of empathy exists. The third viewpoint discussed was how the presence of racial microaggressions are something that drives Jason to teach his students to be aware of derogatory language and choose not to use it. These perceptions about racial microaggressions can manifest and exist in the school environment in several ways.
Jason identified a couple of aspects of the professional educational setting that allow racism to persist as racial microaggressions. The lack of diversity in the schools was one element, which may suggest that it is not necessary for the master narrative of the dominant culture to consider or include the narrative of all racial groups. The lack of Black teachers, as Jason described, appears to be a norm and possibly contributing to the lack of focus being given to Black people’s experiential reality. The context by which everything is judged is through the lens of whiteness or the dominant power.

Another aspect of the environment’s structure was societal stereotypes, which led to Jason’s misidentification as a paraprofessional, a coach, and a threat. He discussed concerns with how issues related to staff reprimands were handled. Jason commented about the administrators he referred to as “great guys” lack of ability to understand and objectively apply school policies in an equitable manner. An example of this was allowing students to be removed from Jason’s class without understanding the why, but then forcing Jason to retain and endure a student who falsely accused him of being inappropriate. These kinds of decisions seemed to demonstrate a lack of support of the teacher and a promotion of racism unconsciously within the environment.

The next narrative is shared by another Black male teacher who chose the pseudonym of Koloraye. Based on what he had jokingly offered as a name, “Dr. Color,” he and I constructed the name that he will be referred to in this study. While Jason’s story provides a vivid picture of how individual professional interactions can be rife with microaggressions, Koloraye’s narrative informed this study with a perspective of how the culture of the workplace could contribute to the experiences of the school staff.
Koloraye

Koloraye initially appeared to be somewhat serious, but I would later learn that he was attending school himself and was just quite focused and professional. Koloraye has been teaching for about 10 to 12 years and has taught a few different subjects. He was born and grew up in the Midwest. Koloraye lives and works in a Midwest metropolitan city. He is a husband and father. His passion for teaching initially began prior to pursuing another profession. His grandfather was an educator and served as his role model. He watched his grandfather and the things that he did, which served as seeds planted for his future as a teacher. Instead of teaching as his first career, he served in the military and afterwards took a different profession for a few years. He soon discovered that his first professional choice was not something that he was passionate about. He selected a different path; to teach.

Although licensed as a teacher, he started his career in education as a paraprofessional. Oftentimes, he is the only African American male, licensed teacher in the schools where he has taught. This has occurred for most of his teaching career. He has enjoyed working with children and their families and building relationships with them. He said building relationships is critical and that he feels that teachers’ sole purpose is to support and educate children. Koloraye serves as a role model for minority males offering them an image of success and a spark of hope of what could be. Students relate to him as a father figure and someone who they can trust and who identifies with their experience as a minority. His goal is to help get rid of the prison pipeline and switch it instead to a pipeline to college for his students.

Koloraye described the school environment and culture for the three different schools where he taught. He termed them as places with a lack of diversity with regard to their staff makeup. Koloraye also explained that in the Midwest, no two school environments or cultures
are the same, but one thing they seemed to have in common was a distinct lack of diversity among school staff.

    At my first school, I was the only minority male teacher. Being the only African American male in the building, I couldn’t ask other African American males anything. There was a multitude of minority teachers. The Title I school was predominantly Black, but we had a minority principal. However, I was the only male that identified as African American at that particular building. Later on, once numbers went up, they received a minority assistant principal. They were allocated an assistant principal, and that person was a minority. Then your staff was half and half.

    At my second school, I had three different principals [in one school] and each one of them were different. First, I had a Caucasian female principal and a Caucasian male assistant principal. I had an all-right relationship with her, eventually, it became better, but not initially. Her interpretation of things was completely different. I was placed in her building. She told me that typically she would interview and hire her staff. She also shared that she didn't hire first through third year teachers. Typically, she liked veteran teachers in there, at least with five years of service, which was fine. I get it. With the assistant principal, I had a great relationship with him. He had a military background. So, he and I got along great. Besides myself, we had another African American teacher that was there. She and I had a great relationship. We could talk about everything that was going on at that particular building. She ended up facing other issues that I didn't face, being a female. It could be female team leads or female principals, they wouldn't question me as much, but they would question her. I don't know if it was just females being harder on a minority female, but they weren’t that way with me. Not everyone.
The next principal, he was a Caucasian male. Once we changed over the regime, with a new principal, he thought he would change things up. He kind of made it a point where he didn't create a great culture in the building. He would do various things like trying to change curriculum. To me, he saw myself and the other African American teacher as a threat, but more so me. He tended to give the other African American teacher more leeway than he would me. If you didn't fit a particular stereotype or image. You might have had issues. Although he never said anything to me, there were extra duties that I was assigned prior to him coming there that he took away. I felt personally that he was intimidated, or he felt threatened by me, even though I wasn't a threat.

If you were a new African American teacher, I would have told you to CYA (cover you're a), meaning document, document, document, and document...everything you do. You're going to have to be two steps better than your peers, because he's going to ride you. He's going to ride you more than your Caucasian colleagues, but it's still not going to be as bad as how he is treating me. He made it an uncomfortable workplace. You didn't feel a sense of being needed. You didn't feel valued. I would see other teachers who would get a lot of support, meaning ‘Hey, I would like to attend this training. Can I go to this training?’ ‘Yeah, we'll get you a sub. We will consider this a professional day.’ And then if I ask, ‘Oh well, you have so much going on. So, if you really want to attend it, you have to take a personal day.’ Well, you just gave this other teacher that and let them take a professional day. I tried to transfer, but I wasn't lucky enough to do that. So, I had that principal for less than five years. This is the building where I saw more challenges.

Once he left, again I had a Caucasian female administrator that came in. All of those duties that the previous administrator had taken away, they gave them back and then some. Their

86
belief was you have these skills. I'm going to utilize all of my resources. The principal was like, ‘I'm going to help prepare you to be a leader.’ So, they gave me additional duties like setting up state testing and sit in on IEP’s. It was a great experience. When it came time to apply for assistant principal positions, my principal couldn't understand why I wasn't getting a call. They would send notifications [on my behalf recommending me], but it was always ‘This person might need a little bit more experience.’ They were like, ‘Well, they're running the building while I'm not here. I don't know what else you need.’

This principal was supportive and tried to change the culture of the building. She wasn't able to change it completely because you still had some of the people who had been there 20 plus years. Some of them kind of had that “Jim Crow mentality” that, ‘Hey, you need to do what I say and not what I do,’ but none of them were in charge. They still had preconceived notions that minority teachers were lazy and that minority teachers were inferior to them. That was supported with the staff that they had or the principals that they had in the past. The whole building did not have the “Jim Crow mentality.” However, you might have some staff members that have that mentality that no matter what qualifications that you have, you're inferior to them.

At the particular school that I have now, I enjoy it. One, I have a great relationship with one of my assistant principals. This is primarily because we both went to the same school for college at the same time. Two, I have a minority principal who has been there, done it, and understands everything. So, he understands a lot of things that I end up going through, and some of the things that I've gone through in the past. Our principal created a good culture as far as inclusion goes holding teachers accountable. If you want your principal to hold students accountable, first you have to hold yourself accountable and you have to hold your students accountable. It's a culture that is changed, and it's more accepting. You have that inclusion.
There's a level of accountability and professionalism that is set. If that is not set or establish, then you tend to have cliques sometimes where you don't have that inclusion, meaning that we are one staff as a collective.

When you define your culture, your culture is how do you want your building to function. Now, ultimately, all principals are going to have the same concept. They're gonna all refer back to the “why.” Why is it that we teach what we teach? It’s to enlightened students and teach them to build these relationships. Ultimately, it’s about the kids. That's with all of the students not just one racial/ethnic group. For the culture that you develop, do you want a culture where you feel like you can communicate with your principal? Do you want a culture where your staff is feared by you? [I don't believe that] you want an open-door policy with your staff members, where they feel if you tell them to do and they say, ‘I'll get to it when I get to it.’ You don't want a culture like that because now you've lost [control of] your building. At the same time, you still want a culture, whereas your vision and your mission are clear. Your expectations are clear. You refer back to the why. You want to make it a building where people love what they do and then they do what they love. Some situations you don't get that because teachers are stressed. And if I'm completely stressed that’s why my numbers might not look good. Is this principal wanting to retain me next year? That’s where we are, and we can change the culture. If you have a principal who supports everything and supports everyone, then it changes the culture. At the same time and changing the culture, you still run into teachers who don't want to accept change. If you have teachers who embrace change, they will embrace that culture that the principal is trying to build. It’s just some of those things that you can still see, but you get some of those teachers who they'll say one thing to your face, and then they will say one thing behind your back.
Koloraye’s Perception of Racial Microaggressions

Prior to this study, I had not heard of the term racial microaggressions. At first, I had to look it up because I was like...uh, never heard this...but it did apply. Racial microaggression would be a combination of stereotyping students in a particular category, and in a sense, discriminating against them based off assumption or that stereotype. It’s a preconceived stereotype that you have. Being in a diverse school district, you tend to get colleagues who don’t take that extra step, meaning I’m not going to build on this relationship. If a student didn’t do their work, I’m not going to inquire why. I’m just going to assume that they were lazy and just didn’t feel like doing it. At my prior school, some of the teachers would not care what events were going on in a student's life. One teacher said, ‘Hey, all I know is that the student is sleeping in class.’ The minority teacher may say, ‘Well, let’s check to see why the student is sleeping in class. You can’t just assume that student is lazy.’ They might not necessarily be lazy; it could be other things going on. Discriminating against a student because of the way that they look or the way they dress. In regard to how microaggressions may apply to teachers, it basically is the same. So, I think it really one relates to the school as far as a teacher goes. It relates to the school and it also relates to the culture in which that principal has for that building. Where you may that unfamiliarity with minorities, you might have more frustrations.

My very first building, we didn't have any issues with racial microaggressions. The second building that I was in, it's hard to respond to microaggression issues when you are part of the problem and if you don't see them. If someone complains about something and you don't conceive that as being a problem, then you're not going to address that issue. It's the relationship that you end up developing with that administrator, who leads to the microaggressions, as far as how they approach things. With the White male principal, his approach was one where the
minority staff kind of felt isolated, in a sense. If you fit in this other category of the preferred bill, that's when you were able to attend professional learnings or you were able to do various things. The current building that I'm at doesn’t have any issues.

In terms of outside of workplace interactions, I've had colleagues in the past that during the school day, they'll talk to you, and everything will be great. At the end of the day, once they leave that building, you guys don't have any communications. You might see them out [at the gas station or restaurant], for instance, and they won't speak to you. Whereas, depending on what the culture is, and the type of school that you're at, you might be friends with those people on social media. They might follow you on Twitter. You might see them in the store, and then they might come up and speak with you, or give you a hug, or they see your spouse because you've built that type of relationship and they talk to your spouse.

Do I think that I have a different experience because I also identify as two or more races? I don't think there's a different experience for me with that. The staff members who welcome that diversity and welcome your experiences overall, they are going to be encouraging [regardless of how you identify racially/ethnically]. They're going to be welcoming regardless, but those staff members who feel threatened they're going to be threatened regardless. It really doesn't matter. I would get some staff members that would ask, 'Are you Hispanic?' 'No, I am not Hispanic,' then they would kind of just leave it at that. You would get others that would argue, 'Because you don’t look just Black. Are you Indian? Are you Hindu? Are you this? Are you that?' 'Well, does it matter? I'm an American. I'm educated, so?' So no, I just don't think that it would be a difference for my experiences related to how I identify as African American or two or more races. There's not a specific thing that would cause people to change their beliefs about either racial grouping.
Koloraye shared three examples describing how colleagues have doubted his ability and/or credentials as a teacher. This section highlights thoughts he shared, and one telling example.

*I think colleagues’ question or doubt me and my knowledge or credentials because it’s a preconceived notion. Your minority males - you don’t see that many at the elementary level, for instance. If you do, they tend to stereotype them, as they might question their sexuality. Or they may think that another minority teacher or I don’t have the qualifications to teach their subject or specialty. You do have more women in workplaces for as far as education goes. Some of them are not used to seeing minorities that are educated and that have the qualifications. When you have that, in that sense, they like to question things. People also look down on minority teachers that teach a specialty. They just think that because one that you’re a male and you have a specialty or certain skillset that sometimes you don’t have other qualifications. That would probably be the biggest challenge that you would have with other staff members.*

*Once, I experienced a different kind of doubt related to me being a minority male teacher. I was having a conversation with another colleague, who was Caucasian. We were talking about applying for administrative positions. We were talking and they had mentioned that they had applied. I mentioned that I applied. They had just gotten a call for an interview. I was frustrated. I was like, ‘Man, I didn’t receive a call.’ That’s when this other person came in and kind of made their comments. Then they were like, ‘Well, it’s going to be your race because they don’t tend to hire minority males unless they have a quota.’ It was frustrating because they felt that comfortable to have that conversation. She continued with, ‘Because if they move one up to a principal or they retired, then they might fill that position.’ I took this and I was offended by*
this. I did feel like there was some truth to what she was saying, based off of what I was experiencing.

The next day, I found out why they felt comfortable. That person was at the building with their kids, and their kids are mixed. Then they came and talked to me and tried to justify it. She said, ‘Hey, I didn't mean to offend you, but I can relate even though I'm a Caucasian female.’ She told me that she could relate because of her kids. Then she said, ‘These are some of the things that they might be doing to hold you back.’ I think I’m one of those people that I wear my expression on my face, but I didn’t say anything to her. I wasn’t gonna say anything to her. I’ll stay positive. Once I feel you’ve wronged me, I'm kind of done with you. Afterwards, I had a different perception. I did feel like there was some truth to what she was saying. That was just based off of what I was experiencing. Like I said, I haven’t seen any African American males hired. I've seen some promoted from various positions, but I just haven’t seen African American males hired. The males that were hired had a particular skillset for their background for the position that they were hired, like, they might be a special education teacher. And they were put in a school that was high needs dealing with special education.

The minority teachers, typically, would kind of stick together in a sense. Primarily, look at majority of your staff and majority of your schools. Even though we are in a public-school district, the majority of your staff is still Caucasian. So, each building is going to be different. At my previous school, the minority teachers were a support system for each other. You have buildings where the culture isn't there for the minorities, they don't feel valued. I've worked under more than one kind of situation. The minority support system is more so you can vent to someone other than your spouse who actually is possibly going through the same thing that you are. So, you can compare and contrast frustrations. Afterwards, you can still be there to support
one another. As far as just saying, ‘Stick in there.’ ‘Hey, I'm going through the same thing. You're not alone.’ It tends to help us out when you ask someone else that is going through the same thing that you were going through and with frustrations pertaining to that.

In the state where Koloraye works, Black male teachers are few in number, and depending upon the subject that they teach and where they teach at times it can be even less. He expressed his appreciation for his administration who have been his advocates and created school cultures that help him to love going to work. He described his awareness of preconceived notions that people have in general about African Americans and how that can enter the workplace and manifest in colleagues and administrators’ behaviors. His major attention is given to his students, helping them succeed and exposing them to what success looks like. Koloraye remains passionate about being a role model and encourager for the students. It is this passion and desire to see the children progress and be accountable for their actions that helps him continue in this field. However, he said that he will not stop pursuing a leadership role, so that he can help with that change.

Although Koloraye shared the fewest stories about racial microaggressions of all the participants, he did experience some. These experiences are highlighted on Table 4.
TABLE 4

CRT ANALYSIS OF KOLORAYE’S EXPERIENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenets</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Macro-level Experience</th>
<th>Micro-level Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normalcy and intersectionality of race and</td>
<td>Racism looks normal because it's engrained in society.</td>
<td>Koloraye thought that stereotypes were normalized when administrators create a</td>
<td>Koloraye was frustrated with the appearance of bias in personnel practices where</td>
<td>Koloroye has experienced implicit bias displayed in reference to his gender and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>racism</td>
<td></td>
<td>culture that condones it.</td>
<td>differences were made between minorities and White staff.</td>
<td>perceived credentials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant ideology challenged</td>
<td>Claims of color-blindness and meritocracy are challenged.</td>
<td>Koloraye believed that by bringing attention to his earned achievement and</td>
<td>Koloraye experienced dominant power and supremacy being stressed in environments</td>
<td>Koloroye was often assumed to not qualified or as possessing less skill or credentials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrality of experiential knowledge</td>
<td>Master narratives hide racial and other forms of discrimination and have</td>
<td>Koloraye has never reported discriminations but has left a workplace due to an</td>
<td>where administrators saw Black teachers as threats or inferior.</td>
<td>due to his gender, race, and/or subject that he teaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and social justice commitment</td>
<td>Injustice regarding any identity discrimination is targeted for elimination.</td>
<td>Koloraye believed that he had at least one school environment that lacked a</td>
<td>It was unclear whether Koloraye was aware of how racial injustices may be woven into</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>commitment to equal treatment of employees.</td>
<td>policies and practices.</td>
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</table>

In Koloraye’s description of his lived experiences as a teacher, racial microaggression initially was not a term easily defined. Prior to our first study interview, he looked up the definition of racial microaggressions because it was not a term that he was familiar with. He did not verbally associate his experiences with racial microaggressions. He did, however, describe which environments where bias and discrimination did not appear, and racism was never a word used to describe any behavior that he faced. As we continued to explore his experiences, he described tones of bias and discrimination present in his work environments in the form of the use of stereotyping though he did not initially identify them as such. For example, in his description of students being labeled as “lazy” without consideration to the factors affecting that student, it was inferred that staff can have biased attitudes towards students. It was mentioned that teachers can
encounter the same types of attitudes. These attitudes appeared in his stories as the questioning of racial/ethnic identity, qualifications, and ascription of intelligence, all of which are associated with racial microaggressions.

Koloraye provided different indicators within his narrative about what exists in the structure of his work environment that permitted the existence of racial microaggressions. His narrative contains a dominant theme of culture and leadership. Koloraye had administrators who invested in and supported him along his career. He found it easiest working with White female administrators, who entrusted him with additional duties. However, it was also with leadership whom he experienced biased treatment. Interestingly, the biased experience was with a White male administrator and not the White female administrators or the African American female or male administrators. Koloraye described feeling as if this leader was intimidated and that he did not fit the administrator’s preferred “bill.” Leaders can contribute to the persistence of racial microaggressions in the workplace either personally or indirectly by not addressing issues that arise, and microaggression become a part of the culture of the school. Based upon Koloraye’s experiences, the administrator defines and establishes the school culture, as well as models the behaviors that are acceptable in the environment in the treatment of staff and students.

In the next section, we learn about the experiences of Empress through her narrative. Like Koloraye, Empress has taught for more than 10 years in a public school system and like Jason and Koloraye, valued the building of relationships with students. Empress’s heart for child advocacy could be heard as she talked about her connections with her students. Through her narrative, we learn about her perceptions regarding being a strong Black woman.
**Empress**

Empress is a female licensed teacher with 15 – 20 years of teaching experience. She identifies as Black American and grew up in the Midwest but has not always lived in the Midwest. She is married and is a mother. She did not initially intend on being in the field of education. She originally thought about and focused on political science and other majors. Eventually she landed on one major with a desire to achieve her graduate level degree in one of the other majors. She shared that her desire ultimately was to have a job that utilized her existing developed skills and knowledge. Empress worked in the community in different capacities, as a volunteer and an intern for organizations.

