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The Politics of Strange Fruit: Examining the Intersectionality of Race, Microaggressions, and Resiliency for African American Male Students in a Public High School Setting

by

Irvin M Brown

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of,

Doctor of Education
in
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School of Education

2018

The Politics of Strange Fruit: Examining the Intersectionality of Race, Microaggressions, and Resiliency for African American Male Students in a Public High School Setting

by

Irvin M. Brown

This dissertation is completed as a partial requirement for the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree at the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon.

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Approved:

Chairperson	05 APR 18 Date

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Committee Member	4-5-18 Date

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Approved:

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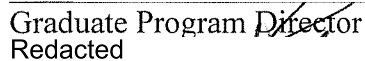
Graduate Program Director	4·5·18 Date



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Dean of the Unit	4/8/18 Date

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Abstract

Examining the intersectionality of race, microaggressions, and resiliency among African American male students and how these experiences impact their lives in a high school setting can produce understandings that could lead to interventions for greater academic success. Research is clear there is a consistent decline in the academic achievement for African American males. Additionally, there has been an increase of African American males dropping out of high schools and entering the perils of a justice system that swings towards an imbalance of hopelessness and the predictability of a shortened lifespan. Analyzing structures and practices through a multi-lens approach of Critical Race Theory, Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory, and Racial Identity Theory can be strategic methods in addressing *and changing* teacher-student relationships, institutional racism, white privilege and power, oppositional cultural attitudes and stereotypes, and racial prejudice. This study was comprised of four focus groups from four high schools and 25 African American male students. An analysis of the data revealed the following themes: microaggressions, racialized stereotypes, racial identity struggle, feelings of being unheard, unseen, invisible and a 2nd class citizen; and resiliency, power, and coping. The findings from the study identified the perception of racial microaggressions among African American male students and used previous research to intersect their experiences with racial identity, feelings of power, strength, and resiliency in a high school setting. The focus group sessions created space to listen to the students' stories and understand their perceptions while allowing them to "name their own reality" about their school experiences. Listening to student voice, referencing and positively

teaching about a student's background and culture is key to the academic success for African American males. Positive cross-race interactions provide increased opportunities for classmates to connect, thus reducing feelings of alienation, invisibility, and hopelessness. All the participants in this study exhibited a strong awareness of racialized stereotypes, microaggressions, racialized messages, and racism in their school culture and context. The study also demonstrated how African American male students develop adaptive coping strategies to manage these experiences and navigate towards academic attainment, a positive racial identity, racial socialization, and resiliency. Specifically, Gender Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy can be applied to all teachers working with males of Color who are disengaged and underperforming in school, and an emphasis in ethnic studies with student affinity groups.

Key words: microaggressions, race, resiliency, African American males, Black Lives Matter, People of Color, lynchings, Critical Race Theory, Racial Identity

Acknowledgements

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,
When he beats his bars and he would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings –
I know why the caged bird sings!

Paul Laurence Dunbar ~ *Sympathy*

First giving honor to God who is the head of my life…(followed by a long-long testimony with a shout, dance, and a soul-stirring amen!).

Thank you Dr. Anctil for entertaining all my odd-hour text messages and emails, coffee house and restaurant meetings, and giving words of reassurance, focus, and support. From day one, in that first summer class you taught and shared about your movie and pop culture interest, I knew you would be the one to "see me" in this doctoral program.

Drs. Merk and Watzke, we make a pretty good team together. Your thoroughness and attention to detail, steadfastness, and sincerity with encouraging me to stay the course has been simply remarkable.

This journey would certainly not be as enjoyable if it were not for the incomparable Tailor Blade & Co. To the two gentlemen (Ahmed and H.) who patiently entertained my week-to-week and year-to-year theoretical analysis successes and woes – I salute you.

Dr. Ryan Richardson, our paths crossed…we have laughed together until the tears rolled down. You've been a true confidant, friend, and brother. My heart smiles because I know rain or shine, hill or valley, easy plain or difficult terrain – you have chosen to travel with me. I love you my friend. Shalom.

Dr. Khaliyah Williams-Rodriguez, where does one begin? You are in the Hallmark of African American folk who have forever etched an imprint on my life. You are a beautiful soul. You believed in me when I was ready to abandon ship. You

showed up (along with your husband Adrian) when the journey became arduous, the tempest was raging, and I felt alone in a storm-tossed sea…you helped me to see the shore and find peace within. I love you both.

Dedication

Foremost, this work is dedicated to the many Black men and women, who came before me, whose names may have been forgotten and faces unseen, I honor you for the sacrifice you gave so I could be. Secondly, to the African American male students who shared their stories filled with heartache and struggle, love and loss, pain and comfort, laughter, fortitude, and the prevailing power to become your best self. Finally, to Dad and Mother Dear, for instilling in me the principle to never quit – I love you deeply.

Table of Contents

Abstract .... *iii*

Acknowledgements .... *v*

Dedication .... *vii*

Table of Contents .... *viii*

List of Tables .... *x*

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Purpose of Study 7

Significance 9

Summary 12

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Critique 14

Theoretical Framework 18

Racial Socialization and Ethnic Identity 21

Racial Identity Theory 22

Critical Race Theory Intersects with Culture and Dominate Ideology 27

Intersectionality of Phenomenal Variant Ecological Systems Theory 31

Intersectionality of Racism in the Classroom, Black Opportunity Gap,
Culture and Climate 33

Summary 40

Chapter 3: Methodology 41

Research Questions 42

Rationale for Methodology 44

Setting 45

Schools 45

Participants 49

Data Collection and Procedure 52

Role of the Researcher 57

Summary 59

Chapter 4: Results 60

Focus Group Questions 61

Emergent Themes 62

Summary 106

Chapter 5: Findings 96

Discussion 96

Limitations 112

Summary of Findings 114

Implications 118

Future Research 120

References 126

Appendices 147

Appendix A 147

Appendix B 151

Appendix C 153

Appendix D 154

Appendix E 156

List of Tables

Table 1. Howard High School 46

Table 2. Langston Hughes High School 47

Table 3. Cab Calloway High School 48

Table 4. Tuskegee Hills High School 49

Table 5. Participants 50

Chapter 1: Introduction

The complex relationship with race, the dominant voice, and being Black in America is eloquently captured, by b. hooks (1992):

> Opening a magazine or book, turning on the television set, watching a film, or looking at photographs in public spaces, we are most likely to see images of Black people that reinforce and reinscribe White supremacy. Clearly, those of us committed to Black liberation struggle, to the freedom and determination of all Black people, must face daily the tragic reality that we have collectively made few, if any, revolutionary interventions in the area of race and representations. (pp. 1-2)

America's historical past for the **African American/Black/Negro** (*People of African descent born in America*) pursuing the right to be seen, heard, taught, and even acknowledged has been from a place of disadvantage from the beginning of public education and if "the Negro was to learn – he must teach himself" (DuBois, 1994, p. 60; Steele, 1992). Washington's (1901) analysis presuppose a foundational issue for the current scholarship that the campaign of whites trained others in everyday life with the belief that if Negroes were educated then their economic value would decrease. White people feared the results of Negroes becoming educated because "they would leave the farms and it would be difficult to secure them for domestic service" (Franklin & Starr, 1967, p. 263). The mere idea of an educated Negro was useless and illogical. The Supreme Court made a historical decision when they heard the case of *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1857), and concluded that Negroes were not

only second class citizens but "were not intended to be included under the word citizens in the Constitution and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides" (Balkin & Levinson, 2007; Graber, 1997; Sterling, 1968, p. 49). Based on their decision, the Negro was not a citizen at all and this quest of citizenship was tied to race, power, and racialization (Marable & Clark, 2009; Sterling, 1968). The Negro was a foreign body, despicable, subhuman, and a strange fruit with interrupted possibilities (Holt, 1995; Jackson, 2006).

For the African American male, the past resembles the present. Over time this has included the subjection to slavery, beatings, castration, lynching, denial of human dignity and voting rights, mass incarceration, hate crimes, police brutality, the eradication of property, injustices of the penal system and the assassinations of early leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Medgar Evers (Alexander, 2012; Franklin & Starr, 1967; Kozol, 1991; López, 1997, 2010; Sterling, 1968). Even the modern-day fallen heroes reflect these travesties: Amadou Diallo, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, Stephon Clark, and the hundreds of others (Alexander, 2010; Clare, 2016; Rickford, 2016; Sterling, 1968; Uschan, 2006; Willis, Logan, & Johnson, 2015). Through all this, African American males have lived and died from a point of disadvantage (Steele, 1992). This disadvantage begins with race (*"race specifies a system of ideas and values, of advantages and disadvantages; race is a marker that describes, informs, and bounds white and non-white people within structures of power and domination"*) (Marable & Clarke, 2009, pp. 133-134). According to Franklin & Starr (1967), Banks (1993), Marable & Clarke (2009), and Winant (2006), the

Eurocentric storyline of the Negro race is not only a phenomenon but a social and conventional constructed concept – not a biological concept – meant to be the defining characteristic for African American group membership and to show superiority, power, and dominance of the white race over all other races. America's belief about race and African Americans became an uncontested truth that "Blacks were intellectually, behaviorally, interpersonally, and physically inferior and should be treated as objects" (Jackson, 2006, p. 14). Despite a history of microaggressions (*the brief, commonplace, and daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental slights and indignities directed toward Black Americans, often automatically and unintentionally*) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Pierce, 1989; Solórzano, 1997; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Torres, Driscoll, & Burrow, 2010; Tuitt & Carter, 2008), racism (*beliefs, attitudes and institutional arrangements and acts that tend to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation*) (Carter, Pieterse, & Smith, 2008) and racial oppression in America, African Americans have created ways to build bridges over troubled waters, devise cultural coping strategies in the face of cruel and deadly adversities, and pursue freedom through educational attainment (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; DuBois, 1994; hooks, 1992; Kozol, 1991; Malcolm X, 1965; Marable & Clarke, 2009; Williams, 2015). These coping strategies that African Americans have built to get through and overcome adversities, despite risk, pain, and difficulty, is known as resiliency (*addresses the capacity for individuals to withstand adversity and maintain adaptive behavior*) (Berry & Asamen, 1989;

Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Franklin & Starr, 1967; Graves, 2014; Pierce, 1989; Sanders, 1997; Steele, 1992).

The vulnerability of the African American male is particularly problematic in education. According to research (Children's Defense Fund, 2014), a Black public school student is suspended every 4 seconds during the school day and less then 80% of Black public school students graduated on time during the 2014-15 school year. The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF) reports that Black males ages 18 and older who are in college make up an anemic 5.5% of all college students – only one in six will receive that coveted college degree towards educational attainment (Toldson & Lewis, 2012). With a consistent, steady decline in the academic achievement for African American males and the ever swelling rise of African American males dropping out of high schools and entering the perils of a justice system that swings towards an imbalance of hopelessness and the predictability of a shortened lifespan, there has never been a more apt time to examine the intersectionality (*human lives, social problems, relationships and power dynamics between locations and processes, i.e., racism and sexism, are linked; people's lives are multi-dimensional and can experience privilege and oppression at the same time*) between race, microaggressions, and resiliency (Brown, 2008; Connell et al., 1994; Crenshaw, 1991; Hankivsky, 2014; Holt, 1995; Howard, 1996; Noguera, 1997; Sue, et al., 2008; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998; Torres et al., 2010; Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2006). The Children' Defense Fund (2018) illustrates an alarming analysis of the American educational system for Black Children, racial inequalities, and educational disparities:

- More than 80% of fourth and eighth grade Black public school students cannot read or compute at grade level compared to less than 57% of white students.
- Each school day, 763 Black high school students drop out.
- Black students are more than twice as likely to drop out as white students.
- 60% of African American males will earn high school diplomas and four in 10 drop out before graduation day – this is compared with a 65% graduation rate for Latino males and 80% for young white males.
- A Black child is arrested every 68 seconds.
- A Black child is suspended from school every 6 seconds – at a growing rate of 4,529 a day.
- Black students scored the lowest of any racial/ethnic group on the ACT® college entrance exam with only 5% of Black students being college ready – compared to 33% of white students and 43% of Asian students.
- Each day 974 Black children are arrested.
- A Black child or teen was killed with a gun every 7 hours and 25 minutes – a rate four times higher than white children and teens.
- The number of Black children and teens killed by guns between 1963 and 2010 is 17 times greater than the recorded lynchings of Black people of all ages from 1882 to 1968.
- 32% of African American males without a college education have spent time within a correctional facility (Alexander, 2010).

- African American students are more than three times as likely as white or Asian/Pacific Islanders and more than twice as likely as Hispanics/Latinos to be suspended from school (Pollock, 2008).
- An African American man is more than six times as likely as a white man to be slain (Alexander, 2010).
- African American males represent 6% of the U.S. population yet 35% of the prison population (Graham, 2011).
- Nationally, one in three African American males is in prison, on parole, or on probation (Marable & Clarke, 2009).

Although the statistics are alarming, they are not a new phenomenon. The African American male student will encounter a magnitude of disenfranchisement in academia and the many racialized negative messages about his appearance, ability, self worth, and intellectualism will have an impact on his identity (Berry & Asamen, 1989; Moynihan, 1997; Nogera, 1997; Steele, 1992).

Conceptually, the processes by which African American male students employ resiliency coping strategies to combat the day-to-day racialized messages (*everyday behavioral, visible and verbal expressions that demean an individual's racial heritage or identity*) (Brown, 2008; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Graves 2014) in high school and share those experiences with others is a growing phenomenon in need of more research. Examining the intersectionality of race, microaggressions, and resiliency among African American male students and how these racialized experiences impact their lives in a high school setting may produce understandings that could lead to interventions for greater academic success. Research has shown that while public

schools strive to provide equitable outcomes for all students, the traditional approach to educate African American males still leads to underachievement in literacy and math, the highest suspension rates, the lowest graduation percentage, and an ever-increasing opportunity gap (Carter & Welner, 2013; Children's Defense Fund, 2018; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Marable, 1995; Noguera, 1997, 2008; Tate, 1995; Toldson & Lewis, 2012).

The intersectionality of race and racism asserts the ideology that the "master narrative" in storytelling is told by the dominant or "majoritarian" voice rather than creating space to hear from those who have been oppressed, set aside, unseen, marginalized, and forgotten. Solórzano & Yosso (2002) posits that this dominant voice is the "unacknowledged White privilege that helps maintain racism's stories" (pp. 27-28). This privilege is invisibly worn and used by its owner and yet visibly seen and felt by its victim. White privilege is considered to be a system of advantages and benefits that are normally received without merit and based entirely on race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; McIntosh, 1988; Tatum, 1992). People of Color are the victims of white privilege and the systemic oppression that comes with it. However, if People of Color are affirmed in their racial identities and given space to share their stories, " . . . the ideology of racism is examined and racist injuries are named, and victims of racism can find their voice" (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 27).

