

Lynn University

SPIRAL

Graduate Student Dissertations, Theses,
Capstones, and Portfolios

Dissertations, Theses, Capstones, and
Portfolios Collections

2024

Places and Spaces: The Onboarding and Retention of Black Students in K-12 Private Schools

Peter H. Boylan
Lynn University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://spiral.lynn.edu/etds>

Recommended Citation

Boylan, P. H. (2024). *Places and spaces: The onboarding and retention of black students in K-12 private schools* [Doctoral dissertation, Lynn University]. SPIRAL. <https://spiral.lynn.edu/etds/427>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations, Theses, Capstones, and Portfolios Collections at SPIRAL. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Dissertations, Theses, Capstones, and Portfolios by an authorized administrator of SPIRAL. For more information, please contact liadarola@lynn.edu.

PLACES AND SPACES: THE ONBOARDING AND RETENTION OF BLACK
STUDENTS IN K–12 PRIVATE SCHOOLS

by

PETER H. BOYLAN, Ed.D

M.S. Science, Pepperdine University, 2011

B.A. English Literature, University of Rochester, 1995

A DISSERTATION

submitted to Lynn University in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

2024

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

Ross College of Education

Lynn University

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Abstract

PETER BOYLAN: Places and Spaces: The Onboarding and Retention of Black Students
in Private K–12 Institutions

This study aimed to identify the social and academic constructs that Black students have made to enter and graduate from private, predominantly White, K–12 institutions. Through a comprehensive examination of themes derived from a narrative model with interviews, this research sought to identify the challenges Black students faced, what they did to overcome the challenges, and then to raise programmatic awareness in those institutions to ease the burden on Black students, their families, and to ease the challenges they face while at those institutions. This study could potentially create new insights into what makes a Black student and their families successful in predominantly White institutions.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my family and friends who have influenced me in every facet of my life. I would like to recognize the leadership at my current institution who provided the necessary push, support, time, and backing for me to accomplish this goal. I would also like to acknowledge my admirable colleagues and the wonderful families that I have had the privilege of interacting with over the years. Thank you for your insight, openness, and generosity of spirit, you have shaped me as a lifelong educator.

I would also like to acknowledge the participants in this study, whose time, truth, and clarity have helped create a new lens into a continuing struggle for equity. All of these perspectives and people served as motivations for this study, and I thank you.

Lastly, I would like to thank the professors at Lynn for their guidance through this process. Dr. Joe Melita, my chair, Dr. Kathleen Weigel, and Dr. Jennifer Lesh. Without their guidance and support I would have been able to accomplish my goals.

Dedication

I dedicate this to my wife, who has shown incomparable strength, resilience, and determination of her own, with a fortitude and ethereal grace that I love deeply. I also dedicate this to my son, who sits at the very center of my soul.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Dedication	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	xi
Table of Figures	xii
List of Abbreviations or Keywords	xiii
Chapter I: Introduction	1
Background	2
Significance of the Study	3
Rationale	4
Theoretical and/or Conceptual Framework	7
Purpose of the Study	8
Research Question	9
Assumptions	9
Summary	10
Chapter II: Literature Review	11
Call for Diversity and Financial Impact	11
Relevant Theories	13

Creating Successful Constructs	14
Learning as Social Collaboration	15
A Sense of Self	17
A Sense of Belonging	19
Building for Success: Institutional Impact	22
Creating the Place	24
Neuroscientific Impact	27
Understanding One's Self	30
Chapter III: Methodology	35
Introduction	35
Research Question	37
Setting of the Study	37
Research Design	38
Data Sources	39
Ethical Considerations	41
Risks	42
Benefits	42
Assumptions	42
Bias	43
Role of Researcher	43

Validity	44
Trustworthiness	44
How Data will be Secured	44
Anonymity & Confidentiality	44
Quality of Data	45
Data Analysis	45
Philosophical Lens	46
Delimitations	47
Limitations	48
Summary	48
Chapter IV: Results	51
Introduction	51
Bias	52
Participants	52
Data Collection	53
Findings	54
Race as a Difference	54
Types of Support	62
Needs for Black Families	68
Researcher Field Note Observations	77

Gary	77
Mike	77
Marc	78
Cameron	78
Grace	78
Themes and Categories	79
Summary	79
Chapter V: Conclusions	84
Introduction	84
Summary of Results	85
Discussion of Results	86
Race as a Difference	87
Types of Support	88
Needs for Black Families	89
Implications for Practice	91
Implications for Predominantly White, private K–12 Institutions	93
Implications for the Black Private School Community	95
Limitations	96
Recommendations for Future Research	96

Research on Parents of Children Who Attend Predominantly White K–12 Private Schools	97
Research on Young Black Adult Professionals Who Have Graduated from PWIs with Established Careers	97
Conclusion	98
References	101
Appendix A: Emails To Gain Study/Participant Entry	112
Appendix B: Consent Forms	114
Appendix C: Interview Questions	116
Appendix D: IRB Approval	118

List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Participant Demographics</i>	53
Table 2 <i>Themes and Categories</i>	82

Table of Figures

Figure 1 <i>Triangulation Method</i>	54
---	----

List of Abbreviations or Keywords

Culturally Responsive Curriculum (CRC): Culturally responsive curriculum uses cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT): Culturally responsive teaching is a research-based approach to teaching. It connects students' cultures, languages, and life experiences with what they learn in school. These connections help students access rigorous curriculum and develop higher-level academic skills.

Code-switching: Code-switching is a strategy that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals use to adjust their behavior to fit into an environment

Private school: Private schools (also known as “independent schools”) are schools not dependent on national or local government to finance their financial endowment. Unless privately owned, they typically have a board of governors and have a system of governance that ensures their independent operation.

Predominantly White Institution (PWI): The U.S. Department of Education defines a PWI as a university that has 50% or more enrollment from White students.

Restorative practices: Also called positive discipline, responsive classroom, or empowerment—restorative practices focus on fostering a sense of community within classrooms to prevent conflict, and on reacting to misconduct by encouraging students to accept responsibility and rebuild relationships.

Underrepresented: A situation where certain groups of students are consistently underrepresented in terms of their enrollment, participation, and success rates compared to the overall student population.

Chapter I: Introduction

In 2018, 9% of students enrolled in private schools were Black (Broughman, et al., 2019). The average lifetime earnings for a Black male with a high school diploma are \$1,340,407.00. The average lifetime earnings for a Black male with a college diploma are \$2,107,728.00. That is an increase of \$767,321.00 over their lifetime (Julian & Kominski, 2011). Parents choose independent K–12 schools for a variety of reasons, primarily for the superior access to education that such schools afford their children (Arrington & Stevenson, 2006). Access provided by private institutions to high-level universities and colleges can make a lifetime of difference for those graduates. These graduates can then create more support and access to higher education for their children. These individuals are often healthier and more likely to volunteer, and their children are more likely to possess greater academic abilities than individuals who have not obtained a college degree (Wiles, 2004). This study sought to tell the lived experiences or stories of Black high school graduates who graduated from predominantly White private high schools. In turn, these participants’ stories have the potential to increase the number of Black graduates from predominantly White private high schools. Additionally, this study sought to prove that having a successful experience in a private K–12 institution will build a belief system in that private educational model for Black families, thus increasing the likelihood of enrollment for future generations and the ability to afford those institutions. Private schools K–12 should facilitate a culture where Black students feel welcomed and valued as members of the school community. A sense of belonging is necessary for all students’ overall health and well-being (Allen & Bowles, 2012).

Background

As the disciplinarian of a middle school, the researcher has seen a large portion of significant discipline cases centered around race and the language surrounding racism. A significant disciplinary case means that a student has been put on a warning or probationary status, including suspension, which includes a timeframe in which any further disciplinary events with the student may lead to the contract of that student being revoked. Disciplinary events do not include the day-to-day natural corrections or counseling in school in their definition. In the cases referred to, Black students did not perpetrate these incidents; instead, these incidents were made against Black students. The use of offensive, racially tinged vocabulary and the intentional “misuse” of terms by non-Black students created an undercurrent of events feeding the negative experiences of Black families. This experience may have been predetermined by Black families. Hughes et al. (2006) found that some Black parents told their children not to trust members of different ethnic groups, also known as a promotion of mistrust. This mistrust may predetermine an emotional state for children. This study sought to better understand this emotional state and what students may have done to overcome this challenge. Some of the perpetrated events can speak to a lack of understanding of other cultures and a lack of exposure to people of color. The perpetrated incidents indicated deeper issues and projected an insular and hostile interpretation of the private school community. The longer Black students were in attendance in the private school setting, the more likely they were to not only experience race-related harmful incidents but also to develop consciousness and awareness of the role of race in their experience. This finding helped to explain the findings of studies that Black students did not feel connected, invited, or

welcomed on predominantly White (PW) campuses (Meeuwisse et al., 2010; Parker & Flowers, 2003).

Race-related incidents fed a layer of environment that created more difficulty for Black students and their success (Moore-Southall, 2016). This experience needs to be mitigated. The researcher hoped to discover and establish some of the needs of Black families for them to succeed in private institutions. Additionally, the reciprocal nature of the study may devise systems of acceptance and understanding for those students who are *not* of color, thus creating a more intentional, conscious environment for the success of all students.

Significance of the Study

This dissertation sought to identify the needs of Black students and their families through their stories and as they pertain to the onboarding and retention of their children in private schools. The researcher hoped for the outcome of being able to incorporate the needs of Black families and students into the school community's fabric, removing or lessening some of the actions that Black families have found necessary to ensure their children's positive mental health and success while at school. This dissertation also sought to increase the number of Black students enrolled in PWISs, providing more opportunities for higher-level education and forwarding the opportunity for Black wealth. With the significance of the deficient numbers of Black students in independent schools, coupled with the increasing diversity of our country, it is critical for institutions to have intentionality behind understanding the needs of those families and programs to support those needs (Broughman et al., 2019; Moore-Southall, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Understanding the stories and lived experiences of Black students attending PW private schools is critical to Black students' mental health and ability to succeed. In seeing Black students graduate, PW private schools are creating more opportunities for talented young people to access higher education, amass financial security, and establish a more robust belief system in private school institutions.

In summation, this study sought to understand the constructs that Black students and their families have made in order to create a place, as members of a marginalized group, that will ensure their educational success. In creating this success and graduating from predominantly White K–12 institutions, those Black students may increase their opportunity for a lifetime of wealth acquisition (Julian & Kominski, 2011). In understanding the constructs Black students have needed to create, private schools can alleviate the extra burden on Black families by potentially building these constructs into the school structure (Wilcox et al., 2020). In providing this information, this study hoped to improve the relationship between predominantly White K–12 institutions and Black families, creating a more solid belief in independent schools, so that they may have more trust, and encourage their friends and family members to enroll their children.

Rationale

Black students are significantly underrepresented in the private school setting. In fall 2019, the percentages of Pacific Islander students (15%), Caucasian students (12%), Asian students (10%), and students of two or more races (10%) who were enrolled in private schools were higher than the national average (9%). In comparison, the percentage of African American students (6%), American Indian/Alaska Native students (5%), and Hispanic students (4%) who were enrolled in private schools was lower than

the national average (National Center For Education Statistics, 2022). Cultural and economic divisions and the lack of Black faculty members are all factors that have led to the low enrollment and retention of Black students in private schools (Davis, 2015).

Hughes et al. (2006), found that some Black parents tell their children not to trust members of different ethnic groups, also known as a promotion of mistrust.

Neuroimaging studies and measurement of brain chemical transmitters reveal that students' comfort level can influence information transmission and storage in the brain (Thanos et al., 1999). Schools that help establish and develop a sense of belonging in their students have more successfully motivated students to learn (Johnson, 2009). A more motivated student is likelier to succeed (Arrington & Stevenson, 2006). This study sought to help create that safer place and space.

This dissertation delved into school culture, intentional onboarding, sustained support, acceptance, and creating safe places and spaces for students to succeed. Some of those actions may be related to Arrington and Stevenson's study *The Success of African American Students (SAAS) in Independent Schools* (2006). In this study, three important principles were put forth.

1. Promoting Black students' connection to the school community and their emotional health is key to their academic success.
2. Schools not only socialize students academically, they also socialize students racially.
3. The experience of racism is a reality for Black youth that can compromise the quality of their school experience and tax their emotional resources.

An environment of racism and disconnection does not create a sense of safety or belonging for Black students as they are not represented well amongst the staff members and, therefore, have less allyship; thus, they may not feel welcome. Isolation can affect their ability to succeed, graduate, and move on to higher-level institutions. Arrington and Stevensen (2006) cited a student interview:

And I think when I first came to [the school] I wasn't welcome. I didn't feel welcome as a family member that had a voice that was being heard, but I feel that in the...years that I'd been there... And seven years is a long time. (p. 7)

The student's feeling of isolation illustrated the necessity of constructing systems of independent communities inside and outside the academic institution for Black students success. Liu and Matthews (2005) stated,

This is interesting in terms of minorities as the private institution is a well-established environment, and the resistance to its influence is very important as opposed to the individual's consent. Thus, the individual may restructure their system without consent but rather enter into a new system of understanding and consciousness. (p. 391)

This dissertation centered around successful systems Black students and their families established within the private school structure. Through narrative interviews, it sought to identify the social and academic operating structures that these students and their families created to establish a sense of belonging, ensure academic success, and create a sustainable mental health model for the students. Black students who had graduated were interviewed, and the information was consolidated, transcribed, cleaned, and coded for themes. Details into the methodology of the study were described in depth

in Chapter III. The study sought to identify the systems created by individuals at the institution, or separate from the institution itself, and weave them into the fabric of practice at the institution, where applicable, through existing programs.

Restorative school discipline practices—also called positive discipline, Responsive Classroom, or empowerment—focus on fostering a sense of community within classrooms to prevent conflict and on reacting to misconduct by encouraging students to accept responsibility and rebuild relationships (Kirsch, 2022). Restorative methodology may help a student feel heard, respected, and valued, and may also decrease the feeling of racism and exclusion, according to Arrington and Stevenson’s 2006 seminal study *The Success of African American Students (SAAS) in Independent Schools*. However, the idea of restoration is reactionary. Meaning, an event has to have transpired for the practice to begin. This does not hit the systemic nature of the problem: lack of race understanding and acceptance. Rather, this study dived into *pre-storative* practices, or establishing an understanding embedded in a school culture with such intentionality that it becomes inextricably woven into the school culture. From Vincent Tinto (2005),

It is one thing to identify effective action; it is another to implement it in ways that significantly enhance student retention over time. This lesson can be broken down into two corollary lessons. First, it is one thing to identify effective action; it is another to implement it fully. Second, it is one thing to begin a program and another to see it endure. (p 13)

Theoretical and/or Conceptual Framework

First, this dissertation examined social and educational constructs as they are stressed in Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1987). Social

constructivism emphasized honoring a multiplicity of cultures because when “learners’ home cultures are honored and validated, a dialogue will open up fixed boundaries so that ‘students can freely examine different types of knowledge in a democratic classroom where they can freely examine their perspectives and moral commitments” (Hirtle, 1996, p. 92).

Secondly, this dissertation featured Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1987). As explained by Cherry (2022), “Sociocultural theory focuses not only on how adults and peers influence individual learning but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes affect how learning takes place” (p. 1). This study sought to improve the relationship between predominately White private schools and the Black community, thus increasing enrollment and retention of Black students in private schools. The study sought to understand the successful constructs that private school graduates have both consciously and unconsciously made to get to graduation and matriculation to higher-level institutions.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to create a safer space and place for Black students to succeed in private K–12 institutions. The success of these students should lead to more opportunities at higher-level institutions and more opportunities to generate wealth. With success stemming from their experiences, these now former students could have a stronger belief in the private school setting and more financial flexibility, allowing them to enroll their children in the educational system that helped foster their success. The study collected and analyzed the graduates’ experiences to understand how they have succeeded in their chosen K–12 institutions. Evidence could point to processes, awareness, and experiences

from the students that the school can onboard, potentially alleviating the need for students and families to create accommodations and environments independently without the school's involvement or knowledge. A school should adopt these constructs and implement them into the fabric of the community to ease the Black community's efforts.

Research Question

The dissertation sought to discover the lived experiences of Black students attending predominantly White private schools, and to understand how those experiences can be improved to increase the success and enrollment of current and future Black students in private schools. The dissertation was informed by the following question:

1. What are the lived experiences of Black students that have graduated from predominately White private K–12 schools who have gone on to colleges and universities?

Assumptions

The researcher assumed that there would be certain difficulties gaining participants given the sensitive nature of the topic. The researcher hoped to promote healthy conversation around this topic and was flexible to any potential amendments the participants offer. The researcher also assumed that some of the convenient, purposeful samplings would encounter resistance because of the nature of the relationship between the researcher and interviewees.

The researcher assumed that the data collected would yield truths about the successful attributes and experiences that former students and their families have manifested and experienced. The researcher assumed that students would express the need for intentional onboarding, mentoring, and inclusionary programs. The researcher

also assumed that there was the possibility of resistance to the request for interviews or surveys as his position as a White male administrator and as some of the students' former disciplinarian/administrator might have interfered with collecting data.

Summary

This study established the need for continuing investigation into the lived experiences of Black students at predominantly White K–12 institutions. It detailed the significantly low numbers of Black students at those schools and some of the challenges that they faced to graduate from those institutions. Chapter I introduced Vygotsky's theories on sociocultural learning and social constructivism as foundations for how students are socialized both racially and academically. Chapter I established that experiences with race and racism created significant difficulties for Black students to succeed in private school. This chapter also established the need to collect stories from graduated students for the researcher to better understand the constructs they have made to be successful at those institutions.