Empress indicated there was probably not just one thing that motivated or piqued her interest in the field of education. She attributed her career guidance to multiple college professors who were instrumental in challenging and equipping her. One professor challenged her and her peers with one question about whether they believed that every child was a viable learner. After hearing this question, she wrote it down and the question has served as her prompt for action since hearing it. She shared her belief that children are viable learners and worthy participants in the educational process. Another professor told her class that if they were planning to be child advocates that they would have to be prepared to take risks to be true advocates. Empress decided that she was willing to take the risks to be a true advocate. She shared her desire to be the best advocate of equal educational access and opportunity that she can be on the front line where things happen. As a result, she looked at education. The geographical area that she teaches in is challenging from a demographic perspective and she did not expect to stay in that location as long as she has. Her passion for being an advocate for her students is what has kept her there.
Empress has taught at three schools. She left her last school due to issues of microaggressions, which she considered reporting and elected not to. Empress’ narrative is solely focused on her current school and she described different aspects related to its environment and culture. She also explained an analogy that she uses to describe her work environment. Although she has taught at more than one school, this section is mostly focused on her current school.

We have a high number of students that are first-generation Americans, or they are from Mexico specifically, or they’re maybe two generations as far as their parents or grandparents being immigrants. There are attributes to indigenous people as far as some things in the halls on the walls that has been done by students. We have been trying to get representation for our Latino students. Black people are not represented significantly, if at all. And you, as a Black teacher, will not see anything that represents you. Our teacher demographics do not come anywhere close to representing the student population. Our students notice how few and in between we, the minority teachers, are and that’s a doggone shame. I’ve had students on their own who would independently mention the fact that, ‘Well, you know, ain’t no Black teachers around here. And you’re the only Black one.’ And when they come to me for guidance and for support that comes up. I acknowledge it, and I build on that. I have no problem using that as a point of encouragement for trying to say, ‘Hey, well, you got me. And you identify that it ain’t a lot of us here, so let me help you. This is your extension of the neighborhood, of family, and village.’

My administration consists of a head administrator and then there is one assistant principal per academy. We’ve had a few administrators over the course of at least seven years. One of my administrators was a White male. He has a Black wife. Oddly enough, he really believed, and there were times that he would say, he understood Black people. Yeah, he was one
of those because he listened to or knew who The Whispers were, and he knew Wu-Tang and with all that he understood everything about being Black. Some people, in the past, accused him of giving things to Black teachers, let me be specific it was Black women, because they were Black. However, he totally did not support acknowledgement of the racial, ethnic groups represented at the school, like Black History Month celebration, and so forth.

He did not like conflict or bad publicity and would tend to sweep things under the carpet or discount them. He would say things like, ‘Is it really that bad?’ Once we had a Latino male assistant principal who was allowed to get away with things. For instance, he had bias and discriminatory discipline practices that were allowed to go unchecked. No one really knows why. People don’t know if it was just a matter of, he was in the district so long and the head administrator didn’t want to be bothered with conflict. It could have been his difference in tenure. Yeah, you’ve got, years tenured and that was a power play, but the kids knew it. We even spoke to it during a specific professional development where they were asking about obstacles. Something came up, it wasn’t trust but it was kind of like along those lines. We had the post notes or the flip chart paper where you can see where different things from sessions had been mentioned or staff had responded to the same questions. I’m not sure if I was on the second or third, but another group of teachers had mentioned a specific administrator. It was said that there was bias toward or favor of a certain group and how that was allowed. They also talked about how students have spoken about it and don’t know how to address microaggressions from their teachers.

The head administrator, he had his own bias as far as helping certain racial groups. If you had a complaint or problem with any of his students or picks as a student, it would be best to have your parent. If the student went into his office saying, ‘Hey, this student did this.’ The
student who is bringing the allegations better have an adult or parent backing them up. We’d have to have a ton of proof. Maybe the most successful students and even educators that I’m aware of have been those who have threatened or even pursued formal action, inclusive of legal action. That’s the thing that made him move and try and do something was the fear of again that bad publicity. Basically, something that would adversely and directly affect his career. I’ve gone to him and mentioned a problem and it’s like, ‘It’s really not that bad.’ When we were done, I decided to just leave it alone, because it’s not going to go anywhere.

Empress talked about two other head administrators, who were White females and at the school for a shorter amount of time. She described the first female administrator as someone who may have been assigned to this school as a pre-retirement assignment. She lived in a pretty much all-White kind of suburb outside of the city. She would just give a stock response as far as the district’s anti-discrimination policy, which was basically bias and discrimination will not be tolerated dah, dah, dah, dah, and it would be left at that. It was this very, very docile tone, but it was just you can have passive viciousness as far as not doing anything that’s the overall effect.

Empress shared that the other female administrator had the shortest amount of time in position. Prior to her coming to our school, I asked someone who worked at her previous school about her and learned that she is “by the book,” but she supports her faculty. We are still trying to figure her out though. She’s pretty true to her word so far. When she said that she cares about children, I believe that. I appreciate what I know so far. In my opinion, there haven’t been any major cultural gaffes that have occurred. I get the impression that she is receptive to conversation and that is significant. The times that we have spoken about my illness and the difficulties that I’m having and the challenges in trying to get my job done, she has paid attention to and responded. She’s reciprocated with the sincerity that I am communicating. This leads me
to say that I believe if I go to her with concerns about microaggressions, I believe it's going to be met positively. I'm encouraged that even though I may be a fly in the buttermilk, things can change.

When I think about our school demographics and culture, you probably have heard the phrase about being the only “fly in the buttermilk.” I know there are a lot of connotations that can come from that, as far as the symbolism and value of a fly, but just the reference to color. Being a little speck or that one Black person being completely surrounded by White people and having that feeling. And it's almost comical when you walk in and they look at you and they do that giving a look of ignoring or surprise. You know, they've seen Black people before. It is the strangest thing. It's an internal cord that is struck. At my school, the representation, the connection, or incorporation is missing. The walls literally don't talk, they don't comfort, and they are cold. When you walk through, you're going from the classroom to the main office to pick up the mail or what have you. There are those times when your physical environment becomes animated. It begins to develop a presence. And you can tell, there's no connection, or there's very little connection. Me and who I am, all the things that make me or that create myself, there's very little of it here. If there were more colleagues, more Blacks there, I would have a greater sense of not so much belonging, but I don’t know how to separate belonging from inclusion, or incorporation. That's what I like to say, belonging. I like more of the idea of being incorporated. When you're in those halls by yourself because you're just taking care of your daily tasks it's like I said, the walls are physically there, and they are thin and lacking. It's almost not like you're hearing voices, but you begin to feel your environment, and it becomes physiological. It is not positive.
To come into a building, and not feel a part of the school, it's hard. I don’t feel membership. It's more than just something you say that I’m going to work. As a teacher, you are even when you physically leave the building, your mind is still there. If I’m at home and I’m picking up paperwork to grade. There's a certain unconscious connection back to that environment and I'm not represented there. And there are people who don't care that I’m not represented. And I know that. If people cared, then I wouldn't be feeling like this after having been at this school for going on [X] number of years. It's compounded when there's no physical, you know, connection or the Black colleague is not there, or they're sparsely placed. That's why it's hard, you know. I don’t go around every day saying...oh, I wish I had another Black teacher that was closer by. The truth is when you see another Black person in order to get your job done, you have to put it aside or in the attic of your mind. And you know that, that's just what it is. Each day, as far as encouraging yourself, I think about where I get my inspiration from today.

You know, as teachers, we have a dress code. Our attire should be at least business casual and neat. My school district has a basic dress code or guideline for administrators and teachers. However, there seemed to be a difference made regarding what this standard looks like when it comes to Black and White teachers. Personally, I dress in a way that is not at the Sunday best level, but not sweats and working around the house clothing. I pride myself on how I carry myself into the workplace. Despite my efforts that I make to come to work aligned with the district’s standard, I find myself being looked upon like me or my attire is something odd.

This year, we had new clerical staff and teachers start working at my school. Many of them I did not meet right away. What makes this year particularly interesting is that we have had this pandemic. This particular day was no different than any other day for me and I dressed like I usually would, “like I have a job.” With us still doing school remotely, there were no students
in the building just administrators, teachers, and staff. Now because of this I made sure that my school badge was on and visible before entering the building. I come into the building and head down the hall. I noticed a White female colleague heading my way. Just because I’m friendly, I looked to make eye contact and prepared to greet her. When she was close enough, I greeted her, but she just walked by and passed me in the hall and didn’t speak. I read eyes. I have no line bifocals, but I’m gonna read your eyes and it’s like I almost click my heels, and turned, and said, ‘Excuse you. I’m not here to wash the floors.’ It was one of those, just walk your behind on to your classroom. I instantly look down to see what I was wearing. I knew my hair was good but looked down to see am I looking, or do I look like a teacher? I checked it out. I did. This particular new teacher was in leggings and t-shirt and gave me half of one “fonky” eye. Yes, I said, “Fonky. F-O-N-K-Y.”

Empress explained further how her attire is viewed. She shared how her attire has also contributed to being mistaken as not being a teacher and how this happens at least once a year to her. The two examples included here are at her children’s schools. So, I went into actually my son’s middle school here in the same district where I teach, for a meeting for school. I was there as a district employee and I was treated as a parent. That also happened at my daughter’s elementary school. I was there for a meeting with the principal. The secretary greeted me, ‘Hello, Mrs. Empress. Are you going to someone’s classroom’ ‘Oh no, Mrs. Samantha?’ ‘I’m not going to anyone’s classroom. I’m here for a meeting with the administrator.’ She said, ‘Oh, okay.’ I signed in and took a seat to wait. The good Black parents dress nicely. So, you’re never there as a teacher. You’re never there on business. I believe that this happens because they’re not used to seeing Black teachers. It’s one of those things that does not offend me. I just kind of
shake my head you know and just say poor little ignorant thing. I am not saying that in a condescending way.

**Empress’ Perception of the Angry Black Woman**

While talking about her responses about her attire and other situations, Empress introduced the term or phrase the *angry Black woman* into our conversation and how she tried not to be viewed as that. I asked what does it mean to be the *angry Black woman?* That I’ve called out nonsense for what it is and called out lies and waste. I’ve challenged wrong. To call a colleague out on a flat out lie and to stop the nonsense, I guess it's a fault. I have very little tolerance for nonsense. I can be silly. I can have fun, but when it's time to be serious, do what you're supposed to do. Come on now. Don't waste my time. And when you're coming in wasting my time, lying, and just going on. Oh, just I call that kind of nonsense. To call someone out on it, I'm simply saying that I raise my hand, respectfully wait to be called on and then they say, 'Well, Empress you have something to say?' 'Oh yes, I do. I'm wondering about or to simply say, why is such and such necessary at this time?' I've even said, 'According to our past practices...this should not be going on...we are wasting time, as far as kids’ lives.' I'm a believer that you don't want to waste that which you can't get back. So, I have to watch my words very carefully. Every day, I know I have to be careful not to come across as an angry Black woman. At the same time, there's that burning in me that refuses to apologize for my intelligence. Everything that makes me, me. It's frustrating, but I know I've got to suppress it to an extent when I go in that building, because I have people in there that are not currently capable of processing me. I'm not talking about processing the rawness of me. I'm talking about the professional, 'Oh, this is a Black woman who has her act together.' So, I've got to temper that even more.
When I’ve called out lies and waste, then I’ve challenged wrong. The wrong that no one else wants to acknowledge. There's automatically negativity and anger attached to it. All they're doing is making a statement. You’re not raising your voice. You're not hunching over someone you’re not standing up. You might simply not even be sitting straight up in your chair. You might be leaning forward on your elbows and you’re yet, an angry Black woman. And then it’s like, well how do you expect me not now to be angry because you have shackled me to this stereotype. I have sat in a room and I'm literally my face is just has this puzzled look of where did they get this from? Whenever I speak up, I know that that's how I'm going to be perceived. I work so very hard to measure my words. Because it can very quickly go a totally different direction.

One colleague that I have her classroom is right next to mine. The other is at the other end of the hall. A student had come late. I told them, one of the few times, to go ahead and come on. I usually don’t let students in my classroom without a pass. If you’re tardy, you can click around your heels and go get a pass. You know, I don’t play with that. Just go, just go. They know the drill. Now my colleague next to me and the one down the hall both saw me. The colleague down the hall got the student’s attention. Instead of allowing them to come to my class, they caught that student and berated the kid. And even though they knew it was me, they said, ‘Who's allowing you to do this and that?’ The student was in shock. My colleague right next to me is watching all of this and is just like, ‘Ooo, wee. I want to watch this.’ She's like, ‘I want to see what Empress is going to do.’ I wasn’t up to her that day. I'm going down there to let her know that it was not okay. And I went down to take care of the kid, because she was messing with one of my students. You would not have known that we were even having a conversation, if it were not for the fact that I was physically at the end of the hall. I did not raise my voice, but the colleague whose class was next to mine, she was like, ‘I was just watching because I just knew
you were gonna go off on her.' I said, 'You did not know that. I was going down there to take care of my child, because So-and-so ain't going to do that.'

I don't normally leave my assigned area. You have to be at your classroom. I don't normally leave my area. I might go one classroom over, but I just, you know, make sure I did not make eye contact with any other teacher. At least I tried not to because there are four other teachers’ classrooms that are in between mine and end of the hall. I went down there, and I was just very matter of fact. So, I had enough time to breathe and make sure, because I'm hearing my mother in my ear, 'Watch your mouth. Watch your face. So, they can't read your face.' I just told her, 'You know, I sent the student. I did this. Don't get on that child’s case.' I happened to have laughed at a moment ago because it's like, yeah, even that colleague in the hall knew I don't leave my spot. She knew that if I’m coming at her I'm serious. Don't mess with my kids. I was respectful, but I’m making sure that I'm getting my point across. The colleague down the hall was receptive.

My colleague whose classroom was right next to me, told me later she was like, 'I was just waiting. Cause, Empress was mad.' I said, 'I was not mad.' She's like, 'Oh, the look on your face.' She’s like [Empress imitated the colleague’s body language which displayed sassiness]. ‘Oh, no. The look on your face was like…’ She was doing [Empress imitated her colleague’s hand gestures commonly associated with Black women]. I said, ‘I didn’t do the neck movement. I didn’t do finger in the air.' She was like, 'But the way you were walking.’ I said, ‘I did not have on heels. I had on flat shoes. And I walked with purpose.’ She's like, 'I was just waiting. It was going to be on.' I mean, I was kind of laughing. I said, ‘You better be glad that I consider you a friend because I halfway wouldn’t like what you said.’ She doesn't like the colleague at the end of the hall. She was like, ‘I was just waiting for you to go down there and kick her ass.’ I was just
like, ‘How did the way I was walking...? I wasn't hunched over. I didn't have my shoulders, my elbows back or anything. I was just walking, really, with purpose to go to defend my student.’ She told me that, ‘You know, I wouldn’t have gone down there and said anything.’ I looked at her and said, ‘Why not?’ Bravery is bad, you know, or it’s not even bravery, I guess. When is confidence and doing the right thing bad? She was picking on one of my students. No, that it wasn’t going down like that. She didn’t run this. No. I said, ‘What were you waiting for?’ She said, ‘No, I really expected that you were going to tear into her.’ And I’m like, ‘No, I’ve got a job to keep. I’ve got bills to pay. Why would I do that? Why would I do that?’ I had a job to keep. These White people are crazy, that’s what I thought. Like really? They really think I’m gonna lose my job. I have better sense than that and you instantly think I’m gonna go down and act a fool. You know, everybody's watching you, which is why you don’t make eye contact when you’re going down the hall to talk to that person. No, they don’t. My colleague, she didn’t realize I was cognizant of a whole lot of stuff. No eye contact because you’re going to have to walk back to your classroom and the kids are going to be talking about everything. She only saw one little bitty thing, and what makes it okay? I don’t know, I wish I could get them to understand.

How did it make me feel? I get angry at having my intelligence being discounted. I can't manage anything other than to be angry. When you first said it, I started shaking my head and my mind just kind of went ‘uh,’ because of my honest response. People are refusing, in their minds, to let me be a voice period. They are refusing to not label. Some people may say, ‘Well, it's just natural for us to label things.’ I'm not allowed to have an opinion of opposition. I am not allowed to, as I mentioned before, to call out wrong. To speak, I’m not allowed to speak with authority in people's minds. A Black man can do it. I don’t see that same stereotype for Latinas in our society. They may encounter that with their own experiences, but I don’t personally see
that. When I do hear the remarks, I don’t hear the remarks about them being an angry woman. I
don’t hear the mockery within our society about them being an angry Hispanic woman or an
angry Latina. For a Black woman to speak with authority and to have a presence of strength is
seen as a negative. They don’t say remarks like angry Black woman when talking about other
women or genders. I’m annoyed with how wrong it is and how long it has been going on. That is
not a part of a transformed society. That is not a betterment of our society or carrying out the
social contract.

Unintentional or unconscious microaggressions, I think continue to exist because of
conditioning. In part, I think if it were an atmosphere, where people have no fear in sharing. If
that truly existed and then people could talk about their concerns. They would talk about what
they want to do. They would talk about how they feel. They would be willing to expose
themselves more as far as their mindset. Where there could be some correction offered, it isn’t...
because it's not okay. When someone's doing something and you know, they’re aware of what
they are doing, and they could change. It's like well, if I say, ‘Hey, we should make this change
in our behavior, in our approach, in our activities, or whatever it is…that's not going to sit well
with, So-and-so. To pursue, it could mean that So-and-so is going to get mad.’ And if the wrong
person in this district gets mad that could spell trouble for you, maybe not immediately…but oh,
you're gonna catch it on down the road somewhere else. Unfortunately, I’ve taught in a much
larger district. I think it's easier to not have certain things follow you. We're still small enough
where I have this phrase, We're a small district with a long memory. It's like for our city, you've
heard the phrase six degrees of separation, it's more like three, because we're about two square
blocks long. It doesn’t take much to know how you're connected to somebody, you know.
Somebody knows, somebody really quick. And there's always some kind of way somebody is
connected. ‘Oh, you did this to So-and-so?’ ‘Oh, you made them mad?’ In this district, we pay a lot of lip service to inclusion and fairness. People will do some dirt. I'm like...wow. I didn't see this when I was a kid. I see it now as an adult and I'm like...well, shazam. These people are pieces of work in this district, which means you have to be that much more careful. It’s always in the back of people’s minds that if I say the wrong thing in a setting where somebody doesn't like it, I'm going to ruin my career and without even realizing it. Yeah, it's unfortunate but that's a disgusting reality.

Throughout our interviews, Empress painted very descriptive images at times about different aspects of her experiences, one of which was that of a fly surrounded by whiteness and supremacy. She explained how her work environment is like a sterile space that lacks anything that she feels connected to. She also spoke of the struggle, stress, and exhaustion that comes with navigating her work environment. She spoke as a fighter, but not in the sense that she is seen and perceived by others to be the stereotype of the angry Black woman. Rather, she spoke as a fighter because she saw the importance of her place in the school and is willing to press through whatever comes her way for the greater good. Her journey as a teacher has been one of focus and service to her students, but also one that has been contained and at times oppressed.