Purpose of Study

The primary goal of this phenomenological study was to examine the intersectionality of race, microaggressions, and resiliency for African American male

students in a high school setting and to discover the impact racism has on these students. This research identified the presence and perception of racial microaggressions among African American male students and explored their experiences about racial identity, feelings of strength, power, and resiliency in a high school setting. Studies (Clark et al., 1999; Henfield, 2011; Spencer, Fegley, & Harpalani, 2003; Lee, Spencer, & Harpalani, 2003; Torres et al., 2010; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006; Sue et al., 2008) have investigated the local impact of these issues across a school system. Carter Andrews (2012) noted:

> The experience of often being the only Black student in a classroom intensifies the effects of experiencing racial microaggressions. Black students manage experiences with racial spotlighting and ignoring by utilizing a variety of resilient strategies that represent varying degrees of resistance. The use of these behavioral strategies demonstrates their resilience not only to racism but also to a school climate in which racism acts as a structural barrier to potentially constrain or impede achievement. (p. 4)

The ability to understand the cumulative effect of microaggressions and racism on African American male students and how to build a positive racial identity towards resiliency is vital to their academic success, mental health, and psychological well being (Brown, 2008; Noguera, 2003; Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Sellers et al., 2003; Torres et al., 2010). Thus, the following research questions were explored in this study:

1. To what extent are racial microaggressions present and perceived in the educational experience of an African American male student?

2. What deterrents do African American male students identify as threats to their resiliency as a high school student?
3. What protective factors lead to strength, power, and resiliency within a high school setting for African American male students?

Listening to stories in order to better understand African American male students' perceptions about their school experiences was most appropriate for this study and therefore, qualitative research methods were employed. A phenomenological method describes the meaning of experiences of a phenomenon (or topic or concept) for several individuals who share common lived-experiences. This approach requires researchers to work from the participants' shared or common experiences, statements, and similar life course stages (Creswell, 2007; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Delgado, 1989; Moustakas, 1994). Hence, listening to the voices of African American male students and their narratives about lived-experiences not only provided an in-depth understanding into their perspectives but also created space for them to "name their own reality" (Creswell, 2007; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016, p. 57; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Significance

At the root of this research lies a hidden truth: Despite the courageous leadership, contributions, and sacrifices of Sojourner Truth, Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, Nat Turner, Rosa Parks, Solomon Carter Fuller, Sandra Bland, Angela Davis, Sharon-Franklin Brown, Tarana Burke, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and many others, more than fifty years later, the battle confronting racism in schools, discrimination, classism, sexism, and educational

inequalities for African American males is still ongoing. This reality undermines the value of learning for all students and represents an ongoing danger in dismantling the fabric of our educational system (Alexander, 2010; Davis & Jordan, 1994; DeShay & Byndom, 2016; Graves, 2014; Marable & Clarke, 2009; Rickford, 2016). While many African American male students navigate through high school successfully, as an ethnic group, they remain at risk for a host of behavioral concerns as perceived by their economic, social, and educational challenges (Garibaldi, 1992; Jackson, 2006; Kunjufu, 1985; Noguera, 1997; Pollock, 2008; Steffensmeier, Ulmer, & Kramer, 1998).

Currently, what is known is that racial microaggressions cause psychological distress among African Americans (Brown, 2008; Carter Andrews 2012; Clark et al., 1999; Gaylord-Harden, Burrow, & Cunningham, 2012; Graves, 2014; Pierce, 1989; Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2008, Tuitt & Carter, 2008). While all members within ethnic groups must learn to develop and cope with sources of stress as part of human development, African American males encounter and internalize these pressures between ethnic identity and academic attainment with varied outcomes (Clark et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2003; Rowley et al., 1998). Research emphasizes the need to study the intersectionality of racism and microaggressions as potential risk factors among African American males (Berry & Asamen, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991; French & Coleman, 2012; Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2008; Willis et al., 2015). As one of the historically disenfranchised and marginalized groups, African Americans have attempted solutions to their educational needs with sparse and limited progress. African Americans in the United States have traditionally viewed education

as a passport to freedom, social mobility, and influence (Franklin & Star, 1967; Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014; Lee et al., 2003; Malcolm X, 1965; Ogbu, 1978; Sterling, 1968). In the days of slavery, men and women who had reading and writing skills were held as respected members of the slave community and these individuals assumed the task of educating others. Consequently, they were forced to be submissive, always reminded they were a problem and "less intelligent than Caucasians" (Franklin & Starr, 1967; Pettigrew, 1964, p. 1), and told they could not achieve at a high level. A common belief existed among white people that African American males had a violent nature and the caste system provided constant reminders that the "Negro should remain the hewer of wood and carrier of water…and remain in his place" (Franklin & Starr, 1967, p. 25; Ogbu, 1978, 1990). Additionally, Blacks were "dispensable objects", a tasteless "strange fruit" without substance, and its only value was to be tortured, lynched, and burned (Jackson, 2006, p. 17).

Given this relevance, there are still present-day challenges that exist which can interrupt the African American male student's journey to academic success, including:

- growing up in poverty;
- internalizing racialized messages and racism;
- the influence of economically depressed and drug infestation of urban communities;
- police brutality and mass incarceration,
- little to no contact with biological fathers or role models; and,
- the dehumanization of their Black bodies. (Alexander, 2012; Alston & Williams, 1982; Battle & Scott, 2000; Berry & Asamen, 1989; Carter

Andrews, 2012; Coates, 2015; Franklin & Starr, 1967; Graham & Anderson, 2008; hooks, 1992; Jackson, 2006; Kozol, 1991; Kunjufu, 1985; López, 1997, 2010; Marable & Clarke, 2009; Noguera, 2008; Willis et al., 2015).

When an African American student encounters racialized messages and microaggressions within a school setting, these experiences have predicted a decline in student engagement and participation, low self-concept about academic ability and achievement, increased stress levels, and other negative behaviors (Brown, 2008; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; French & Coleman, 2012; Gay, 1985; Graves, 2014; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Meeks, 2010; Pierce, 1989; Pollock, 2008; Sellers et al., 2003; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue et al., 2008; Tatum, 1997; Tuitt & Carter, 2008). Therefore, examining the intersectionality of race, microaggressions, and resiliency among African American male students is important to better understand the coping factors towards social and academic success in a public high school setting.

Summary

Considering the ever-changing demographic environment of our K-12 schools, it is essential to acknowledge and understand the racialized experiences African American male students encounter in classrooms to close the opportunity gap and build bridges towards academic success (Crenshaw et al., 1995, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Examining current research, listening to students' stories while exploring the intersections of race, microaggressions, and resiliency in the lives of African American male students in a public high school setting can be one approach towards addressing the impact of racism and the predictability it has on academic success

(Bell, 2010; Brown, 2008; Carter & Welner, 2013; Gay 1985; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Noguera, 1997, 2008; Pollock, 2008; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

This research includes a literature review in Chapter Two detailing the intersectionality of race, microaggressions, and resiliency for African American male students in a public high school setting. For the theoretical framework, the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST), Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Racial Identity Theory (RIT) will be used to explore the intersections of race, racial identity, and the stress factors of microaggressions, and coping responses for resiliency that impact an African American male's developmental process. Chapter Three explains the qualitative research methods for the study. Four focus group interviews were conducted using an interview protocol. The interviews were comprised of 25 self-identified African American male students from four high schools. Chapter Four provides results and data analysis of the emergent themes from the study. Finally, Chapter Five presents a discussion of the study, limitations, summary of findings, implications for practice, and future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Critique

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that informed the current scholarship and the relevant literature reviewed for the study. For decades, researchers have examined the role that racism plays into racial identity, life experiences, and academic outcomes (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Fordham & Ogbu, 1996; hooks, 1992; Ogbu, 1978). Ellison (1952) poignantly stated:

> I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen, although it is most often wearing on the nerves. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except me. You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you're a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognize you. And, alas, it's seldom successful. (p. 3)

African American male students who encounter day-to-day racialized messages (*everyday behavioral, visible and verbal expressions that demean an individual's racial heritage or identity*) (Coates, 2015; Henfield, 2011; Pollock, 2008; Tuitt & Carter, 2008) need an opportunity to have their voices heard and make meaning of those experiences (Graves, 2014; Holt, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The factors by which African American male students employ academic, behavioral, and social resiliency in the face of racism and develop coping strategies that enable them to overcome, persevere, and build a positive self-identity is an area of study in need of a greater critique (Brown, 2008; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Graves 2014, Rowley et al.,

1998). Although some researchers (Clark et al., 1999; hooks, 1992; Marable & Clarke, 2009; Solórzano, 1997) label racial microaggressions as the brief, commonplace, and daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental slights and indignities directed toward Black Americans, often automatically and unintentionally; others (Sue et al., 2008) have added to the definition that "describes a dynamic interplay between perpetrator and recipient" (p. 329). Similarly, Davis (1989) defined microaggressions as "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are negative in nature of Blacks by offenders" (p. 1565). Additionally, there are three forms of racial microaggressions relative to this study (Andrews, 2012; Henfield, 2011; Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2008; Tuitt & Carter, 2008):

1. Microassaults – verbal and nonverbal attacks done with intentionality (*i.e., a white student calls an African American student the "n" word or a student calls another student "faggot" or "you're so gay"*) (Solórzano et al., 2000, 2000; Sue et al., 2008).
2. Microinsults – insensitive or rude behavioral and verbal expressions that demean an individual's cultural heritage or racial identity (*i.e., a white student tells an African American male student that he should be good at football, track, or basketball because all African Americans can run fast and are good athletes*) (Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 61; Sue et al., 2008, p. 329).
3. Microinvalidations – statements or actions that negate, disaffirm, lessen quality of, and invalidate the psychological thought processes, feelings, stances, and racial reality of African Americans (*i.e., when an African American student is attempting to speak about the relevancy of slavery and its impact on him/her*

and then being told by a white student, "can't we all just move on and get over it") (Solórzano et al., 2000, p. 61; Sue et al., 2008, p. 329).

All forms of microaggressions are painful for the victim and however they are manifested can cause a great deal of stress, anger, anxiety, and generate feelings of invisibility, impotence, and powerlessness (Henfield, 2011; Pierce, 1989; Spencer et al., 1997; Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2008, Tuitt & Carter, 2008). In the academic context, when African American male students receive racialized messages from white students and teachers, social media, and from a school's culture, their ability to engage, academically excel, or successfully navigate through the nuances of racism becomes challenging and compromises their positive racial identity (Graves, 2014; Parham & Helms, 1985; Rowley et al., 1998; Sellers et al., 2003). The ability to understand the cumulative effect of microaggressions and racism on African American male students and how to build a positive racial identity towards resiliency is vital to their academic success, mental health, and psychological well being (Brown, 2008; Noguera, 2003; Rowley et al., 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Sellers et al., 2003).

The primary goal of this phenomenological study was to examine the intersectionality of race, microaggressions, and resiliency for African American male students in a high school setting and to discover the impact racism has on African American male students in a high school setting. While there are some generalizations that can be made about day-to-day life experiences of African Americans, African American males go through different experiences than white males (Coates, 2015; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Delgado, 1989; DuBois, 1994; hooks, 1992; Kunjufu, 1985; Noguera, 1997; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Saunders, Davis, Williams, & Williams,

2004; Toldson & Lewis, 2012). In today's culture, stereotypical behavior of white males takes on a different meaning when compared to African American males. White males who exhibit bold, audacious, independent, spontaneous, and free-spirited behavior may be seen as threatening, aggressive, rebellious, too loud, angry or violent in African American males (Clark, 1999; Spencer et al., 1997). Only in America (Toldson & Lewis, 2012), do we use words like "endangered, vulnerable, and extinction (pp. 8, 11)" to describe the academic, social or economical conditions for African American males (Alexander, 2012; Willis et al., 2015). For the African American male, this introduces the dichotomy of the inner-self and outward-struggle – a duality, or as DuBois (1994) prophetically describes the "double-consciousness" of being both an American and a Negro (*Ethnic identity of African American/Black People*). Whereby the African American male is perceived one way by the dominant white culture, in him lives a hidden tension of stress and social cognition struggle to be understood, accepted, affirmed, and seen. Hence, this coping strategy for the African American male towards resiliency is "to merge his double self into a better and truer self… He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face" (DuBois, 1994, pp. 2-3).

The research identified the presence and perception of racial microaggressions among African American male students in a focus group setting and intersected their stories about racial identity, feelings of power, strength, and resiliency in schools. The following questions were explored in this study:

1. To what extent are racial microaggressions present and perceived in the educational experience of an African American male student?
2. What deterrents do African American male students identify as threats to their resiliency as a high school student?
3. What protective factors lead to strength, power, and resiliency within a high school setting for African American male students?

Theoretical Framework

In the current political environment and in what some scholars refer to as post-racial America *("seeming an evaporation of race as a basis of social ordering in the United States"* López, 2010, p. 1024), race is often wrongly thought to be unconnected to the dominant voice or, at best, a problem of racist individuals rather than a systemic and structural problem (Marable & Clarke, 2009). Lawrence (1987) posits:

> Americans share a common historical and cultural heritage in which racism has played and still plays a dominant role. Because of this shared experience, we also inevitably share many ideas, attitudes, and beliefs that attach significance to an individual's race and induce negative feelings and opinions about nonwhites. To the extent that this cultural belief system has influenced all of us, we are all racists. At the same time, most of us are unaware of our racism. We do not recognize the ways in which our cultural experience has influenced our beliefs about race or the occasions on which those beliefs affect our actions. In other words, a large part of the behavior that produces racial discrimination is influenced by unconscious racial motivation (p. 322).

Rather than examining one's belief, influence and perception of a racist's idea as wrong and immoral, "when an individual experiences conflict between racist ideas and the societal ethic that condemns those ideas, the mind excludes his racism from consciousness" (Lawrence, 1987, p. 323).

Research suggests that African American adolescents experience racial discrimination at chronic high levels that become stress factors, which affect their psychological and normative developmental process (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Brown, 2008; Clark et al., 1999; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2012; Kunjufu, 1985; Sellers et al., 2003; Scottham, Sellers, & Nguyên, 2008; Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997; Sue et al., 2008, 2008; Swanson, Spencer, Harpalani, & Spencer, 2002). To better understand African American male students and the influences of race, microaggressions, and what deterrents threaten their resiliency in public high schools, the following theories will be used:

- Racial Identity Theory (*RIT*) gives meaning and significance to attitudes and beliefs about race to an individual's self-concept and identity development (Parham & Helms, 1985; Sellers et al., 1998; Tatum, 1992).
- Critical Race Theory (*CRT*) challenges claims of objectivity, neutrality, and colorblindness of the law and argues that these ideologies normalize and perpetuate racism (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).
- Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (*PVEST*) is a theoretical framework that recognizes, integrates, and gives meaning to a student's cultural identity, coping strategies and experiences; and "one's perception of those experiences in different cultural contexts that influences

how one perceives oneself" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Spencer et al., 1997, p. 817).