Chapter II explored seminal and recent literature as it pertains to the call for more Black students in private schools and how it pertains to the need to understand the lived experiences of Black students at predominantly White private K–12 institutions. It investigated the significance of race-based interactions at those institutions, the importance of creating successful constructs to create a sense of belonging and self, as well as the neuroscientific impact of negative experiences on students, and the neuroscientific impact that school leadership can have on the culture of a school.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter presented and dissected the literature as it pertained to understanding the factors involved in the success of Black students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). There were several layers of the study. One of the layers was the importance of cultivating a sense of belonging in PWIs for the success of Black students. A second layer, but overlapping with the first, was the analysis of the leading theory addressed in this cultivation: Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (1987) and theory on socio-cultural learning. The critical assumption framing the study was that Black students are more successful when they learned with and from each other as members of private institutions and created safe environments within those social groups. This study aimed to articulate the manners and mechanisms that Black students operated with to identify the needs that aided these groups and successfully integrate these findings into the working fabric of the existing school community.

The third layer, delivered in a spiraled fashion with the first two, analyzed the effect of leadership on the successful implementation of an onboarding and retention program and its relevance to the mental health of its constituents, focusing on the students.

Call for Diversity and Financial Impact

In the 2019-2020 academic year, there were 4.6 million students enrolled in approximately 31,000 K–12 private schools (Broughman, et al., 2019). Of those 4.6 million students, 66% were White and 9.4% identified as Black. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2019, more than 40% of the more than half of the nation's population under the age of 16 identified as a racial or ethnic minority (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), roughly 5.7 million students were enrolled in private elementary and secondary schools in 2017, or about 10% of the U.S. student population. Roughly 67% were White, while 11% were Hispanic, nine percent were Black, six percent were Asian, and the remaining seven percent were students from different ethnic groups or those who identify with two or more races (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). This nation's racial diversity, forecasted to grow upward starting in 2017, is accelerating faster than anticipated. In 2020, the diversity index of the total population was 61.1% meaning that there was a 61.1% chance that two people chosen at random were from different racial or ethnic groups. In 2010, there was a 54.9% chance. This indicated that the diversity of the U.S. population increased between 2010 and 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The numbers showed that private schools were still segregated and predominately White and failed to mirror the racial diversity of the United States. More opportunities must be provided for non-White students in private schools. Within those opportunities, the institutions must, with great intentionality, create safe places and spaces for non-White students to exist.

Private schools were often regarded as institutions that offer better education and more opportunity for students to access higher-level secondary education. The effect of private schools serving as a launching pad for higher-level institutions could be profound in terms of the financial acquisition over a lifetime. According to a 2018 study by the Selig Center for Economic Growth, the lifetime earnings for a Black male has gone down to \$1,185,565.00, while earnings for a Black male with a college degree has increased to \$2,355,240.00 (Hill & Humphries, 2018). Once admitted, independent schools may offer quality education to children. However, many Black students faced adversity and have to

negotiate racial-ethnic identity in their interactions with members of different social groups to feel a sense of belonging and to gain acceptance within PWI school settings (Cooper & Datnow, 2000; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2012; Horvat & Antonio, 1999).

Uwah et al. (2008) found that school belonging was essential for Black males, as it can counteract this population's typically high dropout rate. Students who feel valued and respected in their schools are likelier to be engaged and connected and less likely to drop out and be academically unsuccessful. Here, Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism and socio-cultural learning applied. This study sought to understand the constructs Black students created to navigate their academic and social growth at private institutions successfully.

Relevant Theories

Social constructivism and sociocultural learning, developed from Vygotsky (1987) were two theories that both emphasized the relationship between social interactions and learning. Social constructivism emphasized honoring a multiplicity of cultures because when "learners' home cultures are honored and validated, a dialogue will open up fixed boundaries so that 'students can freely examine different types of knowledge in a democratic classroom where they can freely examine their perspectives and moral commitments'" (Hirtle, 1996, p 92.). Sociocultural learning theory made the correlation between social interactions and cognitive development. Student learning was a social process, and cognitive functions were formed based on interactions with teachers or more skilled peers. According to Cherry, (2022), "Sociocultural theory focuses not only on how adults and peers influence individual learning but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes affect how learning takes place" (p. 1). Here, we began to see the

application to Black students and how their formation of socio-cultural groups within the private institution created bubbles of success and perhaps insular strength from the perceived differences in the private institution. Thus, a consciousness surrounding their circumstances must be formed.

As discussed by Liu and Matthews (2005), Vygotsky distinguishes consciousness, the ability to perceive meaningfully, from conscious awareness and defined the latter as “an act of consciousness whose object is the activity of consciousness itself” (p. 384). Conscious awareness was developed in the same way consciousness was—when consciousness means being able to generate meaningful generalization and connecting relationships between objects and concepts, conscious awareness involved the ability to interconnect processes of mental activities (Liu & Matthews, 2005).

Creating Successful Constructs

In social cultural learning theory, generalizations, mental processes, and the formation of relationships to concepts, including a sense of self, were necessary for Black students to have a healthy self-identity, lowering the stresses from their perceptions and realities of the private school. This created a consciousness for the student. When consciousness shifted, or in other words, when the individual reorganized their conceptual system, they acquired the potential of perceiving new connections and of new possibilities of action. Consciousness, therefore, did not involve the complete knowledge of the absolute truth. It was a neutral concept that referred to the general organization of one’s conceptual system, which oriented one’s perception and sense-making. It emerged first on the social plane and then on the internal plane as generalized relationships are formed (Liu & Matthews, 2005). It is important to note here that absolute truth was not

what was acquired, according to Liu and Matthews, but rather a conceptual system that worked for the individual as a part of the whole group.

For Vygotsky, consciousness was defined as an individual's general perceptual orientation. Mastery of language, development of conceptual system, and consciousness were all different aspects of the same process—that of intellectualization. Second, in the development of consciousness, the sequence was from the social to the individual (Liu & Matthews 2005). The focus of the individual was addressed in the section on the sense of belonging.

Learning as Social Collaboration

Social constructivism focuses on the collaborative nature of learning. Knowledge develops from how people interact with each other, their culture, and society at large. Students rely on others to help create their building blocks, and learning from others helps them construct their own knowledge and reality. Social constructivism came from Lev Vygotsky and was closely connected to cognitive constructivism with the addition of societal and peer influence. This model aided in the understanding that Black students learned from each other as they created the social constructs necessary for their success (Wilcox et al., 2020).

A central concept in Vygotsky's theoretical system was the role of social collectivity in individual learning and development. Three common critiques on this concept were: 1) it emphasized the role of the social and the collective, but ignored the role of the individual (Resnick, 1996); 2) it failed to address how the external world was bridged across to the internal mind (Fox, 2001; Cobb, 1996); and 3) it implied a “blinkered social consensualism,” and therefore epistemological social relativism (Liu &

Matthews, 2005, p. 27). Out of this analysis was drawn the flaw in Vygotsky's theory in that he did not incorporate the role or motivation of the individual in his theory. This study sought to provide insight as to the individuals and their experiences as part of the collective whole.

Liu & Matthews (2005) provided more discussion on the individual. They discussed individuals in society. The mind is not seen as autonomous from the social and cultural group. The process of individual development could perhaps be summarized as "the social—internalization through sign mediation—restructuring conceptual system—new understanding/consciousness" (p. 391). In this sense, individual mastery and development must be based on history and culture; moreover, the individual should be enabled to stand above the social collective because of the ability of the mind to generate personal understandings (Liu & Matthews, 2005). This description opened the door for the individual to bring their own experiences, histories, and lenses to actively influence their sense-making and individual constructs as part of the socio-educational system that they exist within.

Vygotsky's theory ignored the efforts of the individual, did not address the bridging of the external world and the internal mind, and did not address the idea of consent in the individual's construction (Liu & Matthews, 2005). The omission of the efforts of the individual is interesting regarding minorities as the private institution is a well-established environment, and the resistance to its influence is very important as opposed to the individual's consent. Thus, the individual may restructure their system without consent but rather enter a new system of understanding and consciousness (Liu & Matthews, 2005). The ability of the individual to restructure the system begins to

establish the importance of the individual, their motivation, and comfort level as it pertains to their own social constructs apart from the group and how it may influence their success.

The assimilation of collective cultural practices and values by the individual can only occur in collaboration with other people within a social settings' offerings and constraints. In a school setting, Vygotsky underlined that three elements are thus always active: the environment, the student, and the teacher (Davydov, 1995). Vygotsky failed to point out that assimilation may not be the ultimate goal; instead, the goal could be a system or construct of reciprocity in appreciation and shared knowledge of individual cultures, learning styles, needs, and successes as students seek to carve and create their own working systems as they relate to themselves as individuals.

Knowledge is personal. Because constructivism is based on your own experiences and beliefs, knowledge becomes a personal affair. Each person will have their own prior knowledge and experiences to bring to the table. So the way and things people learn and gain from education will all be very different (Western Governors University, 2020). Additionally, their personal interpretations can add to the collectivity of the formed social constructs and groups, creating both an individual sense of self and a collective contribution to the success of the whole.

A Sense of Self

Weick et al. (2005) asserted, "To make sense is to connect the abstract with the concrete" (p. 1). This concept exemplifies the need for the student to build a sense of self around abstract concepts like the sense of self and race. Given that only a limited number of Black students attend primarily White independent schools (PWISs), their sense of

school belonging is critical to their success (Booker, 2006; Booker, 2007; Meeuwisse et al., 2010). According to Arrington and Stevenson's (2006) study on adolescent Black students, older students in a PWIS may express a lower degree of school sense of belonging than younger children. As students age and are in school for a more extended period of time, they are more likely to not only experience race-related adverse incidents but also develop a consciousness and awareness of the role of race in their experience. This finding helps to explain other findings from studies that suggest that Black students did not feel connected, invited, or welcomed on PW college campuses (Meeuwisse et al., 2010; Parker & Flowers, 2003).

Black people may be more vulnerable to stereotype threats due to discriminatory practices and a history of limited educational opportunities (Uwah et al., 2008). According to Cooper and Datnow (2000), "Predominately White elite independent schools, with their history of racial exclusion, are often places where African American students find it difficult to fit in" (p. 57). These findings suggest that Black students arrive at predominantly White independent schools under psychological distress and with an undefined sense of how they will be perceived at this institution. Thus, students must begin to make sense of their belongings and how to deal with abstract concepts that are very real.

Sensemaking refers to a conceptual awareness that vividly describes complex social processes through which individuals interpret their personal thoughts in order to orient themselves within their world (Weick, 1995; Ward, 2017). As Weick (1995) encapsulates, sensemaking is defined by constant association between interpreting events and acting upon those events within social contexts (Ward, 2017). Gioia et al. (1994)

stated that the organizational sensemaking processes is shaped by the sensemaking efforts of the organization's members, therefore strategic change is possible only if the stakeholders understand and accept the new cognitive orientations of that particular organization. It requires individuals to label and categorize their experiences in order to derive meaning from them (Weick et al., 2005). This research sought to categorize and articulate the operating systems of the sense makers, the Black students, to promote the success of the Black students who come after them.

A Sense of Belonging

Students who feel connected to their schools and the academic process are more likely to achieve academically and are less likely to drop out of school (Ward, 2017). According to McNeely et al. (2002) “the main development needs of middle and high school students include steadily increasing opportunities for autonomy, opportunities to demonstrate competence, caring, and support from adults, developmentally appropriate supervision, and acceptance by peers” (p. 138).

The culture of the classroom requires trust and mutual respect as well as conversations about goals and a respect for the emotional needs of the students so that all students feel valued and validated (Lynn & Jennings, 2009). For example, social interactions and multiple activity types promote the social growth of Black youth who attend independent schools. However, despite the benefits of attending these schools, some elite, private and independent schools pose challenges for Black youth. Studies have shown that Black adolescents who possess a keen sense of embodied awareness of racial differences in society and schools, in general, are likely to consciously consider whether or not people think negatively or positively about their racial group in a given

environment. The structure and culture of independent schools all influence the manner in which youth weigh their experience and work to form their identity (Birts, 2017). Several factors influenced the students as they went through their experiences. They were parent education levels, central identity as it pertained to race-related messages, household income, cultural pride messaging, racial socialization, and more race-related messages to children at a young age. Race-related messaging included cultural legacy, racial identity, or the importance of being Black to one's self-concept. Racism in general as one is exposed to lifetime racism, and those who have confronted more racism may want to ensure that their children have a more thorough understanding of race dynamics (Arrington & Stevenson, 2006).

In general, students who demonstrate a satisfying and positive experience in their schools are more likely to be successful. Arrington and Stevenson (2006) found that Black students who felt a greater connection to their schools felt more confident in their performance and were better equipped to access the school's resources. In a published summary of the Success of African American Students project (SAAS), Moore-Southall posited three assumptions that succinctly represented the foundation of this work: 1) promoting Black students' connection to the school community and their emotional health is key to their academic success; 2) schools not only socialize students academically, they also socialize students racially; 3) the experience of racism is a reality for Black youth that can compromise the quality of their school experience and tax their emotional resources (Moore-Southall, 2016). The findings presented throughout this report and reviewed in this section build upon the above tenets and illustrate how the experience within independent schools for Black students is related to background

characteristics, race and racism (including racial socialization), and perceptions of self and the school environment (Moore-Southall, 2016).

Black students felt a greater sense of belonging when there was a designated space for Black culture within the institution. Positive racial identity correlates to academic achievement. Affinity groups can help shape a student's racial identity. Black faculty on campus contributed to a greater sense of belonging for participants. Black students who do not play a sport may struggle with the assumption and expectation that they should play a sport. Lack of wealth and different lifestyle can be a challenge to creating a sense of belonging (Moore-Southall, 2016).

The findings affirmed previous qualitative research regarding Black students, suggesting that cultural student organizations serve as the primary avenue for student involvement for high-achieving Black students (Guiffrida, 2004; Harper & Quayle, 2007; Littleton, 2002). However, the findings of this study were not consistent with Littleton's (2002) finding that many Black students are involved with intercollegiate athletics (Gipson, 2013).

Angela Birts posited that there is a Black racial tapestry created when students can combine their experiences, identities, and ethnic identities in a community or society validating the need for sound relationships, affinity groups, diverse representation, conversations on race, and a diverse curriculum (Birts, 2017). Vygotsky "argued that knowing is relative to the situations in which knowers find themselves" (Cobb, 1996, p. 339). This points out the need for Black students to create a sense of self relative to their institutional surroundings.

Building for Success: Institutional Impact

Helping students increase a sense of self-efficacy can increase their motivation and achievement (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). Ward (2017) asserted that when educators strive to understand their students and their students' cultures, that opportunity gap decreases as those educators find opportunities for Black males to express their skills and knowledge in ways that accentuate the positive aspects of their culture and experience. Educators are encouraged to explore how they view minorities in their classrooms and acknowledge the biases and stereotypes that exist within their minds, as well as any preconceived notions about the abilities of their students, which ultimately influence the degree of opportunities that they create for their students.

However, the root of the problem is deeper than just those of institutional and faculty priorities. It lies in the very character of our discourse, how we talk about our work, and how we think of it. It lies in the very language of student retention. Vocabulary such as retention, and speaking of students as consumers, feeds into faculty views of student success and failure primarily as a result of student abilities and/or motivation. The researcher proposed that we stop using this language, especially when talking to faculty. Making changes in the language could assist with moving faculty away from the thought process of "if the institution only gave me good students, I would not have a retention problem." Putting aside the fact that this view of the causes of student attrition is mistaken, the problem is that as long as faculty believe this to be the case, they do not associate their actions with the solution to student retention (Tinto, 2006). Tinto placed the onus of retention, and therefore inclusion, on the teacher/leader. Hammond further placed this burden on the teacher /leader: Students of color must become more engaged.

Strategies must be adopted to create complex thinking; teaching practices must be built around these tenets. Environments must be created to welcome natural ways of student existence that shape the content to connect to student lives (Hammond, 2015).

School reform efforts have done little to disrupt the inequities that inhibit our efforts to equalize the playing field for all students. Thus, the question for educational leaders is how to fulfill our responsibility to truly educate all students for individual intellectual excellence and for global citizenship, how to help them reflect on and act on critically important issues of our times, and how to sort out truth from fiction (Shields, 2013). This a call back to the idea that students may be trying to sort out the abstract concepts that influence them, like racism, as it is critically important, and the truths behind their interpersonal relationships.

The literature suggested that the first step is for the school leadership to include a commitment to diversity and inclusivity as part of the school's mission statement. The school then needs to implement a school-wide initiative that requires the school leadership and all personnel in each department to set goals that include the steps they will take to provide a sense of school belonging for their students outside of the dominant culture. Department and division heads need to provide ongoing professional development for faculty and staff, including training in anti-bias, White privilege, microaggressions, diversity, and inclusivity. A zero-tolerance policy must be enforced for both students and faculty who are perpetrators in incidents of harassment, discrimination, and racism. Department chairs and academic officers should complete an evaluation of course materials and curriculum to determine if and how people of color are represented in the curriculum (Walker, 2017). Students who have teachers who provide emotional

and academic support, encouragement, care, and guidance tend to do better in school, are more sociable, and have less risk of dropping out (Croninger & Lee, 2001).

Creating the Place

There is an assumption for some that disparities in success exist because minority students do not achieve at academic levels as high as their White counterparts due to a genetic deficiency; however, it may not be that Black students have less innate intelligence but are instead victims of their environment (Gallagher & Lippard, 2014). The idea that Black students may have genetic deficiency as opposed to being affected by their environment infers potential bias. It brings to light the heightened emotional state that students of color may have as they enter predominantly White institutions. The interference of stress and cortisol on memory, retention, and thus academic performance was addressed a bit later in this study.