Empress described racial microaggressions as something that caused White staff to not see her as a teacher, imposed inequitable expectations, and was oppressive. The use or presence of stereotypes, including the expectation of the angry Black woman persona when Black women share their thoughts, were two ways that Empress’ lived experiences defined the term racial microaggressions. Empress expressed that racial microaggressions were commonly present in different forms of the environment.
The racial microaggressions that she described are summarized as shown on Table 5.

TABLE 5
CRT ANALYSIS OF EMPRESS’ EXPERIENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenets</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Macro-level Experience</th>
<th>Micro-level Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normalcy and intersectionality</td>
<td>Racism looks normal because it's engrained in society.</td>
<td>Empress thought that the intersection of her race, her gender, and racism played a role in how she is viewed as an educator.</td>
<td>Empress perceived racism as being institutionalized in school practices when actions were not taken to address incidents of discrimination.</td>
<td>Empress described being viewed as inferior or unable to be a teacher in different educational settings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>of race and racism</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominant ideology challenged</td>
<td>Claims of color-blindness and meritocracy are challenged.</td>
<td>Empress believed that meritocracy should be challenged, but it came with a cost that few want to pay, including White colleagues.</td>
<td>Empress observed and described how supremacy is camouflaged in school practices when favoritism is given to or support is lacking for certain racial groups.</td>
<td>Empress described how societal stereotypes like that of the angry Black woman are embraced whenever she disagrees or has something to say.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrality of experiential</td>
<td>Master narratives hide racial and other forms of discrimination and have rejected them.</td>
<td>Empress thought that if she used her voice, she would be labeled as an angry Black woman.</td>
<td>Empress shared her experiences of being subjected to the master narrative of White women being teachers.</td>
<td>Empress described experiences with microaggressions as unintentional or intentional acts of racism that were dismissed by leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and social justice</td>
<td>Injustice regarding any identity discrimination is targeted for elimination.</td>
<td>Empress thought that her work environment was an oppressive that due to what had allowed was not ready to commitment to the elimination of racism.</td>
<td>Empress perceived that racial injustices were woven into policies and practices as leaders did not actively engage incorporating all diverse persons. Rather, leaders participated or supported the injustices.</td>
<td>Empress observed racial justice was supported when it aligns with interest of the White administrator and prevented legal action or publicity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commitment</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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As reported by Empress, racial microaggressions resulted in her intelligence being discounted, her perceiving that she needed to maintain a higher standard than her White colleagues, and her voice being silenced. She mentioned how silencing one’s voice, though not desired, may prevent the manifestation of further microinsults, but it will not without a cost to the Black teacher.

According to her narrative, racial microaggressions were also something that was commonly present and could affect a person psychologically and emotionally. She expressed that at times she felt like a full container of frustration, hurt, and disappointment. Empress perceived as being a consequence of trying to live and work in a workplace where microaggressions persist.
According to Empress, racial microaggressions were persisted in the environment and made it difficult to not have an oppressive workplace. She described a contributing factor to the persistence as the conditioning of staff. In her narrative, she highlighted that staff were conditioned by the behaviors of administration, lack of representation, and the fear of reporting issues within her school district. When administration demonstrated bias in school practices, she described as something in which communicated to staff that certain behaviors and mindsets were acceptable in that environment. She also explained how the oppressive nature of racial microaggressions can be felt in the environment of the school and in the practices that are upheld by administrators. She felt that racial microaggressions could be felt in the walls of a workplace when there was little to no representation of all the employees, rather than the dominant group solely. She depicted the environment as then being oppressive when there seemed to be no concern for incorporating all racial/ethnic groups or addressing issues when they arise. The fear or concern of retaliation within the school or the school district at some later date posed another opportunity for conditioning. She perceived that she had observed in her school district portrayed am image that there was little to no safe space to report or trying advocate as she desired. Empress described these three factors as things that allowed the “buttermilk” to retain and promote the normalcy of racism.

Next, Sierra and I discussed her experiences in the workplace. Empress and Sierra had a similar heart for the children they taught. Both seemed close in age and decided to initially pursue other career paths before deciding to be a teacher. Sierra’s stories offered a perspective of someone who finds connecting with children of all races and ethnicities important. She seemed to care for the school experience of all children, but especially the children of Color.
Sierra

Sierra was an African American female teacher and has served as an educator for more than ten years. She has lived in the Midwest more than twenty years. She is a wife and a mother. Sierra grew up in a predominantly White environment and has ties to the military. She described these facets of her life as being contributors to her awareness to issues seen and experienced in her work environment. Her interest in teaching began as a young child. Prior to this study, one of her siblings reminded her that she always wanted to teach since being a child. She chuckled as she thought about it. She recalled that she was the teacher whenever she and her siblings played school. While in college, she began working as a substitute teacher. She described the experience as one that she loved. Interestingly enough, her undergraduate degree was not in education and teaching was not the career path that she had selected initially. Despite being repeatedly told that she would a great teacher, Sierra was not interested in becoming a teacher. She shared that the instructional model that teachers used was not enjoyable and she lost interest in the field of education. She then pursued different career path.

However, there came a day when she would change her path again and her mind about teaching. As time went on, Sierra noticed that students would gravitate towards her. Her interest peaked after working as a substitute teacher again. After a short time of subbing, she worked as an in-school substitute at multiple schools. Sierra described hearing something like an inner voice saying that she could teach and be a teacher. She remembered thinking to herself, ‘No,’ but that voice kept encouraging that she could do it.’ It also said to her that the students needed her, especially the African American children, who already gravitated towards her. When Sierra paused and considered this inner encouragement, she began to recall how she saw the disparities and the differences in the way that non-Black teachers would treat African American students
and other ethnic minorities. She described feeling a sense of fulfillment when she subbed. One day, Sierra decided to return to school, earn her degree to teach, and become a teacher.

At all of my schools [and before my administration], I always felt like I had to make sure that I was professional at all times. I didn’t feel like the rules always applied to everyone equitably. You know, I dressed professionally. I made sure I was at work those kinds of things. I made sure I had documentation if I went to the doctor’s office just in case. At one of my schools, there were a large number of people from other diverse backgrounds who wanted their kids in my class. While the school staff seemed proud that their students were culturally and ethnically diverse, they themselves seemed to lack cultural understanding. I had a lot of families of Color, who would come up to me and say I want my child in your class. I was the only African American teacher for a period of time. I felt like they wanted their child in my class because they felt that I would have a level of understanding that they weren’t getting in a White class. There was one or two other teachers at one point. the teachers who were there taught different grade levels for maybe a year or two. We never got to see each other. We kind of had to see each other in the hallway or in passing at the coffee machine, but never really got to develop a relationship. Many of my White colleagues were able to develop a relationship with each other, but I wasn’t always welcome into that circle. I did, however, have an African American nurse, who was an older lady with a great sense of humor and my support system for a few years.

At another school, I went from one classroom teacher who was African American to there being three of us who are African American females and that felt good. I know that there are people that would get together outside of work, which is why I was so excited when I came to the new school. I finally had what I was looking for, co-workers to just be chummy with and to talk to here. There were two White co-workers that I would talk to outside of work, but it was usually
work related and it would be like, ‘Hey So-and-so, I'm working on this.’ Or someone may say, ‘Hey, call me up. I'll help you with this’ and then we get to talk about our families and whatnot. I also should say that I didn’t have a whole lot of time to just visit because a lot of my attention was going to my family. I was so excited when I got to this new school and formed friendships outside of work. We get to laugh together and just have a blast. We can let our hair down. If we needed to talk, we close the door at work, talk, and can be ourselves. We had a support system.

I have had at least one White female principal, who held high expectations. I believe that I met those expectations, but I didn’t feel like she had an interest in really getting to know who I was. There were a couple of situations where I didn’t think she respected me. I'll give you an example of what happened. We had a student in the class that had a diagnosed special need. He would throw things and do other things. I was put in the position of just having to deal with that until the day that the administration ended up having to deal with him. Afterwards, they immediately placed him in a classroom where he could be contained better. The administrators called me to the office because apparently the family had a complaint. The administrators were going on and on about the complaint and took the side of the family without doing some fact checking with me. I felt like I was placed in the position where it looked like the administration didn’t respect me as a teacher. They were looking at the family’s viewpoint without saying, ‘Well, let us just talk to Mrs. Sierra,’ like they would do with another teacher.

Another time, I had a White male administrator, who was definitely a taskmaster, but I was up for the challenge. I will say that I felt the pressure of having to be at work much earlier than I had to at work environments. He always had extra things that he wanted us to do. It seemed to me that he preferred small, White women who were kind of dolled up for a lack of a better word. I'm thinking of a couple ladies who he appeared to have favored and were kind of
small and dolled up. It seemed like he just felt more comfortable with that type of a woman. I felt like the reason he didn’t really bother me was because I think that on some level, he thought that the one Black person may run and complain about it. I heard and saw a lot of things that I did not agree with, but I stayed until I made the decision to leave.

I have also had African American administrators, who I enjoyed working for. Having African American administrators seemed to make a difference. Having someone who could relate to me cultural understanding created a layer of understanding between myself and the African American administrators. Cultural understanding is lacking. I have seen insensitivity from different teachers in the building sporadically, not all teachers, but just enough that to me it was very obvious. For example, when we are talking about our students, we already share an understanding culturally. Whereas our White counterparts seemed to look down on our students of Color. They say things like they don’t understand what is going on with the children. Often times, we have that understanding or ability to look beyond behaviors and know how to deal with the students better than the White staff.

When I think about other administration that I have had, I can’t help but to think about one new administrator in particular. I remember we had a new administrator in our building. He came to our building at the end of the prior school year to say hello. I met the new administrator and then I saw him in the building like a week later when teachers were still cleaning out the rooms. I’m the only African American teacher in the building. So, I should be easy to remember. I realized that there was a lot going on and we had a huge school that the new administrator may not know who I am. We do have a couple of paras in the building who are African American, but there’s just some things that would distinguish me and remember that I’m the teacher. I re-introduced myself to the new administrator and they said, ‘Oh, nice to meet you.’
Well, fast forward to the fall semester. We were putting our classrooms together and getting ready in preparation for the new school year. I'm walking down the hallway with the Hispanic custodian laughing with them. I think I asked if I could borrow the custodian’s ladder. I got the ladder to hang something up on my wall. So, I'm walking down the hall back down the hall to my room. That the new administrator was walking down the hall and I said, ‘Oh, hi. How are you doing?’ I said, ‘You made it our end of the hallway.’ The new administrator looks at me and said, ‘I’m sorry. Now what do you do here?’ And I said, ‘I'm a [grade A] teacher. Let me take you to my room.’ I showed the new administrator my room. I thought, ‘Okay, that's how you're gonna make the connection that I'm a teacher,’ because obviously you're not making the connection.

Sierra had an array of workplace experiences and highlighted several different aspects of her lived experiences as an African American teacher. She first began by sharing what it is like as a Black teacher and then discussed microaggressions across her various work environments.

As a Black teacher, I've had those kinds of situations where it seems like we, African American teachers, are invisible on some level. That’s how I feel as an African American teacher that sometimes I'm invisible to parents and/or staff, especially when I am the only African American teacher. I noticed that there have been countless situations where parents didn't know who I was and their kids would walk down the hallway and say, ‘Hi, Mrs. Sierra.’ I’d say, ‘Hi, So-and-so.’ Their parents would turn around and say, ‘Who is that?’ Their child would say, ‘Oh, that's Mrs. Sierra.’

I had a situation that I thought of. It was a parent who had a child, two years in a row in the classroom next door to me. One of the expectations is that teachers will stand outside of their room at the beginning of the day to welcome students into the classroom. This parent was one
who would always walk her child down the hall to class. I would have thought that for two years in a row, she would see me standing right outside of my room and that she would know that I was a classroom teacher. So, we had a school celebration. The same parent came, and we were talking about our children and whatnot. She said something about her four boys. I made some comment about my boys. She made some comments like, ‘So, you must come up here a lot,’ then she said, ‘You must be a volunteer.’ I smiled and responded, ‘Oh no. My kids are grown.’ She looked surprised and said, ‘Oh, well what do you?’ She paused and said, ‘So, you work here?’

And I said, ‘Yeah, I do.’ I thought well I know who you are, but I'm surprised you don’t know who I am. Most parents know who the teachers are. I said, ‘Yeah, I work here.’ She said, ‘Well, what do you do? Do you work in the lunchroom?’ I had to close my eyes for a second because I was trying to think of how to respond. I gave that same response that I’ve used other times, ‘No, I'm a [grade A] teacher.’ You can’t make this stuff up. I thought to myself, even the lunch lady has a lunch lady look, it doesn’t matter what race they are. Lunch ladies have a certain look. I have to dress professionally as an African American teacher, or I will be mistaken as a custodian. I won't be seen as the professional. I thought here I am a teacher who even if I wear jeans or something, my attire, let’s, you know that I'm not the custodian, but this parent was still asking me, ‘Do you work in the lunchroom?’ Was I lunch lady? I think that sometimes as a Black/African American teacher, I feel invisible.

Sometimes, I feel like the opportunities for me have been hard to get. It's sometimes...it feels like I've already met the glass ceiling. And I don't know why. I'm just as qualified. I've interviewed twice for the different positions. I was turned down a few times and I'm not sure why. I've emailed the person who did the interviewing and asked for feedback and never received feedback. And then I looked at my resume and I've had others look at my resume. I have also
reached out to a few people for guidance, and some are trying to help me get at least some feedback. So, we will see what happens. I don’t know if I should attribute it to race but I just know I haven’t been able to get anywhere and I’m not sure why because I have the credentials. I have different credentials and lots of experience, but then you take someone who's young, maybe someone who's less qualified or less knowledgeable. I don’t know why they are able to move forward. So, to me it feels like, even as an African American female, it feels like race is somehow playing a part is the way it feels to me. I think, for the most part, I articulate myself in a way that I can be understood. I think I get along with peers well enough, but I just feel like an African American female that people see my race first. I think they have judgments based on my race.

Sierra’s Perception of Racial Microaggressions

Like other participants, Sierra was asked about her thoughts about microaggressions, specifically racial microaggressions. Prior to this study, Sierra had heard the term racial microaggressions, but that thought that defining it was not the easiest thing. To her, racial microaggressions caused her to think of small bits of racism, which she said that she has seen in some teachers’ expectations of kids.

I think biases exist in school because teachers already come in the school with shared values of racism. That attracts them to one another and they’re able to share it and speak it and I think that’s what it is, but I don’t really know. I just think that because historically, White people have seemingly been in a sort of a superior role and African Americans aren't always viewed as equals. I think those values of racism have just been passed down. Some White teachers have not had very much interaction with Black people until they get on the job. They choose to be friends with people who have the same shared values, whether it’s their church, community, or social community. Those shared values of racism include stereotypes, like we all know each other. I
used to get that at work. ‘Oh, all Black people know each other.’ I said, ‘No, we don’t. We don’t all know each other.’ Then of course, they would say something like, ‘Well, you know So-and-so and you know So-and-so.’ Sometimes, I would be in the office and somebody would say to me, ‘Oh, there was a lady who was she was in the office today. Did you know her?’ This usually means that she…the lady in the office was Black. In the back of my head, I was like…please, but I responded with, ‘No, I don’t know her.’ There seems to be an assumption that if they’re Black then I have to know who they are. That thought is just so ignorant it to me. At my current school, I don’t have this experience.

I’ve noticed that when my Caucasian colleagues and I have conversations or meetings that eye contact is like a six to one. When they’re talking, every five and six times, they will make eye contact with each other and then they will bounce and look at me. You can be in a meeting, like our professional development meetings the person who’s speaking or who’s leading the meeting is making eye contact with each other before they look at me. I thought it was just me at first. When I talked to other colleagues who look like me, they said, ‘Oh, most definitely, that happens all the time.’ Let’s say we’re having to collaborate and talking. They’ll ask each other and then asked me. This doesn’t happen when an African American is leading the meeting. I have to use body language or speak up or do a little bit more extra I feel to make sure that I’m included. Otherwise, they don’t look at or include you at all.

As a female teacher, sometimes you’re left out of the loop or on the outside of things. One example is when they see the White colleague as an expert, even if I chime in with something that makes sense or is valid and brings value to the conversation. They will say something like, ‘Oh yeah. They’re great. It's great.’ All of sudden they understand what that person said. Also, when emails come out, my name maybe second to or the last on the email. I remember a situation
where a piece of mail came to our building. An email was sent out since we were working remotely. One of the office staff members took a picture of the envelope and sent me and my two co-workers a group email. The email said, ‘Does this belong to any of you, or any of you expecting this mail. The outside envelope said [grade A] teacher.’ I responded all, and I said, ‘Could you please open the mail, so we can see what it is? Because I didn’t recognize it.’ Nobody responds but me. She opened it. It was some opportunity for students with some kind of science on hands thing. I said, ‘That’s not mine, but I’m interested in it.’

Well, I ended up coming up to the building, like a day or two later. I always look at my mailbox, so I go and check my mailbox. Our mailboxes are right there in the office right by the office staff person’s area who had contacted us three teachers. I went to my mailbox and didn’t see the letter that I had asked to be put in my mailbox. I asked the staff member, ‘Where’s that mail that we talked about by email?’ I’m just paraphrasing. She said, ‘Oh, I put it in Miss Smithsafe’s box.’ I was just looking like [Sierra demonstrates a perplexed look on her face] and that was my response, not in her face, but my back was to her. So, I said, ‘Why did you put it in her box? I’m the only one answered the email.’ I’m thinking to myself; I was the only one who actually showed some interest in it. I’m a more seasoned teacher. The White teacher has only been teaching for two or three years, but the office staff member puts that piece of mail in the White teacher’s box. I just believe that we’re invisible to the White school personnel. I believe that they don’t see us. I’ve had multiple experiences where they’re looking at my race and they’re not seeing me as the professional. I’ve had someone come into my room, ‘I’m looking for Mrs. Sierra.’ I’ve had a para in the room, who was White, and then someone came into the room and went go over to the para like they were the teacher. I’m clearly at the front of my class. I’m teaching and this White person is sitting down. I look professional and like I am in charge of the
class. I do not carry myself like I'm not in charge of this classroom, but they will inevitably look at that person who looks like sloppy Susie. A couple of times, I have had a parent come in my room and say, ‘Hello, I'm looking for Mrs. Sierra.’ I looked up and I said, ‘I'm Sierra.’ They were just surprised. You could just see the surprise in their face. When district workers came in to install the whiteboard, they said to the para, ‘We’re here to put your whiteboard. Do you know where we can put your whiteboard?’ Again, they're talking to the para. There's nothing about me that says, ‘I'm the para,’ when you look at the two of us. I'm in front of the class, and that para is sitting down next to a student, but they're assuming that the para is the classroom teacher. I think this assumption of me not being the teacher happens because they don't see me as the professional no matter what I look like. Their responses are never anything other than, ‘Oh, okay.’ There's no apology that goes along with the responses. It's not like, ‘Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize that...’ or ‘Oh, you're the teacher?’ There's never been anything like that. It's like, ‘Oh, okay’ and then they just keep going with whatever they were there to do.