First, it is helpful to understand the normative developmental processes (i.e., physical growth, identity formation, social and psychological maturation) for African American males. Spencer's work (1997, 2003) integrates the issues of context and environment, coping, and identity development for African American youth who will encounter numerous racialized stereotypes, negative societal messages, and structural racism, both overt and subtle. Second, when African American males encounter these racialized experiences during there youth they "pose risks for health and positive development" (Spencer et al., 2003, p. 181) and when manifested can create stress and dissonance (i.e., race and gender identity) (Brown, 2008; Clark et al., 1999; Graves, 2014; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2012; Sue et al., 2008, Swanson et al., 2002). When African American males grow up in high-risk environments and the complexities of ethnicity, racism, racial identity, and probability of being invisible, the "quandary of being American, Black, and male" (Spencer et al., 1997, p. 818) becomes a phenomenon critical of investigation. Higginbotham (1978) suggests:

> For Black Americans today – the children of all the hundreds of Kunta Kintes unjustly chained in bondage – the early failure of the nation's founders and their constitutional heirs to share the legacy of freedom with Black Americans is at least on factor in America's perpetual racial tensions means being stressed more because you are Black. (pp. 6-7)

Lastly, the integration of the PVEST Model and CRT accentuate the importance of one's perception of experiences and how racial discrimination can alter

behavioral, academic, and social outcomes, and identity in human development (Sellers et al., 1998; Spencer et al., 2003). PVEST lays the foundation for analyzing self-processes for coping and human development whereby CRT provides the lens to understand the complex structures of race and colorblindness (*the denial, distortion, refusal to acknowledge and/or minimization of race and racism*) (Alexander, 2012; McIntosh, 1988; Neville, Spanierman, & Doan, 2006). By incorporating this multi-analysis lens approach, students are not only able to name their reality and illuminate the factors of cultural distrust, which is a significant predictor of academic achievement, but are also able to acquire healthy racial identity beliefs (Cross, 1971; Saunders et al., 2004; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006; Tatum, 1992). More specifically, this scholarship and intervention will help educators who work with and teach African American males to better understand and apply a developmental framework that foregrounds the relevance of a bioecological and phenomenological study that intersects race, microaggressions, and resiliency in a public high school setting.

Racial Socialization and Ethnic Identity.

Racial socialization and ethnic identity among African American children have been examined for decades by researchers, scholars and academic practitioners alike (Berry & Asamen, 1989; Brown, 2008; Bynum, Best, Barnes & Burton, 2008; Cross, 1971; Gay, 1985; Graves, 2014; Marks, Settles, Cooke, Morgan, & Sellers, 2004; Parham & Helms, 1985; Rowley et al., 1998; Sellers et al., 2006; Tatum, 1992). Racial socialization is a belief system surrounding behaviors, communication patterns, and perceptions that African American parents teach their children about race and

cultural heritage. For example, African American parents instruct their children how to behave and respond if confronted by the police. Racial socialization also informs African American children on how to respond to racism and give meaning to the internal feelings, struggles, external messages about race and one's racial identity (Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson, & Spicer, 2006; Peters, 1985). To better understand how a group of people is able to overcome pain, setback and adversity, it is essential to explore the intersections of the African American culture, the learning environments of the people in it and the cultural practices of a marginalized community (Graham & Anderson, 2008; Neblett, Jr., Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006). Previous research (Banks, 1993; Gay, 1985, Ladson-Billings, 2013; Noguera, 2008; Sellers et al., 1998) suggests African American male students have traditionally experienced educational inequities which keep them disadvantaged for post-secondary preparation due to hegemonic institutional structures and exclusionary practices. These institutional structures, academic barriers, racial hierarchies, and exclusionary practices often lead to tracking African American males into remedial and basic courses, overrepresentation in special education, underrepresentation in honors classes and non-college prep elective courses, as well as higher rates of disciplinary exclusion (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Toldson & Lewis, 2012), collectively, this keeps them from academic success and opportunity.

Racial Identity Theory and Development.

Racial Identity Theory (RIT) illuminates the factors of cultural distrust, which is a significant predictor of academic achievement and takes into account the possible

"issues such as how the condition of being Black in a predominantly white environment influences the personality development and psychological adjustment of Black persons" (Parham & Helms, 1985, p. 431). When the level of mistrust increases in African American males, their academic outcomes and expectations decrease. Consequently, their oppositional cultural attitudes and assertiveness will increase (Carter et al., 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ogbu, 1978; Rowley et al., 1998; Sellers et al., 1998, 2003, 2006; Scottham et al., 2008; Tatum, 1992). This presence of cultural mistrust undermines the academic success and attainment for African American male students (Irving & Hudley, 2005, 2008). RIT (Cross, 1971; Helms, 1990; Parham & Helms, 1985; Sellers et al., 1998; Tatum, 1992) has 5 stages for developing the identity of an African American:

- Pre-encounter – this is where an individual does not believe race to be component in racial identity but rather places more emphasis on another identity membership (i.e., religion, sexual orientation, social class) (Cross, 1971, pp. 15-23).
- Encounter – at this stage an individual has been faced to confront with their race by a positive or negative experience. The impact is so profound that it changes the narrative and attitude of their worldview on race because a personal or social event (Cross, 1971, pp. 15-23).
- Immersion/emersion – the individual immerses her/himself into all aspects of Black culture and views it as good; whereby viewing all aspects of white culture as bad. Although this appears to be a positive shift in the right

direction, this immersion is not psychologically driven nor is it committal toward Black identity development (Cross, 1971, pp. 15-23).

- Internalization – at this stage the individual has made an internal and psychological change towards an inner-appreciation with her/his Blackness. Their perspective on racial identity has a balanced approach in seeing both the positive and negative aspects of being Black or white (Cross, 1971, pp. 15-23).
- Internalization-commitment – in the final stage the individual has made a commitment from internalization to action – including political involvement (Cross, 1971, pp. 15-23).

The Nigrescence model (pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization and internalization-commitment) describes a path the African American travels on towards group identification, acculturation, and Black identity in United States (Cross, 1971). Research has shown that this model helps African American/Black people obtain an emotionally, psychologically, and healthy racial identity development through their life experiences about race, how one see's themselves, and how others see them (Cross, 1971; Parham & Helms, 1985; Tatum 1992; Sellers et al., 1998). Research describes "there are developmental differences specific to individuals over the span of their lifetime, as well as tremendous variability within any given ethnic group in terms of strength of ethnic identification" (Bennett, Mcwhorter, & Kuykendall, 2006, p. 538). There are also 6 stages of identity development for white people (Carter, Helms, & Juby, 2004; Helms, 1990; Tatum, 1992):

- Contact – little to no awareness about one's own racial identity and the privilege associated with it. There is a use of stereotypes and fear of People of Color based on limited contact and/or integration with People of Color (Helms, 1990, pp. 54-66).
- Disintegration – at this stage one's lack of awareness or ignorance is replaced with shame, guilt and sometimes anger when the realization of white privilege is seen as racism. Confusion will take place to lessen the feelings of discomfort and to disintegrate from a racist system (Helms, 1990, pp. 54-66).
- Reintegration – the stage reintroduces the superiority of the white race. One's level of discomfort has reached a crescendo of anger and blame towards People of Color (usually African Americans) because of one's internal desire to be accepted in their own racial group (Helms, 1990, pp. 54-66).
- Pseudo-independent – the awareness of white privilege comes to the forefront of the white person, followed by attempts to give support to or surround themselves with People of Color (typically African Americans to better understand racism). There is also abandonment to their own racial group to reconcile the internal struggle but still perpetuating a racist system in their actions (Helms, 1990, pp. 54-66).
- Immersion/emersion – this stage produces an action towards exploring what it means to be white and the privileges associated with it. The individual now seeks true and valid information about racial identity to replace the fears and stereotypes about People of Color (Helms, 1990, pp. 54-66).

- Autonomy – the final stage has changed a person's belief system about racial identity and white privilege. The acceptance of this self-awakening has energized the individual to not only identify racist acts (i.e., behaviors of oppression, microaggressions) but to interrupt them and thereby creating alliances with People of Color (Helms, 1990, pp. 54-66).

Researchers (Carter et al., 2004, 2008; Cross, 1971; French & Coleman, 2012; Parham & Helms, 1985) posit that an individual's racial identity and racial socialization undergoes psychological changes and functionality when new information about race is taught, processed, and becomes a lived-experience. Throughout each stage, the attitudes towards racial identity present challenges in developing different psychological constructs and race-related schemas (Carter et al., 2008; Graves, 2014; hooks, 1992; Tatum, 1992). The stress of the pre-encounter stage for African Americans describes an individual as someone attempting to escape the reality of their own race by distancing themselves from people who look like them. This de-emphasis of one's self-awareness about race creates a façade or "fakeness" that race will not determine or be a relative factor towards achievement and/or advancement. For example, after Malcolm X (1965) became president of his 7th grade class, he experienced the tension of living through the stresses of RIT:

> I was elected class president. It surprised me even more than other people. But I can see now why the class might have done it. My grades were among the highest in the school. I was unique in my class, like a pink poodle and I was proud; I'm not going to say I wasn't. In fact, by then, I didn't really have

> much feeling about being a Negro because I was trying so hard, in every way that I could be White. (p. 31)

This duality of struggling to understand how others saw him and how he saw himself caused internal stress and anxiety for Malcolm X. His path toward racial identity led him to surrender his Black identity to "cope with the burden of 'acting white'" in order to be seen, accepted, and fit in (Barresi, 2006; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 2; Malcolm X, 1965, 2015).

Critical Race Theory Intersects with Culture and Dominate Ideology.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) arose in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement as a component of legal scholarship and analysis of a corrupt system. Historically, CRT came to shine a light on the extensive institutionalized practices in the unequal distribution of power, racism, and white privilege, opportunity, and resources disseminated within our country's legal system (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009; Tate, 1997). Although CRT has grown in its application in many disciplines, the premise of CRT challenges claims of objectivity, neutrality, and colorblindness of the law and argues that these ideologies normalize and perpetuate racism (Crenshaw et al., 1995). With the understanding that CRT examines white privilege and institutional racism, a recent study (Toldson & Lewis, 2012) concluded that "racial dynamics do alter the school environment by racial lines" which affect discipline rates for African American males and how others perceive them (p. 9). The pioneers of the CRT movement (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 1989) made claims that gave a distinct focus and direction that challenges our belief system surrounding racism and racial injustices:

- Racism has been the normal way of life and has been ingrained into our political, educational and legal systems (Crenshaw et al., 1995, pp. 20-29).
- The voice from marginalized communities – People of Color – should be the narrative that challenges the existing social construction surrounding race and views held by whites (Crenshaw et al., 1995, pp. 20-29).
- Power, equal rights, and resources within the legal system are intentionally withheld from racially marginalized communities (Crenshaw et al., 1995, pp. 20-29).

Consequently, by choosing not to address the systemic, academic, racial, and structural inequalities, these views are fortified into the fabric of our social institutions as the norm (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Crenshaw et al., 1995). CRT theorists (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) have identified six tenets:

1) *Endemic Racism.* Racism is a normalized experience for people of Color – it happens daily because it is woven into the fabric of the United States of America (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, pp. 6-9).
2) *Interest Convergence.* Racism is only discussed when there are an interest convergence and advantage for the white majority – only then will the progressive change be a focal point (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, pp. 6-9).
3) *Social Construct.* Race is a social construct with observable physical attributes with no connection to biological or genetic differences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, pp. 6-9).
4) *Voices of Color.* The dominant voice uses silence and dismissal to exclude people of Color from the conversation – along with their lived experiences that

give power to the majority and legitimizes oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, pp. 6-9).

5) *Differential racialization.* Primary social discourses and people in power (white majority – dominant voice) can racialize groups of Color in a variety of ways and times that fit their need (socially, historically, and economically) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, pp. 6-9).

6) *Intersectionality.* CRT paves the way for the discussion of race and brings the complexities of racism to the forefront – this allows the intersections of racial identities to cross (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, pp. 6-9).

CRT has a long-standing practice of questioning or probing the ideologies, beliefs, and structures of our society through an analytical and critical conceptual lens. One of the primary focuses of CRT is not to rely on old values and assumptions but to rather analyze, deconstruct, and transform lives by building relationships on truth, equity, and acceptance (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Tate, 1997).

CRT scholars (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995) also stress the need to allow students of Color to explore “alternative visions of reality” from their perspectives (Delgado, 1989, p. 2417). Students from traditionally oppressed groups are encouraged to share their experiences and stories with their classmates to create a critical dialogue on issues of race, gender, language, and class. Ogbu (1978) views that what happens inside classrooms and schools is greatly affected by the minority group’s perceptions. These perceptions are related to historical and structural experiences in the dominant majority (Tatum, 1992). Solórzano (1997) was one of the early scholars that spearheaded the development of a CRT framework within the

classroom to address race and racism. He contends that there is a direct correlation between the practices of CRT – and its relation to the concepts of race, racism, and stereotypes in teacher education. Ladson-Billings (1994, 2004) paved the way for a deeper discussion from a teacher's perspective within the classroom to analyzing their work and teaching practices. By using a critical race analysis of what it means to have race at the forefront of the conversation, interrupting racist concepts, and racial inequalities will level the playing field for those students who have traditionally been marginalized, left out, and not seen in the curriculum (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Singleton & Linton, 2006). CRT can be utilized to describe African American males' current reality and to create a framework to surface the counter-narratives that educators can learn from. From using the lens of CRT, each teacher's perspective and influence on a school's climate and culture can contribute positively toward race relations and successful student learning (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Gay, 2003; Lynn, 1999; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tate, 1995).

Knowing how to listen to and facilitate an African American male's lived experiences in a high school setting means paying attention to all students while creating a safe place for them to openly express their thoughts about racial ideology, self-concepts and attitudes about race and be themselves (Rowley et al., 1998). This kind of racial identity and self-esteem development in the classroom can be made when the students see how information can transform their lives and when the teacher fully commits to every aspect of learning by embracing struggle and sacrifice (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Delgado, 1989; Gay, 1985; hooks, 1994; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). By welcoming this spirit of struggle and sacrifice, it challenges the

notion of giving information for the sake of giving it without the teacher and student both participating in the process. hooks (1994) writes that this work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual, racial identity, spiritual and academic growth of students – particularly for the African American male student who sits daily at the crossroads of crisis (Graves, 2014, Noguera, 1997). Confidently, African American male students can enter the classrooms as participants, approach knowledge with boldness, positivity, and see the connection between what's being taught and what's being lived. Thus, creating communities of solidarity in the struggle toward mutual growth (hooks, 1994).

Intersectionality of Phenomenal Variant Ecological Systems Theory.

Research suggests that African Americans who experience discrimination in their lives can have damaging outcomes on their mental and psychological health and wellbeing (Brown, 2008; Carter et al., 2008; Ponterotto & Park-Taylor, 2007; Sellers Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, & Zimmerman, 2003; Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2008). The phenomenon between an African American's mental health, resiliency, and racial identity while experiencing racism, microaggressions, and other acts of discrimination is consistent with the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Graves, 2014; Spencer et al., 1995, 1997, Swanson et al., 2002). More specifically, the following components of this framework will guide the present research in the:

1. Emphasis of the relationship between real-life experiences and racial identity (Spencer et al., 1997, pp. 817-823).

2. Significance of, and giving meaning to, one's experiences in different cultural contexts and environments (Spencer et al., 1997, pp. 817-823).
3. Identification of protective and resilient factors to persevere and problem solve through real-life experiences; and
4. Integration of, listening to, and providing space to capture an individual's perception of racism and racialized messages (Spencer et al., 1997, pp. 817-823).

An African American male's self-perception about racial identity, societal expectations, behavior, and academic outcomes "influences how much one feels valued or valuable" and gives meaning to one's abilities (Spencer, et al., 1997, p. 817). Initially, an individual's self-assessment about race, the perception of self, and how others perceive, can influence identity development and create a unique experience for African American males. Secondly, depending how often an African American male experiences racism (i.e., racialized messages, microaggressions, discriminatory events) and the stressors accompanied with racial identity, eventually a response will surface: negative or positive coping methods – including healthy or maladaptive behavior development (Bronfenbrenner, & Morris, 2006; Brown, 2008; Carter et al., 2008; Sellers et al., 2003; Spencer et al., 1997; Sue et al., 2008). In addition, PVEST Model and CRT accentuate the importance of one's perception of experiences and how racial discrimination can alter behavioral, academic, and social outcomes, and identity in human development (Sellers et al., 1998, 2003, 2006; Spencer et al., 1997). PVEST lays the foundation for analyzing self-processes for coping and human development whereby CRT provides the lens to understand the complex structures of

race and colorblindness (*the denial, distortion, refusal to acknowledge and/or minimization of race and racism*) (Alexander, 2012; McIntosh, 1988; Neville et al., 2006).