Educators must continue to own their misunderstandings of cultural differences as they work to create a culture of high expectations for academic success for all students that is free from bias. These educators incorporate the funds of knowledge that the poor and the disenfranchised bring into their classrooms to create a safe learning environment for all students (Ward, 2017).

Students develop a sense of what they can be successful at as they assess their level of knowledge and skills in relation to the tasks to be completed and the value of these activities to themselves (Bandura, 1997). Students are less likely to drop out of schools where they receive support from their teachers and have teachers that challenge them (Croninger & Lee, 2001). When students are seen, understood, and valued their level of comfort increases, and their level of achievement increases.

The educator has the means through a well-thought, rigorous, and relevant curriculum to diminish the nihilism that exists and is destroying the hope of young Black male students. By designing a curriculum through a context that appreciates and celebrates individual differences and cultures, Black males will not feel worthless but instead feel a valued part of society (Ward, 2017). As students build their self-confidence through mastery of learning objectives, students gain a sense of satisfaction as they become more competent: “The child’s need to be competent is satisfied,” and the result is that “motivation for further achievement is enhanced” (Brendtro et al., 2002, p.56).

When students do not have opportunities in which they can experience success, they become frustrated and may resort to inappropriate behavior or feelings of helplessness, leading to lower levels of academic achievement. The most important factor in increasing student attendance rates is the attitude that the students have towards their school; it must be somewhere the students want to be instead of somewhere they have to be (Gullatt & Lemoine, 1997). Teachers who adopt a culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) in the classroom understand the role that discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and gender plays in whether a student will be academically successful. Their teaching practices reflect on how the hegemonic culture can place roadblocks in the attainment of academic success of some groups of students and, therefore, design instruction to allow free expression of the individual differences of all students to achieve academic justice and equity (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

Students feel a greater attachment to school if they participate in extracurricular activities, obtain higher grades, and do not skip school. In contrast, the feeling of school connectedness is lower in schools that suspend students for relatively minor infractions as

compared to schools with more flexible and lenient discipline policies (McNeely et al., 2002).

Students are less likely to drop out of schools where they receive support from their teachers and have teachers that challenge them (Croninger & Lee, 2001). Instead of alienating the student, the teacher should get to know the student—what they have accomplished, what their experiences are, and what their culture is—as well as the learning styles and needs of each student. The teacher should then design a curriculum that embraces the strengths of each student in order to have an equitable and fair curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Students who have teachers who provide emotional and academic support, encouragement, care, and guidance tend to do better in school, are more sociable, and have less risk of dropping out (Croninger & Lee, 2001). This is especially true for students in very poor urban schools at risk of dropping out, not applying to college, and for having low self-confidence (Murray & Malmgren, 2005).

Schools that have opened their doors to role models serving as mentors have shown positive impacts on the grades, attendance, self-esteem, and behavior of students (Wyatt, 2009). Students tend to develop more self-confidence, aspire to go to college, are more social, are less likely to drop out if they feel their teacher has high expectations for their academic success, and they work harder to meet those expectations (Wentzel, 2003). High expectations are standard at most private institutions.

The buy-in at the administrative levels is crucial. The consciousness of any leader can have a tremendously beneficial effect on those in the organization. Raising a leader's consciousness about the mental health and state of its students, in this case Black

students, could have a significant effect on how they land in the spaces of a private school. Leadership is based on creating trust for group members to contribute. Conditions of trust, care, protection, and cohesion are necessary for effective leadership. The job of the leader is to provide support and safety to group members so that they feel liberated enough to perform their tasks in the most creative, passionate, and successful way (Psychogios & Dimitriadis, 2021).

Teachers and administrators who understand who their students are and appreciate the diversity of their cultural backgrounds are knowledgeable about their educational aspirations, attitudes toward their school, and the careers they plan to pursue after high school. These teachers and administrators are also more likely to develop a curriculum that will meet their needs and result in academic achievement for all their students (Sullivan et al., 2008).

Neuroscientific Impact

An increasing number of people suffer from unnecessary negative stressors, depression, alienation, and disengagement. Students are unequipped to deal with these problems. A self-confident, engaged citizen should be the result of education efforts and thus able to solve problems and efficiently deal with tasks, understand the human and non-human environment around them and their own actions dealing with it, and live their life with fulfillment and aligned with their values (Ruge et al., 2022). Black students have been facing unnecessary stressors all their lives.

The proposition put forth by Dulay and Burt (1977) and Krashen (1982) stated that students retain what they learn when the learning is associated with strong positive emotion. Cognitive psychology studies provide clinical evidence that stress, boredom,

confusion, low motivation, and anxiety can individually, and more profoundly in combination, interfere with learning (Willis, 2007). Neuroimaging and measurement of brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) showed us what happens in the brain during stressful emotional states. Reading glucose or oxygen use and blood flow, positron emission tomography (PET), and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) indicate activity in identifiable regions of the brain. These scans demonstrated that under stressful conditions information is blocked from entering the brain's areas of higher cognitive memory consolidation and storage. In other words, when stress activates the brain's affective filters, information flow to the higher cognitive networks is limited, and the learning process grinds to a halt (Willis, 2007).

Leadership in education and mental health education is failing; taking new steps in terms of addressing the brain's functions as it relates to stress and anxiety and intentionally building in, with the use of resources and capabilities to de-stress students, can create a better environment and aptitude for learning. Neuroscience enlightens us about how the brain works best and has the potential to influence a leader's approach to finding solutions, meeting goals, and improving innovation. Importantly, neuroscience knowledge helps us to be prepared, as so often when leadership fails, employees or humans, in general, have to deal with harsh consequences. Neuroscience shows the relationship between engagement and leadership. Neuroscience identifies what motivates the brain to perform at its best and that fear evokes the opposite (Ruge et al., 2022).

Despite a limited understanding of risk and resilience factors of anxiety, recent investigations have identified a number of personality factors and brain regions linked to anxiety. Among the personality factors, trait optimism has been consistently linked to

resilience against symptoms of affective dysregulation in general, and against anxiety in particular (Wu et.al. 2013). Carver posited that optimism may be the dispositional tendency for people to hold generalized favorable expectations about their future (Carver et al., 2010, as cited by Dolcos et al., 2016). Trait optimism has been acknowledged to promote general psychological well-being and to be particularly beneficial in times of adversity (Anderson, 1996; Carver et al. 2010; as cited in Dolcos et al., 2016).

Every person is unique, has their own genetic features and predispositions, and is exposed to different beneficial or non-beneficial environmental factors. These are mostly unshared, unique experiences and thus highly individual. Those experiences have an impact on vulnerability or protection against disorder or disease. They also give rise to unique perspectives that can be of value for problem-solving. Evidence that diverse teams provide better outcomes than uniform ones has been demonstrated repeatedly. Traumatic experience, be it extreme such as war or as “small” as early attachment wounds, influences individual vulnerability and, ultimately behavior. The “successes” or “failures” of different individuals can consequently not be compared at face value when the individual paths and prerequisites are so different. Waste of talent is unaffordable (Ruge et al., 2022).

Generally, neuroleadership refers to the realization of brain-based findings in institutions with effective leadership. The examination of leadership behaviors classified on indicators in terms of processes in the brain will reveal concrete results in terms of what should be done (Gocen, 2021). The first thing that should be done is to teach the leaders, the teachers, administration, staff, and all members who contribute to the fabric

of a school community about themselves to bring a more positive, open-minded, and understanding community together in support of our students.

Understanding One's Self

This section of the investigation relied heavily on the processes put forth by Angelina Walker. Her structure around the learning of each person's understanding of themselves, their concept of race, and how they view and create equity is invaluable.

This summary of Walker's work presented the findings of her three-tiered qualitative analysis of the impact of intentionally creating a space for school leaders to discuss race and equity. It invited school leaders to call attention to not only personal racial consciousness, identities and experiences, but also asked school and district leadership to act upon the larger economic, political, and societal concerns surrounding racial inequities that permeate educational institutions (Kvale & Brinkman, 1999).

Walker's study provided an overview that emphasized the importance of making sense of lived racial experiences (Wheatley & Frieze, 2011). The sensemaking of school leaders becomes more transformative in nature and deeper in knowledge through the intentional creation of a space to reflect and dialogue about personal and collective race, identity, and equity (Walker, 2017).

The three-tiered components of Walker's work were as follows:

1. A critical examination of specific sensemaking attributes within equity walkthrough journal entries and group reflection.
2. Analysis of textual and visual images to gain an overall understanding and to grasp specific details within the study.

3. Critical examination of hierarchical categories of sensemaking (from limited to transformative) within journal entries and group reflection.

Overall, the findings suggested that transformative sensemaking increased when creating a space to discuss race and equity in educational settings. The findings also suggested that creating a photo-driven personal racial timeline and participating in group reflection was where the most transformative sensemaking occurred (Walker, 2017). Walker's study included six major components:

1. Pre-Study Question
2. Equity Walkthrough in the Morning
3. Group Reflection (here, the information from the survey and interview will be compiled and shared with school leadership)
4. Equity Walkthrough in the Afternoon
5. End of Day Reflection
6. Member Checking Questionnaire

School leaders repeatedly refer to personal stories, lives, experiences, identities, and differences and make connections to their own educational environments when provided the opportunity and space to make sense of race and racial inequities in education (Walker, 2017). When the student and alumni stories and experiences are shared, the assumption is that there will be greater learning, insight, and understanding on the part of school leadership. This should lead to creating intentional spaces for our students, leaders, and teachers.

Establishing intentional spaces for school leaders as a group to reflect upon their lived racial experiences contributed the most: 63.2% of the reflections during group

reflection were categorized as transformative sensemaking (Walker, 2017). Walker's finding indicated that school leaders want extended time for racialized discourse. She posited the following findings: New school leaders were more likely to make sense in a transformative manner while participating in racialized sensemaking and discourse than both seasoned and other school leaders. Most school leaders, after utilizing intentional time and space to reflect upon and make sense of racial inequities in education, were ready to act and confront racism and oppression in their daily lives. However, Black school leaders were more likely to design solutions to racial inequities. Participants reported that being involved in the personal racial timeline and group reflection allowed them to understand various perspectives and stories and host difficult conversations about race and equity and participants reported that equity walkthroughs would be powerful tools to utilize during a regular school day (Walker, 2017).

Effective support for hosting courageous conversations about race and equity in schools included financial commitment to hosting conversations and creating systemic space for conversations to take place. Additionally, well-funded school districts are more likely to have adequate staffing to allow school psychologists/counselors the time to consult with teachers to support the translation of research into practice. As a result, students in schools with a greater research-to-practice gap, including those with significant populations of minority, Indigenous, and rural students, are less likely to benefit from these changes without intentional research attention and educational policies at state, provincial, or federal levels (Forman et al., 2013 & Valdez et al., 2019, cited in Wilcox, et al., 2020).

Summary

This chapter delved into the preconceived notions that Black families may have as they enter into predominantly White K–12 institutions. It began to detail the effect that race and being in an underrepresented minority can have on the mental health of Black students. It also detailed the necessity that Black students have to create a sense of belonging to insulate themselves from occurrences of racial discrimination and the constructs that they may have to make to be successful in PW institutions.

The chapter used two theories from Vygotsky: socio-cultural theory and social constructivism (1987). These theories describe content in which school communities and the students themselves play a large part in their success at their chosen institutions. Students themselves are influences, both positive and negative, creating experiences with the people in their community and the environment in which their learning takes place. These theories lead into the necessity for the students to create a strong sense of self through social collaboration to create a sense of community. This chapter also covered the institutional impact of raising racial and awareness in the community and specifically amongst the leadership of those communities. Additionally, the chapter detailed some of the neuroscientific impact that negative stressors, like racial experiences, can have on mental health and cognitive function, and how this can create a difficult environment for Black students to succeed in.

Lastly, the chapter focused on optimism, and its necessity for success when encountering difficulty, and how, with success in private K–12 institutions, students have a greater opportunity to affect their lifetime earnings, creating more financial opportunity. Chapter III focused on the methods used to gain insight into the Black graduated

students' constructs, the effect they may have had, and their recommendations for improving the success of future Black students in private K–12 institutions.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

In the 2019-2020 academic year there were 4.6 million students enrolled in approximately 31,000 K–12 private schools (Broughman, et al., 2019). Of those 4.6 million students, 66% were White and 9.4% identified as Black. According to the 2019 U.S. Census, more than 40% of the more than half of the nation’s population under the age of 16 identified as a racial or ethnic minority (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Roughly 5.7 million students were enrolled in private elementary and secondary schools in 2017, or about 10% of the U.S. student population, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Roughly 67% were White, while 11% were Hispanic, nine percent were Black, six percent were Asian, and the remaining seven percent were students from different ethnic groups or those who identify with two or more races (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). The racial diversity of this nation, which was already forecasted to grow upward in 2017, is accelerating faster than anticipated. The gap between diversity in the United States and the demographics of students in private schools prove that private schools are still segregated and predominately White and fail to mirror the racial diversity of the United States.

Studies have investigated how private schools plan to recruit and retain Black students and create a diversity, inclusion, accountability, and equity system (Walker, 2017; Wheatley & Frieze, 2011; Ward, 2017; Birts, 2017). This study sought to create an ongoing onboarding and retention awareness based on successes of the lived experiences of Black graduates and their families. This awareness may lead to a program that will incorporate restorative practices, peer advocates, and culturally responsive theories and

classrooms. This research sought to create a safe space and place to raise private K–12 community knowledge and acceptance to increase and secure the Black student population at private K–12 schools. The focus of the interviews was the creation of constructs that graduated Black students made to be successful in the face of significant challenges in predominantly White private schools. This study sought to improve the relationship between predominately White private schools and the Black community by offloading constructs that the Black students have made and potentially embedding those characteristics in the fabric of the private school community. By easing some of these challenges, it may create more Black graduates. Those graduates may then have a stronger belief in the private school system and be more likely to voice support of private schools in the Black community and to send their own children to private schools, thus increasing enrollment and retention of Black students in private schools.

Vygotsky’s sociocultural learning theory and his theory on social constructivism (1987) provided a lens into how students created systems of learning and consciousness to both insulate and educate themselves for success. With this lens, the interviews attempted to gain further insight into the themes shared between student experiences and identify any subtleties or driving themes that rose to the surface to create norms. To understand what the experiences of Black students have been and what they may have constructed and what they have determined are the needs for Black success in PWIs are, the researcher posed the following questions.

Research Question

The dissertation sought to discover the lived experiences of Black students and their families attending predominantly White private schools. The dissertation was guided by the following question:

RQ 1: What are the lived experiences of Black students that have graduated from predominantly White private K–12 schools?

The intent of this research question was to uncover the valuable experiences and constructs that Black students have made in order to cope with challenges, including race, and forward their success in their chosen institutions. This research may also help to address the negative effects of race-based experiences, lowering the students stress levels and creating a more favorable learning environment from which those Black students can succeed.

Setting of the Study

The study's setting was one on one audio-taped semi-structured interviews in order to gather the participants' narratives, carried out in various locations around the United States via Zoom. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect new, exploratory data related to the research topic, triangulate other data sources, and validate findings through member checking (Lincoln, 1985). All identifiable information was made confidential with names and places changed to protect those interviewed. Only the researcher has access to this information, and it is stored in an encrypted file under lock and key and was destroyed when the study was completed.

Description of Population

In this research, the target population was Black young adults who have graduated private schools and are now in successful post-secondary institutions and/or careers. The researcher used a convenient and purposeful sampling and instituted snowball sampling from the participants as recommended in Creswell & Creswell (2018). The inclusion criteria was Black young adults who have graduated from predominantly White private schools. No high school students or minors were interviewed. Participants were accessed through a convenient sample of associations and past students and families with whom the researcher was acquainted. Within this convenient sample, purposeful sampling was also employed. This refers to choosing participants and sites for data collection because they will inform understanding of the research problem and phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Design

This narrative design (Clandinin, 2006) was centered on semi-structured audio-taped interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method was used in the collecting of the experiences and insights of Black private school graduates to identify the social and academic constructs that they may have made to graduate from private K–12 institutions. This narrative research began with the experiences as expressed in the stories of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Narrative study falls within the realm of social constructivism or the philosophy that people’s stories capture the complexities and nuanced understanding of their significant experiences (Ntinda, 2019). In a narrative design is focused on taking a deeper dive into the lived experiences and stories of the participants to gain rich, deep context of their narratives to establish the essence of their meaning (Clandinin, 2006). The researcher used a purposeful, convenient sample to

obtain the initial participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Snowball sampling was used to gain more participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher used audio-taped one-on-one interviews that were 30 to 40 minutes to generate “insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing” (Merriam, 2009, p. 42). Zoom AI was used to transcribe the interviews that were then cleaned and double checked by the researcher. Member checking was also used as the cleaned the transcription was then sent to the participants who had 1 week to make revisions. After member checking was resolved, the transcripts were cleaned, organized into codes, and initial themes were derived. This data was then triangulated with the field notes to create validity. Field notes are widely recommended in qualitative research as a means of documenting needed contextual information (Phillipi & Lauderdale, 2017). The intention of the study was to gain information and themes that could be used to create programmatic influence on private schools to offload some of the constructs from these young adults that helped to make them successful graduates at PWIs.

Data Sources

One-on-one semi-structured video recorded interviews using Zoom were used to discover a deeper understanding of the challenges and solutions that the Black graduates faced. Participants were gained through a letter via personal emails that also contained the informed consent. Participants had to sign the informed consent and email it back to the researcher. As stated by Lincoln (1985), researchers can use semi-structured interviews to collect exploratory data related to a research topic, triangulate other data sources, or validate findings. Semi-structured interviews also allowed for follow-up questions to gain more layered insight. Field notes were also used to gain context and

observation during the interviews. Philippi and Lauderdale (2017) stated that field notes were essential for documenting participants' behavior and interactions.