Sometimes, White teachers will have these conversations and then you come up on them and realize that the conversation will shift. You can sometimes pick up that they're talking about someone Black just based on how they frame the words or don't add in certain words. When they do this, they are usually repeating what they heard about someone Black or talking about an experience that they’ve had with a person of Color. Listening to their conversations sometimes, you learn how they feel about Black people and that outside of school, you’re just another Black person to them. You sometimes learn that they are afraid of us outside of work. You’re invisible to them. They're not even trying to figure out who you are if they look at you or see that you’re their co-worker. I also learned that some White colleagues have no interest in knowing anything about us after work or just getting to know us.
Sierra faced microinsults though she was unaware that this term was associated with her experiences. She described three experiences of messaging that conveyed hidden insults, like implying that she is inferior or not qualified.

For example, when I was thinking about going back to school to get another degree, I shared it with at least one other teacher. So, I initially shared it with [teacher A] on my team and I said, ‘Hey, why don’t we work on our degree together?’ Her response was, ‘Oh no. You go ahead. I don’t think it’s worth it,’ blah, blah, blah. I thought it all helps towards having a better retirement and moving up the pay scale. Education respects education. So anyway, I never said another word to her, and I went on and got my graduate level degree. When I told one of the administrators that I got my graduate level degree, the administrator was happy for me and announced it at the staff meeting that I just got the degree. I was not expecting her to announce it because I didn’t say, ‘Hey, share this.’ So, the administrator announced it at the next staff meeting. I could see the surprise look on several of my White colleagues faces. I’m the only African American classroom teacher, of course. I remember a White teacher [teacher B] coming up to me and said you, ‘You got your graduate level degree?’ It wasn’t like congratulations. It was almost like [teacher B] didn’t think that I was smart enough to get my degree. That didn’t come out well to me.

After that, like five teachers suddenly were in a graduate level program the next semester. [Teacher A] who told me that, ‘No. I’m not getting it,’ they went on and started working on a graduate level degree. While these teachers were going to school, I decided to get some other credentials. I was working on that when [teacher B] heard that I’m in school and said, ‘Oh, you’re in school.’ I said, ‘Yes.’ Then [teacher B] said, ‘What are you getting your graduate level degree in?’ I said, ‘I already have that degree.’ She continued to ask me on different other
occasions, ‘So, when are you going to be finished with your graduate level degree?’ As she was
closer to getting finished with her degree, she asked again, ‘When are you gonna be finished?’ I
finally said, ‘I told you I got that graduate level degree over two years ago.’ She acts surprised
and said, ‘Oh. Well, what are you doing?’ I told her that I was working on some other
credentials. I thought that was interesting that the administrator had announced it a couple
years before at a meeting that she attended and she was still asking me, ‘When are you getting
your graduate level degree?’ After that last time, she stopped asking me.

Depending upon the situation, I would respond by speaking up and reporting if I
experienced biases at work. I'm used to people not seeing me as a professional or the teacher
now. It does still kind of makes me mad. It angers me, but there's nothing I can do about that.
Sometimes I did not, and I would just internalize. I thought about having that conversation with
the office staff member that I mentioned earlier, because I do want to be on pleasant terms with
her. I always share whatever is going at work with my family and people who are my inner
circle. Sometimes I would ask my family and inner circle about what I should do. So, it was kind
of slow, depending on situation for me to always find the courage to say something.

Sierra explained one example of a time when she has reported an incident that involved
the mistreated of a student of Color. Another teacher, one of her White colleagues, was observed
yelling and not allowing them to do something that the school administration had approved them
to do. Sierra was a witness to it.

By the time, the White female teacher was done he was crying, and this was not a kid who
breaks down and cries every day. He was pretty self-assured. So, I had a conversation with him
afterwards and told him that he didn’t do anything wrong. I also told him that I would take care
of the situation. When I had my break, I marched myself right on into one of my administrators’
office and let them know what took place. After the family complained also about the matter, administration spoked to everyone involved. I was relieved because I knew that I hadn’t done anything wrong. This became a big ordeal, but the teacher did not believe that she didn’t do anything wrong. Before going to the office, the teacher came to me and told me that she had done nothing wrong. She ended up having a reprimand in her file and she had to give a verbal and written apology to the family. I saw her in the hallway later. She was visibly shaken. I asked her, ‘Are you okay?’ She didn’t seem to want to talk to me. I saw her again at the team meeting about a week later. She would not look at me. She would direct her conversation toward the other teammates and would not address me or anything else. That teacher stopped talking to me for about a month like I was the one who was at fault, but I didn’t do anything. When she started talking again, she never mentioned the incident.

There was another teacher who taught next door to me. She taught the kindergarten room that was next door. I saw two boys in the hallway one day, who are walking with a White gentleman. And I realized, ‘Oh, I think they must be in foster care.’ When I looked at them, I realized they looked just not cared for. They didn’t have a cared for kind of look in their appearance. I asked that teacher, ‘So, there was White guy walking with the boys, and he took one of them to your class’ blah blah blah. She said, ‘Oh, that’s So-and-so.’ I said, ‘Yes. Is he in foster care?’ She said, ‘Yes.’ I said something to the effect that, ‘Oh I thought so because both boys didn’t look cared for.’ And she said, ‘Well they look like hoodlums to me.’ I said, ‘Hoodlums?’ I said, ‘He doesn’t look like a hoodlum.’ I could see that their hair wasn’t combed, and their legs were a little ashy, because he was wearing shorts. The both of them…they didn’t even look like hoodlums, they’re five years of age. Not at five years of age. I said, speaking about the boy in her class specifically, ‘He’s five years old.’ She said, ‘Well, he looks like a hoodlum to
me.’ That hurt my heart that our children are labeled so early by someone who doesn’t recognize
that he doesn’t have any control over his situation and his appearance and who’s caring for him
and that kind of thing. So, that’s what I mean when I say that [cultural understanding is lacking].

One of the other things that I have done as a response to issues at work is leaving the
school. The time that I moved on to another school, I didn’t realize that on some level I had
overstayed my welcome because the stress of being in that environment. I loved the school and
the relationships I had formed with families, but I left it because of stress. I was also not getting
the opportunities for building level leadership like the administrator’s favorites. I knew that I
couldn’t measure up to being White. I couldn’t measure up to being that little, small White lady
that the White male administrator seemed to have a preference for. So that was a little bit
stressful, along with everything else that he did. I really framed my leaving like I was looking for
another opportunity, but I felt like that time had run its course, because it was stressful. I didn’t
realize how it was affecting me. I was feeling stressed and always having to feel like I had to look
over my shoulder like I wasn’t quite good enough.

What I do try to do to change the biases I see is to integrate opportunities for my students
to see all people in positions of in leadership power, especially people of Color. I do that by
introducing them to people like judges. I look for any opportunity to bring in anyone who is
African American or of another ethnicity. I’m not always looking for someone who’s White
because there are plenty of great examples of White people doing great things. I want my
students to know that people of Color can be in places of authorities and that White people are
not the only ones. Media, their textbooks, and their school life does not usually reflect that
positions of leadership are attained to the students of Color. I want my students of Color to see
people that look like them and my White students to also see people of Color in those roles. It is
important for all of our students to see that people of Color are beautiful, because sometimes they don’t see us as that. By doing these things, I think helps to change their perception and cultural understanding of people.

Sierra, like other study participants, enjoys teaching and helping her students to see that they are valued. She works to develop relationships with students and families to promote a healthy and collaborative learning experience. Racial microaggressions are frustrating to her but, although stressful, have not negatively affected her zeal for teaching. Another item that she valued is having other African American personnel, specifically teachers, to connect with at the school. This affords her to work with people who share a similar cultural understanding, which she shared is lacking in the school environment.

Sierra described racial microaggressions in the workplace as being equivalent to “small bits of racism.” In the stories she shared, these bits of racism were subtle and directed towards African American teachers and the students of Color. Racism has she described it manifested in the use of stereotypes when White colleagues spoke about and handled students of Color. As illustrated in Table 6, Sierra’s lived experiences are highlighted through the CRT lens.
TABLE 6

crt analysis of Sierra’s experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenets</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Macro-level Experience</th>
<th>Micro-level Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normalcy and intersectionality of race and</td>
<td>Racism looks normal because it's engrained in society.</td>
<td>Sierra believed that some White personnel have shared values of racism and pass them down generationally.</td>
<td>Sierra questioned whether the hiring practices and how teachers were supported were influenced by race.</td>
<td>Sierra has experienced the implicit bias of district staff, school staff, and parents directed at her as well as at students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>racism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant ideology challenged</td>
<td>Claims of color-blindness and meritocracy are challenged.</td>
<td>Sierra believed that there were times when she needed to challenge the biased beliefs of colleagues but believed also that she should be cautious in doing so.</td>
<td>Sierra shared how one administrator exercised his power and supremacy as he created racial difference amongst the staff and openly favored non-Black teachers.</td>
<td>Sierra faced some stereotypes that reflected racist beliefs that Black people are inferior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrality of experiential knowledge</td>
<td>Master narratives hide racial and other forms of discrimination and have rejected them.</td>
<td>Sierra believed that she did not always have the ability or courage to speak up when racial bias seems to manifest.</td>
<td>Sierra felt the most silenced when she was the only African American teacher, especially when the administrator was a White female.</td>
<td>Sierra perceived that her experiences of being unfairly treated or left out of colleague collaborations were diminished as being insignificant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and social justice commitment</td>
<td>Injustice regarding any identity discrimination is targeted for elimination.</td>
<td>Sierra did not discuss the commitment of the school administration to eliminating racism.</td>
<td>Sierra did not describe how racial and social injustices were woven into policies.</td>
<td>Sierra did not describe any situation where tolerance was present and aligned with White interest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Sierra, stereotypes were present in conversations and interactions between colleagues. She also described racial microaggressions as something that was the result of generationally shared values and attitudes about race and racism. Although Sierra did not use the terms microinvalidations and microinsults, she shared lived experiences that were specific instances of being treated or viewed as invisible and one who was not a teacher. She described frustration with the practice of White staff members viewing Black children as inferior and “hoodlums” and her intelligence was repeatedly questioned for more than a year. Sierra lastly portrayed racial microaggressions as something that can be internalized when she was unsure how or whether to report it.

When discussing the contributing factors that aid racial microaggressions to persist in the structure of the environment, Sierra shared stories highlighted three primary factors. The first
factor was the school personnel’s lack of cultural understanding or willingness to see Black people as more than the stereotypical images. Sierra believed that this lack of understanding and willingness made it possible for biases and societal stereotypes to be perpetuated, which she was thought was linked to the White teachers’ limited exposure to Black people. The second factor was the school personnel’s displayed biases and comfort in doing so. The school personnel displayed racialized beliefs and stereotypes in conversations and interactions with Black personnel and students in what was perceived to be a casual and comfortable fashion. With Sierra being often the only Black teacher, the lack of diversity and challenging of the status quo by White personnel also appeared to contribute to the cultural structure in the workplace. Sierra explained that personnel enter the workplace with values or attitudes about race and the racial groups, which go unchallenged. The last factor was the perpetuation of racism in leadership practices. Sierra described that administration’s support of stereotypes or creation of biased cultures can result in the persistence of racism and racial microaggressions. She mentioned, for example, how one administrator’s created racial differential left Sierra feeling like she could not compete with her White female colleagues.

For the following narrative, we meet and learn about Zilla, who appeared to be the oldest of the male participants. Zilla’s narrative provided an interesting perspective regarding the cultural capital that a teacher can wield and how teachers can affect the use of stereotypes in the workplace.

Zilla

Initially, Zilla selected Wolverine, then Godzilla, after two of his favorite sci-fi characters. Eventually, it was shortened to just Zilla, which we laughed about later during the member check meeting. Zilla is an African American male public-school teacher with less than
10 years of teaching experience. He is not a Midwest region born native but grew up here. Similar to some of the other study participants, he has lived and worked outside of the Midwest and had a tie to the military. He spent more than five years in another profession before coming into the field of education. He described the Midwest as a familiar place and one where he could easily return to and get reestablished. He said it was important to be able to hit the ground running instead of having to learn a new place and trying to learn his way around, and he had networks already established in his present location.

Zilla described his interest in education as a long-standing idea. Originally, he had planned to obtain his teaching degree and teach elsewhere. While earning his degree, he worked as a substitute teacher and was often requested by schools. Since he thought he was good at teaching, he decided that it would give him the ability to be at home at a reasonable time and spend more time with his family. Zilla also expressed his excitement about the field of education, which were the benefits and career longevity. As a teacher, you are off for three months in the summer, which was quite appealing to him. In addition, he said there was also a large demand in the Midwest for teachers. After multiple job offers, he elected to teach in his present location, rather than somewhere else.

Zilla talked about his current school’s administration and culture in general terms. His school is one of over 700 magnet schools in the Midwest. Typical to the magnet school format, his current school has a theme or scope in which students’ learning is focused. He described the work environment as a diverse school due to its theme. He described the school as a close-knit community and having a high degree of connectivity between the teachers and students, which he attributed to the school’s small size. Zilla mentioned that in smaller schools’ teachers have a
better chance of building rapport, creating lots of relationships with students, and having the opportunity learn about peers quite well.

During a couple of the interviews, Zilla and I discussed his administrators. We began talking about his administrators and their role in the environment and culture. We focused on his current school in this narrative, where he has only had two administration teams since joining the staff. He said that these teams always had at least one minority and one male administrator on them. Zilla mentioned that he noticed a difference between leadership styles but also how administration was treated staff based upon their race.

The current administrator, she’s an African American female. When they first announced that she was going to be the principal, the whole demeanor of the meeting changed. You could see the sighs and the people shifting in chairs. Since then, it’s been a nonstop battle with her. To me, it’s like...oh, well, you’ve had a different principal, a different style. So, you’re gonna have to expect that.

Zilla commented that she seemed aware of the dissatisfaction or disengagement of some White staff members when she became the new head administrator. He shared that this administrator may have contributed to some stereotypes by embracing everyone as family or calling them cousins, which caused staff to cringe. The staff had been accustomed to leadership where the head administrator and the assistant principal had been White.

[The team included a] Caucasian lady and Caucasian male, who was the assistant principal and gave me a hard time. The female administrator let you know that she dated outside of her race and likes basically the types of people that she hires. She was basically like, ‘I want teachers that can connect to students. If I’ve got to hire a whole building full of Black teachers, then I’m going to do it.’ The problem is, she just couldn’t find that many. This was one aspect of
her successor’s decision-making that does not appear to be questioned because it was similar her vision to grow the staff culturally.

The succeeding administrator was the African American female. Since she became the principal, she’s made it a point to get some men of color in the school. She felt that's what the school really needed to so the kids can see people that they can relate to and have a positive role model. Believe it or not, we have more Black male teachers than we do White male teachers. I noticed that those hired, they grew up in the Midwest, went to college in the Midwest, and decided they wanted to go into the teaching field. All of them seemed to come from a similar background. Zilla insisted that it is good to have teachers that can relate to students regardless of race. He also shared that all teachers should desire to connect with their students and put an effort towards developing their cultural awareness.

Zilla observed that the staff began to compare the new African American principal to the former White principal not long after she had started. The White female teachers mostly were always comparing her to the previous thing. It's like, ‘I can’t stand what she's doing.’ ‘She doesn’t know what she’s doing.’ They look for any little thing to complain about her. And usually it’s, ‘She doesn’t know what she’s doing.’ I always say, ‘Well, she must have known something because they made her the principal.’ And so, I kind of pull them to the fence to where it’s like, I kind of try and point out to them that, ‘Maybe the issue is with you because you have an African American female, and you just don’t like that.’ Just to show you, her first full year, we lost more than five teachers. Prior to her becoming principal, we didn’t lose any.

When I had like a deep conversation with one of the teachers that complained. She said, ‘I am not like that…’ She said, ‘because there are other African American female leaders.’ I said, ‘So yeah, but you don’t have to report directly to them.’ I then said, ‘She’s doing the same
things that the previous principal, but now it's an issue for you.' Some of them left and went
down to a lower school level. That told me, 'Well, there's an issue. There's got to be issues
between you and her that goes beyond professionalism.' And I think that they didn't like to be
told differently and did not have things smoothed over for them or bending over for them when
they asked things to do. ‘Because I've always did it this way.’ ‘Well, that's not the proper way to
do it.' They felt offended because they were able to get away with it before, but now you've been
corrected. And it's like, ‘How dare that African American female come in here and change
things.' I can understand towards your first year that you want to go by the book. You want to
make sure everything’s on the level. So, changes made people really uncomfortable, but I think
that as far the tone of skin made it even more hard for them to take or hard to swallow.

In terms of his relationship with the administrators, Zilla interacted with them regularly
and the interactions occurred more often after they learned about him and his expertise. He
noticed that his relationship with the administration was different than that of his African
American colleagues. Zilla shared that his colleagues generally only get to interact with
administration during an annual or monthly walkthrough or some other kind of review of their
class. Zilla summarized his interactions by saying that his smile, approachability, and value
afforded him positive interactions with the administration for the most part.

When asked about what he thought racial microaggressions were, Zilla was initially
unsure of a definition, but shared that he had tried to research the term a little bit prior to
beginning our study interviews. Zilla described the culture of his workplace as positive, but he
associated the term racial microaggressions with the use of stereotypes and provided examples.

I think what it means basically is how do people handle us as far as being a Black male
in a public sphere and what are their reactions. It’s like is it sometimes negative or is it
sometimes it falls into the stereotypes. Or basically, it is a type of small things that hold you back, because they feel like you are not quite what we want, or something like that.

One particular time happened after a faculty versus student basketball game. They were talking about me cuz I love their playing and jumping around and doing a whole bunch of stuff. First the comment is like, ‘Yeah. Mostly African Americans, you guys are athletic.’ I said, ‘Well, not all of us, plus, I’m old. You know, what?’ They responded, ‘What?’ I answered, ‘Tomorrow, I’m gonna be walking around with my legs hurting.’ And I said, ‘I’m not gonna be moving that much. Tomorrow, I’ll probably stand by my desk.’ In that same conversation, it was like, ‘Ah, yeah. African Americans look young.’ I can kind of read people when they’re kind of being semi-serious and joking. I said, ‘Not all of us.’ I said, ‘There’s some of us that just look old.’ They said, ‘You’re not that old.’ I said, ‘Really?’ Someone asked, ‘Yeah, what are you like 39, 41?’ So, then they look at you and say, ‘How old are you?’ I’m like, ‘over 50.’ And they’re like, ‘Whoa.’ ‘Uh.’ ‘O my god, I don’t really believe it.’ Then somebody said, ‘Black people just age so well.’ I’m like...oh, here we go again. I kind of disarm them and remind them that there were older looking Black people too. Then we go back to, ‘Yeah, all Black males are athletic.’ I said, ‘Well, some of us are athletic and smart, too.’ I started going into my little rant about, ‘You do know who invented the streetlight? Who did the first open heart surgery?’ I said, ‘You didn’t know Thomas Edison didn’t actually invent the light bulb, but he just stole the patent from it? These guys didn’t play basketball or football. Did they?’ So, then they’re kind of like totally embarrassed. And then I said, ‘Okay, I see what you mean now.’ I hate it when somebody says or almost like says, ‘Oh, you African Americans can just play basketball and do that real well.’ I’m like, ‘Well, here we go. So, every one of us is a basketball player and we sing, and we rap?’ Zilla added that societal stereotypes are interjected in casual conversations as “semi-joking around.”
Zilla’s Perception of Stereotypes

Zilla described more of his experiences in the workplace, and these experiences involved being used as an angry Black man, being the unicorn, and how he processed these microaggressions. The one stereotype that Zilla talked about the most was the angry Black man. He described how the angry Black man is utilized as a scary image for students.