Empirical research has found a connection between an African American male's racial identity and experiences with racial discrimination and the affects racial discrimination has on mental health (Cross, 1991; Graves, 2014; Neblett Jr., et al., 2006; Rowley et al., 1998). Operario and Fiske (2001) found that an individual's ethnic identity can develop one's self-concept when influenced by race-related incidents (i.e., prejudicial thoughts and behaviors). The study also revealed that high-ethnically identified minorities react to "both subtle and obvious forms of prejudice" (p. 558). In addition, Graves (2014) found that by giving student voice to their experiences inside and outside of the classroom, schools can learn and participate in the healthy racial development and socialization of students. As stated earlier, PVEST (Lee et al., 2003; Sellers et al., 1998, 2003, 2006; Spencer et al., 1997, 2003; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) provides the framework for African American male students to identify, give voice to, and name their experiences while sharing one's perceptions of those experiences with others from a variety of cultural contexts that influence one's perception of himself.

Intersectionality of Racism in the Classroom, Black Opportunity Gap, Culture and Climate

The thread of racism is just as strong today as it was during slavery. Mills (1997) states in *The Racial Contract* that:

We need to recognize that racism is itself a political system (a global white

> supremacy), a particular power structure of formal and informal rules, socioeconomic privilege, and norms for the differential distribution of material wealth and opportunities, benefits and burdens, rights and duties. (p. 3)

Discussing such topics as racism, white privilege (*" . . . an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank check"*) (McIntosh, 1988, p. 30), and multicultural education with educators can often be challenging and difficult, but necessary. Ultimately, the teacher and student can participate in a learning process that passionately connects their lives and empowers them to live deeply (Gay, 2003; hooks, 1994). Engaged pedagogy invites us to make this type of connection. It is about working together. Engaged pedagogy addresses the need for teachers to acknowledge students' diversity and incorporate students' pluralistic backgrounds and experiences into the learning experiences and classroom culture (Lynn, 1999; Tate, 1997).

Pioneers who focus on racial inequalities in the classroom such as Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995), Tate (1997), Gay (2010), Solórzano (1997), and Banks (2004) have advocated that the underachievement of African Americans, Latinos and Asian Pacific Islanders, comes as a result of the lack of culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2002) suggests that culturally responsive teaching use "the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). This allows the teachers to transform their classroom practices with being open to learning about the cultural characteristics of ethnic groups

and address the problem of students underachieving in the school system (Gay, 2010). One of the leading ecological theories among African Americans underachievement is due to being involuntarily immigrated to the United States (i.e. kidnapping, slavery, slave-trading). Consequently, creating an oppositional culture as the result of witnessing barriers to access and achievement to their individual successes into mainstream society (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Some researchers (Alexander, 2012; Franklin & Starr, 1967; Ladson-Billings, 2013; López, 2010) argue that systemic oppression, segregation, and control of equal educational opportunities taken away from African Americans are a direct correlation to slavery. Higginbotham asserts that dominant whites wanted "absolute enslavement of Blacks and feared that any judicial protection of the slave would trigger further challenges to the legitimacy of the dehumanized status of Blacks and slaves" (Higginbotham, 1978, pp. 8, 14).

Black Opportunity Gap.

The greatest and most alarming problem facing educators – and our society – is the growing opportunity gap for students of Color. Closing the opportunity gap that exists between our Black and Hispanic students with their Asian and white peers is the surest way to show growth in the right direction and sustain academic equality for all students (Carter & Welner, 2013). The substantial ramifications for males of Color are a present dilemma and educational deficit in our schools and beyond. Given the ecological factors that males, and in particular males of Color, bring with them to school (Noguera, 2008), some teachers lack the requisite skills to facilitate engagement and learning. The theory of Gender-Relevant Pedagogy (GRP) serves as a framework to inform teachers' dispositions when interacting with boys and provides

the content to increase engagement and learning. Nationally, our males of Color are failing and one hallmark of our country is to educate all students – not just the privileged. Research (Toldson & Lewis, 2012) indicates that African American males become disengaged for a variety of reasons, including "non-inclusive curricula and poor relationships with teachers" (p. 32) and without the foundational learning needed to navigate through life the economic stability of whole communities, a thriving workforce and the viability of families of Color will be in jeopardy (Casserly, Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, & Palacios, 2012).

John H. Jackson, President and CEO of the Schott Foundation for Public Education, responded with: "Simply stated, while most will say Black lives matter and are important, the four-year graduation results in this report indicate that most states and localities operate at best, and have created at worse, climates that often don't foster healthy living and learning environments for African American males" (http://www.blackboysreport.org). These learning environments have a need: African American male teachers. Today, 74 percent of educators in the United States are females; 79 percent are white. African American men comprise 1.9 percent of the entire U.S. teaching population (Bristol, 2015; Lynn, 2006). African American male teachers, however, have not always represented a small fraction of the country's teaching force. In 1890, data from the U.S. Census suggested that among African American teachers, the majority of whom were in the South, 49 percent were men and 51 percent were women (Fultz, 1995). By the 1940s, the number of African American male teachers decreased dramatically when compared to African American female teachers: 21 percent and 79 percent, respectively (Fultz, 1995). Unfortunately,

African American male teachers were disappearing from the classrooms and the overall impact would be felt for decades to come (Lynn, 2006; Kunjufu, 1995; Pollock, 2008; Sterling, 1968; Tatum, 1997). In 1954 (Byrne, 2005), the Supreme Court mandated the United States public schools to integrate. A long and arduous "battle against segregation in the American public educational system, a practice that had cheated African American children out of anything resembling a quality education, was at an end" (Haney, 1978, p. 88). As integration moved into the school system, African American students could finally walk into the hallways of white schools and despondently, their African American teachers did not follow. Before *Brown v The Board of Education* (1954), there were 82,000 African American male and female teachers across the United States (Haney, 1978). However, between 1954 and 1965, 38,000 African American teachers lost their jobs (Bristol, 2015). The *Brown* decision brought catastrophic and long lasting consequences for African American teachers and principals. For example, "in North Carolina, 128 out of 131 white school superintendents believed that it would be impractical to use Negro teachers in schools under their jurisdiction" (Haney, 1978, p. 90). African American educators were dismissed for a variety of reasons: African American schools were forced to close because African American students were attending the newly integrated schools, school boards refused to pay African American teachers the same salary as their white colleagues, African American principals became assistants to white principals or "became supervisors in the central office" (p. 92), and state legislatures adopted laws that allowed for the dismissal of African American teachers without cause and once again, African American students would pay the price (Haney,

1978). In the 10-year period from 1975-1985 African American students who selected education as a college major decreased by 66 percent. The 5-year period from 1984-1989, a change in certification requirements and teacher education program requirements resulted in another loss of 21,515 African America teachers (Tillman, 2004). Education historians noted that these teachers provided their African American students with the socio-emotional support and an academically rigorous curriculum to navigate an overtly racist society (Bristol, 2015; Franklin & Starr, 1967; Kunjufu, 1985; Ladson- Billings, 2013). These teachers believed their roles to be much more than delivering content, but to serve as surrogate parents to their students (Toldson & Lewis, 2012).

Culture and Climate.

Culture can be defined as a system of values, beliefs, patterns, and ways of knowing that guide communities of people in their daily lives (Trumbull, 2005). The school climate helps to set the tone for all learning, student engagement and teaching done in a school environment and, as the literature review will explain, it is predictive of students' ability to learn and develop in healthy ways. Studies document that students in schools with a better school climate have higher academic achievement, positive race relations and better social and emotional health (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009; Cohen, Guffey, Higgins-D'Alessandro, & Thapa, 2013; Finn, 1993). Studies on a school's climate and culture can guide educators in understanding what factors of the environment are most significant to student growth, best effective practices in the classroom, academic outcomes and gaps, as well as how relevant they are in predicting student performance – socially, behaviorally and

academically (Fulton & Elbot, 2008; Hughes, Anderson, Cannon, Perez, & Moore, 1998; Way, Reddy & Rhodes, 2007).

Changing race relations and developing positive aspects of these relations are essential aspects of measuring the climate of schools. Ogbu's research (1978) showed how institutional racism affects minorities in a variety of ways and has a significant effect on their perceptions of school and workplace climate. As society grows more economically and ethnically diverse, problems involving race and school culture become more relevant to the learning environment. Minorities and ethnic groups that have been traditionally marginalized play ever increasing roles in the influences that affect education. School environments that suffer from poor discipline processes, high teacher-turnover rates, low student and staff morale and socio-economic disparities, are blamed for the demonstrable gap in achievement among minorities. All of which contribute to a school's culture and academic performance (Cohen et al., 2013; Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2008; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Mills, 1997; Noguera, 1997; Pollock, 2008; Toldson & Lewis, 2012; Williams, 2015). Studies continue to show that a school's culture and climate have an overwhelming impact on students' academic performance, self-esteem levels, mental, emotional and physical health (Koth et al., 2008). Research also contends that adolescents growing up in poor urban areas are exposed to a multiplicity of risks and social dangers that can contribute to making unwise decisions concerning the school attendance and failure, substance abuse, and misbehavior (Alexander, 2012; Banks, 1993; Berry & Asamen, 1989; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noguera, 1997, 2003, 2008). The focus on

school's culture and climate should be a priority if the scores and dropout rates for African American male students are expected to improve.

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the existing literature on defining racialized messages, racial socialization, and ethnic identity for African American male students. To better understand race, microaggressions, and resiliency, it is vital to know the stages of racial identity development for both African and white Americans. African American males have been known to mask their ethnic identity in the classroom to do well socially and academically (Brown, 2008; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Rassiguier, 1998). To better understand the protective factors of African American male students and how they overcome the impact of racism, microaggressions, and develop resiliency in the classroom, the multi-analysis approach of RIT, CRT, and PVEST were used (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano et al., 2000; Spencer 1997, 2003). The intersectionality of these theories show how institutional racism affects minorities and has a significant influence on their perceptions of learning and living within predominately all-white spaces. PVEST lays the foundation for analyzing self-processes for coping and human development, and CRT provides the lens to illuminate how an African American male student perceives the complex structures of race and how those perceptions intersect with racial identity and resiliency within a public high school setting (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Sellers et al., 1998, 2003; Spencer et al., 1997).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the research design and methodology used to guide the current scholarship on how to examine the intersectionality of race, microaggresssions, and resiliency, and the impact racism has on African American male students in a high school setting.

> Methodologies that dismiss or de-center racism and its intersections with other forms of subordination omit and distort the experiences of those whose lives are daily affected by racism. The method and applications of intersectionality can fundamentally alter how social problems are experienced, identified, and grasped to include the breadth of lived experiences. (Hankivsky, 2014, p. 1; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, pp. 32-33)

Three research questions were used, followed by a qualitative methodological approach with a phenomenological perspective. The phenomenological perspective gave the meaning of a phenomenon (or topic or concept) for the African American male students that share common lived-experiences, along with the resiliency and adaptive skills to cope with racism, racialized messages, and discrimination (Sellers et al., 1998, 2003, 2006; Spencer et al., 1997). Thus, listening to the voices of African American male students and their counter-narratives (or stories) about lived-experiences not only provided an in-depth understanding into their perspectives but also created space for them to "name their own reality" (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Creswell, 2007; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016, p. 57; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The theoretical framework used in the study is the Critical Race Theory (CRT), Racial Identity Theory (RIT), and

Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Theory (PVEST). Finally, a discussion of the positionality as a researcher who identifies as an African American male, including the demographics of the sample and setting, data-collection, and procedural methods.

Research Questions

The primary goal of this phenomenological study was to examine the presence and perception of racial microaggressions among African American male students in a public high school setting and to discover the impact racism has on African American male students in a public high school setting. While there are some generalizations that can be made about day-to-day life experiences of African Americans, African American males go through different experiences than white males (Coates, 2015; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Delgado, 1989; DuBois, 1994; hooks, 1992; Kunjufu, 1985; Noguera, 1997; Toldson & Lewis, 2012). Stereotypical behavior takes on a different perspective and meaning for African American males as compared to white males. White males are applauded and validated when they exhibit bold, audacious, independent, spontaneous, and free-spirited behavior. Contrarily, that same display of emotions may be seen as threatening, angry and aggressive, rebellious, too-loud, or violent and criminal behavior for African American males (Clark et al., 1999; Toldson & Lewis, 2012; Spencer et al., 1997; Welch, 2007). Whereby the African American male is perceived one way by the dominant white culture yet within him lives a hidden tension of stress and social cognition struggle to be understood, accepted, and seen. Franklin and Starr (1967) describe it this way:

> You don’t know, and you can’t know what it is to be a problem, to understand that everyone is watching you and studying you, to have your mind constantly

> on your own actions. It has made us think and talk about ourselves more than other people do. It has made us self-conscious and sensitive. (p. 106)

This research examined the presence and perception of racial microaggressions among African American male students in a focus group setting and intersected their stories about racial identity, feelings of power, and resiliency in a public high school setting. The following research questions were explored in this study:

1. To what extent are racial microaggressions present and perceived in the educational experience of an African American male student?
2. What deterrents do African American male students identify as threats to their resiliency as a high school student?
3. What protective factors lead to strength, power, and resiliency within a high school setting for African American male students?

Qualitative research methods were most appropriate for this study that wanted to listen to stories in order to better understand students' perceptions about their school experiences. Focus group methodology was used to better understand about racial identity and how students' stories intersected with their perception of microaggressions, feelings of power, and resiliency in a public high school setting. The focus group sessions created space to listen to the students' stories and understand their perceptions while allowing them the "therapeutic support in validating one another – paralleling the sanity check" about their lived-experiences (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000, p. 20; Graves, 2014; Harper, 2015; Holt, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This study used a phenomenological approach to capture and better understand the complete story from the participants' shared or

common lived-experiences, statements, perspectives, and similar life course stages (Creswell, 2007; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Delgado, 1989; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2016). The approach also describes "the essence" and the meaning of those lived-experiences (Creswell 2007, p. 58) and "one's perception of experiences in different cultural contexts that influences how one perceives oneself" (Spencer et al, 1997, p. 817).

Rationale for Methodology

Qualitative research methods were used to conduct this study with African American male students. The primary purpose of qualitative research is to describe, clarify, and highlight the lived-experiences of the participants. Qualitative research methods represented a useful and effective approach to understanding the "experiences as expressed in lived and told stories" of the African American male students (Creswell, 1998, p. 54; Moustakas, 1994; Walker & Myrick, 2006). The phenomenological perspective (understanding the lived-experiences including the social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of the students involved within the study) gave the meaning of a phenomenon while it was happening for the African American male students who shared common lived-experiences, similar life course stages, racial identity, along with identifying the resiliency and adaptive skills to cope with racism, microaggressions, and discrimination (Groenewald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Rowley et al., 1998; Sellers et al., 1998, 2003, 2006; Solórzano et al., 2000; Spencer et al., 1995, 1997). By using qualitative methods, researchers can better understand the life experiences and meanings that an oppressed group of people who have been historically made invisible, unheard, marginalized, forgotten, or

silenced (Sue et al., 2008). For the purposes of this study, four focus groups (a total of 25 self-identified African American male students) were interviewed with a focus group protocol to explore their perceptions, feelings of, responses to, and meanings of microaggressions. Research supports the use of focus groups as being strategic when the participants are similar and are able to ask questions, exchange ideas, and comment on one another's experiences to yield the best information for the study (Creswell, 2007; Krueger, Moustakas, 1994). Secondly, when the participants share the same racial identity, display a willingness to be cooperative, and participate in focus group held in their home high school, this encourages group participation and engagement rather then participants being interviewed individually (Creswell, 2007; Kitzinger, 1995). Thirdly, the use of focus groups "does not discriminate against those who cannot read or write" (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 300).