Data Collection

An approximately 60-minute interview was conducted with each participant, and participation was gained from the convenient, purposeful sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher used snowball sampling, a sample that is referred to the researcher by other participants within the convenient sample to gain access to more participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this case snowball sampling was also used to avoid the need of access to institutional records, thus accessing the young adults directly. This interview was conducted by the researcher to dive deeper into their lived experiences at those schools. This interview was recorded via Zoom, transcribed by Zoom, then cleaned and double checked by the researcher. Through pre-coding and manual coding themes were revealed (Saldaña, 2013). These themes were categorized to determine trends and analysis. Interviews were used because the researcher was seeking to attain as vivid an account from the participants as possible without diluting the sample (Saldaña, 2013). The interviews were the primary source of data collection.

Participants were informed about the recording of the interview and given informed consent via email and emailed back to the researcher. Consent was obtained via the informed consent form (Appendix B).

The research took two weeks to complete transcriptions of the interviews. The interviews were transcribed via Zoom and cleaned, then were sent to the participants for member checking once complete. All transcriptions of the interviews and transcripts were presented to some or all participants for feedback (Varpio et al., 2017). Member checking

was also utilized. Participants were given one week to review and verify the transcriptions. Once the transcriptions were approved by the participants, coding and analysis began. The researcher first organized the transcripts into codes and distilled them. Codes were organized and themes were created by identifying recurring patterns. The researcher used field notes to create needed observations during the interview were then triangulated with the coding for verification.

Ethical Considerations

Participants received a letter via Lynn email asking for consent and providing any necessary details, such as purpose of the study, time, place, protections, and method of interaction (interview). Informed consent was presented in the email. All Lynn University guidelines were adhered to regarding human subjects and research, including purpose of the research, participants' role, risks and benefits, and the voluntary nature of the study. There were minimal risks; however, if a participant felt uncomfortable, the participants had the ability to opt out at any time, and measures were taken to preserve the participants' privacy. There are no benefits, but participants may enjoy knowing they were assisting in increasing the literature regarding Black students successfully graduating from K-12 predominately White private schools. Once they agreed, the identities and personal information of the participants were anonymized, names became pseudonyms, and places were changed to pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities. Data was stored under lock and key in the researchers' office on a computer with a password that only the researcher knew. After the study was published the data was scrubbed and deleted per Lynn University policy.

Risks

The risks to the participants were minimal, and allowances were made for participants to exit the interview or to refuse to participate at any time. There were no penalties if participants wanted to quit the interviews and audiotapes would have been destroyed. This was communicated in the informed consent and reviewed before the interviews commenced.

Benefits

Participation in this study did not offer any benefits. However, participants may have enjoyed the contribution to research that may help other Black students and their families be successful, more comfortable, and to remain in private schools through graduation, increasing their ability to attend high-level secondary institutions, thus increasing the opportunity for Black wealth and the potential to strengthen the Black community's belief in the benefit of private school education.

Assumptions

The researcher assumed that there would be certain difficulties gaining participants given the sensitive nature of the topic. The researcher hoped to promote healthy conversation around this topic and was flexible to any potential amendments the participants offered. The researcher also assumed that he might encounter resistance from some of the purposeful samplings because of the nature of the relationship between the researcher and interviewees as he served in an administrative and disciplinary capacity for some of the participants.

The researcher assumed that the data collected would yield truths about the successful attributes and experiences that former students and their families have

manifested and experienced. The researcher assumed that the students would express the need for intentional onboarding, mentoring, and inclusionary programs. The researcher also assumed that there may be resistance to the request for interviews as his position as a White male administrator, and his relationship to some of the students as their former disciplinarian/administrator may interfere with collecting data.

Bias

Bias was a concern for the study and comes from the researcher's experience as a Dean of Students and position as Assistant Head of Middle School at the time of the study. Over the years, the researcher has developed relationships with some of the potential participants. Several significant events have influenced this study, and the frequency of those events involving the care, inclusion, and relationship-building with Black students and their families has been the researcher's job to address. Those relationships and subsequent conversations have been, throughout the years, formative and moving. Because of this personal experience and knowledge, it is possible that the researcher may interpret the data in ways that confirm already held beliefs.

Role of Researcher

Because of the researcher's relationships with some of the participants, the researcher clearly defined his role as a researcher only. To mitigate this, bracketing and reflexivity will be used. Creswell and Miller (2000) state that the researcher can use bracketing early in their research process and reflexively proceed researcher suspend bias and reflect on the meaning and interpretation of the research. This can help the researcher reflect on the cultural and social influences in their interpretation.

Validity

Validity and reliability were tantamount to this study due to the sensitive nature of the research and the background of the participants. Validity of the information was addressed through member checking. Member checking is a process where data transcripts are presented to some or all participants for feedback (Varpio et al., 2017). Purposeful sampling was also used to replicate and stabilize the study (Merriam, 2009).

The researcher maintained a professional demeanor throughout the process and was transparent in all communications about the research and its intent. Informed consent was reviewed for each participant. Dependable notes were used to ensure the ability to replicate the study.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness in the study, member checking—the ability of participants to validate the transcriptions—was again used. Triangulation was also used by cross-referencing the researcher’s notes. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999 as cited in Carter et al., 2014).

How Data will be Secured

The data collected was stored under lock and key in the researcher’s office until the study was published and then shredded after the completion of the study.

Anonymity & Confidentiality

Protection of the participants’ confidentiality was a major consideration. Thus, all answers and personal information were confidential. All personal information was

anonymized. Names were changed to protect the participants who participated in the interviews. School names were not used.

Quality of Data

The interview format of this study allowed for the authentic stories and explanations of the participants to be at the forefront. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for more detailed and descriptive accounts of the participants' methods of success and their successful graduation from independent K–12 schools. The researcher was seeking to have as vivid an account of the participant's experiences as possible without diluting the information (Saldaña, 2013).

Data Analysis

Student interviews were transcribed, via Zoom, cleaned and double checked by the researcher. The researcher then organized the interviews into codes to generate themes. The resulting transcripts were also pre-coded. Saldaña (2013) described pre-coding as “circling, highlighting, bolding, underlining, or coloring rich or significant participant quotes or passages that strike you—those ‘codable moments’ worthy of attention” (p. 19). These repeated words or phrases from the respondents were then additionally used to determine themes once coded (Saldaña, 2013). This allowed the researcher to develop themes and reveal relevant insights in response to the questions posed (Appendix C). This may have created deeper connection and reveal more relevant insights as to the pattern and commonality of the responses eliciting the details of the construct that the graduates have made. Member checking was also used.

The researcher also used triangulation from transcriptions with the manually recorded field notes to use multiple types of data to create verification of the data.

Philosophical Lens

Social constructivism and sociocultural learning (Vygotsky, 1987) are two theories that both emphasize the relationship between social interactions and learning. Social constructivism emphasizes honoring a multiplicity of cultures because when “learners’ home cultures are honored and validated, a dialogue would open fixed boundaries so that “students could freely examine different types of knowledge in a democratic classroom where they could freely examine their perspectives and moral commitments” (Hirtle, 1996, p. 92). Sociocultural learning theory makes the correlation between social interactions and cognitive development. Student learning is a social process, and cognitive functions are formed based on interactions with teachers or more skilled peers. As explained by Cherry (2022), “Sociocultural theory focuses not only on how adults and peers influence individual learning but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes affect how learning takes place” (p. 1). Clandinin inferred that narrative research falls within the realm of social constructivism through people’s lived stories to capture the complexities and nuanced understanding of their significant experiences (Clandinin, 2006). The researcher used these theories as the basis to justify the incorporation of interviews to extract the construct of those graduated Black students.

Culturally relevant pedagogy is an educational practice that both builds on the notion that learning differs based on culture and that teachers can directly influence student achievement by incorporating their students’ cultural needs into their instructional practices (Ladson-Billings, 2021). As stated by Bond (2017), “Demographic shifts in school enrollment within the United States necessitate preparing preservice teachers to

teach students with backgrounds that differ from their own ethnically, linguistically, racially, and economically” (p.161).

It is the influence of these theories that has led the author to believe that students can and have created their successes in the environments that they are in. Intrinsicly, all students are resourceful and capable. This research sought to establish what and how Black students in predominantly White independent schools cope with and create operating systems and pathways to success that ultimately help them succeed in the face of many difficulties.

Delimitations

The initial barrier to this research may come from the potential reluctance of the participants to discuss their experiences. Because of the sensitive nature surrounding the topic of race and potential discrimination, or at the very least lack of opportunity, participants may not want interviews to take place as the data and information that is revealed may bring back negative experiences. The second barrier may be that the students may not want to participate in the process, as their experiences and desire for privacy may preclude them from divulging stories of a personal nature. This may include their biases against the school and/or researcher. A potential solution to this barrier may be to provide questions to the interviewees before the interview.

Additionally, delimitations may be that the researcher did not interview any staff or faculty members. The research will not include White alumni experiences. No other minorities were interviewed for this study.

Limitations

The sample size was small due to the small number of Black families enrolled at some institutions and their availability to the researcher. The request for information and interviews or surveys may be affected by the author's position as a White male administrator and his position as some of the student's former disciplinarian, which may interfere with collecting data. It is important to note that no other demographics were interviewed for this study. This study may be applied to any demographic who is in the minority at a private K–12 institution.

Summary

The methodology the researcher used in this study was a narrative design of qualitative interviews to create in-depth stories, findings, and authentic responses from the participants. Using two of Vygotsky's theories, social constructivism and socio-cultural theory (1987), the researcher sought to understand those lived experiences in order to explain the necessity for some of those constructs and onboard any relevant insights discovered by the research into programmatic changes, as they relate to the Black student experience for those K–12 private institutions. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted, centered around the research question, to add depth and detail to the lived experiences and to understand the social and academic constructs of the group.

A convenient, purposeful sample, as well as snowball sampling, was used to engage the participants in a semi-structured interview, allowing for a more detailed and authentic explanatory view of themes. Interviews were conducted through Zoom conferencing, with consent, and transcribed by Zoom, then manually cleaned and coded.

Pre-coding and triangulation were also used to create validity (Saldaña, 2013). These transcripts were coded for analysis. This analysis created categories from the interview transcripts, revealing a clearer perspective of the research nuances, details, and experiences. Using interview findings offered insights and a more robust understanding of the research itself.

The study took place in various location around the Southwest United States, with robust protections and privacies in place to protect the participants' confidentiality. Ethical considerations were addressed with informed consent and privacy considerations.

The role of the researcher has been delineated. The researcher's role, despite former professional relationships with some of the participants, was solely that of researcher. The researcher acknowledged potential biases by using bracketing and reflexivity to moderate them. Purposeful sampling and member checking were used to create validity and reliability. Member checking was also used to fortify trustworthiness along with triangulation.

Limitations could be potential bias on the part of the researcher because of the aforementioned relationships, the researcher's personal experiences, and challenges accessing reluctant participants. Delimitations were the limited scope of the research on only Black students in private K–12 institutions. However, the researcher chose to focus on this population because of the researcher's personal experience and the significantly low numbers of Black students in private schools.

In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.,

I do not see how we will ever solve the turbulent problem of race confronting our nation until there is an honest confrontation with it a willing search for the truth and a willingness to admit the truth when we discover it. (1968)

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

This study explored the lived experiences of students who graduated from private K–12 institutions and entered colleges and universities. The study sought to understand the needs of future Black students in private K–12 institutions by examining those experiences and what constructs those Black graduated students have made outside of and apart from the institutions they attended. Understanding those needs is critical to the onboarding and retention of future students. This chapter revealed the results of that research based on one essential research question:

What are the lived experiences of Black students that have graduated from predominantly White private K–12 schools?

This chapter's analysis directly addressed this question by examining the researcher's narrative interviews. Pre-coding, manual coding, and the triangulation process were used to analyze the transcriptions, and field notes were also used to aid the triangulation process. The demographics of the participants were presented in table form.

Creswell & Creswell (2018) recommended that between five and 25 participants be interviewed and when the researcher begins to hear the same answers, the researcher is said to have reached saturation and can then leave the field. The researcher began to hear the same stories after the third participant and left the field after the fifth interview.

The interviews were conducted the week of June 9th, 2024, via Zoom. The participants were garnered through a convenient, purposeful sampling, with snowball sampling used after IRB approval. Saturation was achieved after the third interview; however, two more interviews were conducted to create confirmation (Saunders, et.al.

2018). Data collection was ended at this point, as the participants all recorded similar responses in the interviews.

Bias

Creswell and Miller (2000) stated that the researcher can use bracketing early in their research process, and reflexively proceed, to suspend bias and reflect on the meaning and interpretation of the research. Bracketing and reflexivity were used to stem bias throughout the research process. Notes were used by the researcher to identify potential bias and reflect on the researcher's experience and metacognitive thoughts. This process created a safety net of sorts for the researcher to review his own process, adding to the bracketing experience.

Generally, reflexivity suggests an awareness of a qualitative researcher's self-influence on the research (Probst, 2015). The researcher evaluates and understands how their influence on the study design, data collection and interpretation of data shapes the direction of the findings (Finlay, 2002). In using reflexivity, the researcher was also better able to maintain a non-anxious presence and to remain as neutral as possible.

Participants

As recommended by Creswell (2018), at five participants the researcher met saturation. All the locations and the names of the schools that they attended were kept confidential, as were their specific ages. The pseudonyms given to them were Gary, Marc, Mike, Cameron, and Grace. All of the participants graduated to attend a university or college, identified as Black, and attended a private, predominantly White, K–12 institution. Table 1 described the participant demographics.

Table 1

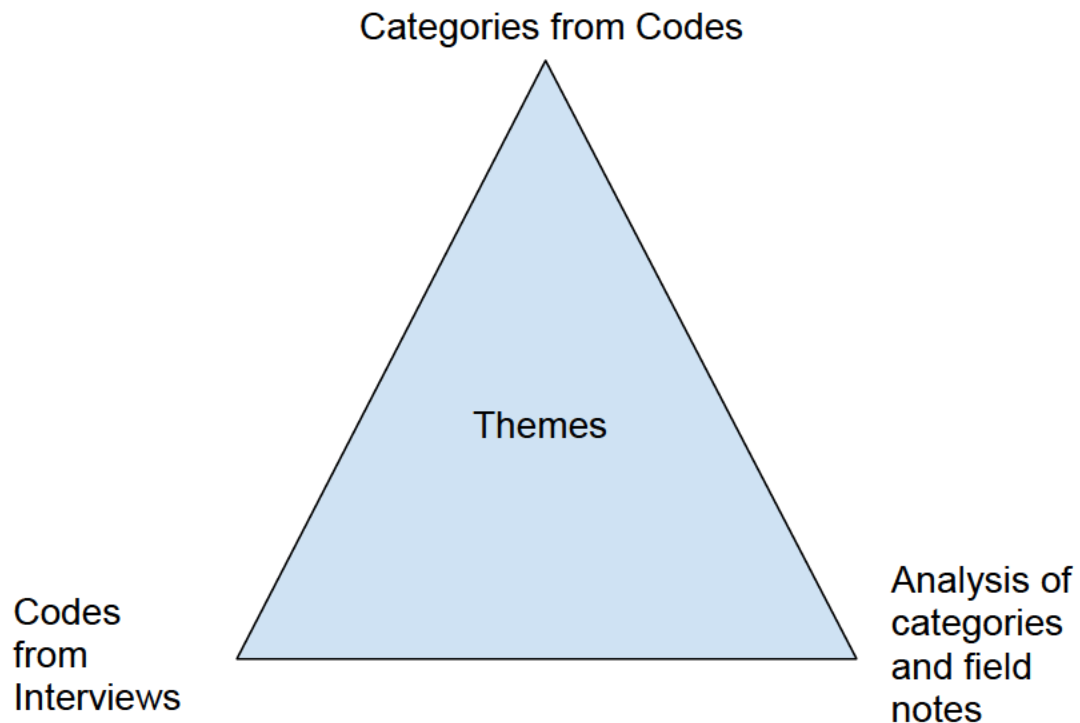
Participant Demographics

Participants all under 24	Identify as Black	Time spent at institution	Gender	Number of Black students in your class	Graduated to university or college
Gary	Yes	6 years	Male	3/65	yes
Marc	Yes	7 years	Male	6/100	yes
Mike	Yes	12 years	Male	12/200	yes
Cameron	Yes	13 years	Female	7/85	yes
Grace	Yes	13 years	Female	13/96	yes

Data Collection

The primary research data in this study consisted of five participants who were Black and had attended private, K–12, predominantly White institutions and graduated to attend a university or college. At the conclusion of a week of interviews, all interviews were transcribed via Zoom, manually cleaned, and given to each participant for member checking. As outlined in the informed consent, participants were given 7 days to assure the validity of the transcription before the researcher began pre-coding. After pre-coding, each interview was manually coded and compared to the pre-coding for comparison and analysis. Pre-coding served to be valuable to the researcher as it revealed initial codes that were precursors to later codes and themes that would be used to create categories. Field notes were used at this time to aid in triangulation. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999, as cited in Carter, et al., 2014).

Figure 1 *Triangulation Method*



Findings

In this portion of the chapter the experiences of the graduated Black students from private K–12 institutions were presented with analysis. The participants discussed their experiences openly and in admirable detail, recounting a multitude of experiences from years spent in the predominantly White private school system. Those experiences came down to three themes with nine sub-sections, three per theme, that added depth and detail to those themes. Those themes were Race as a Difference, Types of Support, and Needs for Black Families.

Race as a Difference

All the young adults who participated in this study expressed that at various stages in their time spent at predominantly White private schools and in various ways

they were made to feel different because of their race from the majority population at the school.