*The one that I experienced the most, is the angry Black man. Today, other teachers use me and other staff members to basically scare the children. They’re like, ‘Hey, here comes this big Black guy. You don’t want him to get angry at you.’ I noticed that basically a lot of female Caucasian teachers have trouble handling young minority boys. So, they’re always quick to send them to the office or always quick to call one of the Black teachers to basically handle something that they should be handling in the classroom. That’s the biggest one I’ve seen from time and time again. In fact, the administrator is thought it was cool because he’s made the comment, ‘Having you is like having an extra administrator on the floor.’*

In addition to being portrayed as scary, Zilla revealed that Black teachers, specifically Black male teachers, are utilized as disciplinarians.

*Caucasian colleagues always seemed to go get the Black teacher, the Black male teacher because it makes kids calm down. Being a Black teacher or Black male teacher, students actually connect with me a lot more because they have somebody like them. They feel it's a safe place to where I get more information than the counselor sometimes as far as students with issues and problems going on. a good example is the teacher who said ‘I can't discipline this young African American male. Let me go get a Black male to discipline him or get him corrected on the right path.’ That’s one of the things I don’t particularly care for as far as, ‘Well, we have to use you.’ And you’re kind of making me feel like the villain to where I got to come in and help discipline*
and the kid looks at me in a different light versus until they wait until they get with me and then also, they feel like, ‘Well you're not bad after all. You're nice.’ I’ve said, ‘Well, you've only seen me in a disciplinary field versus the actual teaching of a classroom.’ I can tell when my colleagues are doing this and its mostly White females. They feel that having a strong Black male presence. You know it's always coming because they always say, ‘Mr. Zilla, if you have time, can you come up here and you help me with this student? I can't get them motivated. I can’t get them to work. Maybe if you talk to them.’ Then they also say, ‘They look up to you too.’ When I bring the kid back. ‘Oh, thank you. Thank you.’ I always smile. Basically, what I'm thinking is like...oh, okay. You've had trouble with this kid before. So obviously, you need to work out some type of solution to where you don't rely on me or Mr. X and you don’t call us down here versus you handle it yourself. When we're not here, you can't use the big African American guy to come down there and basically intimidate the kids to make them feel good or put them back in line. So, you kind of get a mixed bag, as far as how they present using the Black male teacher to help solve their issues. This is kind of one those unspoken things to do. I think is great that they think we can help calm things down, but I also see issues with teachers who basically are not aware of other cultures.

In the next part of Zilla’s narrative, he introduced me to the term “unicorn.” He was introduced to the term after having an issue with one of his administrators. That particular day, he was quite frustrated with the administrator and the level of disrespect and unfair treatment he was receiving regarding his intervention with a student’s inappropriate behavior. Zilla walked me through this situation, which ended with the administrator and him moving past the issue. The administrator never really seemed to acknowledge his unfair treatment or retaliation towards Zilla, nor had to answer for it. During this situation, however, Zilla learned from his union
representative that due to the few number of Black teachers that Black male teachers are likened to unicorns because they are even fewer in number. He shared that in schools in the Midwest, there are not very many African American males teaching core subjects such as English, science, and mathematics. For Zilla specifically, his personality and ability to create a comfortable space for his White colleagues to speak freely seemed to further his uniqueness.

*I know how to make people, this includes students, comfortable, to where they’re like, ‘I can talk to you about anything.’ It's kind of a good thing and it's a bad thing. Because when they get really comfortable with you, they start telling you things they wouldn’t dare say to the other male teachers. They're so comfortable that they start saying things that are supposedly jokey joke. I kind of jokey joke back and make a little bit more serious. That's when people get really comfortable with you. They start letting their guard down and they start expressing things that they know in a normal setting, they wouldn’t say. Zilla believed that because of this freedom that his peers and administration feel with talking to him, they begin to display their implicit biases through the use of stereotypes more comfortably and freely.

Another stereotype that Zilla shared is that of the universal Black experience, meaning that he is expected to serve as a spokesman for both Black teachers and students. He described this as a common happening by sharing three instances:

*We have a couple of teachers who basically, even administrators, will ask, ‘Why Black male teachers/Black men do this particular thing?’ I'm like basically the spokesman for all Black men in America. They feel confident not to question why Black teachers do this. It's kind of funny because I'd never get that kind of question about one of my Caucasian colleagues. Anything that happens to or with my other Black colleagues. ‘Mr. Zilla, why do you think that he's doing this?’ As if I had an answer to it. I said, ‘Well, you don't know. You’ll have to ask him.’*
'Because I have a different life experience than he does.' So, my answer might be, and this is an example, I will say, 'My answer is not exactly what you will look for because of my experience. So, I don't know if I'm the right person to be asking this question.' Then they always give me that look, but I'm always honest about it. So, it kind of gives me a little bit of a leverage to where it's like they know not to ask me stuff unless they want a true answer.

One day, a White colleague asked me, 'Well, how do you deal with this particular student?' My response to that was, 'Oh, you just think that because I'm a Black male, I had the same experience as him?' Then the colleague basically kind of gotten embarrassed, 'I apologize.' They apologized profusely. 'No, that's not what I meant. That's not what I meant.' I said, 'Well, what did you mean?' At that point, I kind of basically got a little bit more aggressive. I wanted to make sure that he understood to where if you're going to ask me a question like this, you know that you're going to get an honest response. You may not like that response that I gave you though. So, its kind of really redirected the relationship and the weirdest thing was like they sought out to understand the culture a whole lot more versus at that particular moment.

One aspect of this stereotype that I was very adamant about occurred when one of my colleagues, who taught the same subject I did, basically made the comment to a fellow colleague, 'These kids are all alike.' To me those words, 'these kids,' 'those people,' and 'them,' I don't care to hear that because I've heard those words before. Even on previous jobs where there's hardly any minorities. Me hearing that, that's like a coded word for like your class is and that you’re talking about Black people. I then said, 'What do you mean by these kids?' She tried to qualify by saying these neighborhood kids. I said, 'Well, what about the neighborhood kids?' I said, 'What do you mean these kids?' When I hear this, I hear that teachers are just basically saying like, 'You guys are all the same.' That kind of got my red flag boom moment going. I think
the issue is it's basically a self-awareness thing. I want people to ask themselves like really be honest with yourself.

Another example of stereotyping shared related to the ascription of intelligence and inferiority. Zilla shared five examples that according to Sue (2010a) are referred to as microinsults.

Even as a unicorn, some people want to feel superior to you. A good example probably happened last week. We came up with some type of assignments since I helped with the [X] classes. And they made the point to where it's like, 'Yeah, Mr. Zilla, and how hard was it for you when you got your [YY] degree?' I said, 'It wasn't hard for me.' I said, 'because I know how to study.' I said, 'My first year in college, I didn't apply myself.' I said, 'but then basically, I had a come to Jesus' moment. They kind of showed me like you got the knowledge and everything else. You're just not applying yourself. So, once I figured that out, it's very easy for me.' I said, 'That's why I have the credentials that I have.' And then they come back, 'Well, yeah. I just finished my second graduate level degree.' So that would be one of those situations where it's like, 'I want at least be equal to you or I feel superior to you.' And I'm going to make a comment that basically at least shows you that I'm on your level and maybe above you. I think that's probably because of the need to feel superior to minorities. That's my big takeaway. If somebody who's always talking when you're sharing your experiences and they're always trying to top your experience. That's just somebody trying to say, 'Look, I'm just as good as you.' 'In some cases, I might be better,' versus just enjoying your experience that you're letting them know about. Instead of them enjoying your experience, they want to make sure that they have a say in it like I have similar experiences too.
These shared encounters and other instances of elevating one’s experiences or knowledge seemed to make Zilla laugh. He seemed to realize that it is something that exists, and people may be unaware of while they are doing it. He shared that it does not appear to matter what the conversation or topic is, the other person tries to identify a way to present themselves as superior to the person of Color. I next asked Zilla to describe for me his process for dealing with stereotypes and microaggressions.

*I try and break them. I have tried to basically redirect the microaggression back on that particular person who’s doing it. I also basically reported it to the administrator and for one situation, I said, ‘I think you really need some diversity training, because here it is you have a teacher who's basically getting students in trouble.’ And they're coming to me because they are not learning to work with them and not adjusting to them and just basically saying like, ‘You guys are all the same.’ I told the administrator, ‘This is unacceptable. If that's the way that she thinks about them then what does she think about her colleagues?’ I said, ‘What is she saying when I'm not within ears’ distance and she's only surrounded by White people?’*

*So, the school administration actually did do some diversity training type stuff within a month or two. The trainers came in and talked about some things regarding the culture. They hit on some pretty good points, but I had wished they would have hit more on things like working with minority colleagues. To me, it wasn’t really diversity training because it was more like a how to deal with angry Black kids training. They did talk about how using words like “them” and “those people” were hurtful to people hearing them who were minorities...only a little bit of the training dealt with peers. It was mostly focused on kids and that was the disappointing part. I had wished for a more well-rounded training towards how you deal with people who are different than you versus only the students. The training definitely could have been a little bit*
deeper than it was. The other thing that was disappointing was that I knew that my colleagues
didn’t like the training and so they didn't take it seriously. So, instead of it being a positive thing,
it ended up being a waste of time and being a discussion with someone saying, ‘Oh, we got to do
this program today.’ And someone else saying, ‘Well, I gotta do this today.’ ‘At least we’re
getting paid for today.’ Nevertheless, it did change some of the language in the school.

I think that’s part of the problem is awareness and not being exposed to cultures other
than your own. Cultures as far as races of your own because one of the issues I see is you have a
lot of Caucasian teachers. They basically spent their whole life maybe in the Catholic school and
go to a smaller school as far as college. They're exposed to African American culture, but they
have a hard time dealing with it. I basically tell them that you need to learn about it because you
chose to teach in this particular school. So, I kind of use it as a teachable moment and kind of
help them confront their demons is what I would say. Let people know what they actually are
doing to where it’s like they say, ‘I don’t have experience with dealing with African Americans.’
Or ‘I don't have experience working with colleagues like this.’ ‘I grew up in...’ There's actually
a couple of teachers in our school, it’s like they will come to me and was like, ‘I'm sorry but I
just don’t understand, can you help me understand?’ These examples provide context regarding
the stereotypes he was faced with that were helpful for the analysis of his stories in the next
section.

The examples provided in the narrative above provide context regarding the stereotypes
Zilla faced and his descriptions were helpful for the analysis of his story. Zilla, like many other
Black male teachers, is a unicorn, representing the uniqueness or rareness of African American
males as educators. As such, Zilla and other Black male teachers have a value different from
their Black female counterparts and a different value from his male peers. Zilla finds educating
students gratifying but wishes that it did not entail stereotypes or other microaggressive behaviors that are present at times.

When asked what the term racial microaggressions meant, Zilla was initially unsure as he had never heard the term before. He was, however, acquainted with racism. He mentioned that prior to starting the study that he had tried to research the term racial microaggression. He used stereotypes as part of his definition for racial microaggressions, which served as his lens for the presence implicit bias and the act of stereotyping people. For most of Zilla’s shared experiences, he used the term stereotypes. Highlights of his experiences are shown on Table 7.

TABLE 7
CRT ANALYSIS OF ZILLA’S EXPERIENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenets</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Macro-level Experience</th>
<th>Micro-level Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normalcy and intersectionality of race and racism</td>
<td>Racial looks normal because it's engrained in society.</td>
<td>Zilla perceived that many of his White colleagues lacked exposure to Black people until they entered the workplace and possessed unconsciously gained racial attitudes that they were superior or different than Black people.</td>
<td>Zilla perceived that the practice of utilizing Black teachers to control Black students was institutionalized as an expectation, thus, not requiring White teachers to ever learn how to work with students of Color.</td>
<td>Zilla experienced implicit bias when stereotypes were included in his communications with colleagues, students, and parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant ideology challenged</td>
<td>Claims of color-blindness and meritocracy are challenged.</td>
<td>Zilla assumed that the status quo is maintained when there is no challenge of the negative behaviors or stereotypes, such as the use of offensive or stereotypical language to describe people of Color.</td>
<td>Zilla observed some White colleagues desire to impose supremacy in practices, who should be in leadership roles, and who should handle issues with Black students.</td>
<td>Zilla heard societal stereotypes being used in the workplace in casual conversations such as how African Americans are athletic, assumption that they did not speak well, and that they all share a universal experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrality of experiential knowledge</td>
<td>Master narratives hide racial and other forms of discrimination and have rejected them.</td>
<td>Zilla believed that it was expected that he be able to relate or share the same experiences as either all Blacks or Black males.</td>
<td>Zilla possessed a different culture capital, which allowed his voice to be heard more than his peers.</td>
<td>Due to Zilla’s increased cultural capital, he experienced mixed responses to his reports of microaggressions. Sometimes there were dismissed, and other times action was taken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and social justice commitment</td>
<td>Injustice regarding any identity discrimination is targeted for elimination.</td>
<td>Zilla believed his commitment to challenging stereotypes helps to eliminate them in the mindsets of those in his workplace and with students.</td>
<td>Zilla believed that his plan of assistance was being done and supported due to a mindset of superiority to put him in his “so-called” place.</td>
<td>Zilla experienced a change in treatment when his value aligned with the school’s interest or need for his expertise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to him, there are good and negative kinds of stereotypes and racial microaggressions were the negative kind of stereotypes. He described that the stereotypes used in his school were
the same types of labeling that he perceived as being common outside of the school environment. He expressed that these stereotypes were racialized views, sayings, and behaviors that manifested in conversations and interactions between administration and staff, amongst staff, and sometimes between students and staff. Zilla believed that stereotypes, at least the negative kind, were things that needed to be challenged to stop them from manifesting and persisting.

Although Zilla did not describe his work environment as a place where racism is found everywhere, he did communicate that it has a presence and persisted. The major factors described by Zilla were the people, their awareness, their exposure to cultures, and the diversity training that they receive. As highlighted by his stories, this presence of racism was due to those administrators, teachers, other staff members, students, and/or parents that brought it into the space daily. He perceived that they have thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors that were a reflection of a lack of exposure to various cultures or what they have been exposed to. With so few African American male teachers, he felt that the disruption of racism or opportunities to see positive Black teachers were limited. He described that he was intentional about challenging stereotypes, but he did not mention that White colleagues challenged the status quo of stereotyping. Instead, he depicted an ongoing practice of using the Black teachers as disciplinarians, which was supported by administration and White staff. Zilla also expressed that societal stereotypes persist in the workplace because at times some of his White colleagues seemed to lack an intentional pursuit of learning about other culture. Coupled with this belief, he shared that some White colleagues did not obtain exposure to Black people until after they began to teach. The last contributing factor that he described was diversity training. He viewed diversity training as something that did not go deep or wide enough to properly address the preconceived notions about Black children or adults.
While Zilla had the fewest years in teaching of the participants in this study, the final narrative reflects the experiences of a tenured teacher with the most years in service.

**Practical**

Practical, a Black female teacher and referred participant, selected her own pseudonym, which she had no trouble creating. It was meaningful to her as it described a part of who she was. Reared by her grandparents in the country, she grew up at a time when segregation was still the law. Practical currently lives in a somewhat sub-urban city in the Midwest with her family. She works in the same city where she lives, which is not always the case with educators. She has been happily married for more than ten years and has children. Since entering the education field, Practical has taught for more than 20 years. Because of her ties to the military, she has travelled and taught in different states and abroad. She has taught grades between PK – 12 and children of different races and ethnicities. She shared how she especially enjoyed learning and teaching abroad. Studying abroad afforded her the chance to develop skills which she said has made her a better educator. Due to that experience, she was better equipped identify when a child is struggling because of how she struggled learning foreign languages since they were so different. Practical shared that her experiences taught her how to navigate the teaching world.

Practical became interested in the field of education as a young girl. In our initial meeting, I asked her how she decided to become a teacher. She began to think back to her childhood and shared that playing school with her cousins is what helped to create a spark for learning and teaching. Growing up in the country left little room for distractions, she shared. She and her older cousins would play school regularly. They used a stick and the ground to as their pencil and paper. Practical shared that the ground was the largest chalkboard that a child could have. She enjoyed learning as a child and learned to read at an early age. She described herself as
a fast learner and that teaching seemed to manifest naturally for her. She was reminded of her
time attending segregated schools. She recalled how the desegregation of schools did as much
harm as many thought it would do good. Black students in Black schools would lose everything
being pushed into White schools. Although equality was desirable, she said it came with a cost.
She referred to it as a forced integration, which left Black students without their Black teachers,
school mascots, proms, and added an increase of racial challenges as they attended the White
schools. Practical recalled one time when she tried out for a school play. She was one of more
than thirty girls to audition. Although she earned the leading role, other staff members at the
school preferred that another student, one who was not Black have the role. The day after the
role assignments were made public, a meeting at the school occurred and the drama teacher was
instructed to change the student roles. When he did not, they fired him the next day. Practical did
not end up being in that lead role. The whole play was disbanded. Although she became
acquainted with racism and discrimination at a very early age, it did not affect her desire to learn
or teach. In the end, she felt that she had no other path but to be a teacher. So, she stayed the
course and became a teacher.

Practical shared her image and thoughts about her school environments, culture, and
interactions. She has worked at more than one school. If you were new to my school, I guess I
would describe it as a brick-and-mortar building. The student population is 60% Caucasian and
40% minority, which encompasses Hispanic, African American, Pacific Islander, Native
American, and a group of students that classify themselves as Other. The staff, however, is only
about 3% minority and 97% Caucasian. The entire school district staff is female dominant. The
students are very diverse, but not the teachers. One may think that because the students are very
diverse that everything does, or the culture reflects that. When you look at the area where the
school is, it is predominantly a White area. The paraprofessionals tend to be your minorities. Your administration is basically White. The SRO’s (School Resource Officers) are usually white. Your janitors, your custodians, and your lunchroom workers tend to be minorities. Your school secretaries are generally white, and maybe light Hispanic. The bus drivers are Black and usually male, but every now and then you find a female or someone who is White.

When I think about our curriculum, I think to myself...what are these students studying? Basically, they're studying old White men. The children know of Dr. King, but they think that the only thing he did was, [to them], have a dream. They don't know what the dream is about. They don't know how the dream came about. They know of Harriet Tubman, but it's interesting what they think. They really have no connotation about what slavery really was. It’s all just a story to them. There’s not a lot spoken about other cultures. I think about Cesar Chavez. What do the students really know about minorities in literature? I use different materials to add to the curriculum and challenge the students. The goal is to open their eyes to minority cultures. They tend to be watered down or not included at all in the curriculum that’s one reason the staff needs to focus on diversity and/or diversity training.