Setting

This study took place in the Pacific Northwest in an urban school district comprised of a diversifying population. Thurgood Marshall Schools (including traditional, charter, magnet, and bilingual programs) are the communities of Howard, Langston Hughes, Cab Calloway, and Tuskegee Hills. The school district is one of the largest school districts in the region comprised of 45% economically disadvantaged students, 36% students of Color, 15% students with disabilities, 11% English language learners, and over 65 languages spoken.

Howard High School. Howard High School is the largest high school in the District and the most affluent. The majority of the teaching staff is white and over 90% of their graduating seniors goes to college. Their school programs include AP

offerings and courses in Social Science, Language Arts, Visual and Performing Arts, Science, Mathematics, Health and Physical Education, and extensive offerings in the professional/technical areas. The following table will describe the demographics for Howard High School.

Table 1

Gender by Primary Race: Event Year: 2016-2017

Student Race	Female	Male	Total
African American	20	18	38
Alaskan/Native American	2	8	10
Asian	216	224	440
Hispanic	138	175	313
Multi-Racial	116	85	201
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	5	2	7
White	797	878	1675
Total	**1294**	**1390**	**2684**

Langston Hughes High School. Langston Hughes High School is the 2nd largest high school and the most racially diverse high school in the District. The majority of their teaching staff is white, 65% of the student body identify within a low socio-economic status with 85% of the graduating seniors apply to colleges, technical schools, and/or join the military. Their school programs include AP offerings, courses in Social Studies, Language Arts, Science, Mathematics, Health and Physical Education, and extensive offerings in the professional/technical areas. There is also a visual and performing arts charter school on campus. The following table will describe the demographics for Langston Hughes High School.

Table 2

Gender by Primary Race: Event Year: 2016-2017

Student Race	Female	Male	Total
African American	17	28	45
Alaskan/Native American	11	3	14
Asian	16	24	40
Hispanic	175	201	376
Multi-Racial	50	45	95
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	10	8	18
White	402	424	826
Total	**681**	**733**	**1414**

Cab Calloway High School. The Cab Calloway High School is the only high school in the District with a Spanish-Immersion program and IB course offerings in Literature, Spanish, Social Sciences, History, Math, Biology, Film and Theater. This school has the highest ratio of staff of Color and over 85% of their graduating seniors go to college. Comparatively, 45% of the student body identify within a low socio-economic status. The following table will describe the demographics for Cab Calloway High School.

Table 3

Gender by Primary Race: Event Year: 2016-2017

Student Race	Female	Male	Total
African American	9	9	18
Alaskan/Native American	2	7	9
Asian	14	12	26
Hispanic	122	127	249
Multi-Racial	47	33	80
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	2	1	3
White	416	439	855
Total	**612**	**628**	**1240**

Tuskegee Hills High School. The Tuskegee Hills High School is the only alternative high school in the District, which includes a degree completion program for students who need a flexible schedule to accommodate personal and family requirements. Their school programs include courses and project-based learning in Social Studies, Language Arts, Science, Mathematics, Health and Physical Education, and offerings in the professional/technical areas. They have a diverse teaching staff and over 80% of their graduating seniors apply to college or attend technical schools. The following table will describe the demographics for Tuskegee Hills High School.

Table 4

Gender by Primary Race: Event Year: 2016-2017

Student Race	Female	Male	Total
African American	1	2	3
Alaskan/Native American	1	1	2
Asian	0	0	0
Hispanic	12	10	22
Multi-Racial	4	3	7
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island	0	0	0
White	40	56	96
Total	**58**	**72**	**130**

Participants

Students. Participants in the study were asked to participate through invites given to them by the administration, invites given at student clubs and/or group meetings, and/or word of mouth. The study used criterion sampling to select a sample that would assure the existence of and give voice to the phenomenon under exploration (Creswell, 2007; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). By creating space and allowing the voices of African American male students to be heard and tell their stories "can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle on racial reform" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). All the students who participated in the study self-identified as African American/Black males.

The four schools represented in the study each have elicited their own individual insights about student and school culture, race relations and perceptions,

experiences, and demographics. What follows are briefs descriptions of the participants in each focus group and will conclude with a data analysis about their experiences in Chapter Four.

Table 5

Schools

n of Participants	High School
9	Howard
8	Langston Hughes
6	Cab Calloway
2	Tuskegee Hills

Howard High School. The participants who attended Howard High School were the largest focus group within the study. The participants were from grades 9 to 12 and four of the 9 participants included one or more ethnic identities when they self-identified as African American/Black. The data analysis in Chapter Four will explain a variety of academic achievement, athletic levels, racial identity influences, and racialized experiences. The students' counter-narratives or stories detail social support networks within the school context and whether or not they could recognize and verbalize their stress with sometimes not knowing how to respond to or cope through day-to-day life experiences in being African American male students. The PVEST framework acknowledges a student to contextualize and make meaning of their racial identity development. Additionally, PVEST includes examining students' experiences from multiple schools and who "display different psycho-social and academic outcomes" (Graves, 2014, p. 13).

Langston Hughes High School. The participants who attended Langston Hughes High School were the second largest focus group within the study. The participants were from grades 9 to 12 and 7 out of the 8 participants included one or more ethnic identities when they self-identified as African American/Black. The data analysis in Chapter Four will explain the students' academic achievement, athletic levels, racial identity influences, and racialized experiences. The students' counter-narratives or stories detail social support networks within the school context and whether or not they could recognize and verbalize their stress with sometimes not knowing how to respond to or cope through day-to-day life experiences in being African American male students. The PVEST framework acknowledges a student to contextualize and make meaning of their racial identity development. Additionally, PVEST includes examining students' experiences from multiple schools and who "display different psycho-social and academic outcomes" (Graves, 2014, p. 13).

Cab Calloway High School. The participants who attended Cab Calloway High School were the second smallest focus group within the study. The participants were from grades 10 to 12 and two out of the 6 participants included one or more ethnic identities when they self-identified as African American/Black. The data analysis in Chapter Four will explain the students' academic achievement, athletic levels, racial identity influences, and racialized experiences. The students' counter-narratives or stories detail social support networks within the school context and whether or not they could recognize and verbalize their stress with sometimes not knowing how to respond to or cope through day-to-day life experiences in being African American male students. The PVEST framework acknowledges a student to

contextualize and make meaning of their racial identity development. Additionally, PVEST includes examining students' experiences from multiple schools and who "display different psycho-social and academic outcomes" (Graves, 2014, p. 13).

Tuskegee Hills High School. The participants who attended Tuskegee High School were the smallest focus group within the study. Tuskegee High School is also the only alternative school in the district. The participants were from grades 11 to 12 and one of the participants included one or more ethnic identities when he self-identified as African American/Black. The data analysis in Chapter Four will explain the students' academic achievement, athletic levels, racial identity influences, and racialized experiences. The students' counter-narratives or stories detail social support networks within the school context and whether or not they could recognize and verbalize their stress with sometimes not knowing how to respond to or cope through day-to-day life experiences in being African American male students. Additionally, PVEST includes examining students' experiences from multiple schools and who "display different psycho-social and academic outcomes" (Graves, 2014, p. 13).

Procedures

Data collection from all focus groups consisted of a brief demographic questionnaire (Appendix D and E) to gather information about age, grade level, racial/ethnic identity, and an outline about the focus group protocol. The questions (Appendix B) used during the 90-minute focus group sessions were open-ended to generate a variety of responses and examples about race, microaggressions, and resiliency (Clark et al., 1999; Solórano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2008). The protocol was comprised of seven questions, which generated responses that spoke about their

experiences surrounding race, microaggressions, and resiliency in a high school setting. The questions also allowed the participants to describe their feelings, understand the experiences of microaggressions (give meaning to them), examine their effect on them, and how it is that they experience what they experience (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 1990; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). To gain a greater insight, clarity, and deeper understanding from the participants' responses, follow-up, and probing questions were used:

1. "I heard you say ___________; can you please share more about that experience?"
2. "You also said ______________; what does that mean?
3. "Can you elaborate on that experience and share your feelings please?"

The school's administration generated a report to identify the African American male students in each school. Once the students were identified, invites were given to African American male students explaining the research and interview process. Focus group sessions were facilitated in a private conference room at each school and each student was given a pseudonym to protect their identity. Prior to the sessions meeting, all students signed a consent form with parent/guardian approval with information describing the study and how the results will be used. Students were also given an open-ended preliminary questionnaire at the beginning of the session to describe racial identity, school experiences of feeling put down and/or receiving negative reactions because of their race, and to define racial microaggressions. The questionnaire gathered additional insight about each student's perception and presence of microaggressions within their school context. At the conclusion of each session,

the researcher asked the participants if there were any additional topics, ideas, themes, or concepts to include with the data that may not have surfaced with the questions. All focus groups sessions were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Phenomenological Analysis

The phenomenological perspective gave the meaning of a phenomenon while it was happening in daily life for the African American male students who shared common lived-experiences, similar life course stages, and racial identity (Husserl, 2002; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990). Phenomenological research aims to reveal what it means to be human and seeks to understand the true essence of the experience of those who experience it. The researcher initiated various cycles of coding with listening to the transcriptions to gain an authentic depiction and interpretation of the narratives known as a hermeneutical phenomenology process (Husserl, 2002; Laverty, 2003). Throughout this process, the researcher suspended personal biases and judgment (epoche) with memoing and journaling (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). To illuminate the phenomenon, the next phase involved a phenomenological eidetic reduction. This process allowed relevant meanings and thematic patterns to be extracted from the participants' narratives. This phase of the analysis permitted the students' experiences to be captured as the emergent themes in the study.

Table 6

Emergent Themes

Theme	
1	Microaggressions (use of the N-word, racist jokes, instructional practices, language/vocabulary)
2	Racialized Stereotypes (athleticism, academic ability, physical appearance)
3	Racial Identity Struggle (acting white, not Black enough, absence of a parent)
4-5	Feelings of Being Unheard, Unseen, Invisible and a 2nd Class Citizen
6	Resiliency, Power, and Coping

Similar patterns and themes were combined or clustered together from all four focus groups (Creswell, 2007; Groenewald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). The overlap in the clusters can explain the nature of a human phenomena or lived-experience from the participant. The student questionnaires were also analyzed for possible themes and patterns to construct a cross-case analysis of an existing phenomenon within multiple schools context. Once the data was organized, the researcher reviewed the field notes, words, and phrases in the marginal notes on the transcripts. These field notes were vital to the phenomenological process because they contained ideas, emotions and reactions, illustrations, and interpretations of the data (Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan & Krueger, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). This investigative process allowed the researcher to analyze the data for thematic patterns; based upon:

- Identifying the presence and perception of microaggressions;
- Deciding whether patterns could be found in the presence and perceptions of, responses to, and effects of microaggressions;

- Concluding if certain patterns could be grouped or clustered as one or in a similar pattern;
- Reviewing, listening, and relistening to the transcriptions to detect emotion and reaction to the perceived microaggression;
- Comparing the emergent themes to the field notes, ideas, and interpretations written in the marginal notes; and,
- Using imaginative variation to understand, inspect, and expand divergent perspectives.

After the completion of analyzing the participants' stories and reviewing the emergent themes, a final process of coding known as "restorying or retelling" was used as a framework to make sense of the stories (i.e., chronological sequence, narrative grouping, time, place) and intersect the participants' experiences of microaggressions. When participants use storytelling as a means to explain their lived-experience (or their phenomenon), the stories are communicated from a personal memory timeline of events and not given in chronological order. As a researcher, "restorying or retelling" is necessary to understand the participant's perspective, response to an event or encounter, and give a beginning, middle, and end to their story (Cortazzi, 2014; Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; Solórzano et al., 2001). The students all described the deterrents that impact their resiliency, and what protective coping factors they use that lead to strength, power, and resiliency in a high school setting. As previously stated, the use of focus groups have been shown to be an effective method in gathering information by allowing the participants to engage in a social context and provide an interpretation of the

phenomena from the participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2007; Kruger & Casey, 2002; Solórzano et al., 2000).

In addition to the phenomenological analysis process, CRT, which starts from the premise that race and racism is normalized in the daily life for People of Color and has been ingrained into our educational system, there is a need to allow students of Color to explore "alternative visions of reality" from their perspectives (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 1989, p. 2417). Students from historically oppressed groups are encouraged to share their experiences and stories to create a critical dialogue on issues of race, gender, language, and class. (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. 20-29).

Lastly, the reliability and validity can be discussed within the traditions of a phenomenological analytic process because of its rigor and intentionality with data interpretation. For example, bracketing and listening to participants' lived-experiences, and the multiple stages of analyzing those experiences for patterns and themes illustrate the in-depth complexities of the data analysis within the study (Creswell, 2007; Laverty 2003; Moustakas, 1994).

Role of the Researcher

As an African American male raised in the deep-South and now living in the Pacific Northwest, I have a unique insight into the experiences of the population I am inquiring about and can relate with their encounters of race, microaggressions, and the coping factors towards resiliency. The lived-experiences of being both an African American and an educated man can pose great learning-to-living strategies for others to be "intellectually quickened and awakened…towards new-found freedom"

(DuBois, 1994, p. 124). Although I identify as an African American and male, it was important to understand my role and biases throughout study. Some students took ease to sharing about their experiences while others needed ample time. Once students began to recollect and answer the questions, others within the focus groups perceived that as affirmation and deemed it safe to share about their experiences. I do believe my racial identity helped to foster a safe and inclusive environment to hear their stories. There were times when the participants were sharing about being racially profiled in a store or by the police and I wanted to interject my own thoughts and experiences. I could easily relate with their stories but I chose to be silent. This was an optimum opportunity for young African American male students to be seen, heard, understood, and affirmed within their racial and social identities. This was their time and my silence created more space to hear the authenticity of their lived-experiences and stories.

I routinely monitored by thoughts and emotions by taking descriptive and reflective notes. Unbeknownst to the participants, I had experienced numerous racialized microaggressions as an administrator within and without the school context. Personally, these experiences continue to happen and rarely, if ever, is there a platform for adult African American males to be seen, heard, understood, and affirmed within their racial and social identities. Usually, it happens after the fact…after a life has been lost, it then becomes just another 72-hour news cycle, and the story is silenced forever. Beautiful souls like Patrick Harmon, Juan Jones, Danny Ray Thomas, and Saheed Vassell are simply categorized as "justified deaths" at the hands of police because their behavior appeared to be of a "threatening manner".

As a researcher conducting a phenomenological study, I have chosen to create space and hear the voices from the Kings of this generation. I have self-selected to be that someone to hear them, see them, believe in them, and I am respectfully interested in understanding the social interactions of young African American male students, their individual encounters about race, and their stories of how race and microaggressions impact their day-to-day lived experiences, including what gives them the power to persevere and become resilient even in turbulent and difficult circumstances.