Gary elaborated on one of the ways this feeling came about for him as it related to micro and macro-aggressions:

It's like, getting comments about, like, how dark you are. When they turned the lights off, people are like "where'd Gary go?"

Or Marc, who stated:

I can take that even further, I've been called the hard 'R' n-word at playtime when we were younger. Or, the time where, like, I guess a switch just flipped in his brain and he went straight racist on me, like "How are you talking to me like this? You're Black...you're not on Varsity and you're Black, you can't even play basketball.

Or Grace who communicated this from her experience in third grade:

She said I wasn't pretty because my skin was too dark.

Grace added:

I definitely saw myself as different from the majority. Just, what I look like, my skin was a different color, my hair was a different texture.

Mike, separately and independently from the other participants, communicated an experience nearly identical to Gary's:

It was the way people were allowed to do things, like, how can you even make jokes about skin color? Oh-turn the lights off, where'd Mike go? Where's Mike at? It's like, man, we should be past this.

Additionally, Cameron stated these examples:

...like, can I touch your hair? Or, you're so smart for a Black girl. You take all these AP classes and they seem surprised by it.

As Representatives. The students also communicated that micro-aggressions were a part of their lives while at their institutions, even in how they were looked at as representatives in the classroom for Black culture and experience at a young age.

Gary explained that:

Teachers would ask for your perspective about certain subjects around Black people, and you having to speak on their behalf, it's tough, you're just a child. I mean, you can't really speak for a whole Black population as a 10-year-old child.

Or Mike, who echoed this experience:

It was always in an English class or a history class that we're talking about slavery, or bad things happening to Black people. "Mike, how do you feel about that?" It seemed that they wanted us to be the first person to tell their opinion on how you feel, while I understand that my race is involved in this-but having to be singled out like this on debates and topics like this, it's crazy. You know, reading derogatory words in books, and people looking at you, trying to see how you feel, people making jokes about not taking certain historical things seriously, you know, that's a lot going on in the mind.

Mike went further saying:

Black doesn't also mean that their color means that they are entitled to having an opinion on those things. We could be hearing it just as , or hearing or learning about it just as the same way as the other non-White or White students are. So, you're singled out, for your opinion, like it has some weight, but it doesn't make

sense. Our experiences can't be that much different, like, we grew up in the same times that other kids did, right?

Cameron elaborated on the type of representation she witnessed in the curriculum:

Teachers, they try to focus on slavery, and like the murdering and sadness of Black and Brown communities. We need to learn about communities without portraying them as poor and murderers...

Grace echoed the need for more positive stories representing Black people;

You learn more about Black oppression, slavery, and all the ways Black people have been discriminated against. We need more positive Black history and Black stories.

Mike elaborated on the effect of some of the Black stories represented in the curriculum:

I felt like every single book that the teacher chose had something derogatory for Black people and words everywhere...like derogatory terms. In class other kids would literally get excited to hear the words and say the hard 'R', and the 'A' and it's like, extremely offensive. Our teachers would say you have to read every word in this book to get the full experience. We don't have to say that.

When asked a follow up question about implied permissibility around the offensive words he read, or if reading the words aloud made other students more likely to say the words, Mike responded:

100% that what they thought. You could see it, too. When the word is coming up, they get giddy and excited. Teachers saying they're allowed to read it in class, of course they're gonna go outside the class and think they have the permission to

say that around us. But in turn, as a Black person, if we have any physical reaction toward that word or person, it's our fault. We're the aggressor.

Financial Disparity: Culture Shock. Another difference that the participants communicated was that of the socio-economic differences that they experienced, some even stating that it was a culture shock.

Marc stated:

It was a culture shock. What took me back was the amount of wealth I was surrounded by. There was an amount of money that I had never seen before. It was a clear difference in wealth disparity. I'd go over to their houses and see how they lived their lives were so drastically different. I remembered one time in seventh grade that I lied about where I lived. They all had bigger, nicer houses. I felt kinda separated. It was so stupid.

Cameron stated that:

I would go to my friends' houses, and they would have elevators in them. I come from a single parent household. So, that is a culture shock, especially for a child not necessarily understanding the social economic difference between you and your classmates.

Mike concurred with the financial gap in his interview, stating:

It was a culture shock [the finance]. But, needed, right? Because when we get into the real world, there's no telling who we are going to run into, or who we're gonna see.

Grace expressed:

I bet, probably by the time where I'd be having play dates with friends, you'd go to their houses, and you'd notice that they were much bigger, or that they have a staff that's working at their home. Oh, wait, I don't have this at my house.

Gary elaborated that:

So, I'm young and I was really aware of how much people were paying for school. But, then, when you'd go to people's houses, everybody has, you know, two story houses. None of those people were renting. Where I'm from if you have a two story house that's millions of dollars. Also, the cars, the Range Rovers, the sports cars, it was cool to see...but I'd say have and have nots. There would be nannies picking people up after school. I was always in after care because my parents didn't usually pick me up. Most of the kids in aftercare were people of color.

Because of the experiences, both from the race-related macro-and-micro aggressions to the financial disparity, the participants communicated their feelings and reactions as outcomes from these events.

Gary explained:

But I feel like you get this, not self-hatred, but like a feeling lesser than because you realize that you don't have all these things that everybody else has. You feel lesser than them when in reality, my family was doing perfectly fine.

Mike elaborated that:

There was a kind of breaking-a-barrier point, where, okay, there are a lot of people. They're a lot different from me and from the people that I know.

Cameron expressed further, about some interactions in her family spaces:

When I came back to my family spaces, I would be called things like an Oreo, or asked, “You’re so friendly with these White people, why are you doing that?” So, it was looked down upon in my community for me to be in those spaces. I’m questioning, do I really belong in those private school spaces? If everyone around me is telling me that I don’t, including people who look like me, and people who don’t look like me as well.

Grace went further in describing her physical reaction:

I guess it contributed to my anxiety. I’d say definitely, I started to feel socially anxious, and not just about my skin color.

Marc talked about his experience and how it made him interact in the classroom:

Part of me felt unseen by my teachers and classmates, I just kinda ended up shrinking into myself academically and pushing myself into a corner. I felt like I had nothing intelligent to say or add, and that I was going to say something that was incorrect, then to be viewed as stupid, or less than...and when you’re in that environment-and you pair that with academic insecurity, I guess you could say they just don’t go together...Every class then, I have, there’s no space even for me to enter.

Acquiring a State of Mind. Each participant echoed a state of mind that they needed to create that was necessary to combat the experiences that they were having.

Cameron explained her state of mind that she acquired as a result of racial interactions:

I’ve experienced so many microaggressions that I just kind of tune them out like it’s any other day.

Marc also echoed a similar state of mind approach:

Like when I was getting verbally assaulted by that guy, I just forgot about it the next day, I'm the person to let it pass and let things flow through me. I never like to get too riled up about everything. I'm kind of in a neutral state all the time. So, let's say something would happen to me, the next day I wouldn't even care about it. At least, that was back then. Now I've grown a little bit, and I deal with those types of things better, but back then I would just let it slide.

Gary expressed his state of mind this way when faced with microaggressions and how he had to deal with them:

Ok, I gotta represent Black people, my family and myself in a way that I want to be looked at, as you know, what the stereotype is. You know, loud ghetto, more violent, things like that, varying away from the stereotypes, which, in a sense, I don't think is very healthy. I feel like, as a kid you could learn just how to be yourself, but that's just the deck of cards you'd been handed, you know.

Later Gary also expressed this about his state of mind as he returned to this topic:

I just kind of bottled it up, and just kind of pushed it aside. I might make a joke back and then need to move on.

Grace explained her approach this way:

I tried to not let my feelings of anxiety rule my emotions: to recognize that because I may look differently doesn't mean that I have any less value than any other student, or any less reason to be at the school, you know, I do belong there.

Mike's state of mind was communicated this way:

I wasn't really with any of that [microaggressions] like the way some White kids thought it was. They grew up saying it together, or like as jokes with their friend groups. And then when they see a Black person, they're not thinking, or it slips their mind because they're so used to it. I was not OK with it at all.

When asked if he made his displeasure known he responded:

Oh, 100%. You have to. Because if you don't they're gonna take advantage of you. You have to set a boundary.

Types of Support

As a result of these events and understandings the participants recognized that they sought out support to combat their experiences and strive for success in similar ways. Some support they needed to create themselves, some came from their families, some from their friends or groups. There was a lack of support from the schools they attended.

Cameron first explained why the creation of spaces for Black students was necessary as there were few people like her in the school:

We had only one Black woman who was the Spanish teacher, and one who was in admissions...that was it.

Cameron further explained her circumstance:

There were no clubs at my school. There were no affinity groups. We created those spaces for ourselves. We did have a Black dance teacher, we would stay after school, with her. We also got Student Council, oddly enough. We wanted to be in a leadership role on campus, so, we had to know which opportunities we

could thrive in. I saw other Black peers thriving there before me, so thought that might be a good space for me to step into.

Later when asked if there was support for her, she replied:

There was support but it wasn't necessarily representative of me.

Cameron further explained her efforts to create spaces for students like her.

I co-founded the first Black Students Organization, my senior year. We had been trying since I was a freshman, but they refused on the basis that it was exclusive. But we did it during Covid. Just prior to the Black Lives movement, so, it seemed strategic [on their part] to let it happen, because we had been trying.

Mike reflected a similar circumstance that he was involved in:

There were not many of us, you know, minorities or people of color, not many teachers as well. How could we make up our own club? We had a Black math teacher, we had a Black Dean, We had one Black history teacher, those were the teachers who were leading. The math teacher started a club when I was there called Club 42, after Jackie Robinson. We would meet every Wednesday to say, "How you guys feeling, you know?" They just wanted us to feel as comfortable as possible on the campus. It made us feel like we were getting to the point that we were the same. We had a club now, too.

Grace elaborated on her environment as well:

There weren't many of us. It was not only the students but, we didn't have many Black teachers, there weren't many Black administrators.

She went on to name a similar avenue of support:

We had the African American Cultural exchange, or ACES. Black students would get together and share our experiences, like in life, positive or negative. I personally viewed it as an outlet and a kind of a way to affirm that the feelings that I was feeling wasn't just me. Maybe my experiences were not unique.

Marc added this to the tapestry of spaces that students used:

I was part of the Black Student Union; I was actually president. It was more of an excuse for all of us to get together and hang out, we just wanted to use this as a space to be ourselves and catch a break from maybe putting up a facade throughout the entire day. I had to, I had to do a lot of code-switching, I didn't want not to fit in and be too Black around these White people. When I would be in our Black Student Union meetings, I would be able to turn it off and be the person I'm more comfortable with.

Cameron echoed something similar about the necessity of code-switching from space to space indicated a difference in spaces that the students occupied:

There's a debate about whether people should code-switch or not as it relates to being authentically you. Are you bringing your full self into space that actually needs you. I'm still dealing with how I show up in different spaces, code-switching was all I knew in balancing between being two different people in a sense, so figuring how I could be authentically me.

Gary intimated that his school didn't offer support and that he wished he had gone outside the school for more interactions:

If there were (clubs) I wasn't aware of any. In terms of outside of school there were the Jack and Jill clubs, that's where the Black middle-class families went. I

would hear other Black students talk about how they knew each other, and it was the summer camps that I kind of missed out on, I kind of missed out on being able to bond with the kids, and it's Black culture.

Families as Support. In terms of support and authentic spaces, the participants indicated their families as different forms of support:

Marc indicated that his mother was highly involved in his support:

She was very active, like, very active when it comes to school, and being in the school environment, she would always be at games, she knew all my teachers, she would come when we had events. So, she was a big part of helping see me through. She would try and meet with everybody I had a class with at the PTA meetings. I think that her involvement in my academic education is a big reason why I saw it through.

Marc also said this:

To try to find people to lean on in those times, preferably those who share your experiences, and speak up about it. More importantly, share those things with your family, with counselors and with other people.

Additionally, Marc said:

I was lucky enough to have a friend group where I would look forward to seeing the other Black kids, in other grades that were still there. Those people kept me there, that and my internal desire to graduate.

Gary indicated his sister as a role model:

I always looked up to my sister. She had great grades, she went to a super prestigious private school...you saw what she was doing, and you were like,

Okay, I can't really do less than that. But it did set a high standard that my parents had for both of us.

Mike had this to say about his about family:

I would say the people in Club 42 and my family. You know there's a very, very small amount of people in your class every week. All the Black kids know everybody, you know a lot about them, too. There are not many of us. It really helps to get to know who you are and where you need help. And then parents get to meet other parents. If we have some things in common that we are working on, parents are going to put us together to help work on that together.

Cameron expressed that she felt like a motivating factor for her younger brother, as well as benefiting from the support she had received from older classmates:

I felt like I was making a pathway and being a role model for my younger brother, as well as the girls who came before me making a way and showing me opportunities and scholarships that I didn't know about.

Cameron also elaborated on her friends as a form of reciprocal support:

I'm here to support my friends, who are also in this situation, and having similar feelings to myself. Being in these spaces—creating these spaces for each other—it's kind of a way to support ourselves through these experiences, even if our school, surroundings, and peers were not supporting us.

Goals and Will Power. In addition to their families and friends the participants also echoed the manifestation of goals and personal will.

Cameron described it like this:

It's like, Okay, here I am. There are costs to the situation where you had to weigh the cost benefits. It wasn't really my choice. I'm setting myself up to go to law school. So, knowing my life plan, knowing the plan I have for myself, do higher education it was. I need to continue to put myself into these spaces and make these sacrifices. I also see the comparison to my peers who didn't go to private institutions or private schools and didn't have the best access to education, and there is a difference. I'm seeing people graduate from college and I'm also seeing people get themselves into bad situations or working 9 to 5, and being in the same spot and not having the same opportunities as those who are getting degrees...so law school is the goal.

Marc expressed his will and his goals this way:

What made me successful were my dreams. Personally, I want to work in music. So, my dreams of someday having a successful life in music kept me going. I would tell a kid to do what you can do to put yourself in the best position to achieve that.

Later in a follow up question Marc referenced his personal drive:

Even if I were the only Black person in the whole school, I still was going to see it through to graduate. That's what cards were dealt for me. I wanted to graduate, and I wanted to go to an HBCU. And my school was going to put me in a better position to do that.

Grace continued the theme:

I remained successful by always trying to do my best and pursuing my interest. I was learning things that actually intrigued me, that sparked my interest.

Later from a follow up question:

I think it's partially from my parents and partially from myself. I always just try to, to prove that I belonged.

Mike expressed his personal will this way:

Recognition helped. When you do the things that you are supposed to do behind closed doors, people come to bring it to light. It's the best feeling ever because you feel like everything you've done is paying off, and you're doing the right thing. It also incentivized me to continue doing that thing, I want to get that again, right?

And also in the response:

Whatever you get, your work ethic was the definer of success.

Mike additionally said:

It looked like waking up early and practicing after practice. Go home and do test corrections, even if I got a 92, get the best score possible. If I have extra time, don't pick up a video game, do more homework earlier in the week. Trying to always find constant ways to progress.

Gary stated his manifestation of personal will in a greater context:

I think the idea of Black excellence and raising above all the people that aren't a person of color, is what drives us through what is. It's what gets us there, seeing it as something to conquer rather than something that's holding us back. It keeps you hungry, to conquer and have that Black excellence.

Needs for Black Families

Communication with Black Parents.

Grace communicated this about her thoughts on addressing race issues in the school:

The administration needs to have a way of addressing aggressions and implementing anti-racist agendas, with no tolerance for discrimination, it should be made clear to the families.

Marc addressed race through the need for involvement, by the institution, in communication with Black families:

I never told my parents about the racism that I experienced. They probably knew it existed but as far as they know, nothing ever happened to me that was that bad. I think the Black parents need to be ready for the experience and that it's going to happen.

Gary explained a similar situation:

I never did tell my parents about them, because I'm only half aware that I'm going through them (microaggressions). Parents, as adults know that these things are gonna happen, and maybe they're waiting for the kids to mention it before having that conversation, but they might have been dealing with it for a few years now...not all Black parents have been to PWI's. Do they have a full understanding of what a Black child is going through?

Mike echoed a similar sentiment in terms of getting Black parents more involved:

If the parents, if the loving and accepting community can start with the parents and it automatically can get passed down to the kids. If you have your parent saying great things, and meeting great parents, you are better set up to meet kids your age, better also, maybe to break down some of those barriers. Then the

parents can have the conversation with their children like, hey, you know it took me some effort to put myself out there, for this parent event or fundraiser, but if I can do it, you can do it.

Cameron added this about the importance of having strong parent groups:

It takes a village. It's the [Black] community. I think that's the biggest driving successor. If you don't have other co-parents—like, three of my mom's best friends, those are my moms, too. The amount of time they spent taking care of me, taking me where I need to go, and supporting my family. Helping understand all aspects, going to fundraising opportunities, scholarship awareness, things like this are crucial for success.

Cameron added this about how the above aspects contribute to student success, but institutions need to outfit those same students with the tools to succeed:

It's like how scholarship programs drop these kids of color off in completely new, predominantly White spaces, and doesn't give them the tools to succeed. It applies all throughout the education. Students need things like access to transportation, lunch programs; like not enforcing a no sharing policy when a kid can't afford lunch, these are only some of the things playing into and hindering and harming children's success in these spaces.

Curriculum Changes. Grace went further addressing some of the hindrances that Black students faced and how to address them, particularly in the curriculum.

More positive Black stories. You learn about Black oppression, and slavery and all the ways that Black people have been discriminated against in American

history, rather than learning about them in other ways. There can be other more positive ways. You can teach a more diverse curriculum in that way.