Diversity training is something that teachers can get through the teachers’ association. Everybody can take it if they wish. Now, there is mandatory training for diversity, and it is not going to be a choice anymore. Everyone has to take a mandatory cultural diversity professional development. In addition, at my school, a book was chosen for a book study that discussed race, but the box of books never got opened. When I mentioned it, it was still somewhere packed away. So, the books were bought but never used. There now exists little factions within the school that are supposed to be addressing diversity, but it tends to be watered down also.
When I think of school interactions, I think of staff to student, staff to staff, and staff to parents. The administrators and staff often seem not to value minority children. You can see that when they speak about their own personal children. If they say something about a child, and you say, ‘Well, what would you do with your child?’ ‘My children wouldn’t do that.’ I read a study about the thoughts of teachers towards their biological children versus the children they’re teaching. It’s not the same care or concern. Interactions with administrators have not all been pleasant. She stated that if you do too good of a job or make others look inferior, then you may get reassigned or lose your job. I did too good of a job once and got reassigned.

Practical has had various kinds of interactions with her administration. Some of the administration highlighted in this section are department heads, team leaders, directors, and/or building and district-level leaders. Despite the title, all are being identified as administrator to help maintain confidentiality. Practical has faced at least two occasions of retaliation by an administrator, who Practical shared either perceived her as inferior or did not agree with her.

Once I had this certain [administrator A] and we didn't see eye to eye. She didn’t like when I displayed more knowledge than her. One of the things was that she didn't understand laws around special needs children. A special needs child came back to school and needed to re-register. Because of some additional items going on, I called the [administrator A] and let her know about the situation. She said, ‘Well, she can’t come to school.’ I said, ‘Yes, she can.’ ‘No, no. She can’t do that.’ I knew that [the administrator B] knew better because of past experiences of enrolling similar students. So, I appealed to my [administrator B] to talk to [administrator A], but my [administrator B] did not support me. In fact, she kind of stood on the fence. [Administrator B] said to [administrator A], ‘Well, are you sure?’ ‘Oh, yes, I’m sure.’ So, then I asked, ‘Do you want me to go and tell the student that she cannot come to school?’ ‘Yes,' was
the answer from [administrator A]. I was very upset about it. I attempted to find the girl, but for whatever reason, she'd already gone home. Early next morning, I got a call from the [administrator A] and she said, 'I called the State Department.' The state lawyer said, 'That the student can come to school.' [Administrator A] said it as if it was something that she had discovered and was now teaching me. I realized that [administrator A] did not know the law as well as I did.

Later during the school year, I was talking to another staff member about part of the brain necessary for learning to read. [Administrator A] kind of got in our conversation. [Administrator A] said, ‘Well, I don’t know who you’re talking about.’ So, the staff member and I looked at each other. ‘That part of the brain has a particular name, but it is not a person.’ That was a little embarrassing for [administrator A]. So, what did they do? They got me really good. Near the end of the year, it was decided that administrators needed to shake things up a bit. The administration needed to move some positions, is what was said. However, I would not learn about this change until after much of the staff had already been told. The group that I led started asking me questions, but I didn’t know what they were talking about. Eventually, another staff member was brave enough to tell me. ‘Practical, you’re being moved.’ At the next a roundtable meeting, papers were passed out for the next year’s positions. One teacher at the table asked, ‘Practical, why isn’t your name on this paper?’ I said, ‘Well, I didn’t write the paper. I don’t know.’ She asked it again. ‘Why isn’t your name on this paper? What are you doing next year?’ At that point, others at the table became concerned about themselves. [Administrator A] made all at the table with the exception of me re-interview for their positions. My name wasn’t on this list or any lists. By the end of the year, it was decided that I will lose my position of 7+ years and be moved elsewhere. I did go back later and ask [administrator B] why did I lose my position.
She said, ‘I had nothing to do with the decision.’ Then I went and asked the [administrator A], ‘Why did I lose my position?’ Her response was, ‘Well, [administrator B] and I decided.’ I didn’t go back to tell [administrator B] what was said and decided not to pursue it anymore. It would only lead to a circle of denial. The last comment that [administrator A] said was, ‘But you’ve been there a long time.’ I said, ‘What? Some people stay in a position for 20 years.’

Practical shared that this was not the last time that an administrator got upset with her and caused her to lose her job and be reassigned. She also noted that sometimes Black teachers are reprimanded unnecessarily rather than be reassigned.

Although this next incident did not happen to Practical personally, she explained how she supported her colleague. A new minority teacher was hired, and they had a few problems. So, I thought I’d not interact with her for about 5 - 8 weeks. One day, it was reported to an administrator that the new minority instructor had been called a racial slur by a parent. The administrator told the instructor that it was in her head. I heard about it from another administrator. I went to the new teacher and asked her about it. She was hesitant to speak about it, but I knew she needed to. So, I kept talking until she revealed what the administrator said. I said to her, ‘Are you real?’ The answer was, ‘Yes.’ I asked, ‘Do you hear me?’ The answer was, ‘Yes.’ Then ‘It’s not in your head. It's real.’ She understood her being new that things weren’t always fair and that there were some things that she could learn from me. Practical continued to be connected with this colleague.

Practical’s Perception About Being a Black Teacher

Practical described what it is like to be a Black teacher and experience with racial microaggressions, which covered originally more than forty pages, but included here are salient thoughts and moments along her experiences.
As a Black teacher, you're never seen as good or the best. You're always having to prove yourself, no matter how long you have been there. You can be second. You could be second forever, but never the best. This happens too many times. You're brainstorming something, and you make a statement. Somebody takes your statement and twists it a little bit and they own it. I remember being in a meeting and it was all of our departmental teachers. I just kind of said something, which was loud enough to be heard by whoever was facilitating. The teacher at the next table repeated it. Afterwards, the White teacher at my table sitting right next to me said to me, ‘No. You said that! I heard you say that. You’re the one who said that!’ The facilitator stayed silent. I said, ‘Oh girl. Let that be. That’s nothing new to me.’ It annoyed the teacher sitting at my table and rightfully so. Many times, I don’t say anything, because you can’t quote silence. Often, I have found in the past, when you say something no matter how you say it, no matter what tone you say it somehow you come out as the angry Black woman. An angry tone is added to it that you didn’t add to it. I’m always on guard. This other person picks up what I said and said that it’s a new idea. It became the next best thing since cornflakes. People are very reluctant to give you credit. Credit is given to someone else for your idea. That is very typical.

I remember I was teaching at middle school and it was a co-teaching situation. I had been co-teaching the whole year. So, I knew the children very well. They hired a sub for the other co-teacher, which is what they’re supposed to do. The teacher was absent that day. When the sub was in her room by herself, the students were going crazy. So, I came in and said, ‘So-and-So, sit down. You know, you don’t do that. Just stop it!’ She turned to me and she said, ‘You ought to be a teacher?’ I don’t think I responded to her if I remember correctly, but I said something to the co-teacher the next day. I repeated the incident to the White administrator. they dismissed it, and said, ‘Whoa, no big deal. How would she know who you are?’ Typical. Yeah,
the administrator would have been highly offended had someone said that to them. It just doesn’t mean nothing. ‘She wouldn’t try to hurt your feelings.’ Another time the principal was bringing a non-teaching staff member, who came to help during COVID, around to get to know the people. She said, ‘Oh, I know you.’ I said, ‘Yeah, where do I know you from?’ She said, ‘Well, I’m a hall monitor at the other building. And you’re a substitute over there.’ Everybody got quiet. I said, ‘No, sweetheart. I’m not a substitute. I’m a teacher.’ I often have asked myself...why do I have to be the sub? Why do you want to assume that I’m the para or the substitute? Why can’t I be the teacher? The administrator never said a word just continued their tour and introductions; and they left the room. Just no big deal. Either your feelings don’t matter, or you don’t have any feelings. It’s always said, ‘They didn’t intend that.’ I always say that intent and impact are first cousins. They have a relationship that isn’t always congruent.

You know, I have several credentials. I’ve taught various grades from PK through 12th grade. Yet with all that I have, I have been passed over more than seven times for jobs without an interview. One time, I was in a different teaching department and was trying to cross over to this new department. This time, they did a sham of an interview. They called me late Friday evening, they invited me to attend an interview. Okay. So, I went. Supposedly everybody gets the same questions. Well, the very last question they asked me was, ‘What do you think of the new departmental standards?’ I said, ‘The new ones?’ He said, ‘Yeah, the new ones.’ So, I said, ‘Well, I don’t know.’ ‘You don’t know?’ ‘No, the new ones?’

So, I got a call later that afternoon from Human Resources (HR). ‘Oh, Practical, they said that you’re very experienced, well-educated’ blah, blah, ‘but they were concerned that you didn’t know anything about the new standards.’ The standards would not be completed for at least another several months. So, my question to the person that was telling me that was, ‘How
could they ask me those questions when the standards aren't even done?’ The HR person went on to say, ‘Well, the other candidates must have said something.’ Practical asked, ‘Are you sure the other candidates were asked that?’ ‘Yes, they all were asked the same questions and you know, you can go online and look the standards up, even if they aren't finished.’ I said, ‘They’re not done. You asked me about the new ones.’ It was a trap. They had to put something there. So, it was the new standards. I already knew that they had the person chosen. They had to come up with something. If they hadn’t or if I could have just played along with them, somebody else would have had another question.

Nevertheless, this time, I filed a systemic institutional racism complaint. I didn’t say I sued. I said that I filed a complaint with the State Board of Education. And one of the teachers said to me, ‘Practical, you’re going to file that with the White Midwest State Board of Education?’ I had the support of my spouse, a lawyer, and my union rep. I thought oh goodness. I guess my union rep has been in this thing before. they didn’t have high hopes that it was going anywhere. There was a type of investigation, but it went nowhere. I spoke to different people while I waited on the investigation findings. It went nowhere. I would receive a letter almost six to eight months later that they had found no grounds for my accusation of systemic institutional racism. So, systemic institutional racism has to include more than one person. And I had no peers with my equivalent experience in education. I think if a person was passed over more than several times that it is institutional, but the definition implies that there must be more than one person and not instances with one person. The people that they had spoken to during the investigation concerning me all agreed that I was very educated. I also have a lot of experience; however, I just didn’t fit. It kind of died there. Did I expect to get anywhere with it? No. I just needed to bring it to their attention. I just needed to bring it to the public’s attention. So, I've
been entertained. There's a bit of unfairness, which is not too good. Not too good. And even now I can still feel that. It's just why do you keep having to prove yourself over and over? When you're passed over and you're passed over and you go, ‘Well, wait a minute. This person got the job, and they don't even have the credentials that I have,’ but they got the job.

Practical shared that the expectations for a Black teacher were different from those of White teachers. When a Black teacher meets the desired performance level it is often viewed as inferior, or they are then labeled as an overachiever. *I remember a time when I was at the middle school, the administrator wanted us to do something. So, when we came back for the second meeting, I had done what he said to do. Nobody else had done it. They didn't have time. They didn't know blah, blah, blah, blah. I did. Someone said, ‘Overachiever.’ I said, ‘No. I was taught to do that.’ Then when you do that more, ‘Well, why are you going to do all that. I just do so and so and so.’ Then they love to brag about, ‘Well, this is all I got. I make more money than you.’ They'll tell me that in a minute. ‘I just got this degree and I do so and so. So, I don't need that degree and credentials that you have.’ ‘Well, good for you.’ It’s said to hurt your feelings. You swallow a lot...oh gosh, you swallow a lot. You act like it doesn’t hurt. It hurts. It hurts. So, you meet with this person in the morning, and they hurt your feelings here. Then this person, they hurt your feelings and this one. Then they wonder why you don't want to have lunch with them. Well, I can stay at my desk and talk to myself, right? But then you realize that by not having lunch that you are the discussion at the table. So, then you say to yourself...let me go and break this up.

One of my schools became concerned about the No Child Left Behind testing. The school was really into testing, testing, and testing the children to death. The school was concerned about reading, math, and writing. The African American boys were almost always at the bottom.
One day, one of the administrators was teaching strategies to everyone using different prompts, but the prompts she put up bothered me. Prompts are not usually as complex as the one she used that day. For instance, let's say, in kindergarten, you show the boy a prompt that has a little dog. And you say, 'Tell me a story about the dog.' You tell the child that 'I want you to tell me what you feel when you see this picture and use adjectives, descriptive words,' so that the reader will understand what you're feeling. Then the child gives you five sentences about the dog. However, the example this administrator wanted to use for a prompt and gave the children to write about was that famous picture of the Black army soldier who had whip marks embedded on his back. I thought to myself...you don't have any other pictures in your classroom? I just thought that was so wrong. You can't find nothing else? And the administrator gave all staff present this example to use that picture of the man with the whip marks. This is a very deep picture. Teachers and administrators were sitting there, and no one said anything when it was shown. It looked to be no big deal to anyone, like that's all right. That's what she showed. So, you know, the administrator showing that display to us that was a "mosquito bite." You could have had them write on the Easter Bunny, but this is what you want to have all the Black children write their prompt on? What are they writing here? This man's back is permanently scarred. I thought to myself that I have got to say something to the administrator. I wouldn't have been able to say anything during the meeting because they would have too many people defending them. I wanted them to hear what I had to say. So, I waited until after the meeting. First, I talked to another minority about it. I said, 'I am going to say something to them.' That person said, 'Good.' That person was in no position to really say anything and has to kind of walk on eggshells. Not that I necessarily went there to hurt the administrator’s feelings, but I went there to share that you can find another picture. After I spoke to them, they apologized and said, 'Oh, I didn't think that
would offend.’ ‘Why wouldn’t it offend me?’ ‘I didn't know that.’ And so now the session had already happened. You can’t take that back and who knows what the administrators or the other teachers did with the photo, especially the student teachers. I don't know. I don't know. Well, so that’s a mosquito bite.

Practical shared that there are times when you are excluded from things such as departmental required training or the distribution of supplies. *I remember when there was this new state standard that all of our departmental teachers have to do, and it ties in with their license.* An email was sent out to the teachers in the department except for me. During our meeting this morning, a person while speaking said, ‘Well, I got the email yesterday.’ Well, I didn’t know anything about an email being sent out. I put in the chat: ‘Who sent out an email?’ [Administrator C] said, ‘I did.’ I said, ‘Well, I didn't get the email.’ ‘Well, Practical, you’re not...’ She didn't come out and say, ‘Well you're not included.’ Rather, she said, ‘Well, your training will happen with [administrator D] and was not directly affected by the new standards.’ I thought to myself...wait a minute. I'm in this department. Why am I being left out of this training? So, I wrote back, ‘Really?’ There was no response other than referring me to [administrator D]. I finally went to [administrator D], but they were very busy today because somebody tested positive for COVID-19. I understood that they had to do the tracing and get the seating chart and all that. I finally did speak to them and sent them an email. [Administrator’s D] response was, ‘You will do it virtually.’ [Administrator D] said, ‘I told them to set it up on the computer,’ blah, blah, blah. So, I'll be doing this training by myself, which is okay. I won't have to do it with them. I just couldn’t understand though, you've got maybe 23 teachers in our department. Why would I be left out? It's all being done on Zoom virtually. Why can’t I just be a part of that group? Okay, that's fine. That's fine. I'll be doing it alone. I thought I could set up my
own timetable, whatever. I do think about what may have motivated them to leave me out. Every now and then I'm told by somebody that I intimidate people. Not so much physically, but just my presence and that I have the credentials that I have. I speak well. They don't know a whole lot about me, even though I've been there for years. I'm private and all that. So maybe, maybe that's it?

When asked whether she knew or had been exposed to the term microaggressions, Practical responded, “Yes.” We talked about how she became acquainted with the term, what it meant to her, and whether she had any experiences with it. She shared that microaggressions are like mosquito bites and that she got the analogy about microaggressions from a webinar that she attended about racial justice.

The way they compare microaggressions was as being mosquito bites. I don't know if I have a definition, but it's just little annoying things that kind of pick at you. If you've ever had a whole bunch of mosquitoes, they just continuously bite, and you just can't get away from them. Somebody over here thinks you're an overachiever. Somebody over there is like, ‘What are you doing that for?’ There is always somebody criticizing or questioning you. The slight insult that, ‘Are you a teacher?’ The slight insult that you might be a para...not that there's anything wrong with being a paraprofessional...but I think I'm a little bit more. The insult that you should never call yourself the title doctor or identify yourself with any credential. ‘Who are you?’ Just little insults, but the people who are doing them don't realize that there are insulting. They will tell you that they're colorblind. They will tell you that they're not prejudiced. Just the fact that they have to say that you know. And my answer is, ‘So, I'm glad you believe that. And, yes, you've given it a new name.’ Microaggressions are deeply ingrained and do mean something. The one biggest problem that I find when you're the only one Black teacher, maybe one or two or
whatever, is that it's very easy to become insecure. Because you ask yourself, 'Well, no one else is having a problem? And I'm the common factor in these problems. So, it must be me.' It's very easy to become insecure. It takes a while for that confidence to build or be rebuilt. I think the thing that has helped me the most is that I've been in different spaces and I know that that's not right.

What allows microaggressions to exist? I think there's several things. One of the things, I think, is that the faculty is mainly White. When something is pointed out as being a microaggression, 'Oh, that doesn't mean nothing.' It's kind of dismissed or they see something else, especially in your AP (Advancement Placement) classes where you only have one Black child. 'That child’s just over-sensitive.' 'No, that child’s not over-sensitive. They don’t get a second chance.' So, a lot of microaggressions are able to happen because the majority of your staff looks different and to them it’s no big deal. ‘Oh, it’s nothing. It’s nothing.’ It’s dismissed. So, call it to their attention, ‘You’re over-sensitive.’ ‘Nobody would do you any harm.’ No. No. Somehow you were supposed to look crazy. You just get so much against you; and then somebody says, ‘We just don’t plain ole like you.’ You're not doing anything to them, but somehow, they get the message to you that this is what are you doing. You may have a colleague that walks by you and doesn’t speak because you’re not visible. Yet, their peripheral vision before they got to you, they saw you. Or they come in the classroom and they look in every which way, but not at you. And if you let it, it can get to you. I think I had this way of just kind of swallowing and swallowing then when I get home, I would talk about it or whatever. There’s a problem if you let it become bitter. You can’t afford to do that no matter how much it hurts. You take all kind of disrespect. You get disrespect from the students. The older the students get they
can be very disrespectful. You also get disrespect from the staff. The things that you can experience as a Black teacher is sometimes it's so deep, it cuts.

As a learner, Practical has continued to identify strategies to address the exhaustion, stress, and disappointment she feels in the workplace. For example, she said that she often finds herself throwing herself into teaching. At times, she described it is therapeutic when the workplace is not quite comfortable. She has incorporated other strategies to aid in her coping with her workplace experiences. One technique has been to have her own mantra. She insisted that it is required. In Kipling's poem (referring to Rudyard Kipling) If, the first two lines say: “If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you.” She told me that it is important to keep that in mind, the first two lines. She found that she shared it with lots of African Americans. She also expounded on the next line, which talked about doubting. Practical pointed out that we, as Black professionals, need to be prepared for people in the workplace to doubt you. She stressed that this was a very good principle to remain conscious of. She thinks that she has enough experience as an educator to have confidence and be competent. Yet, she feels challenged and overlooked as if she is inferior.

Despite all that she has experienced in her teaching career, she embraces and continues to like teaching. Practical enjoyed being able to hear her students regurgitate and employ the lessons that she teaches them. She expressed a real passion for her profession as an educator. She enjoyed supporting her students and motivating them to move beyond the status quo and social norms. When the opportunity arises, she connected with other minority teachers, which allows them all to be a support system for each other. She valued this support system and the mentoring of new minority teachers if the teacher is comfortable with it.
As highlighted in her experiential narrative, Practical has described her encounters with racism in different ways as illustrated on the Table 8. She expressed an awareness of the racism and discrimination that she has been exposed to in the workplace. She defined racial microaggressions as annoying occurrences likened to *mosquito bites*.