Summary

To conclude, this current scholarship proposed to examine the intersectionality of race, microaggressions, and resiliency for African American male students in a high school setting. The phenomenological perspective gave the meaning of a phenomenon (or topic or concept) for African American male students that share common lived-experiences, along with the resiliency and adaptive skills to cope with race and racism, microaggressions, and discrimination (Creswell, 2007; Sellers et al., 1998, 2003, 2006; Spencer et al., 1997). The qualitative research methods represented useful and effective approaches to understand the meanings of African American male students make of lived-experiences. Therefore, listening to the voices of African American male students and their narratives about lived-experiences not only provide in-depth understanding into their perspectives but also create a safe space for them to "name their own reality" (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Creswell, 2007; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016, p. 57; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tate, 1997).

Chapter 4: Results

The primary goal of this phenomenological study was to examine the intersectionality of race, microaggressions, and resiliency for African American male students in a public high school setting and discover the impact racism has on African American male students in a public high school setting. This research has identified the presence and perceptions of racial microaggressions among African American male students and intersected their experiences about racial identity, feelings of power, and resiliency in a public high school setting. The following research questions were explored in this study:

1. To what extent are racial microaggressions present and perceived in the educational experience of an African American male student?
2. What deterrents do African American male students identify as threats to their resiliency as a high school student?
3. What protective factors lead to strength, power, and resiliency within a high school setting for African American male students?

Listening to stories and understanding students' perceptions about their racialized lived-experiences within a school context was most appropriate for this study. The questions (Appendix B) used during the 90-minute focus group sessions were open-ended to generate a variety of responses and examples about race, microaggressions, and resiliency (Brown, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Clark et al., 1999; Moustakas, 1994; Solórzano 1997; Sue et al., 2008). The protocol consisted of seven questions to gather information about an African American male student's descriptions of race, stereotypes, racial identity, feelings of power, and racialized

messages. These questions produced responses that illuminated their lived-experiences in high school and described what their experiences meant to the participants (make meaning of). The questions also investigated the effect of these experiences on the participants and intersected those experiences across multiple school contexts (Creswell, 2007; Graves, 2014; Patton, 1990; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The research used a phenomenological approach, which described the meaning of experiences of a phenomenon (or topic or concept) for several individuals who share common lived-experiences. This approach required the researcher to work from the participants' shared or common lived-experiences, statements, and similar life course stages (Creswell, 2007; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Delgado, 1989; Moustakas, 1994).

Focus Group Questions

1. What are some subtle ways that teachers/staff/students treat you differently because of your race?
2. Describe a situation in which you felt uncomfortable, insulted, or disrespected by a comment that had racialized language?
3. Think of some stereotypes that exist about your racial identity. How have others (within the school environment) expressed their stereotypical beliefs or biases about you?
4. In what ways have others made you feel "put down or less than" because of your racial identity, cultural values or communication style? Describe your feelings.

5. In what ways have teachers/staff/students expressed to you that they think you're a second-class citizen, inferior to them or invisible?
6. How have teachers/staff/students expressed or suggested that you do not belong here because of your race?
7. When you experience these incidents or encounters, how have you felt?

Transition Questions

1. What are some of the ways that you dealt with these experiences, incidents?
2. What do you think the overall impact of these experiences and incidents has been on your lives/identity? School experience? Academic achievement?

Table 1

Emergent Themes

Theme	
1	Microaggressions (use of the N-word, racist jokes, instructional practices, language/vocabulary)
2	Racialized Stereotypes (athleticism, academic ability, physical appearance)
3	Racial Identity Struggle (acting white, not Black enough, absence of a parent)
4-5	Feelings of Being Unheard, Unseen, Invisible and a 2nd Class Citizen
6	Resiliency, Power, and Coping

Howard High School. The data analysis revealed that this focus group represented a variety of academic achievement, athletic levels, racial identity influences, and racialized experiences. The student counter-narratives or stories further revealed this focus group had limited social support networks within the school context and the participants could recognize and verbalize their stress in sometimes

not knowing how to respond to or cope through their day-to-day life experiences in being African American male students within this high school setting.

Langston Hughes High School. The data analysis revealed that this focus group represented a variety of academic achievement, athletic levels, racial identity influences, and racialized experiences. The student counter-narratives or stories further revealed this focus group had limited social support networks within the school context. Some of the participants believed their parents including close friends could provide the support they needed to respond to or cope through in their day-to-day life experiences in being African American male students within this high school setting.

Cab Calloway High School. The data analysis revealed that this focus group represented a variety of academic achievement, athletic levels, racial identity and racialized experiences. The student counter-narratives or stories further revealed this focus group had social support networks within the school context. As the researcher, I work at Cab Calloway High School. The participants acknowledged that my presence in the school and their ability to access me on a day-to-day basis gave them the support they needed to respond to or cope through in their day-to-day life experiences in being African American male students within this high school setting.

Tuskegee Hills High School. The data analysis revealed that this focus group had limited degrees of academic achievement and athletic levels. Although one participant identified with more than one ethnic identity both participants had encountered racialized experiences. The data analysis further revealed the participants in this focus group did not have any social support networks within the school context or home environment. Both participants acknowledged a need for support in order to

respond to or cope through in their day-to-day life experiences in being African American male students within this high school setting.

Theme 1

Microaggressions. This theme refers to the racial microaggressions that African American males encounter in their everyday lives. Racial microaggressions (microinsults, microassaults, and microinvalidations) are similar to unconscious racism and biases, but describe the brief, daily, and common practice of verbal assaults directed to African Americans males (Carter Andrews, 2012; Henfield, 2011; Sue et al., 2008, Torres et al., 2010; Tuitt & Carter, 2008). These participants described the interactions between them and the perpetrator, the environment, and their understanding of the experience. The data for these emergent themes are organized and presented by restorying or retelling the students' stories shared throughout the sessions. The students would often describe the experience (phenomenon) without knowing what to call the racialized experience, which gave voice to other students to recollect, affirm and/or validate a similar encounter.

When asked the participants to describe some subtle ways that teachers, staff, or students treat them differently because of their race, some would immediately connect their experiences with the use of the N-word or racist jokes. Mace recalled:

> "There was this one time I came up to my friend and said, 'What's up my nigga?' The teacher corrected me, and told me that he is not a nigger. I got offended by that because she corrected me and told me that I said it in a wrong way, while also I shouldn't be saying it. That word has a very hard past on the

> Black community. I was very offended by that and it was very uncomfortable for me."

Lamar then shared his experience and feelings about hearing racist jokes:

> "Last year when I was in my social studies class, we were watching a movie and it was about Civil war and slavery, a lot of people made KKK jokes and honestly I just felt not really mad but more disappointed."

As a researcher, I chose not to assume that I understood what each participant was experiencing and would ask for clarity with saying, "But what do you mean by that?" Andre then shared in a greater depth his experience with racist jokes:

> "Obviously it's a racist joke because I'm Black. But it's not meant to hurt my feelings or be racist. Just to make your joke actually. Let's say you're just out at night and it's dark outside. And they're like 'Obviously your skin tone is black or brown'. And they'll be like, 'you can't even see him anywhere, you blend in'."

Using jokes with a racialized tone and meaning not only creates an environment of cultural mistrust but also instills feelings of self-doubt, internal stress, anxiety, and insecurity (Solórzano et al., 2000). Andre's response is complex: on one hand he is offended by the remark and on the other hand he is trying to forgive or excuse the offense. Research describes this discomfort creates a situation of rationalization and heightens his awareness of racial consciousness (Crenshaw et al., 1995). After Andre shared about his experience, others were asked if they had had a similar experience with racist jokes? The following participants raised their hands: Jordan, Trejon, Tyrel, Rashad, Dre, Covin, and Lamar. Although Dontae attends

Langston Hughes High School, he had experienced similar racist encounters with the use of the N-word and racist jokes. Dontae said:

> "I bet probably a couple of you guys have had it, but just walking into the halls and stuff, just hearing white kids or some Mexicans use the N word and saying words like that and stuff casually. {*Background conversations – 'oh yeah' 'it's annoying'*} It's not like just to me or whatever. When you hear it though, it makes you angry. Like, you want to do something about it but can't {*voices agree with the statements in the background – 'they say it so calmly'*}. A lot of people, when you confront them about it in using the word, they always like make jokes, 'Oh well, I have a Black friend, they gave me the N-word pass.' There's no pass to it, you can't say the word."

A notable observation during the focus groups was this casual sensibility or ease to share their story, add on to, contribute, and affirm what a fellow participant was saying. The methodology in using storytelling to listen has a profound way to create dialogue, illuminate experiences, define race and racism, build community, and continue a strong tradition within the African American culture (Marks et al., 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CJ affirmed Dontae's experience with stating:

> "With the use of this word, it's starting to happen a lot more as well. Just with newer kids coming into the school. I've started to hear it a lot more, I don't know if that's just me or what."

Jeremiah further added that there's a difference between saying Nigga and Nigg*er*:

> "Mostly it'd be like, with that hard '*er*' into it and said by some white kids. White people always say that I give them the so called the N-word pass but I didn't say anything about that."

Although the participants are revisiting past experiences in the classroom, their account of these experiences are vivid, raw with detail, and emotion. Rashad, Tyrel, and Lamar share their feelings about the topic Black History in the classroom. Their experiences can be characterized as microinvalidations, which are communication patterns that negate, dismiss, and nullify their reality and feelings as students of Color (Howard, 2008, Pierce, 1989; Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue et al. 2008).

> "Some teachers when they talk about African American history, they sugarcoat it. I feel it's just because we're in the classroom. I'm like if it was just an all-Black classroom that they'd say stuff differently and not even bring it up."

Tyrel's perception of the racialized communication pattern has placed him in the spotlight to be a "native informant" in the classroom (hooks, 1994; Tuitt & Carter, 2008).

> "When they talk about Black History Month and bring of racist things from the past. Other students who are always white will kinda look at you when you say something weird. It's hard to explain but it's how they look at you and the feeling you get inside."

Lamar's perception has created an experience where he identifies as an African American and his heritage is being invalidated by the dominant culture:

> "We're taught like, we learn about slavery but we're pretty much taught to forget about it. Just leave it in the past with all the other racial stuff. We're told to forget about it and not talk about it. It's like we're oppressed."

In these instances, Tyrel perceived that his race made him hypervisible (Carter Andrews, 2012; Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). When an African American male experiences' racial spotlighting combined with a racial microaggression, there could a combination of internal feelings and processes that "can cause psychological turmoil for African Americans who must constantly question the intention and message of the perpetrators" (Sue et al., 2008, p. 330). Lamar and CJ's racialized experiences are a microassault, which is characterized as an intentional verbal attack that brought up visible pain (Henfield, 2001; Howard, 2008, Pierce, 1989; Solórzano et al., 2000):

> "One time in September of this year, it was our first game and my friend, he was playing. He was a lineman and he tackled the quarterback. As he was getting up, the quarterback called him a Nigger and he told the ref and no action was taken and since that day, nothing has happened."

CJ's racialized microaggression with being called the N-word is a racial slur. The incident has caused feelings of anger and frustration. But he has to make a conscious choice between exhibiting negative reactions and resisting the attempt to respond or maintain his integrity in a difficult situation.

> "A while back ago, last year, there was this one guy and he would greet me by saying, 'Hey my nigga.' It was kind of like an okay thing at first. But after the second time it's kind of like FU, third time and then after that it's just annoying. I would start to get a little bit like angry and frustrated."

Being called racist names on a sometimes-daily basis, students try to guard their emotions, swallow the pain, develop strategies for survival, self-protection and preservation, and move forward not realizing that the gradual accumulation of these racialized encounters will have a long-lasting impact on them (Clark et al., 1999; Marks et al., 2004; Pierce, 1989; Solórzano et al., 2000).

African American students often experience racial microaggressions in the form of "not being seen or overlooked". Juju and Marcus share their perception of being overlooked and believe it is because of their race:

> "An example is during class, you raise your hand and the teacher won't go to you until you're the last one, I don't know, I've had that happen to me. If it's a student, their body language is different. They just say they know or think they know you but they're talking to someone differently just because of their skin tone."

Marcus' entrance into the classroom was already hypervisible because he's one of the few students of Color and now additional attention is drawn towards him because he feels like white students are treating him differently:

> "Another example is if you walk into a classroom and the classroom is predominantly white students, they'll usually treat you a little differently and stuff. If you're just doing what other people do but they think it's like weird or something like that they'll not talk to you as much as they do to the other students that are white in the classrooms."

As a researcher and being an African American male, it would be convenient to assume how the participants feel but rather than lean on my intuition, these follow up questions were asked:

> "Can you explain a bit more? What do you mean, you walk into a classroom and you feel like they treat you differently? Explain what that means or feels like?" Marcus goes deeper with his comment and adds greater clarity with, "It's just the energy. When you walk in, it's just a little more tense for you because you're the only one in that classroom."

The perceived pressure in being in all "white spaces" creates hypervisibility and racial tense because Marcus is the "only" African American in the class. His feelings of "being different and weird" are creating stable coping strategies that will yield emergent identities (Carter Andrews, 2012; Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Sellers, 2003; Spencer et al., 2003; Tuitt & Carter, 2008).

When an African American male student encounters racialized messages and microaggressions within a school setting, these experiences have predicted a decline in student engagement and participation, low self-concept about academic ability and achievement, and other negative behaviors (Brown, 2008; French & Coleman, 2012; Graves, 2014, Pollock, 2008; Sue et al. 2008). The following experiences are from the Cab Calloway High School focus group. Jackson's perception of the racialized communication pattern has not only placed him in the spotlight in being one of the few African American students but additional pressure is on him because he's assumed to be an expert on Black History or the "native informant" on the topic (hooks, 1994; Carter Andrews, 2012; Tuitt & Carter, 2008).

> "I think there are subtle ways that teachers and students teach differently, such as when it's Black History Month and you're talking about Martin Luther King, or Malcolm X, or something comes up about civil rights and all of this, they just stare at you, like, 'Oh you're the only Black person in this classroom, what is it like?' You're like, 'Wow, I wasn't really there so I can't really explain what it was like."

Rayondre's perception of this racialized encounter produces feelings of being invalidated and unseen by the dominant culture.

> "I feel like people act different when it comes to groups. For example, like our Black Student Union, we say Black Lives matter and then it's not unfair for us because other people say, 'Oh, all lives matter. Or, 'white lives matter.' And, 'Why don't we have a group or anything?' I feel like it's unfair for them or unfair for us because they don't understand what we went through and stuff like that."

The participants' experiences validate the research surrounding how socioeconomic status is associated with the perception of racism and the impact this has on African American students academic ability, self-esteem, self-concept, and racial identity (Carter Andrews, 2012, Clark et al., 1999; Marks et al., 2004; Operario & Fiske, 2001). Lamar's perception of his racialized encounter is a three-fold stereotype: he's being singled out because he's African American and there's a racial microaggression in the assumption that's his family is poor or comes from a single-family home,

> "So we'll say a topic in a class, we'll talk about financial needs or your family's income, on multiple occasions I've seen teachers single me out and immediately presume that I have low income or I am without a parent. So they will spend more time with me without me even asking for assistance nor presenting the fact that I am poor or wealthy and so I can tell that they just have their self-opinion about stereotypical African-American and how their income is within the family."

Maurice shared a similar experience from a teacher and his perception of the teacher has assumed he's not as smart and should consider attending a different college:

> "Kinda like, it's not really in a bad intention way but I was personally looking at going to University of Oregon and one of my teachers said that I should probably look at something less than that. I don't know if it was based on my race but that's how it felt."