Cameron also communicated the way the curriculum could affect the understanding of Black culture, and the need to create understanding through curriculum:

I also think that if children are exposed to communities, like us, through a different light in literature, through projects, through research, then it feeds into the understanding of our communities. If you're feeding negative stereotypes, by the work that you're assigning, that's ultimately fueling and (essentially) voting on the society's devices.

Mike concurred and added more on the effect of negative curriculum aspects:

It's during those slavery discussions, it felt like being antagonized, when people say, why didn't they rebel, or choose to stop? Like, you think they did not consider that? That it wasn't thought about? Systematically, it was impossible. Maybe [teachers] have a thought about how those things/words can have an effect. It happens, you know, and in certain classes. It can take a toll. It gets tiring.

Gary supported this by communicating a unique difference in how things are taught in predominantly White institutions and what could change to foster a healthier space for students, especially in a more positive approach:

Black is excellent. It's amazing, you must look at the culture. There's a difference between celebrating a culture and teaching a culture. It's when you're learning about, or when you're being celebrated about. Do you celebrate Juneteenth in the classroom or just teach it? It's like, you're just learning about Juneteenth and seeing all these black and white photos of slavery and and now kids are giving

you side-eye, it's night and day, the difference. I feel like the energy about learning about Black events has a more negative tone. You can still celebrate, it's like a party and you're still learning about stuff, an example would be like Hanukkah— it's a celebration, it's a different energy... We have a lot to be proud of, and I feel like it's a different energy learning about slavery. Or just American history around Black people.

The participants each indicated that the institutions that they attended prepared them for academic success but that social education, or investment in the institution, may have been a challenge.

Marc said this about experience and his preparation:

A lot of Black boys don't care about education, and I was a victim to that, I needed motivation. I didn't really care about the stuff I was learning. But looking back, I do have more of an appreciation. I feel like a lot of the stuff that I learned in high school overly prepared me for my university. I took Spanish 5 and started at university in Spanish 2. Like the Math classes, they were a breeze. I had already learned it. And essays, because of the writing in high school, I was able to knock out essays in a matter of days because we wrote so much in high school, so I was definitely prepared.

Grace echoed her experience indicating that there was a lack in addressing some social and identity/associative needs:

Academically, I was able to succeed, after graduation, because of the tools given to me like how to write a proper essay and math and all that stuff...[socially] I

wish I would have had more of a community of Black students and Black families, especially in Lower School.

Mike added this about his academic preparation:

The college preparatory aspect, I feel, is invaluable. It's similar to the amount of college work that we're getting. I even feel that when I have my child, I would want them to have the same exact preparation to be ready. Academically, going to college was almost the same [as the high school experience]. The workload is very similar. It didn't feel overwhelming.

In a follow up question Mike added this about what was lacking in his experience, and how important learning more about himself is:

Learning our identity is very important, learning who we are is very important [in high school]. Learning how to handle situations where your character might be called into question because of race is something that Black students need to experience and learn, just to be ready for adulthood, you never know what you're gonna run into.

Gary added this in terms of what he learned, but through his experience, and not directly from the institution:

What being at a PWI taught me was that I had to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. Especially where you're the only person who looks like you. Which I found that, as I get older, it's a fundamental thing to be successful in the real world. It's helped me a lot in college and in applications—like I'm able to be successful in multiple environments.

Cameron elaborated on her types preparation, noting that while she was prepared academically, there was a lack in socialization and an outcome of resilience:

If we're talking about academic success, I'd say yes, the grade system A through F and getting into college, I'd say yes. It prepared me for success. I'm doing well and achieving my academic goals. I think that it wasn't the school itself that specifically prepared me for the socialization tools that I needed to be successful, but more the lessons I needed to learn along the way. It definitely made me resilient. I think resilience, it's an important tool people should have in this world, because it's tough.

Other participants named the fostering of resilience as a need for Black families:

Marc stated:

I didn't like asking for help, I just kinda relied on myself to take care of what I need to do academically. I liked my internal standards. I had my own personal standards that I knew I was capable of.

Gary explained his resilience in this way:

I'm able to articulate myself in the classroom; I'm able to play this many instruments; I'm able to play lacrosse, a predominantly White sport, I'm able to do all these things and make it look easy when I'm in an extreme minority. I've learned how to do it from the get. That's an advantage that I've had.

When asked if they would send their own children to private K–12 schools, the participants responded this way:

Grace: *Yes, depending on the school.*

Mike said: *I would, the college preparatory aspect of the institutions is invaluable.*

Gary intimated that:

It's a tough question, it would depend on where I live, if it were Atlanta, or D.C., where I know they will be around more Black students, regardless, I would. I'd put them in a PWI knowing that they could come home and get Black culture, see Black culture, at the mall, etc. I would do so because the public school system has failed Black culture. I would rather put that money down on a PWI.

Cameron said this:

I think so, there are lots of layers, some are better or worse than others...I think though, as they get older, giving them more of an opportunity to make decisions for themselves. Have balance, go through private K-12 education but then move on to an HBCU would be a good ratio.

Marc said this:

No. I feel like it's a waste of money. Just the whole concept of paying for private schools, like, it's not college, it doesn't make sense to me, like I get the benefits, even though it helped me, it doesn't make sense.

Fostering Community. Additionally, the participants expressed the need to involve the Black families more, in order to form a larger community. Grace gave an example of appealing to the Black family demographic to create community and communication:

We had the Black family picnic, and it would happen every September. Black families would come together and meet at the park, or the school, to introduce each other and mingle.

Mike asked this of the institutions in terms of reaching out to Black parents:

We need to come and connect and get to know each other in an area where everyone is more comfortable, and in an accepting environment. More school associated events. Like, fundraisers, things that would incorporate their demographic, like, they don't golf right? Have one over dinner, something where everyone can get involved and feel accepted and more comfortable. Then, by default, they're gonna want their kids to be as well, they won't mind putting their kids in these extra things because it works on a parental scale.

Gary said this of parental involvement:

You want a full understanding of what a Black child is gonna go through...knowing what a community looks like within the school and knowing what the community looks like outside of school.

Marc communicated this about parent understanding and needs:

Like a BSU [Black Student Union], but for parents. If the school administration would meet with the parents, they could go back and forth with ideas about how to create better environments. It would also expose the parents to the kind of environment they were existing in. It would help these parents care for their kids, even in recruiting more teachers, counselors, creating clubs and such. Even recruiting coaches.

Cameron supported more parent involvement and knowledge from them and for them imparted to her:

I also think my family had partly to do with that, I'm grateful they gave me the space to figure it out, but at the same time I wish there would have been some hard lines, things like to do or not to do, or who to be.

Researcher Field Note Observations

Maxwell (2012) argued that “observation and field notes can enable you to draw inferences about someone’s perspective that you couldn’t obtain by relying exclusively on interview data” (as cited in Deggs & Hernandez, 2018, p. 94). This process would in turn support the creation of analytic notes and yield insightful qualitative data to ensure a complete understanding of the research setting and phenomenon (Deggs & Hernandez, 2018)

Field notes allowed for the researcher to document reactions and level of engagement providing further insight into the participants’ responses and creating a more robust record of the researcher’s observations.

Gary

Gary’s interview was approximately 65 minutes. Gary was passionate and engaging about the subject matter and gave detailed, extensive, answers. Gary expressed both his own feeling of negativity towards himself as a child due to his experiences and expressed an unbreakable sense of pride in his accomplishments and his embodiment of strength as a young Black man. Equally energetic and thoughtful, Gary easily addressed topics with insight and personal exploration. Gary spoke with noted reverence for his sister. He was equally passionate about his recommendations for the institutions, future students, and their families.

Mike

Charming and gregarious, Mike was quick to expand on his experiences with great openness and ease, despite recounting some difficult events. Lasting over an hour, his interview was punctuated with patient forays into his beliefs, and bursts of affirmation

and energy when questions struck a chord or invited his passion about his trials. Mike displayed strength and uncompromising standards when recounting his experiences with the “N” word. Mike communicated that he was enjoying the interview, despite its sometimes-challenging recounenances. Mike’s passion seemed to lie most in the needs for families and community, tracking with his engaging persona.

Marc

Marc, whose interview was also an hour or so, was more reserved and guarded at first. Prone to shorter answers in the beginning, Marc opened up about a third of the way through and demonstrated deep personal insight as it pertained to his engagement with the school, his perceived shortcomings about himself, and what he felt was necessary for institutions to move forward. While his more subdued demeanor never changed, the depth of his answers did, providing noted detail about some of his racial confrontations, communicating his deep offense and hurt. Despite this, Marc was guardedly optimistic about his future and the changes he had made to become successful.

Cameron

Easily the longest interview at over 75 minutes, Cameron was wise, thoughtful, and incredibly self-aware. With an easy smile that masked her deep personal insight and passion on the topics, Cameron provided insight that would greatly benefit the students.

Grace

A self-described introvert, Grace used an economy of words to convey her emotions around the questions and topics. The shortest interview at 45 minutes, Grace communicated her feelings with dignity, and added targeted depth when she would re-engage a question. Her insight into the curriculum needs for Black students was poignant

and direct. While Grace did not plunge to great depth in her answers, her ability to let her words stand created a resonance that was very powerful.

Themes and Categories

There were four themes and nine categories after pre-coding and coding. Table 2 identifies those themes with definitions and examples.

Summary

This chapter reveals the researcher's data collection methods and defines the themes that have been distilled. The themes were Race as a Difference, Types of Support, and Needs for Black Families.

In the first theme, Race as a Difference, participants detailed their experience and how they were made to feel different through negative racial interactions, including being singled out as spokespersons for their race at young ages, class-and-race-based financial disparities, and how they, as Black students, created a necessary mindset in order to get through these negative experiences. Participants were clear about how these issues affected them negatively, and how they created difficulties for them in terms of finding identity, a sense of belonging, and the psychological challenges of being perceived as different and that difference, instead of being appreciated and celebrated, was used to make them feel less than. Participants included that this was reinforced by the low numbers of Black students and faculty at their institutions.

The second theme, Types of Support, investigated the types of support that the Black students sought to create in order to fortify themselves against some of the headwinds they detailed in the first theme. They identified a lack of support from their institutions in terms of having pre-established spaces that they could seek shelter in,

create common ground in, and have an outlet to be free to express themselves and represent their culture without the presence of macro and microaggressions. They described their individual motivations to create those spaces, and how they relieved some of the stress and pressure that they experienced by being in the significant minority. They expressed that many of these places were not originally available to them, that they had to work to create them both overtly in the school culture and through their friendships. The participants also expressed how important their families were in terms of support, how their parents were motivators for success, as well as their siblings. They indicated that there were high standards for them and an obligation to their families, as well as to Black people. The interviewees also indicated strong self-support, and the strength of their own individual will as being uncompromising in pursuit of their goals as necessary for their success.

In the last theme, Needs for Black Families, the participants echoed that private K–12 institutions need to communicate with Black families about the environments that those Black children would be entering. They stressed that open communication and an uncompromising lack of tolerance for negative racial interactions from the institutions would create safer spaces and “hard lines” for all students—Black, White, or other—to be able to follow. The participants also stressed the need to not only diversify the kinds of things taught in private K–12 curriculums, but *how* they approach those topics that they are teaching, underscoring the race-based differentiation when asking young students their opinion on race based-topics, literature, and facts from American history. The participants also sought to identify the need to celebrate and represent Black culture more positively in education, clarifying the negativity surrounding the topics chosen by the

institution and how those topics, novels, and events are taught in a predominantly negative light. Lastly, the participants represented the need for predominantly White K–12 institutions to intentionally create community events around the Black community members in ways that are inclusive, representative, and accessible to the Black demographic. They stressed that the creation of these specific community events would fortify the Black families’ experiences at those institutions, creating a conduit of information sharing, experience sharing and a place where families could collaborate on the building of success for their children and other Black children in the private school community. These themes were further dissected and distilled in Chapter V.

Table 2*Themes and Categories*

Themes	Categories	Definitions	Examples
Race s difference	Race as difference	Participants communicated race created differences	<i>Turn off the light and it's 'Where'd Mike go? Man, we should be past this. - Mike</i>
	Financial Disparity	that negatively impacted them	<i>You get this, not self-hatred but, subconsciously, a feeling of being lesser. - Gary</i>
	Acquiring a State of Mind		<i>I've experienced so many microaggressions that I just kind of tune them out like it's another day. Cameron</i>
Types of Support	Clubs	Participants communicated the need for support create spaces for	<i>We began a club called Club 42, just to be able to talk about our brotherhood and sisterhood. Mike</i>
	Family and Friends	Black students as they leaned heavily their own goals and willpower	<i>My family, definitely, was a great support system, I definitely leaned on my parents. Grace</i>
	Goals and Willpower		<i>Regardless of what school I was at, I still saw it through to graduate, like, that's the circumstance, I wanted to graduate, I wanted to go to Howard. Marc</i>
Needs for Black Families	Communication with parents	Participants articulated the needs for Black families from institutions to foster ongoing success	<i>The kid is in school and dealing with things, and the parents are predominantly at home or at work, are not very involved with the system, and they don't know what to do or what's going on. Mike</i>

	<p>Curriculum Changes</p> <p><i>Not only how they'll talk about Black history, but how they'll pinpoint us to answer their questions for them.</i> Mike</p> <p><i>Black is different versus Black being excellent. I feel like the energy around learning about Black events is different, it has a negative tone to it.</i> Gary</p>
	<p>Fostering Community</p> <p><i>It takes a village, I believe that it's the community, that's the biggest driving successor. Things like that are crucial for success.</i> Cameron</p> <p><i>More school associated events, like, for everyone, I mean, parents too, in an area where everyone is comfortable and accepted in an environment together.</i> Mike</p> <p><i>A support group, like a BSO, but for parents.</i> Marc</p>

Chapter V: Conclusions

Introduction

In this dissertation, Chapter I introduced the research study and its necessity. Chapter II provided a literature review around the study and the study's framing and influences. Chapter III detailed how the research took place and explained the narrative methods the researcher used to gather data and inquire on the topic. Chapter IV gave details and examples from the interviews of five Black students who attended private, predominantly White K–12 institutions, graduated, and have gone on to colleges and universities. Chapter V discussed these findings and distilled them as they related to the participants, creating a summary of findings, suggestions for future research, what the limitations of the study were, and a conclusion.

Preceding literature explored the experiences of Black students in predominantly White institutions (Birts, 2017; Moore-Southall, 2016; Walker, 2017; Parker & Flowers, 2003). However, many other studies were conducted at the university level, and many focus on males only.

This study aimed to tell the stories and do a dive deeper into, and understand better, the constructs that Black students made in order to be successful in predominantly White K–12 institutions. The focus of the study was to hear from the students themselves about their challenges and to distill their lived experiences down to the more concrete constructs that were the foundations of their success. In understanding these constructs, the researcher aimed to determine what could be uncovered from those students' insights and experiences, and onboarded by the institutions to facilitate the onboarding and

retention of Black students in private K–12 institutions, effectively creating safer places and spaces for those Black students to succeed, and even thrive, in.

Summary of Results

This study’s intent was to identify the constructs that Black students have made and find necessary for success in private K–12 institutions. The driving essential research question was: What are the lived experiences of Black students that have graduated from predominantly White private K–12 schools and gone on to colleges and universities?

This question’s exploration was guided by the interview questions in Appendix C. The loosely structured format allowed for natural, more spontaneous, follow-up questions in the interview.

As those experiences were entrusted to the researcher, the study sought to identify what socio-cultural and academic constructs the students made to negotiate the inevitable barriers faced in their position as members of the significant minority in private K–12 institutions. The methodology for collecting this data and its analysis have been outlined in Chapter III, revealing themes and categories as a result of the explication of their stories detailed in Chapter IV. The participants’ stories were, at times, nearly identical accounts of microaggressions and biased representations in the classroom, while they also carved out their own unique interpretations of their personal experiences. The three themes that revealed themselves through the stories of the Black attendees and graduates from private K–12 institutions were:

1. Race as a Difference
2. Types of Support
3. Needs for Black Families

These three thematic revelations provided a personalized lens into the challenges, mental state, and necessary constructs that the students created and abided by to overcome the barriers and headwinds confronting them in predominantly White institutions.

Discussion of Results

Black students at predominantly White, private, K–12 institutions faced a variety of hindrances to their success at those institutions. From race-based micro and macro-aggressions to unwanted spokespersonship for the Black community in the classroom, to feelings of being less than due to vast financial background disparity, students in these institutions had to create fortifications to their well-being—safe spaces—to enter into those institutions. The difficulties they faced, because they are Black, created more difficulties than the majority of White students may face. Stressful conditions can block information and hinder the flow of information to the brain (Willis, 2007). In order to combat these challenges, the students had to advocate for themselves in the political, racial, and social landscape of the schools, creating Black advocacy groups, both officially and unofficially. The dearth of Black representation in the staff, and Black representation in the curriculum, placed a premium on those Black allies on the staff to support the success Black students. Additionally, the students, partly because of the lack of support they received from the schools, leaned heavily on family and friends to create insulation and places they could go to express their experiences, finding out that they were not alone in their interpretation of events and struggles therein. This created an intense personal will that the students had to manifest, a fierce drive to overcome their obstacles and succeed in spite of the significant headwinds that they faced.

Race as a Difference

The first theme, Race as a Difference, revealed the defining moments and factors that the participants encountered, changing their self-perception and the way they would exist in those private institutions for the entirety of their time there. The repeated discriminations against them, from serving as unwanted representatives of slavery and American history, to an acquired understanding of the vast financial disparities between them and their classmates, resulted in the fact that participants were made to feel different, less than, and found themselves creating a mental state where they normalized race-based interactions, adding stress, anxiety, fear and doubt to their daily existence. Ruge et al. (2022) noted that neuroscience identified what motivates the brain to perform at its best and that fear evoked the opposite (Ruge et al., 2022). When taking into account the formative Arrington and Stevenson (2006) study, *The Success of African American Students (SAAS) in Independent Schools*, schools not only socialize students academically, but they also socialize them racially. With the narratives discussed in this study, racism was a major factor in the students' consciousness and their school experience. Arrington and Stevenson's study supported that the experience of racism itself as a reality was a hindrance to the students' performance and well-being.