**TABLE 8**

**CRT ANALYSIS OF PRACTICAL’S EXPERIENCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenets</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Macro-level Experience</th>
<th>Micro-level Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normalcy and intersectionality</td>
<td>Racism looks normal because it's engrained in society.</td>
<td>Practical thought racism was viewed by others as insignificant but were as frequent and uncomfortable as mosquito bites.</td>
<td>Practical experienced racism as institutionalized in personnel practices.</td>
<td>Practical encountered implicit bias for more than 10 years from a combination of leadership, co-workers, parents, and students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of race and racism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant ideology challenged</td>
<td>Claims of color-blindness and meritocracy are challenged.</td>
<td>Practical thought that challenging the status quo could disrupt what felt like bias.</td>
<td>Practical questioned the presence of dominant power and supremacy in the curriculum and school practices.</td>
<td>Practical was often assumed to not be a teacher, which is a role mostly held by White women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrality of experiential knowledge</td>
<td>Master narratives hide racial and other forms of discrimination and have rejected them.</td>
<td>Practical’s voice was silenced at times to prevent from being labeled.</td>
<td>Practical experienced her reports of discrimination being rejected or dismissed as her imagination.</td>
<td>Practical’s experiences and observed experiences of other minority staff with microaggressions as being viewed as not real, unintentional, or insignificant by White personnel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial and social justice commitment</td>
<td>Injustice regarding any identity discrimination is targeted for elimination.</td>
<td>Practical assumed that there was little to no commitment to eliminating racism in her workplace.</td>
<td>Practical perceived her reports of racism were not addressed as racial injustice.</td>
<td>Practical did not describe an instance where racial justice aligned with White self-interest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples include being ascribed inferior intelligence, unfair treatment during pursuit of advancement and performing job duties. Practical portrayed her encounters of racial microaggressions as exhausting, at times painful, and stressful. For a period of time in her career, her voice was silenced in an effort to not be associated with the angry Black woman stereotype and at times was the result of being treated as invisible.

When she considered what allowed racial microaggressions to remain in her workplace, she expressed that people were a main contributing factor. The people revealed through her stories were varying level of administration, colleagues, student teachers, parents, and students.
who held and displayed racialized attitudes or implicit bias within the school environment. Practical also believed that the lack of diversity in the community, school district personnel, and curriculum all contribute to the persistent ideology that Black people are not teachers. Much of her shared experience, for example, showed issues mostly with White females either in a leadership or colleague role. She also described more than two instances were racial microaggressions manifested and staff elected to ignore the issues. Practical referred to a part of the staff’s response as a “circle of denial,” which was another way that allowed racial microaggressions persisted in the workplace. She described this circle as being displayed when racism is confronted and as something that demonstrates people’s lack of comprehension and/or willingness to see that it exists. The next barrier to racial microaggressions was the limited number of voices that to challenge the status quo. She did not describe many voices other than her own which spoke up to challenge or disrupt displays of racism. Finally, Practical believed that the interpretation and execution of policies by biased people did not address the presence of bias, discrimination, or retaliation.

Summary of Teacher Participant Findings

The narrative accounts contained in this study highlight six Black teachers’ experiences and perspectives about racial microaggressions in the workplace. Each narrative account provides a glance at their work experiences and showcases how the racial microaggressions are manifested in their respective schools. The six Black teachers described both shared, and unique, experiences and perspectives. The first commonality amongst the teachers was that all of the participants teach at schools where the teaching staff is predominantly White. All participants discussed being in a work environment where there were at least one other Black teacher present. Zilla described his current school as having the most African American teachers including
himself. Practical, Jason, Sierra, and Koloraye reported working at schools where they were the one Black teacher. Jason shared a common perception that being the only African American teacher in a building is, for the most part, normal. Highlighted on Table 9 is a sample of the findings presented next.

**TABLE 9**

**STUDY PARTICIPANTS’ EXPERIENCES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Tenets</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Macro-level Experience</th>
<th>Micro-level Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jason Koloraye Empress Sierra Zilla Practical</td>
<td>Normalcy and intersectionality of race and racism</td>
<td>Racism looks normal because it’s engrained in society.</td>
<td>Participants assumed racism was normalized with the consistent use of stereotypes and is normalized as a cornerstone of the generationally societal normacy of it.</td>
<td>Participants experienced institutional racism via hiring, discrimination resolution, and unaddressed personnel practices perceived to demonstrate preference towards White and tenured staff members.</td>
<td>Participants experienced bias whenever stereotypes were used in casual conversation, questioning of their professions, etc. from staff, parents, and/or students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Koloraye Empress Sierra Zilla Practical</td>
<td>Dominant ideology challenged</td>
<td>Claims of color-blindness and meritocracy are challenged.</td>
<td>Participants believed the status quo remained either when it went unchallenged or when challenged by the Black staff alone.</td>
<td>Participants experienced the presence of dominant power and supremacy within the schools’ curriculum, culture, discrimination issue resolution practices.</td>
<td>Participants experienced societal stereotypes of the angry Black person, Black people being a threat and unqualified manifesting in poor, parent, student, and/or administration relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Koloraye (mixed micro) Empress Sierra Zilla Practical</td>
<td>Centrality of experiential knowledge</td>
<td>Master narratives hide racial and other forms of discrimination and have rejected them.</td>
<td>Participants thought that their voices had to be silent to protect oneself or due to racial exhaustion.</td>
<td>Participants were being defined by the master narrative of teachers being White females and Black people being lunch staff, paraprofessionals, and sports coaches.</td>
<td>Participants experiences were viewed as unintentional acts that did not harm the teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason (macro only) Empress Zilla Practical (macro only)</td>
<td>Racial and social justice commitment</td>
<td>Racial injustice regarding any identity discrimination is targeted for elimination.</td>
<td>Participants believed some of their workplaces were oppressive and/or did not clearly demonstrate a commitment to eliminating racism.</td>
<td>Participants observed racial and social injustice woven into practices as leaders applied their own biased racial beliefs to the work culture and how they handled reported incidents of microaggressions.</td>
<td>Participants witnessed and/or experienced that racial justice when public attention or litigation were a concern and when Black teachers were viewed as having a high level of cultural capital or a unique skillset.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Normalcy of Racism and Racial Microaggressions**

When asked to define the term racial microaggressions, four participants were aware of and used the term racial microaggressions to describe the subtle acts of racism experienced.

Three of the four participants had attended training, served with a racial justice group, and/or researched the topic of microaggressions at least two years prior to this study. The fourth person had heard the term before but did not recall from whom. The remaining two participants who were unfamiliar with the term microaggressions described situations and encounters as acts of
stereotyping or discrimination. Despite policies and laws geared to not permit racism and discrimination, participants all described the presence and persistence of racial microaggressions.

The first study finding is that all six participants experienced racial microaggressions in their work environments. Each of the participants had more than one experience with racial microaggressions in the form of stereotyping and acts of discrimination or harassment. On a micro-level, all six participants shared that the use of stereotypes was a common occurrence in their school environments. For example, when asked to describe their experience as a Black teacher, Zilla immediately commented on stereotypes and how they are present in the school practices. He described how Black teachers were used as the scary, angry Black man or woman stereotype to intervene and calm down Black students. Jason described colleagues and families as being standoffish and/or seemingly supportive of inappropriate microaggressive behaviors, including the use of offensive language and the removal of children from his class because he was Black. Sierra and others described how White colleagues spoke poorly of children of Color based on their stereotyped notions of the backgrounds and capabilities of the children and adults attributable to their race. Each teacher shared that they encountered the use of stereotypes being applied to them and that the microaggressions were not always, if ever, seen as an issue by White administrators or co-workers.

On a macro-level, also referred to as the institutional level, all participants described experiencing institutionalized racism within the school or district-level’s hiring, feedback, discrimination, and harassment resolution, and/or other personnel practices. Participants perceived to leadership to demonstrate preference towards White and tenured staff members. Although the participants shared similar encounters with racism, there were some gendered differences that were highlighted in their narratives. The three women, for example, all described
challenging or racialized experiences under the leadership of White female leadership at a team, departmental, school, and/or district level. The women had differing realities with White or Latino male administration. Empress and Sierra both experienced biased attitudes and practices from their White male administrators at either the principal and/or assistant principal levels. In contrast, all three male participants experienced gendered microaggressions based in stereotypes, with Jason and Zilla’s narratives including interactions perceived to have sexually suggestive overtones. Jason was the only male participant to describe having a great relationship with his White male leadership and shared that he believed that it was due to the existing relationship that they had prior to him teaching at the school. Koloraye and Zilla were given more leeway and better support from the White female administrators than their male administrator counterparts.

Two participants shared stories of enduring racial microaggressions throughout their teaching career. Jason, the youngest tenured educator in this study, mentioned encountering the use of stereotypes as early as while he was being interviewed for teaching opportunities. These stereotypes included the perception that his physique meant that he coached football or that his ethnic hairstyle was inappropriate for the workplace resulting in the interviewers asking him to cut his hair. Practical, who had the most tenure of the participants, shared a number of instances of racial microaggressions over the course of her career. She indicated that because of the duration that she has been dealing with microaggressions, that she had developed various strategies to process, absorb, and refrain from becoming bitter about the unfair treatment. Few participants shared strategies like Practical did, but five of six participants commented that it was helping to have a support system or someone to be able to talk with about their experiences.
Challenging the Dominant Ideology

The next finding was that the dominant narratives or ideology remained despite being challenged on both the micro- and macro-levels. All participants reported challenging the status quo of implicit bias and racism through personal interactions or official steps of reporting. The dominant ideology that participants challenged included stereotypes of Black people as angry, scary, threatening, unqualified, never a teacher, and possessing an unusual kind of sexual prowess. All participants commented that despite challenging the racism, they continued to experience stereotyping along their careers and at different schools. Practical was the only participant who mentioned that non-Black staff also attempted to directly challenge unclear or biased decision-making. Jason mentioned that he had partner teachers who encouraged him to report instances of harassment.

On the macro-level, the study participants reported different reasons for the dominant ideology remaining, such as the presence of dominant power and supremacy within the schools' curriculum, culture, and discrimination/issue resolution practices. In addition, five out of the six study participants indicated that they did not believe that their White administrators and/or colleagues understood that the use of stereotypes and other racial microaggressive behaviors were inappropriate and harmful. Jason, for instance, shared that he does not believe that White colleagues or administrators can comprehend what it feels like to experience racial microaggressions. Both Practical and Empress shared stories that demonstrated that displayed subtle acts of racism are thought to be harmless, unintentional, and not worth the Black teachers giving attention to. Empress recalled having administrators and colleagues who thought that they understood Black people, but really did not and demonstrated it in their actions or responses. Zilla commented that his White colleagues said or did things that they perceived to be normal
sayings about Black people until he challenged them. Both Zilla and Sierra described some of their colleagues as having little to no exposure to Black Americans prior to working at their schools and dismissing racial microaggressions as nothing wrong. All participants seemed to indicate that this lack of comprehension could, or did, yield displayed biased decision-making, subjective interpretation of policies, misinterpretation of students’ needs and character, and/or lack of interest to change the culture.

Centrality of Experiential Knowledge

Study participants described being exposed to master narratives of White women as teachers, Black educators as inferior, and whiteness as something that defined the culture and curriculum. Based upon participants’ stories, these master narratives seemed to promote the ideology that White educational professionals were normal and superior while Black teachers’ realities with race and racism were defined by whiteness. In other words, their experiential reality with racism was dismissed and seen as insignificant through the lens of the dominant power and supremacy. According to two participants, the school environment and curriculum lacked equal representation of all the school’s students and faculty. On an interpersonal level, all participants described encounters with behaviors that constrained their connectedness with White personnel such as not valuing their contributions, ascribing inferior intelligence, and labeling them as an angry Black person when they did voice their concerns. Participants shared that their experiences with racism, discrimination, and/or harassment did not appear have the same value as the racialized perspective, tenure, and/or gender of their White leaders or colleagues. As described by participants, their administrators’ failure to unambiguously examine and address voiced racial concerns and issues further normalized racism and whiteness, which perpetuated a cycle of denial amongst White staff and the silencing of study participants.
The participants’ narratives revealed that racial microaggressions, on a macro- and micro-level, adversely affects Black teachers’ workplace experiences in a variety of ways. Four out of six study participants described experiences of being ignored, excluded, and/or their experiential reality as a Black/African American dismissed. The participant’s experiences are not uncommon and are reflected in research from the field (Dovidio et al., 2017; Sue et al., 2019; Sue et al., 2008).

Along with the stereotyping microaggressions described above, participants did not feel that their viewpoints, feelings, and/or contributions were valued. Five participants indicated that their perceptions about predominantly White workplaces and their own image of themselves were strongly influenced and shaped by exposure to stereotypical messaging communicated within the work environment. All participants commented about either internalizing the racism, possessing feelings of frustration, and wanting to leave their schools. Four participants have left at least one school due to the adverse effects of the workplace experiences. One participant had considered leaving their school, and another was considering it at the time of this inquiry.

**Racial and Social Justice Commitment**

The final finding dealt with the presence of a commitment to eliminate racism and promote racial and social justice. Not all participants described their work environments as places where a commitment to eliminate racism exists. Empress explained that her school appeared to have environmental microaggressions with the lack of representation or celebration of Black Americans or other persons of Color. She also described her school environment as being oppressive. Although Koloraye, Sierra, and Jason did not use the term oppressive, each mentioned desiring to leave or leaving a school or department due unfair treatment. As reported by participants, in schools where there were more diverse staff members or an inclusive culture,
the occurrences of racial microaggressions did not appear to be as prevalent. Four of the six participants also witnessed and experienced the persistence of racial injustice when challenging the status quo meant standing against White friends or tenured staff.

Another aspect of the racial and social justice commitment could be found in leadership’s ability to respond to reports of racism. All six Black teachers gauged whether to report acts of racial microaggressions. Because of dissertation length considerations, this narrative inquiry includes only a sampling of experiences of microaggressions from the participants. Along with the stories that were edited out of this document, many of the included incidents shared during interviews were not reported or confronted. Three of six participants assumed that reporting microinsults and microinvalidations would yield no action taken or retaliation from either the perpetrator or other colleagues. Zilla, however, shared that when he reported the use of offensive language action was taken, but perceived that his social capital that afforded him the opportunity that his peers did not have to be heard. Besides this instance, he commented that he made it a practice to confront his White colleagues directly when racialized stereotypes were made in his presence. Empress, in contrast, described concern, observing that the school district she is in has a short memory and retaliation is a possible action to reporting such racial issues. Jason commented that he takes care of things himself because he does not have confidence in the administration’s ability to comprehend and address the issue. Participants did not perceive the perpetrators of displayed racism were remorseful for their actions and the leadership concerned unless litigation or negative community publicity was in jeopardy.

Each of these teacher’s stories were gathered over the course of two interviews and verified during subsequent member checking meetings. Together, we worked through the development of the stories and finalized the narratives contained in this chapter. Additions and
corrections were made throughout the development and finalizing process. Empress shared that she liked how her experiences were shown using the CRT table employed during my analysis. Koloraye, Zilla and Practical thought the chart helped frame their examples. Most participants commented that they found the interviews to be an opportunity to release some of what they internalized and carried with them, expressing that it was refreshing to talk about their experiences. In the next chapter, these six teachers’ narratives will be discussed, and implications of this research will be explored.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This study examined the basis, manifestations, and persistence of racial microaggressions for Black teachers in the workplace utilizing the Critical Race Theory theoretical framework. I explored how racial microaggressions are experienced by Black educational professionals, the resulting impact on their workplace experience, and what they perceived contributed to the persistence of its existence in the work environment. The chapter will include a section identifying implications from this study for policy, practice, and further research.

Discussion

Six Black educational professionals were given a space in this study to voice and name their experience about the presence of racial microaggressions in their work environment (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016). The experiences and voices of the Black educators participating in this study were perceived to be unvalued and marginalized at times. The lived experiences depicted through their narratives echo several premises found in existing research focused on racial microaggressions (Keels et al., 2017; Pierce, 1959; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018; Schmidt, 2018).

Normalcy of Racism and Racial Microaggressions

Researchers have found that racial microaggressions are an insidious form of bias and racism that manifest as commonplace occurrences in the lives of people of Color, especially Black Americans (Dover, 2016; Ong & Burrow, 2017; Ong et al., 2013; Pérez Huber & Solorzano, 2015b; Pierce et al., 1977; Sue et al., 2008; Yosso et al., 2009). Microaggressions can be present in any work environment and be implicitly supported by policies and practices, as well as be inescapable for Black people regardless of geographical location, gender, tenure, or education (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Holder et al., 2015; Nadal et al., 2014; Pitcan et al., 2018).
Like the participants in these research studies, the lived experiences of the Black educational professionals in my research demonstrated ways in which microaggressions were normalized both in behavior and policy.

Based upon the participants’ narratives, the differences between the teachers did not seem to be a determining factor in regard to whether the teachers’ experiential workplace reality included experiencing racism. First, there was no indication that their geographical location would mitigate the risk of their exposure to racism. The teachers in this study worked at different schools in different areas of the state, varied in tenure and age, and taught different subjects and grades. Some taught in larger communities of different sizes with the presence of diverse populations, but this also did not make a difference as to whether or not the participants experienced microaggressions. Each of these teachers experienced racial microaggressions in their current situations. Being in a larger, more diverse space may have offered some personal relief and support from other persons of Color, but it did not completely mitigate the cultural ignorance and insensitivity of their White administrators and colleagues resulting in instances of microaggressions.

The teachers’ gender was also unable to secure a bias and discrimination-free space for them to work in. Although both genders experienced racism, at the intersection of race, gender, and race, the microaggressions encountered differed. The female teachers seemed to report more invisibility and invalidation, while the male teachers seemed to report more hypervisibility and invalidation. All the teachers were exposed to stereotypes. The Black male teachers were used differently (unicorn, disciplinarian) than were their female counterparts, but they also were subject to sexual stereotyping. Both genders experienced being labeled as a violent person, in the form of an *angry Black man* or *woman* stereotype. Another gendered difference manifested in
the type of stereotypes assigned to the females and males. Sports related stereotypes were assigned to male teachers who were assumed to be coaches rather than teachers, for example, while female teachers were commonly mistaken for paraprofessionals, cafeteria personnel, or custodians. There seemed to be an indication that an intersection of gender and race was also present in the teachers’ experiences.

As described by the teachers’ narratives, the existence of education, professional credentials, and tenure were other factors that did not seem to eliminate the likelihood of racial microaggressions encounters. All of the teachers held graduate level degrees and professional credentials but were questioned about their qualifications and knowledge and assumed to possess less than their White colleagues. The teachers faced doubts about their intelligence from their current school colleagues, and for some, at their past schools as well. Being an educated and credentialed professional, they may have expected to have a better experience in the workplace due to their achievements, but their educational status and tenure of service did not appear to eliminate the risk of being exposed to racial microaggressions. The teachers’ experiential work realities involved racial microaggressions in some degree for the entirety of their professional career.