Both Lamar and Maurice have perceived that their race has put a spotlight on them to judge and predict their financial status and academic abilities. After sharing these experiences, the level of emotion, passion, and the intensity of the group's feelings were rising in the room. Marcus' shared about another racialized experience known as a microinsult, which is characterized by behavioral and verbal expressions with the intentionality of vulgarity, insensitivity, disregards and disrespect toward one's racial identity, culture, and heritage (Bennett et al., 2006; Bynum et al., 2008; Connell et al., 1994; Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2008; Tuitt & Carter, 2000). His sharing prompted others within the group to acknowledge similar accounts of racist encounters with students:

> "In my sophomore year, I was in health class and I usually sit in the back but I moved to the front and some kids were like you're lucky because Rosa Parks sat in front of the bus so that you'll be sitting in front of the class. In that moment I was so pissed I had to walk out and clear the air because that felt very hurtful. So, you feel like you're not a full person you are like one third of a person. I remember my friends were like that too and I don't want to be butt hurt over it because then they would be like, 'Dude why are you so bothered it's just a joke?' and I said, 'It's not a joke you fucking idiots.' That's not a joke but I can't say that because I'd be singled out and you know it pisses me off but then when I actually freak out they are like, 'Dude why are you getting so bothered about it'?"

Marcus' racialized encounter created a stir in the room. All the participants were visibly shaken, annoyed, and frustrated. Juju quickly responded with, "It's because they are grouping up on you or us. It's a joke to them." The mixed-feelings in the room were of pain, disappointment, and not knowing how to solve the problem or the internal conflict that existed. Research on the phenomenology of prejudice indicates that many African American male students in secondary schools experience feelings of marginalization, discrimination – including the heightened perception of prejudice behavior and racial microaggressions (Carter Andrews, 2012; Operario & Fiske, 2001: Pierce, 1989, Tatum, 1992). Lamar recounts a recent interaction with an elementary school student where his race made him hypervisible and presented an awkward yet teachable situation:

> "So I had an incident today. I attended a class called elementary mentor. And this first grader came up to me and we're doing a study thing in his counselor's room. And he said he didn't like me and so I felt inclined to ask why. And he said the color of my skin because you're brown. And I asked him, 'What's wrong with the color of my skin?' And he said, 'You're chocolate and now people are going to eat me.' And so I was like, 'Okay.' And then he was like, also, 'You like chicken and coy.' He's like, 'But I don't like those things because I'm white.' And I was confused. I was like, 'Everyone likes different things.' I was like, 'Well, we're all chocolate if you think about it.' I was like, 'White chocolate, dark chocolate, we're all the same.' And he was like, 'No, I hate you guys.' And I said, 'Oh.' And I asked why. He said, 'Because you're different.' And so I felt that was also an incident, how people so young and in first grade, and still growing at a young age. And he's already said he hates Colored people. And he's only in the second grade now being taught from a community that has entitled him."

Although Lamar did his best to navigate through a difficult and dehumanizing situation, someone is influencing the impressionable mind of the first grader – including his own racial identity with affirming white supremacy, and the perception of others in a negative way. At an early age, he's demonstrating racist and prejudicial behavior with limited information and knowledge of people of Color. Unbeknownst to him, he's developing white racial consciousness and is a recipient of white privilege and power (Crenshaw et al., 1995; hooks, 1992, 1994; López, 1997; Marable, 1995; McIntosh, 1988; Tatum, 1992).

Theme 2

Racialized Stereotypes. The next significant theme refers to the presence of racialized stereotypes that African American males receive on a daily basis. Steele and Aronson (1995) suggests that a stereotype threat is a threat experienced by a marginalized and even stigmatized group when they believe the negative view of themselves is reinforced or confirmed by the dominant voice. An African American male's self-perception can theorize their thought processes about racial identity, societal expectations, behavior, and academic outcomes. Initially, an individual's self-assessment about race, the perception of self, and how others perceive her/him, can influence identity development and create a unique experience for African American males (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Brown, 2008; Carter et al., 2008; Cross, 1971; hooks, 1992; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Marable, 1992; Marks et al., 2004; Sellers et al., 2003; Solórzano et al., 2000; Spencer et al., 1997; Sue et al., 2008; Tuitt & Carter, 2000). The focus groups were given the following prompt and questions: Think of some stereotypes that exist about your racial identity. How have others (within the school environment) expressed their stereotypical beliefs or biases about you? Dontae and Tyrel shared their experience in what others assumed about their athleticism:

> "I really don't know. I'll go first. This is kind of weird, but I feel like just right off the bat, they feel like we play sports, or involvement with some kind of sports just because of being Black. I feel like just because of being Black they think we play sports automatically. Their stereotype is that they expect us to

be good in sports because we’re being Black or like, they expect you to be able to jump and dunk and all these different things.”

Tyrel’s perception is similar to Dontae’s because it is a racialized stereotype that others assume of him,

“And sometimes when you meet new people it is kind of assumed that I play basketball because I'm Black and I am tall.”

African American males who experience these racialized stereotypes (and give name to it) are experiencing their racial identity or “Blackness” and masculinity defined by the dominant white culture (bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Sellers et al., 1998, p. 21). This particular question created a ripple effect of emotions from surprise and laughter to bewilderment and frustration. Jordan quickly chimed in with saying:

“Well, just going back to the sports thing, other teachers or students just automatically think that I play basketball…they won't believe that I play baseball because most of the time that's predominantly white people who just play baseball.” Chewy quickly agreed with Dontae in saying, “They judge you because you play sports, because you're Black.”

The focus group of Cab Calloway High School shared similar experiences about racial stereotypes and racialized language regarding their athletic ability. Jackson began with:

“I feel insulted or disrespected by someone using racialized language against African-Americans. I would have to say when it comes to sports or how we act, it's like if we act a certain way where it's like, ‘Oh, you're ghetto because

> you're Black.' Or you play some sport and they're like, 'oh, you're good at it because you're Black.' It's like, 'Oh no, I'm good at it because I try and put effort into it'. I try not to worry about what other people think. White people also think that if you're Black, the only thing you should be good at is selling dope, playing basketball, football, rapping, gangbanging and stuff like that. It's not like you should be a good doctor, a good human being, good humanitarian, nothing like that, it's just those are the only five things you're regulated to be good at."

Jackson's feelings and interpretation of the experience creates a situation where the dominant culture's perception of him forces him to prove a point or defend who he is. Lamar agrees with Jackson and shared a similar experience on how he feels judged by the dominant culture:

> "Agreeing what Jackson said, on multiple occasions, I feel insulted when put in a certain group where people would instantly think that I am good at a sport such as basketball or football. Not giving my opinion I'm not or I am, it's just they already assume I'm good at a certain sport because that sport predominantly has a color of race. And then they would always say, 'Oh, Lamar can't swim.' Because a stereotypical Black person can't swim or whatever. And so they kept my ability for sports and limited to two sports and now it's football and basketball. So I felt insulted that they see me as a person who just plays those type of sports because of the racial makeup."

These racialized assumptions create psychological stressors whereby African American males internalize them as their "cultural and possible norms or realities"

causing cultural identification shifts to happen that lead to questioning their academic and ethnic ability, self-worth, and dehumanization (Carter Andrews, 2012, pp. 2-3; Clark et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2003; Spencer et al., 1997, 2001, 2003; Tatum, 1992; Tuitt & Carter, 2000; Willie, 1987). Marcus suggests that it's not because of his race that makes him good but rather because of his ability and effort he devotes to it:

> "Going back onto what Jackson and Lamar said, it is true because they {white people} usually repeat and they say, 'Oh, you have an extra tendon.' Or, 'You're just good at the sport because you're Black.' But it's not true. We could be terrible at the sport but once we go out for a certain sporting event or we're in a sport where it's like if I did try for this I got really good at it."

Throughout this discussion, the participants described a variety of racialized stereotypes: low academic expectations from teachers and students, negative connotations about their physical appearance, family structure, and athletic ability. Additionally, previous research (Banks, 1993; Gay, 1985, Ladson-Billings, 2013; Noguera, 2008; Sellers et al., 1998) suggests African American male students have historically experienced educational inequities, which keep them tracked and disadvantaged for post-secondary preparation due to hegemonic institutional structures, racial hierarchies, and exclusionary practices. Tey shared his experience about how some of his teachers and others have low academic expectations him, "Last year, I got straight A's and all of my teachers and a lot of other people thought I was lying when I said that or they were really surprised. They feel like I should be like, it shouldn't be like that."

Rashad's experience brings in another component of not only feeling inferior but also living with the "burden of acting white" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; pp. 2-3):

> "Sometimes people make fun about the way I talk because sometimes I use bigger words or like have a higher vocabulary than a lot of people expect because I guess people think Black people aren't as educated as white people which is not true."

Drawing on previous research (Garibaldi, 1992; Howard, 2008; Irving & Hudley, 2005, 2008; Kunjufu, 1985; Noguera, 2003; Ogbu, 1978), both Tey and Rashad are experiencing environmental factors (historically and structurally) within the school context that can influence their academic outcomes – positively and/or negatively. As the researcher, it was important to record how the students felt during these discussions. After Rashad shared about his experience, it was noticeable that his countenance changed which prompted this question for greater clarity, "When you hear that Rashad, tell me how it makes you feel?" He responded with, "It makes me feel kind of upset and angry because they're wrong." According to research, " . . . structural racism and racial stereotyping, both overt and subtle, characterize the experiences of African American youth" (Spencer et al., 2003, p. 181). Although Rashad does not believe the statement, he will have to work twice as hard – if not more – just to persevere through and overcome the stereotype. Jeremiah remembered how others had a negative perception about them. He said, "People sometimes ask me if I'm *high* or not. I'm not but obviously they think that…how that some Black people so-call smoke marijuana or weed." This negative perception " . . . associated with ethnic identity" emphasizes students of Color resiliency as they challenge prejudice

and racism (Operario & Fiske, 2001, p. 550). Anthony gave his account of a negative perception people have of him – including how others think he's under the influence of drugs and his attire is different. As mentioned earlier, he too feels the burden of "acting white":

> "They {white people} just expect that you've already done before and you smoke weed, I've been asked that a lot of the times. A lot of people talk about the way I dress. I guess, like a stereotype for Black families is either they don't work or they just work like not very high paying jobs. A lot of people think like, 'You're just very nice for a Black person.' It's kind of upsetting."

These messages are painful to hear and live through, yet the intersectionality of their truth and moving toward resiliency will be necessary to build strong and powerful racial and academic identities. Pierce (1989) prophetically stated "that despite the heavy cost in terms of stress, we must defy these racism-inhibitors and push back the boundaries of what is probable and possible for minority people to hope for, desire, and achieve" (p. 297). Lamar shared about the negative societal messages he received from racialized stereotypes and expectations that others had about him:

> "Well, as a stereotype it's -- a lot of Black people, they believe that they don't know their parents or not parents individually but like your dad would walk out on them be a deadbeat. When I first got here, when I started school, a lot of people and last year too thought that I didn't know my dad. They think that I don't know my dad. A lot of people think I don't know my dad but I do."

Barack's perception of these experiences proposes somewhat a dual-conflicting phenomenon.

> "Just because we're Black that we know everything about shoes. We're supposed to have the best shoes in our closet. It's a hundred shoes in there with nothing but Jordan's. One day you come in with something that's not in tiptop shape then everybody got to talk about it. At the end of the day, you can't let it affect you. I feel like just let it roll off. If I prove you right, I prove you right, if I prove you different, I prove you different. I'm just being me, you know what I am saying? At the end of the day that should be your only goal for yourself."

One perspective of Barack's experience suggests that he has minimized his prejudice encounter and that it has little to no affect on him. While the other perspective posits members of a stigmatized group become more racially aware of negative feedback and categorized it to be of a prejudice nature and intent. Thereby, leading to a place of self-preservation and resiliency without internalizing the negative messages of being unheard, unseen, dismissed, and rejected (Crocker & Park, 2004; Operario & Fiske, 2001).

Theme 3

Racial Identity. The theme of racial identity emerged as the participants shared about being stereotyped, the internal struggle of self-perception, and the feelings they experienced during the encounter. When the level of mistrust increases in African American males, their academic outcomes and expectations decrease. Consequently, their oppositional cultural attitudes and assertiveness could increase (Carter et al., 2008, Connell et al., 1994; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Irving & Hudley, 2005, 2008; Noguera, 1997; Ogbu, 1978; Spencer, 1997, 2003). This theme also

captures the internal struggle of racial identity that African American males go through in a high school setting. Due to microaggressions, racism, discrimination and dehumanization, stereotype threats, and the unhealthy perception of their self-concept, African American male students struggle to discover and affirm their racial and cultural heritage (Clark et al, 1999; Cross, 1971; Rowley et al., 1998: Sellers et al., 1998, 2003). Some participants found it difficult to define their racial identity and/or connected a past, hurtful experience that gave passionate voice to an unhealthy perception of themselves. Tey shared his experience:

> "I don't really have any Black, actual just Black people in my household. It's me and my white mom and my brother and sister. It doesn't feel like she's different for me. I grew up with her and I didn't really grow up with a dad. It's like how I've been raised and that's just -- I don't know any difference. I see myself as Black and white. I remember when it was starting to get really bad where I just get called the N-word with the hard R and stuff. This one kid I barely even knew, we were sitting at lunch and he just straight up called me that and I was fed up and I beat him up and I got suspended. My mom didn't care because she said that I did the right thing by sticking up for myself. A little like two months after that, I got told, 'Go pick cotton.' I told the principal about that. I never -- I don't know what happened to him."

Tey's school's experience is complicated and can *in*directly be related to his home environment. Tey has developed a racial consciousness for himself and knows that there is a difference (physically) between he and his mother and has chosen to identify as African American. He also connects growing up as an African American child

(with a white mother) to not growing up with a dad who happens to be African American. Research addresses "how people learn to make sense of experiences in the world is an outgrowth of a process of cultural socialization" (Lee et al., 2003, p. 8). Tey is learning and developing patterns on how to cope, respond to, live in, and navigate through for the present and long term. Tey's mother has reinforced his negative behavior and although he feels justified with his physical response: his use of physical violence could lead to future conflicts and greater discipline actions with lasting academic consequences (Thomas & Stevenson, 2009). The sacrifice to choose between one's ethnic identity and academic success is a common experience among African American male students (Alexander, 2010; Brown, 2008; Connell et al., 1994; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Irving & Hudley, 2005, 2008; Kunjufu, 1985; Pollock, 2008; Sellers et al., 2003; Spencer et al., 2003). CJ's shared about his home environment and growing up with a white mom:

> "First off, my parents are divorced and for most of my life I grew up with my mom and she's white. When we used to live together as a family, things weren't really different. Now that my parents are divorced, when I spend time at my mom's house then I don't talk the same as when I talk to my Black dad. So, it's very subtle, but it's just the way we communicate and the language we use. That's partially because it's a household thing, the language, but it's also, I wouldn't treat my mom the same way as I treat my dad. It's not just because she's my mother, it's because of where they-- I don't know, I guess it's their skin color."