Additionally, Liu and Matthews' (2005) seminal insight in regard to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory stated that individual mastery and development must be based on history and culture; the individual should be enabled to stand above the social collective because of the ability of the mind to generate personal understandings (Liu & Matthews, 2005). These theories clearly illustrated why the students needed to create individual understanding and constructs to rise above of their circumstance while at their

institutions, and that they should be enabled to do so with the aid of the institution they attend as it pertains to the maintaining of their own culture, and the understanding of the culture that they are surrounded by. This practice of construct creation was crucial to understand the experiences of the participants and the necessities they sculpted knowingly and unknowingly to fashion the structure of their success.

Types of Support

The second theme, Types of Support, delved into the kinds of support the participants created to foster their fortitude and success in their educational space. The students cited the lack of existence of clubs and affinity groups and their necessity to create those spaces for each other. These clubs and spaces allowed them the necessary environment to share stories, be their authentic selves, create friendships, share strategies and knowledge about their experiences, and to learn from each other, as noted by Wilcox et al. (2020). These groups proved valuable in the necessary formation, the creation of safety and of identity apart from the institution, as noted by Birts (2016).

The students also expressed the two-fold aspect of family and friends providing both motivation and support when manifesting the willpower and fortitude necessary to continue their path in the private K–12 institutions. The participants revealed not only the high academic standards that were set for them by their parents, but their obligation to succeed as it pertained to their place as role models for their siblings and friends. This path-forging was further supported by Wilcox et al. (2020). The participants noted the determined intentionality of their parents to become involved in the school community, to build bridges and share knowledge with the community about themselves, and get to know the teachers on a more personal level.

The participants noted that these efforts by friends and family fed a willpower within themselves to overcome their hindrances and succeed. The participants detailed their individual will and drive to achieve their goals, and to succeed despite hefty headwinds and negative socio-cultural impacts. The participants demonstrated unwavering commitment to reap the benefits of the institutions they attended while carving out their place as Black students. This insight as to the necessity of individual will and individual, often internal, constructs apart from the group was further supported by Resnick's evaluation of Vygotsky (Resnick, 1996). The participants' strength and determination formed the deep roots and foundation for success in their educational setting.

Needs for Black Families

In the third theme, Needs for Black Families, the participants offered their insights, based on their experiences, as to what current and future students and families would need to foster their onboarding, retention, and success at private K–12 institutions. These insights and recommendations, as challenges, emphasized the broader issues faced by Black students and how the K–12 institutions can make intentional and distinct efforts to combat those issues.

The participants underscored the need for the private K–12 institutions to reach out to Black parents as a way to prepare them for and keep them current on the things that their children are going through at the institution, and what they, as a school, have as a policy for microaggressions and race-based interactions. They communicated this emphatically, as the participants indicated that while they were going through some of these challenges, they were deeply entrenched in processing these occurrences and did

not communicate a lot of their struggles with their parents. They emphasized that they normalized these occurrences and just “moved on” when they would happen, not seeking advocacy from the institution itself, or letting their parents know what they were going through.

The participants also asked, thematically, that the schools be more intentional about demographic-targeted community outreach to get Black families together, and to integrate those Black families into the school community once trust and safety were established. The participants detailed that parent involvement was crucial to their success, and that adding a much more robust layer of communication and intentionality around the Black parents would significantly bolster the Black communities’ understanding of, sense of belonging in, and participation in the private school community. Given that only a limited number of Black students attend primarily White independent schools, their sense of school belonging is critical to their success (Booker, 2006, Booker 2007; Meeuwisse et al., 2010).

The participants also offered distinctive insight into the schools and their curriculum, and how that curriculum is taught. The participants detailed their unwanted role as spokespersons as a Black person when it came to issues of slavery, discrimination, racial epithets and terminology, and American history. Insight was offered as to the negative socio-emotional effect of these occurrences, the creation of low-lying anxiety and fear, and how it offered permissibility around those racial terms for other students, not of color, to use those ugly terms. The insights also offered the understanding that the Black students may be experiencing some of this curricular information at the same time as their White counterparts, born in a similar time frame in the same geographic location,

so their familiarity with the information was similar to that of their classmates, creating an awkwardness in the classroom around race, and the presumption of false expertise of the Black students on the topic. This also implicated the fact that, even if the Black students had some interpersonal knowledge, they should not, ever, be pressured to or feel the need to share that knowledge in the classroom space, nor be singled out to do so.

The participants emphasized the need to re-frame the narrative around Black stories, history, and literature in the curriculum. They offered depth and detail around the need to celebrate Black culture, and the negative feeling around Black history and the Black timeline as it is taught. They called for more positivity, more celebration around Black experiences, contribution, and perseverance in the literature choices, the implementation of those choices and the nature of celebrations around Black history not just as morose fact, but as very worthy of celebration and the purposeful identification of positivity and strength in Black culture. As Arrington and Stevenson (2006) noted, race-related messaging including cultural legacy and racial identity is important to being Black and to creating one's self-concept (Arrington & Stevenson, 2006). When this messaging was predominantly negative and fostered by the institution or its lack of action against it, it created an added hindrance to creation of the Black students' identity while at the private K–12 institution, impeding their ability to learn and to land safely in those spaces. Negative racial messaging also can be an endorsement of microaggressions and racist behaviors.

Implications for Practice

This narrative research further revealed depth and detail in terms of the Black students' experiences and the immediate application of support to be implemented for

Black students and their families in private K–12 institutions. It also provided significant implications for cultural and logistical changes for those institutions in terms of the way that the institutions apply their curriculum and target the Black community in their communications.

Black students face significant hindrances and headwinds when it comes to their private school experience. Race, financial status, and micro and macro-aggressions all create psychological and social challenges that necessitate a constructed mental state of passivity or indifference towards race and racism experienced by the participants. These events also determined that, because of the potentially emotionally unsafe environment they were in, the Black students had to go outside the institutions themselves to create a sub-culture of insulation and support not provided by the school.

The students relied on their families, co-parents, and intense personal will to create clubs and sub-cultures with their friends as well as with the Black representation in the limited staff members that were in the institutions. This study established the need for private K–12, predominantly White institutions, to address concerns surrounding racism and race relations openly and intentionally. PWIs, in order to both better support their Black students, and to uncover and combat the more insidious occurrences of racism, must address the under and overtones in the way the curriculum is delivered, and the passive acceptance of negative race-related interactions.

Even in the face of the dearth of Black teachers and administrators in these schools, allyship, advocacy, and understanding must be a priority. This study suggested pathways that the institutions could take to better create cultures of support, places that

provide a voice for Black families and students, and also address the deeper concerns of curricular choices and its implementation.

Implications for Predominantly White, private K–12 Institutions

This study underscored the immediate need for schools to address how their curricular choices are made and how those same choices are taught. Teachers cannot choose to make representatives of Black students in their student’s ongoing education. Teachers cannot choose to create permissiveness around racial experiences and language in their curriculum. These choices must be better. They must come from a place of acceptance and understanding rather than establishing Black students as a culture to be regarded as, at best, less than. Additionally, the choices surrounding the handling of race-based incidents in the community can have an immediate impact on the environment that the Black students face. They must not be tolerated, and it must be clear to the community. The decisions around the school environment and the implementation of these changes can be traced directly back to school leadership. Gocen (2021) noted that the education and enlightenment of these types of incidents must be used to teach the leaders of schools and, in fact, all the stakeholders of the school community, or anyone who contributes to the fabric of a school community, about themselves and others, to bring a more positive, open-minded, understanding community together in support of the students and families.

Many of these institutions use restorative practices and responsive classroom initiatives to create what they may consider a safer space for students. This study contended that the nature of restoration and responsiveness are reactionary to incidents that have taken place. This study aimed to create *pre-storative* practices that happen in

the education, understanding, and exposure to Black culture in an appreciative form, a celebrated form that does not allow for permissive negativity to surround the education about American history and the treatment of Black people. The lens in which students are taught will be the lens they keep. Administration and teachers must learn to educate themselves and their communities on the beauty of Black excellence and the fortitude of Black culture, to create an understanding, not just based on grainy photos of slavery and a timeline of horrible events, but one of appreciation, one of the understanding of fortitude, resilience, and celebration. Then students can learn through a different, proactive lens about their community members, a lens that does not allow for permission to use offensive slang, or allow for negative attitudes towards differences of appearance, color, or hair, but one that understands Black experiences, contributions to community, history, and culture. Here the school leadership can create an appreciation and understanding of the Black community through positive exposure, allowing for impressionable students to see through a lens of admiration and respect. Psychogios and Dimitriadis (2021) noted that the job of the leader is to provide support and safety to group members so that they feel liberated enough to perform their tasks in the most creative, passionate, and successful way. Teachers are leaders.

To that end, the private school community, and its leadership must involve their teachers in the community building process. Teachers must be required to attend the Black families' orientations, community building activities that are demographically focused on Black families, and to create outreach and bridge building activities through a more interpersonal avenue. It is not enough for teachers to be trained at 2-day conferences, or to use books or on-line resources about Black culture and anti-racism;

they must interact and exist with those communities and get to know their Black stakeholders so that they themselves can create bonds of care, understanding, and appreciation on a year-to-year interpersonal level. It is not enough to think that a single traditional back-to-school night is enough to get to know a marginalized family. It should not be incumbent on the Black families to insert themselves into the school community, but for the school community to create proper outreach and understanding for the Black community. To use participant Gary's expression, it is much different to be taught about Black culture, than it is to appreciate, understand and celebrate Black people and culture. The people must get to know each other. To know someone is to understand them and their values.

Implications for the Black Private School Community

Ruge et al. (2022) also noted that an alignment of values can lead to a self-confident and engaged citizen. Self-confidence is a result of optimism: believing you can do something allows for better pathways for the realization of success. Dolcos (2016) noted that optimism promotes a general psychological well-being that can be particularly beneficial in times of adversity. This study revealed the need for more, better, and open communication from the schools to Black families about the private school experience. This communication, the study revealed, would foster a better understanding of, not only what the students are going through, but what Black families may need, or need to know to succeed in predominantly White institutions. Thus, it is incumbent on school leadership to create community events that are demographically focused on Black families. This will create a better alignment of values. This can ease Black families and students into the private school culture and create relationships and support amongst

Black families by familiarizing themselves with each other, as well as allowing the faculty members to create relationships and understanding with the families. This would, in turn, foster easier lines of communication and understanding between the schools and Black families. This understanding and allyship can create confidence amongst the families, and thus their children, that they are seen and heard, fostering optimism and confidence as valued community members.

Limitations

This research had its limitations. At first glance, the participants were from the ages of 19-24. While they provided their very recent, and relevant, experiences, an expanded demographic may yield more insight as to the effect of private school education and its challenges on Black adults and their corresponding accumulation of opportunity and wealth.

Additionally, all participants were from the same region in the United States. A greater variety in location would have created a broader sense of the impact of region-specific issues, potentially lending insight as to how geography can shape the students' and families' experience as it pertains to school demographics and local politics.

Furthermore, the participants may have benefitted from exposure to some of the theoretical framework proposed in this study prior to their interviews, as it may have given them a better understanding of their own experiences, the influences of their socialization, and how that affected them.

Recommendations for Future Research

The narrative research in this study allowed former Black students to illuminate their experiences in predominantly White private K–12 institutions and to provide

distinctive recommendations for what institutional leaders can do to alleviate the negative effects of those students' experiences and better support their success at those institutions. While these insights were critical to this study's conclusions, the researcher proposed the following recommendations for future research.

Research on Parents of Children Who Attend Predominantly White K–12 Private Schools

Consider increasing the scope of the research to include interviewing the families, caregivers, and parents of the Black students directly. This would give valuable insight into their experiences and needs from a parental perspective, including but not limited to the themes uncovered in this dissertation. It would provide a valuable cross-reference of information as it pertains to the success of Black students in PWIs. Giving the participants an introduction to socio-cultural theory and the neuroscientific effects of stress would help them to recognize and identify more qualities and trends in their experiences.

Research on Young Black Adult Professionals Who Have Graduated from PWIs with Established Careers

Consider surveying this demographic and researching the effect of graduating from K–12 PWIs and how it may have established their professional trajectory. This would serve to provide more detailed evidence into the accumulation of opportunity and wealth as a result of the initial educational paths that the adults have taken. It would also provide a potentially more mature perspective on some of the issues and recommendations made in this investigation. It could also investigate further if their belief in those initial educational experiences have changed, and if they would still send

their own children to predominantly White private schools.

Research the Effect of the Recommended Implementations from this Investigation as to the Effect They Have on Current and Future Students

Creating a research study that would give valuable insight into the effect of this researcher's dissertation-recommended implementations and how they may or may not have created a safer place and space for Black students would be a logical next step. This researcher would recommend a 1, 3, and 5-year check in with the families and institutions to monitor the progress of any implementations, as consistent feedback as to the needs and families in regard to the implementations of initiatives is crucial for the initiatives and their effectiveness. Additionally, training and implementation should employ bias recognition for leadership, teachers, and staff, much like the one mentioned in Chapter II, by Angelina Walker (2017).

Conclusion

The purpose of this narrative study was never to propose that the struggles of Black students in predominantly White schools is either new or novel; rather, it is to recognize those issues as unfading facts and to deepen the understanding of what those students themselves, who are continuing to go through these occurrences, needed to do to be successful in those environments. The purpose of this study was to diminish and significantly disrupt what are the sadly inevitable occurrences of racism. Examining, via the research question, those five separate student experiences and the impact of those events, yielded by their personal insights as to the effect that their attendance at those institutions had, but, moreover, how they would change those experiences for future students and their families for the better. The themes introduced—Race as Difference,

Types of Support, and Needs for Black Families—provided a clearer cognizance around the effect of what the ongoing issues are, what the students did for support to combat those issues, and, finally, what they recommended for immediate improvements in that educational environment.

The indications for practice highlighted the need for glaring changes in the institutions from which the studies were derived. These stories were not from history, but rather were some of the most recent experiences available for investigation. The changes surrounding the institutional support that Black students need when race-based issues arise is crucial to the establishing of safety for those students, as the current lack of safety yields significant challenges as to the students' ability to learn. Some of this safety needs to be in the institutions' proactivity in providing, without the need for student-led initiatives or parent proactivity, the creation of affinity groups and space for these students as an understanding and concrete effort to provide support. Additionally, this study underscored the need for the institutions to change the way they educate all students on the experiences and contributions of Black people across the curriculum. The educational lens around Black experiences needs to change to include the recognition, support, and celebration of the perseverance, strength, contribution, and joy that Black stories and culture encompass to create a better understanding throughout all of the educational and societal avenues available to predominantly White K–12 institutions. To that end, not only the administrative leadership of the schools, but the teachers at these institutions must be involved in community building activities with Black families. Changing this lens can move further forward in changing the lens of the predominantly

White culture, creating understanding and appreciation rather than tolerance, pity, or far worse, the buttressing of racism.

It is incumbent upon school leadership to create the spaces and places for all of their stakeholders to have buy-in around these understandings, not only to recognize where their own individual interpretations and biases may exist, but to level the playing field for Black students, paving the way for their future accomplishments and achievement. School leadership must proactively seek out Black community members, in a demographically palatable way, and with unwavering intentionality, reach out to those parents and caregivers to open their institutional gates further, to create inclusive membership with those communities. Thus, they will all have measure in increasing access to higher level institutions for Black students, opening doors for those students and their career advancement, and creating a greater chance to amass opportunity, choice, and wealth.

This study reinforced the need to actively and continuously combat the forces of racism and for institutions to listen to the voices of their Black community members in order to create equitable changes, changes that can create safe places and spaces for Black students and their families to co-exist, thrive, and excel, thus potentially changing the paths and fortunes of the indispensable, talented, and promise-laden Black youth.

References

- Allen, K. A., & Bowles, T. (2012). Belonging as a guiding principle in the education of adolescents. *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology, 12*, 108-119.
- Arrington, E. G., & Stevenson, H. C. (2006). *Final report for the Success of African American Students (SAAS) in Independent Schools project*. Penn University. https://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/23
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W.H. Freeman.
- Birts, A. (2017). *The African American/Black racial tapestry: Black adolescents' private, independent school experiences and racial identity development* [Doctoral dissertation, San Jose State University].
- Bond, V. L. (2017) Culturally responsive education in music education: A literature review. *Contributions to Music Education, 42*, 53-180.
- Broughman, S.P., Kincel, B., & Peterson, J. (2019). *Characteristics of private schools in the United States: Results from the 2017–18 Private School Universe Survey, first look*. (NCES 2019-071). National Center for Education Statistics. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.
- Booker, K. C. (2006). School belonging and the African American adolescent: What do we know and where should we go? *The High School Journal, 89*(4), 1–7. doi:10.1353/hsj.2006.0005.
- Booker, K. C. (2007). Likeness, comfort, and tolerance: Examining African American adolescents' sense of school belonging. *The Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education, 39*(3), 301–317. doi:10.1007/s11256-007-0053-y.

- Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (2002). *Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future*. Solution Tree.
- Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., Neville, A. J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(5), 545-7. doi: 10.1188/14.ONF.545-547. PMID: 25158659.
- Cherry, K. (2022). *What is socio-cultural theory?* Very Well Mind. Retrieved from <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-sociocultural-theory-2795088>
- Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry: A methodology for studying lived experience. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 27(1), 44-54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X060270010301>
- Cobb, P. (1996). Constructivism and learning. In E. De Corte and F. E Weinert (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of developmental and instructional psychology* (pp. 338–341). Pergamon Press.
- Cooper, R., & Datnow, A. (2000). African-American student success in independent schools: A model of family, school, and peer influences. In M. G. Sanders (Ed.), *Schooling students placed at risk: Research, policy, and practice in the education of poor and minority adolescents* (pp. 187–205). Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. and Miller, D. L. (2000) Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124–130. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1477543>

- Croninger, R. G. & Lee, V. E. (2001). Social capital and dropping out of high school: Benefits to at-risk students of teachers' support and guidance. *Teachers College Press, 103*(4), 548- 581.
- Davis, J. (2015, November). *Regents approve Albany State, Darton State merger*. The Atlanta Journal Constitution. <https://www.ajc.com/news/local-education/regents-approve-albany-state-darton-state-merger/82lzWECpXkr8EXAwj6Pj1L/>
- Davydov, V. V., (1995). The influence of L. S. Vygotsky on educational theory, research, and practice. (S.T. Kerr, Trans.). *Educational Researcher, 24*(3), 12-21.
- DeCuir-Gunby, J. T., Martin, P. P., & Cooper, S. M. (2012). African American students in private, independent schools: Parents and school influences on racial identity development. *The Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education, 44*(1), 113- 132. doi:10.1007/s11256-011-0178-x
- Deggs, D., & Hernandez, F. (2018). Enhancing the value of qualitative field notes through purposeful reflection. *The Qualitative Report, 23*(10), 2552-2560.
- Dolcos S., Hu Y., Jordan A.D., Moore M., Dolcos F. (2016). Optimism and the brain: Trait optimism mediates the protective role of the orbitofrontal cortex gray matter volume against anxiety. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, 11*(2), 263-271. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nsv106>
- Dulay, H., & Burt, M. (1977). Remarks on creativity in language acquisition. In M. Burt, H. Dulay, & M. Finocchiaro (Eds.), *Viewpoints on English as a second language* (pp. 95-126). Regents.
- Finlay L (2002) 'Outing' the researcher: the provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research, 12*(4), 531–545.

- Fox, R. (2001). Constructivism examined. *Oxford Review of Education*, 27(1), 23-35.
- Gallagher, C. A., & Lippard, C. D. (2014). *Race and racism in the United States: An encyclopedia of the American mosaic*. Greenwood.
- Gipson, J. A. (2013). *Understanding high-achieving African American students: A quantitative study at Grand Valley State University* [Masters thesis, Grand Valley State University]. <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses/44>
- Gullatt, D.E., & Lemoine, D.A. (1997). Truancy: What's a principal to do? *American Secondary Education*, 26(1), 7-12.
- Gioia D. A., Thomas J. B., Clark S. M., Chittipeddi K. (1994). Symbolism and strategic change in academia: The dynamics of sensemaking and influence. *Organization Science*, 5, 363-383.
- Gocen, A. (2021) Neuroleadership: A conceptual analysis and educational implications. *International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology (IJEMST)*, 9(1), 63-82. <https://doi.org>
- Guiffrida, D. A. (2004). How involvement in African American student organizations supports and hinders academic achievement. *NACADA Journal*, 24(1-2), 88-98. <https://doi.org/10.12930/0271-9517-24.1-2.88>
- Hammond, Z. L. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain*. Corwin Press.
- Harper, S. R. & Quaye, S. J. (2007). Student organizations as venues for Black identity expression and development among African American male student leaders. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(2), 127-144.
- Hill, A. & Humphries, J. (2018) How much is your college degree worth: Race and gender inequities in lifetime earnings. *Insight: Research Briefs from the Selig*

- Center for Economic Growth*. <https://www.terry.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/Insight-Lifetime-Earnings.pdf>.
- Hirtle, J.S.P. (1996). Coming to terms with social constructivism. *English Journal*, 85(1), 91-92. <https://doi.org/10.2307/821136>
- Horvat, E.M., & Antonio, A.L. (1999). “Hey, those shoes are out of uniform”: African American girls in an elite high school and the importance of habitus. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 30(3), 317-342.
- Hughes, D., Rodriguez, J., Smith, E. P., Johnson, D. J., Stevenson, H. C., & Spicer, M. P. (2006). Parents’ ethnic–racial socialization practices: A review of research and directions for future study. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(5), 747–770.
- Johnson, L. S. (2009). School contexts and student belonging: A mixed methods study of an innovative high school. *The School Community Journal*, 19(1), 99-118.
- Kirsch, N. (2022) *Restorative practice for school discipline, explained*. Future Ed. <https://www.future-ed.org/restorative-practices-for-school-discipline-explained>.
- Julian, T. & Kominski, J. (2011). *Education and synthetic work-life earnings estimates*. United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2011/acs/acs-14.html>
- Krashen, S. (1982). Theory versus practice in language training. In R.W. Blair (Ed.), *Innovative approaches to language teaching* (pp. 25–27). Newbury House.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkman, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Ladson-Billings. G. (2021) *Culturally relevant pedagogy: Asking a different question*. Teachers College Press.

- Lincoln, Y.S., Guba E.G. (1985) *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Littleton, R. A. (2002). Campus involvement among African American students at small, predominately White colleges. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 21(2), 53-67.
- Liu, C.H., & Matthews, R. (2005). Vygotsky's philosophy: Constructivism and its criticisms examined. *International Education Journal*, 6(3), 386-399.
<http://iej.cjb.net>.
- Lynn, M., & Jennings, M. E. (2009). Power, politics, and critical race theory: A critical race analysis of Black male teachers' pedagogy. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 12(2), 173- 196.
- Lynn, M., & Parker, L. (2006). Critical race studies in education: Examining a decade of research on U.S. Schools. *The Urban Review*, 38(4), 257–290.
- McNeely, C., Nonnemaker, J., & Blum, R. (2002). Promoting school connectedness: Evidence from the national longitudinal study of adolescent health. *Journal of School Health*, 72(4), 139-146.
- Meeuwisse, M., Severiens, S. E., & Born, M. P. (2010). Learning environment, interaction, sense of belonging, and study success in ethnically diverse student groups. *Research in Higher Education*, 51, 528-545. doi:10.1007/s11162-010-9168-1
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Moore-Southall, B. (2016). "Do you even see me?" *A sense of school belonging of African Americans in elite, predominately White independent schools*. [Doctoral dissertation, California Lutheran University].

- Murray, C., & Malmgren, K. (2005). Implementing a teacher-student relationship program in a high-poverty urban school: Effects on social, emotional, and academic adjustment and lessons learned. *Journal of School Psychology, 43*(2), 137-152.
- National Center for Education Statistics (2021). *Characteristics of private schools in the United States: Results from the 2018–19 Private School Universe Survey*. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2021/2021061.pdf>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Private school enrollment. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgc>.
- Ntinda, K. (2019). Narrative Research. In: Liamputtong, P. (eds). *Handbook of research methods in health social sciences*. Springer, Singapore.
- Parker, M., & Flowers, M. (2003). The effects of racial identity on academic achievement and perceptions of campus connectedness on African American students at predominately White institutions. *College Student Affairs Journal, 22*(2), 180-194.
- Phillippi, J. & Lauderdale, J. (2017). A Guide to Field Notes for Qualitative Research: Context and Conversation. *Qualitative Health Research, 28*(3), 381-388. doi:10.1177/1049732317697102.
- Probst, B. (2015) The eye regards itself: benefits and challenges of reflexivity in qualitative social work research. *Social Work Research, 39*(1), 37-48.

- Psychogios, A. Dimitriadis, N. (2021). Brain adjusted relational leadership: A social consciousness approach to leader-follower interaction. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.672217>.
- Resnick, L. (1996). Situated learning. In E. De Corte and F. E. Weinert (Eds.), *International Encyclopaedia of Developmental and Instructional Psychology*, (pp. 341-347). Pergamon Press.
- Ruge, D., Pedroarena-Leal, N., & Trenado, C. (2022). Leadership in education, medical education and health. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(9), 5730. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19095730>.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(4), 1893-1907. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8>
- Schunk, D. & Pajares, F. (2002). The development of academic self-efficacy. In A. Wigfield & J. Eccles (Eds.), *Development of achievement motivation* (pp. 16–31). Academic Press.
- Shields, C. M. (2013). *Transformative leadership in education*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Sullivan, J., Riccio, C., & Reynolds, C. (2008). Variations in students' schoolteacher-related attitudes across gender, ethnicity, and age. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 35(3), 296-305.

- Thanos, P. K., Katana, J. M., Ashby, C. R., Michaelides, M., Gardner, E. L., Heidbreder, C. A., et al. (1999). The selective dopamine D3 receptor antagonist SB-277011-A attenuates ethanol consumption in ethanol-preferring (P) and non-preferring (NP) rats. *Pharmacology, Biochemistry, and Behavior*, *81*(1), 190–197.
- Tinto, V. (2006). Research and practice of student retention: What next? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *8*(1).
<https://doi.org/10.2190/4YNU-4TMB-22DJ-AN4W>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *Measuring racial and ethnic diversity*. Retrieved from uscensus.gov.
- Uwah, C. Furlow, C., McMahon, H. (2008) School belonging, educational aspirations, and academic self-efficacy among African American male high school students: Implications for school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, *11*(15).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0801100503>.
- Varpio, L., Ajjawi, R., Monrouxe, L. V., O'Brien, B. C., & Rees, C. E. (2017). Shedding the cobra effect: Problematising thematic emergence, triangulation, saturation, and member checking. *Medical Education*, *51*(1), 40–40.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.13124>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1987). *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky* (Vol. 1). R. W. Rieber and A. S Carton (Eds.). Plenum Press.
- Walker, A. (2017). *Transformative school leadership: A qualitative examination of school leaders' sense-making of lived racial experiences and racial inequities in education*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Denver]

- Ward, J. (2017). *Teach us to teach you: Experiences of Black males in urban high schools in Georgia*. [Doctoral dissertation, Georgia Southern University].
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/1546>
- Weick, K. (1995). *Sensemaking in organisations*. SAGE Publications.
- Weick, K., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science*, *16*(4), 409–421.
- Wentzel, K. (2003). Sociometric status and adjustment in middle school: a longitudinal study. *Sage Family Studies Abstracts: Trends in Marriage, Family, and Society*, *25*(3).
- Western Governor's University. (2020). *What is constructivism?*
<https://www.wgu.edu/blog/what-constructivism2005.html#close>
- Wheatley, M. J., & Frieze, D. (2011). *Walk out walk on: A learning journey into communities daring to live the future now*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Wiles, R. (2004, October 19). A college degree pays off big – not just in income, study finds. *The Arizona Republic*. Retrieved from <http://www.azcentral.com/families/education/articles/1019collegebenefits19-ON.html>
- Willis, J. (2007). The neuroscience of joyful education. *Educational Leadership*, *64*(9), 1-5.
- Wilcox, G., Morett, L. M., Hawes, Z., & Dommett, E. J. (2020). Why educational neuroscience needs educational and school psychology to effectively translate neuroscience to educational practice. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.618449>

Wu G., Feder A., Cohen H., et al. (2013). Understanding resilience. *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience*, 7(10).

Wyatt, S. (2009). The brotherhood: Empowering adolescent African-American males toward excellence. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(6), 463-470.

Appendix A: Emails To Gain Study/Participant Entry

Dear ,

My Name is Peter Boylan, and I am a Doctoral Candidate at Lynn University. I am conducting a study for my dissertation on the successful academic and social constructs that Black students made while in private K–12 institutions. The title is : *Places and Spaces: The Onboarding and Retention of Black Students in Private K–12 Institutions*. I am under the guidance of Dr. Joe Melita of Lynn University.

I am interested in finding out more about some of the challenges that Black students have faced while at predominantly White K–12 institutions. Moreover, I am interested in what they consider the essential elements of success in their time at those institutions.

Participation in the study will consist of an interview, if you so choose. It would be a one-on-one interview that would take approximately thirty to forty minutes.

Your participation would be entirely voluntary, and all information you provide will be strictly confidential. Your interview would also be anonymous, your name, location and identifying information would be anonymized. You will be given a chance to validate the transcription of the interview after it has been cleaned. There is no immediate benefit to you: however, your contributions may contribute to improving the ability of Black students to remain in and graduate from private K–12 institutions. Your participation would contribute a positive impact to the onboarding and retention of Black students in private K–12 institutions and have the potential to create programmatic changes to those institutions.

If you are interested, please tell me by responding to this email and by filling out the

informed consent form attached. I will be happy to schedule a one-on-one interview with you so that you may share your thoughts and experiences with me.

Thank you for your consideration. Participating in this study is greatly appreciated and my hope is to create a lasting impact from your experiences and contributions.

Many thanks,

Peter Boylan, Doctoral Candidate

Pboylan@email.lynn.edu

Appendix B: Consent Forms

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Peter Boylan, M.S., Ed. D. candidate from Lynn University's Donald E. and Helen L. Ross College of Education, which is partnered with the Carnegie Foundation. You were selected as a potential participant in this study because you attended a private school and identified as a person of color. Your participation in this research is voluntary. The faculty director for this research is Dr. Kathleen Weigel. You may contact her at Kweigel@lynn.edu. Thank you for participating in this interview. Your feedback is important.

AGE OF CONSENT: You must be 18 or older to participate in this study.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: You are invited to participate in this study to help determine the needs of Black families as they navigate the private school culture.

SPECIFIC PROCEDURES: Your participation in this interview will help gather information to help Black families successfully navigate private schools.

DURATION OF PARTICIPATION, COMPENSATION, AND WITHDRAWAL: The total duration of your participation should be no longer than 30-40 minutes. There will be no compensation for participation, but you may feel strongly about contributing to the success of Black students in private schools. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without consequences of any kind. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS: There are minimal risks to your participation. While the investigator will keep your information confidential, there are some risks of data breaches when sending information over the internet that are beyond the control of the investigator.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND SOCIETY: There are no benefits for answering the survey questions; however, participants may enjoy answering questions regarding the success of Black students in private schools.

CONFIDENTIALITY: This interview is strictly anonymous and there is no identifying information. No IP addresses will be kept or known to the researchers. Your answers to questions will be stored for two years on a password-protected computer, the password know only to the researcher, and, after that time, will be deleted. This project's research records may be reviewed by the departments at Lynn University responsible for regulatory and research oversight. Study findings will be presented only in summary form.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATOR: If you have any questions about the research project, you may contact Peter Boylan (323-371-9685) at pboylan@email.Lynn.edu

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS: For any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call Dr. Jennifer Lesh, Chair of the Lynn University Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects, at jlesh@lynn.edu

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. I/We will give you a copy of this document for your records and I/we will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

Print Legal Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date of Signature (mm/dd/yy): _____

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. At what age did you enter the private school system? How long did you stay?
2. What was your experience like?
3. What were some of the challenges that you encountered?
4. Did you feel welcomed? Why or why not?
5. Did you see representation of people like you in the school?
6. Did you make friends easily? Why or why not?
7. Was race an issue at your school?
8. Can you elaborate on why or why not?
9. How was the support at the school? Did you have trusted adults that you knew you could go to?
10. Were there clubs or organizations with like-minded people that you had access to?
11. How did you define success in school?
12. What did you do to manifest that success in school?
13. What were some of the components of that success?
14. What would have helped your onboarding process, or what features of that process are essential to continue?
15. What was most important to you at school?
16. What are the needs of Black families that, if met by the schools, may increase their enrollment at private schools?
17. What resources do Black students and their parents need to feel supported at predominantly White private schools?
18. Is there anything you would change about your experience?

19. Did your experience better prepare you for success after you graduated??
20. Would you send your children to a private institution?
21. What were the driving forces for success for Black students in private schools?
22. What are the sociocultural needs of Black families to retain Black students at private schools?
23. What changes would Black students make to create a better experience for future Black students?

Appendix D: IRB Approval



3601 North Military Trail
Boca Raton, FL 33433
561-237-7348 | lynn.edu
Erika Grodzki, Ph.D., IRB Chair

DATE: 05/30/24
TO: Peter Boylan
FROM: Erika Grodzki
PROJECT NUMBER: 23.22
PROTOCOL TITLE: *Places and Spaces: The Onboarding and Retention of Black Students in Private K-12 Institutions*

PROJECT TYPE: New
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: 05/30/24
EXPIRATION DATE: 05/30/25

Thank you for your submission for this research study. The Lynn University IRB has APPROVED your NEW Project. This approval is in accordance with 45 CFR §46.111 Criteria for IRB approval of research. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

It is important that you retain this letter for your records and present upon request to necessary parties.

- This approval is valid for one year. **IRB Form 4: Application to Continue (Renew) a Previously Approved Project** will be required prior to the expiration date if this project continues beyond one year.
- Please note that any revision to previously approved materials or procedures must be approved by the IRB29 before it is initiated. Please submit **IRB Form 5 Application for Procedural Revisions of or Changes in Research Protocol and/or Informed Consent Form 1 of a Previously Approved Project** for this procedure.
- All serious and unexpected adverse events must be reported to the IRB. Please use **IRB Form 6 Report of Unexpected Adverse Event, Serious Injury or Death** for this procedure.
- At the completion of your data collection, please submit **IRB Form 8 IRB Report of Termination of Project**.

If you have any questions or comments about this correspondence, please contact the chair of the Lynn University IRB, Erika Grodzki (egrodzki@lynn.edu).



Dr. Erika Grodzki, Institutional Review Board Chair
Institutional Review Board
Lynn University
3601 North Military Trail
Boca Raton, FL 33433
561-237-7348 | lynn.edu