**Challenging the Dominant Ideology**

Since racism is engrained and perpetuated by societal stereotypes, challenging the status quo of racism, whiteness, and supremacy was a large undertaking for these minority teachers alone (Anthym & Tuitt, 2019; Sue et al., 2019; Sue & Spanierman, 2020). The teachers in study found themselves challenging the status quo by confronting White colleagues’ and student behaviors and/or comments and reporting acts of microaggressions experienced. Challenging the dominant ideology would seem appropriate and correct when there are anti-discrimination laws
and policies in place. However, the teachers who reported found that the interpretation and application of these laws and policies were subject to the personal bias of those responsible for overseeing the execution of the practices (Donnor, 2005; Donnor et al., 2018; Tate, 1997). Those participants who reported the microaggressions tended to do so either once they had arrived at a breaking point or had been encouraged by colleagues or other people to do so. They also had to weigh the potential consequences of reporting, because doing so could result in retaliation or further isolation for the teachers. When they did report, many discovered that reporting did not seem to matter, and the racialized circumstances remained.

Regardless of the leadership or district level at which the teachers submitted their grievances, the stereotyping and discrimination persisted because the reported issues were deemed to be things that the teachers needed to do something about or ignore. The reported incidents were thus excused, dismissed, and redirected back on the teachers. However, the type and amount of cultural capital that the Black teachers possess could positively affect their challenging or reporting experience by giving them a means to be heard (Mensah, 2019; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). This is aligned with the CRT framework, which highlights the criticality of the Black voice (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997). It appeared that the more valuable their skillset was to the school’s agenda, the more power they had to challenge, and report acts of racism. For all of them, reporting microaggressions still remained frustrating and at times exhausting for the teachers who stood alone challenging or internalizing their experiences (Friedlaender, 2018; Hall & Fields, 2015; Keels et al., 2017).

Centrality of Experiential Knowledge

The master narrative in these teachers’ work environment defined roles for White and other racial groups by hiring practices and racial saturation in roles. The teachers’ educational
attainments and professional abilities seemed to be known, but these did not establish them as a viable source of knowledge or bring them forward for advancement opportunities. Most of the teachers experienced rejection despite their level of credentials or how their ideas may have aligned with the school’s objectives. Many of the teachers seem to voluntarily choose silence to protect themselves from stereotypes and/or further rejection and frustration (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016; Solorzano et al., 2000; Tate, 1997; Yosso et al., 2009). The teachers appeared to have to learn strategies to govern and guard themselves against the impact of racial microaggressions and internalized racism. Although some teachers were seen as a good fit for other roles, they would learn that other factors such as preferences for their White colleagues would supersede their qualifications even if they might be a stronger candidate. Following repeated attempts to advance their careers, some teachers seemed to turn their efforts to either leaving their respective schools or considering employment outside of the Midwest. Those who did change schools discovered that they still encountered the same master narrative and racial microaggressions.

**Racial and Social Justice Commitment**

Racial microaggressions are related to the values, mindsets, and actions of individuals, which in turn are influenced by their institution and its culture (Pérez Huber et al., 2006; Torino et al., 2018). When racism is embedded in the culture, racialized beliefs, practices, and manifestations are defined and guided within that culture, and it manifests consciously or unconsciously in the actions of people (Jones, 1997; Jones & Rolon-Dow, 2018; Madsen & Mabokela, 2000). Although school district policies and practices are thought to be designed to ensure that these workspaces operate with proper controls and equitable procedures are embraced and performed, these teachers found that this was not the case. When racism appeared normal in
the teachers’ work environment, the space seemed uncomfortable, hostile, and made work difficult and challenging for Black teachers (Jackson & Kohli, 2016; Kohli, 2018; Pizarro & Kohli, 2018).

In each of these teachers’ workplaces, the role of the building administration was critically important in regard to demonstrating a commitment for eliminating racism and using the reporting of issues of racial microaggressions as a springboard to address a building culture that allowed microaggressions. Administrators act as gatekeepers for policy implementation in their buildings and for setting the tone for the culture of that space (Brooks et al., 2013; Schein, 2017). While policies are a source for administration to ensure that Black teachers and other minorities have bias-free work environments, administrators also have responsibility to ensure that the school’s culture is aligned with the policy to reduce bias occurrences. Policies and practices appeared ineffective for handling implicit racism and Black teachers perceived that there was little recourse but to live with racism and feel betrayed by their White administrators and/or colleagues (Gómez, 2015; Hall et al., 2012; Smith & Freyd, 2014).

On both a macro- and micro-level, the administrators, regardless of their level, are perceived to have the ability to mitigate racism and racial microaggressions (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Sue & Spanierman, 2020). Administrators appeared to possess the ability to prevent the formation or continuation of uncomfortable and hostile working environments by holding staff accountable in equity matters. However, there seemed to be a gap in the interpretation and implementation of policies and the expectation of an anti-discriminatory environment to the extent that administrators appeared to contribute to the creation and maintenance of microaggressive cultures. Such a culture does not generate or sustain respect to the anti-
discrimination laws and policies that exist today. And, for the case of these Black teachers and for those who will come after them, the students are watching.

Implications for Practice, Policy, and Research

The Black teachers’ narratives delivered six different viewpoints embodying experiences across four different Midwest school districts. The research data from participant narratives offered an increased understanding of the experiences that Black teachers have with racial microaggressions in the workplace. The data also has important implications for practitioners concerned about increasing cultural understanding and responsiveness; school officials interested in eliminating racism in the work environment; and researchers examining how racial microaggressions in the workplace can be made more visible.

Practice

For practitioners, it is important to comprehend that Black educators are more likely to experience racism in predominantly White environments (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby Jr, 2016). The Black teachers indicated that their workplaces had a lack of staff diversity and held a desire to see staff personnel reflect the student population, if at all possible. Given the small pool of teachers of Color available in the Midwest, deliberately expanding current strategies concentrated on attracting, recruiting, and hiring practices may have some limited, but positive results. After new educators are hired, attention should be given to preventing the isolation of Black teachers. It can benefit the students to see and interact with educational professionals who look like them and have a cultural understanding as to how to relate to them. There is also a potential value in allowing race matching for teaching teams to occur, which could increase the cultural strength of that team and ensure that the minorities have support (D'Amico et al., 2017; Pittman, 2012). One retention strategy that teachers noted as helpful to them involved developing
intentional systems to support and mentor new Black educators and making mentoring available to coach them with career navigation (Harris & Davis, 2018; Sun, 2018).

The role of administration and their vision for their work environment are critical factors when considering changing a culture. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of leadership to define what beliefs, norms, and practices will be acceptable in the work space (Miller, 2012; Osiname, 2018). School administration must commit to regularly reviewing existing policies, practices, norms, and to monitoring how race is defined and valued in their work environments (Madsen & Mabokela, 2000; Schein, 2017). Administrators at all levels would do well to demonstrate their racial and social justice commitment by listening, investigating, and holding employees accountable for exhibiting microaggressions. Administration can communicate clear expectations to staff and stakeholders that racial microaggressions are not acceptable and will not be tolerated (Sue et al., 2019). Creating safe work spaces where challenging the dominant ideology is regarded as opportunity to improve school culture and climate for staff and students will contribute to the modeling of anti-racism (Daniel, 2013; Osiname, 2018). They can promote professional respect for the educational attainments and contributions of all staff by embedding it into the culture with recognition and incentives.

**Policy**

Given that racial microaggressions appeared to be normalized in the work environments in this study, school officials who are committed to eliminating racism may want to give consideration to disrupting the status quo. Attending to the stereotyping status quo has the potential to improve the work environments where Black teachers teach (Banaji, 1993; Conaway & Bethune, 2015; Steele, 1997). School policymakers and administrators can increase cultural understanding and responsiveness through diversity training. The Black teachers described their
White colleagues as not understanding how their behavior was deeply offensive, and some indicated that they did not trust that the White administrators understood enough about implicit racism to take action (Amodio & Swencionis, 2018; Baston, 2016; Dovidio et al., 2018; Gullo et al., 2018). Diversity training could be strongly beneficial to helping personnel to develop an ability to see and comprehend how their behaviors and conversations are inappropriate and the harm that they may cause. To close this gap of knowledge for all employees, a more extensive diversity training would seem to be a viable recommendation. However, as reported by participants and as demonstrated by their experiences, existing diversity training is ineffective and not broad enough. Evaluating and expanding trainings to include such topics as biases, racism, cultural humility and awareness, workplace allyship, bystander engagement and how to disarm microaggressions could prove to be effective in reducing microaggressions (Overland et al., 2019; Sue et al., 2019).

School policymakers and administrators may also benefit from expanding understanding of accountability. Officials may think about a more robust accountability action plan or system that provides adequately defined actions that support Black teachers and increase cultural awareness for White personnel who display racial microaggressions. Accountability for those reported for committing microaggressions could include a requirement to complete targeted training focused on the offense for which they were reported. When stakeholders connect and develop positive relationships with students and staff based on mutual respect, inclusion, and accountability for the welfare of all members, schools improve (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; White et al., 2019). Such a plan or system necessitates that work environments have the resources needed to focus on implicit bias, racism, and racial microaggressions. District leadership would also need to give ongoing support to the local school administrators regarding how to develop
inclusive teams and create bias-free work environments that are conducive for Black teachers and other teachers of Color to work.

Research

Although this study extends existing research about racial microaggressions and Black teachers, there is still more terrain for future researchers to explore. This study’s data was solely on the racial microaggressive experiences related to a specific racial group (Black/African American), inclusive of two genders (female and male), who were all licensed teaching professionals in public schools. To learn more about the whole topic, it would be beneficial for future studies to focus on: Examining the experiences of a broader scope of educators, including paraprofessionals and substitute teachers; the lived experiences of persons with intersecting identities such as race, gender, and sexual orientation or race, gender, and class (Pitcher, 2017); and, the experiences of Black and teachers of Color in non-public schools. As some of the Black female participants experienced more issues with White female leaders than White male leaders, and some Black male participants reported having difficulty with White administrators more than with White female administrators, it would be interesting to examine the dynamics associated with racial microaggressions experienced across genders, as well as within racial sub-groups (Frazier, 2011; Pyke, 2018; Weiner et al., 2019).

Final Thoughts

Working with the six Black teachers, who were vibrant and engaged throughout this study, has been a tremendous honor for me. Telling and reading their stories, I believe, will serve as strength and an encouragement to other Black professionals, regardless of their profession or industry, as they did for me. Their stories also will serve as counternarratives to the master narratives that promote and reflect dominant power, supremacy, and whiteness, which can be
seen across numerous professions. The Black teachers in this study gained a freedom to exhale and release what over time builds up and gets locked away in an effort to protect oneself. Many expressed a feeling of gladness and appreciation for this study and the ability to breathe and be heard, because as one teacher shared, “[the] cup gets full after awhile.” When I began this journey with them, I compared racial microaggressions to carbon monoxide, but now I have discovered that in today’s racial climate it has transitioned to a more noticeable and poisonous thing. Racial microaggressions have shifted from just being present to being present and protected systemic racism. Instead of an odorless and tasteless gas, this different and harmful gas is one that you can see, smell, taste, and feel. Sometimes it seems that rather than disrupting the flow and getting rid of it, we are reaching for gas masks. Nevertheless, I felt privileged to have the Black teachers’ stories shared with me and to be entrusted to tell their stories and honor their lived experiences. To echo the late Sam Cooke (1964), “it’s been a long...a long time comin’ but I know oh-oo-oh...A CHANGE IS GONNA COME.” I pray that through this and future research that many will embrace the need for change and allow it to come.
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196


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APPENDICES
Subject: Introduction and Request to Solicit Study Participants

Dear Administrator:

My name is Deborah Cox-Stubblefield. I am a Wichita State candidate in the Educational Leadership doctoral program.

I would like to request permission to solicit study participants within the [name of the group] Facebook group. I am interested in having a recruitment post within the group from approximately October through November. The post would consist of an image advertising the recruiting effort with basic study and contact information. Attached is a copy of recruitment flyer that I would like to include in the recruiting post.

I am interested in soliciting within this group due to this group having members who either are teachers or may know teachers that could be referred. The following provides the study basics:

- Title: The Invisible Struggle: An Exploration of Black Teachers’ Experiences with Microaggressions
- Study Purpose: This study will explore the persistence of microaggressions in the workplace as experienced by Black teachers.

I look forward to your response. And thank you in advance for your consideration and time.

Respectfully,

Deborah Stubblefield
APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT FLYER

A study exploring racial microaggressions in the workplace.

**CRITERIA:**
- Black Teachers who identify as female or male
- Teachers who teach Pre-K to 12th grade in Kansas

**PARTICIPATION INCLUDES:**
- Confidential interview(s) via Zoom or Microsoft Teams
- A $50 Visa gift card

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**
Email: dacox-stubblefield@shockers.wichita.edu
APPENDIX C

SCREENING INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello, my name is Deborah Stubblefield. I am a doctoral candidate with the Wichita State University’s Educational Leadership program. I appreciate your interest in potentially participating in my research study. My research is focusing on understanding the experiences of Black teachers with racial microaggressions in the workplace. The name of the study is “The Invisible Struggle: An Exploration of Black American Teacher Experiences with Racial Microaggressions.”

Today, I would like to gather some preliminary information to ensure that you meet the criteria for the study. This interview will also be used to describe the research process associated with this study and answer any questions that you may have. Before we begin, I would like to review a few procedures. I will also review the signed consent form with shortly. To guarantee confidentiality, your name will not be used when I capture and report the results of the session. With your permission, I would like to audio-record our interview so that I am able to accurately analysis the shared information. This session will last approximately –10 - 15 minutes. Do I have your permission to audio record this interview?

(Turn on the recorder; and restate the recording question. Review the signed Informed Consent with the participant. Begin interview.)

1. What is your name?
2. What is your current profession? In what state do you work?
3. Are you currently working in this field? Do you currently work in the state? What type of school (e.g., public, private, charter)?
4. What race do you identify yourself as? What gender do you identify yourself as?

Thank you for your time today!

(If they meet the criteria: I will schedule a time for our next interview. If they do not meet the criteria: You current do not meet the study participant criteria.)
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Wichita State University
College of Applied Studies
Counseling, Educational Leadership, Educational and School Psychology

Interview Consent Form

Purpose: You are invited to participate in a research study of Black teachers’ experiences with racial microaggressions. I hope to learn about the presence and persistence of racial microaggressions in the workplace and the impact on Black educators.

Participant Selection: You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are currently a State of Kansas PK-12 teacher, who identifies as either a Black male or Black female. You were either referred or volunteered use with the use of a recruitment flyer. Approximately 4 - 6 participants will be invited to join the study.

Explanation of Procedures: If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in an initial virtual interview to schedule a mutually convenient date and time for our interview sessions. Participants will be asked to share their experiences with workplace racial microaggressions. These experiences will be captured using a set of semi-structured questions asked by the interviewer. The interview will last about 60 - 90 minutes. Two or more interviews may be needed to capture and develop your story narrative. You will also be asked to review the transcriptions of our interviews and to review your final narrative. The interviews will be scheduled approximately three weeks apart to allow time for transcribing and review.

Discomfort/Risks: During this study, it is expected that the risks, discomforts, and inconveniences will be minimal. There may be discomfort due to recalling experiences. Participation is voluntary. If you feel uncomfortable with any question, you can feel free to not answer it. You also have the option to withdraw from the study at any time. No identifiable information will be used.

If at any point you feel too distressed to continue the study, please inform the researcher and you may discontinue your participation without penalty.

Benefits: All participants be will afforded the opportunity to share their thoughts about racial microaggressions in the workplace, which adds to the increasing literature about Black teachers and microaggressions.

Confidentiality: The researcher will make every effort to keep your study-related information confidential. But, because we are using the Internet, there is a chance that someone could access your online responses without permission. In some cases, this information could be used to identify you. However, in order to make sure the study is done properly and safely there may be circumstances where this information must be released. By signing this form, you are giving the research team permission to share information about you with the Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies and the Wichita State University Institutional Review Board.
APPENDIX D (continued)

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Wichita State University
IRB Approval Date: 09/21/2020
Study #4812

Digital copies of interview recordings will be secured in password-protected locations (e.g., computer, secured external drive) available only to the researcher. All digital items will be secured for five years beyond the completion of this study. After the end of the fifth year, the data will be destroyed by erasing all voice recordings and deleting any digital data files.

The researcher may publish the results of this study. If I do, I will only discuss group results. Your name will not be used in any publication or presentation about the study.

Compensation to Subjects: Compensation will be offered to participants with a gift card of $50. The gift cards will be distributed at the end of the study after completion of interviews and review of the final study narrative. Participants who withdraw before the end of the study will not be compensated.

Refusal/Withdrawal: Participation in this study is fully voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Contact: If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research and Technology Transfer at Wichita State University, 1845 Fairmount Street, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, telephone (316) 978-3285. If you have any questions about this research, you can contact the principal investigator, Kristin Sherwood (Kristin.Sherwood@wichita.edu) Wichita State University – CLES Office, 1845 Fairmount Street, Wichita, KS 67260-0007.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that:
• You have read (or someone has read to you) the information provided above,
• You are aware that this is a research study,
• You have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction, and
• You have voluntarily decided to participate.

You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

________________________________________
Printed Name (Participant)

________________________________________
Participant Signature Date

________________________________________
Printed Name of Witness

________________________________________
Witness Signature Date
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello, my name is Deborah Stubblefield; and I am a doctoral candidate with the Wichita State University’s Educational Leadership program. I appreciate your willingness to assist me by participating in this interview. My research is focusing on understanding the experiences of Black teachers with racial microaggressions in the workplace. The name of the study is “The Invisible Struggle: An Exploration of Black American Teacher Experiences with Racial Microaggressions.”

Today, I would like to discuss your experiences with racial microaggressions in the workplace. Before we begin, I would like to review a few procedures. I will also review the signed consent form with shortly. To guarantee confidentiality, your name will not be used when I capture and report the results of the session. Prior to the final report, names will be removed and replaced with a pseudonym. With your permission, I would like to audio-record our interview so that I am able to accurately analyze the shared information. This session will last approximately 60 - 90 minutes. Do I have your permission to audio record this interview?

(Turn on the recorder; and restate the recording question. Review the signed Informed Consent with the participant. Begin interview.) Let us get started with the interview.

I. Opener questions:
   1. What brought you to education? Why did you decide to be a teacher?

II. Interview questions have been organized by the two research questions:
   1. How do Black teachers describe racial microaggressions from their own lived experience as a professional educator?
      a) How many different schools have you worked as a teacher?
      b) Talk to me about what it is like to be a teacher in your school workplace(s).
      c) What is it like to be a Black teacher in your workplace(s)?
      d) If gender is not mentioned:
         i. What is it like to be a Black female/male teacher in your workplace(s)?
         e) How would you describe your school to me if I were a new Black teacher?

   2. What do participants identify as existing in the structure of their work environments that allows racism to persist as racial microaggressions?
      a) Had you heard the term racial microaggressions prior to this study? If so, talk to me about what it means to you.
      b) As examples are shared:
         i. Tell me how you respond to that?
         ii. How did your school administration respond to…?
         iii. Talk to me about what the incident meant to you.
      c) How do you see microaggressions as being a part of your school culture?