Jeremiah shared a similar experience and added how others mistake him for being white because of how he communicates. The phenomena he's experiencing is a development towards positive racial identity, racial consciousness of being African American, and the unnoticed *but felt* stigmatized-assumption and burden of "acting white" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, pp. 2-3; Spencer et al. 2001):

> "I really don't know how much percent of Black I am, I don't know. My mom, she looks white, but she is half Black and white and my dad's just an average Black person, obviously. I mostly lived with him when my parents got divorced when I was only three years old. I don't really know much to be taken care of by my mother, mostly by my grandma and my dad. But uh, I really usually get made fun of about my voice because if I'm on a game or something, I usually just get known as a white person by my voice."

Tey remarked with, "Sometimes I get comments like, 'You don't talk Black and stuff like that'." Although the participants are revisiting experiences that range between the pre-encounter to the internalization-commitment range for racial identity, Operario and Fiske (2003) found that an individual's ethnic identity can develop one's self-concept when influenced by race-related incidents (i.e., prejudicial thoughts and behaviors). Thus, the participants' experiences are developing how they see themselves. The current study also revealed that African American male students who see themselves as high-achieving students react to "both subtle and obvious forms of prejudice" (p. 558). Several of the participants conveyed their experiences with being multi-ethnic but identifying as African American/Black. Jordan shared about how people do not believe him when he's asked about his racial identity in being multi-

ethnic. “Personally, I'm mixed race. If I tell someone that I'm half white, a lot of times they won't believe me and they'll say that I'm not and that I'm completely -- they think that I'm completely Black.” Chewy identifies with Jordan’s perspective and expresses frustration with his experience, “People say that I don't look like I'm Black because I'm very light skinned. It kind of makes me frustrated because, like I said, I’m Black, but they really don't believe me.”

Research (Carter et al., 2004; Connell et al., 1994; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Cross, 1971; Helms, 1990; Marks et al., 2004; Sellers et al., 2003; Tatum, 1992) suggests that racial identity development is not only a fluidic, transformational, cyclical, and dynamic process but also a process, which can manifest the emotion of anger in the encounter or immersion-emersion stage. The following participants’ experiences describe the internal struggle of identification and the external dilemma in trying to “*fit in*” and/or relate. Anthony shared about being made fun of and living in a “*grey area*”:

> “I get made fun of for like not having a lot of Black features like I know you guys got hair stuff. Some people are like confused. My mom is half white, half Black, my dad is Black, my grandma is white and my grandpa is Black. I'm around 75% Black. I get made fun of for that. Sometimes I don't fit in with Black groups or white groups I have to travel around that little grey area.”

To gain a deeper understanding, a clarifying question was asked to Anthony, “Is it because you think or feel that you’re not Black enough and how does it make you feel?” Anthony answered the question by saying “yes” and then lowered his head.

Jordan quickly jumped in and added, “It makes me feel frustrated that they don't believe me.” Although Tyrique’s experience is similar he has never been told that he did not look Black enough or did not fit in, “I'm half white and half Black. It's the features – I guess that I got. My hair, otherwise, I never experienced, you know what I mean? Nobody ever told me I didn't have enough features like I didn't look Black or anything.” Guided by previous research (Operario & Fiske, 2001), “the strength of people’s identity is associated with perceptions of ambiguous negative feedback (p. 552). In spite of the challenging and uncomfortable circumstances, adaptive coping strategies and levels of resilience can be attained with social learning, cultural systems, and verbal knowledge (Lee et al., 2003; Spencer et al., 2001).

Rashad shared his experience with attending a predominately white school and being raised by a white mom, “Being in an all-white school pretty much is hard and I have a white mom. And we're mostly around white people all the time. It's hard to explain what we feel and see.” The students must learn to cope with and navigate through the daily, racialized societal messages – both overt and subtle – they experience through cultural socialization. These experiences, however difficult and painful, will grow their resiliency levels and increase their overall ability to withstand the negative impacts of institutional racism, prejudicial behavior, and racial microaggressions (Lee et al., 2003; Marable & Clarke, 2009; Pierce, 1989; Sellers et al., 2006; Spencer et al., 1997; Sue et al., 2008; Tuitt & Carter, 2008). Chewy remembers a frustrating experience when others did not believe him about identifying as Black, “People say that I don't look like I'm Black because I'm very light skinned. It kind of makes me frustrated because, like I said, I’m Black, but they really don't

believe me." For African American male students, there is a complex predicament going on as they learn survival and coping adaptive strategies: Black culture experiences, white racial consciousness, and being a member of a racially stigmatized group. Spencer (2001) theorizes that these racialized experiences are a deficit-oriented perspective and "problematic because this perspective denies minority youth a culturally specific normative development perspective of their own, and instead, compares their experience to the normative developmental processes observed in white children" (p. 21).

This particular question also gave voice for other participants to share about their feelings surrounding racial identity and give name to the experience. Tey reflects about the school administration and pointedly reminds me about my duality of roles in being African American administrator and a researcher. He said:

> "It feels like the principals here don't understand us and stuff but it's different like when you're here talking to us because you're also African-American. It's like you know how we feel with everything. I feel like at least every school should have at least one person like that in the school, so we can have someone to relate to, so they understand us better. We need someone to feel comfortable to talk to."

In this instance, Tey is expressing his need to connect with someone whom he racially identifies with and understands his struggle (Bristol, 2015; Carter et al., 2008, Connell et al., 1994; Cross, 1971; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Franklin & Star, 1967; Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Gay, 1985, 2010).

When Rashad shared about being "raised by a single mother" and the "stereotype of not growing up with a dad", it is an experiential truth for African American males that there is a link between the development of a positive self-concept and the absence of a dad in the home (Battle & Scott, 2000; Kunjufu, 1985; Moynihan, 1997; Willie, 1987). Rashad continued with saying:

> "And I grew up being raised by a single mother and so people tried to -- a lot of my white peers don't really understand what it's like to actually grow up without a dad. They just understand what the stereotype it is of not growing up with a dad because I'm Black. They try to -- I wouldn't necessarily say comfort but they say things and do things that are just like about the topic. They say things about the topic of me not having a father and it's related to the fact that I'm Black and it's just annoying because they don't really understand it, they don't…yes, they just don't get it. Because them and their peers are surrounding themselves with others that have both their parents in their lives."

Rashad's experience, as with many of the participants, is complex. He has been placed in a hypervisible situation (because of his racial identity) while still learning adaptive coping strategies to navigate towards a positive human and behavior development. Furthermore, without a cultural system comprised of African American role models, teachers, or the influence thereof, institutionalized practices that manifest white racist power structures will continue to dehumanize, oppress, and devaluate students of Color (Bristol, 2015; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Freire, 1970; Gay, 2010; Helms, 1990; hooks, 1992, 1994; Ladson-Billings &

Tate, 1995; López, 1997, 2010; Marable & Clarke, 2009; Spencer et al., 2001; Tatum, 1992). According to Alston & Williams (1982):

> That a father-son relationship facilitates the adoption of an adequate self-concept by the boys who are able to model after their fathers and are, in addition, given training by them. Those boys whose fathers are at home have a significantly higher and more positive self-concept than those boys whose fathers are not at home. (p. 137)

Barack also shared his experience and the frustration he has had to live through with growing up without a dad:

> "A lot of feelings about race I feel and go through aren't touched on; I want to say at the end of the day are painful. I have a lot of emotions that I just can't trust nobody. You know what I'm saying? I'd say more of the way I've been treated because of my racial identity has impacted that. It's not because I woke up and my skin is black so I'm isolating myself. It's because of the way I feel that people have approached me because of what I've seen on social media. It's so many things, and so many ways that I feel about things and you can't talk about them, because what class do you have for it? The type of person I am, I'm not about to go to no counselor, no homie, no mom. I don't even really have much of those, even a mom or dad to go running to. We just hold all this in, and I'm just trying to do what I can do to be successful for myself, nobody else. You all ain't I'm paying my bills or buying me no new shoes, so why I got to be worried about you?"

Barack's experience speaks to the influence on how social media depicts and perpetuate white racial consciousness with its stereotypical, historical images and false narrative about the African American/Black man (Alexander, 2010; Franklin & Starr, 1967; Jackson, 2006; López, 1997, 2010; Marable & Clarke, 2009). hooks (1992) posed this question: What can the future hold if our present entertainment is the spectacle of contemporary colonization, dehumanization, and disempowerment where the image serves as a murder weapon?

The impact of not having a dad was also experienced from students who attend Langston Hughes High School. Dontae shared his experience about being made fun of because his dad has not been present in his life:

> "I want to follow up on the dad thing. When I was younger it really affected me too when people would make jokes like that, because my dad was in prison a lot and different things like that. He got out a couple of years ago and he's still not in my life. But when people make those jokes, I would sometimes just break down out of nowhere and ask my mom why he left or why he didn't want me and my sister and brother. Doesn't really phase me anymore now."

Dontae's lived-experience in growing up without a dad and developing the coping strategies to respond has yielded emergent identities to navigate through and rise above the "dissonance-producing situations". Here lies the importance of intersecting PVEST and CRT – including the ecological factors – which captures the perception of a phenomenon and creates space to make meaning of the process that builds a strong foundation for identity development (Bell, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006;

Crenshaw et al., 1995, Spencer, 1997). Tey has concluded that his experience with not having a dad present and the jokes accompanied with it no longer affect him,

> "I've experienced a lot of jokes about my dad leaving. I know that's a big part of -- I guess it's serious like but a lot Black people's dads leave and stuff like that. It doesn't really affect me anymore, it used to in middle school, but I don't care anymore."

The responses given by Dontae and Tey are not uncommon for African American male students who grow up in single-family homes. Research has shown that the absence of the Black-male-father-figure in the home has produced both positive and negative results (Battle & Scott, 2000; Kunjufu, 1985; Noguera, 2003).

As more of the participants shared their experiences about "*fitting in*" and living in the "*grey area*", other participants shared experiences about being labeled with the stereotype and burden of "acting white" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, pp. 2-3). Juju's experience is similar but yet he has chosen to define the encounter as racist:

> "I was raised in Bel-Air, Oregon and I don't have that accent or that slang that you would normally find in a Black person. And all the time, I get questioned on orientation of how I speak. Why don't I use my slang and stuff and why aren't I more like Black, I don't know. But this one white girl, Becky, she was like, 'You remind me of just that stereotypical Black guy.' And I was like, 'What do you mean?' She was like, 'You have a chain.' And she just said like how big and Black and I was like. 'Okay.' {Participants laugh} So I took that as, it was like, kind of racist."

Lamar's encounter has led him to name the experience as being whitewashed:

> "After thinking, I have to agree with Juju. I live in Lake Osprey, Oregon, and I've been going to a predominantly white school for a good portion of my life. Almost every year, I have multiple encounters of people who come to me saying I'm whitewashed because I don't act a certain way that they see a Black person on television or in different area of Portland. And so, like how as Juju said, my vocabulary and grammar, I guess how he said he doesn't use slang, just to justify or find a reason why he's different. I guess that's why I'm called whitewashed because I have a different type of vocabulary or I dress differently or I don't do certain sports like that. I feel like people put a title over me or a race because of how people go throughout the day."

Both Juju and Lamar are experiencing the dualism of a racial microaggression (intellectual inferiority) and the phenomenon of the "acting white" assumption (Berry & Asamen, 1989; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Spencer et al., 2001; Sue et al., 2008). There is "a fear with excelling in academic areas that traditionally have been defined as the prerogative for white Americans" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 3). The African American male is perceived one way by the dominant white culture yet within him lives a hidden tension of stress and a social cognition struggle to be understood, accepted, and seen.

> African Americans do not see their social identity as different from that of their white oppressors, but as opposed to the social identity of white Americans. This oppositional identity, combined with their oppositional or ambivalent cultural frames of reference, make cross-cultural learning, the crossing of cultural boundaries very problematic (Ogbu, 1990; p. 155).

Accordingly, the PVEST framework provides a tool to understand the correlation of the African American male's perception of his experienced stress, responses to risks, resistance and resilience, achievement levels, cultural socialization, and the structural racism that impacts identity development (Berry & Asamen, 1989; Clark et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2003, Sellers et al., 2003; Spencer et al., 1997, 2001).

Theme 4 – 5

Feeling Unheard, Unseen and Invisible; Feeling like a 2nd Class Citizen. The next two emerging themes were closely related during the focus groups and have been combined together to better understand and make meaning of the participants' experiences. According to Franklin and Boyd-Franklin (2000), when African American males "perceive prejudice, discrimination, and encounter repeated racial slights that the accumulation of these feelings in not being seen as a person of worth – can create psychological invisibility" (p. 33). As the participants shared about their experiences in feeling unheard, unseen, overlooked, overwhelmed with their reality, and even sometimes judged, research also suggests that the "immense psychic energy to be Black is most drained in electing which of many daily microaggressions one must undercut" (Pierce, 1989, p. 309). Tey relates an experience with feeling judged and overlooked by a teacher:

> "I feel like a new student or you're just walking in the class, they instantly judge you, they think you're a troublemaker. Teachers overlook me in the classroom. Sometimes they will call on me and I said the right answer, and they'll say it's wrong or something. They call on somebody else that's white,

> they say the same exact thing and he {the teacher} gives him praise and says, 'Yes, good job. They said the same thing as me."

Without hesitation, Tyrique quickly shared, "I feel like {teachers} expect less from me or us." Tyrique's analysis of his teachers' perspective about his academic ability aligns with research. Kunjufu (1995) noted that teachers do not nurture nor take the time motivate African American male students to succeed in the classroom. Noguera (1997) strongly suggested that those who treat African American male students differently are still promoting the Jim Crow and slavery systems in our schools. Both Dre and Covin shared similar experiences about being ignored by the teacher and feeling unseen. Dre said, "Say I'm raising my hand in class, if I raise my hand first and another person raises their hand, they would pick their hand first before me and just ignore me." Covin added, "Sometimes when things like that happen, it feels like my education isn't as important as other people's are." Dre and Coven have perceived, along with Tyrique and Tey, that it is because of their race that they were overlooked and even unseen or their Black body was seen and a conscious decision made that the Black body was ill-prepared, invisible, inadequate to produce the correct answer (Clark Andrews, 2012; Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; hooks, 1992, 1994; Jackson, 2006). When the teacher called on the white student it reaffirmed to the African American students that racial microaggression can be validated and sustained by white teachers. Wretchedly, these racialized incidents forever cement institutionalized racism, white privilege and power, prejudicial practices, and systemic barriers within the classroom that limit and cut short the academic success for the African American male student (Banks, 1993; Carter Andrews, 2012; Delgado, 1989; Gay, 2002; Graves,

2014; Harper & Davis, 2012; Howard, 2008; Kunjufu, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Meeks, 2010; McIntosh, 1988; Noguera, 1993; Pollock, 1998; Solórzano et al., 1997, 2002; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Tatum, 1992; Toldson & Lewis, 2012; Winant, 2006).

A follow up question was asked to the group, "Does this make you not want to participate and be engaged?" All participants responded with, "Yes". There were multiple affirmations to this experience within the focus group and a second question was asked, "How many of you have experienced something like that recently?" Lamar said, "This week actually." Lamar's response prompted this question, "How many of you have had this type of experience this week?" The following participants raised their hands: Covin, Dre, D, Andre, Rashad, and Trejon. African American students feeling unseen or dismissed in the classroom is not unusual. A number of scholars of Color have long argued that African American students who attend predominately white schools must learn to navigate through the nuances and challenges of "*traditional white domains*" just to be academically successful, emotionally healthy, and maintain a positive racial identity (Carter et al., 2008; Clark et al, 1999; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 7; Gay, 2002; Graves, 2014; hooks, 1992, 1994; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Noguera, 1997, 2008; Rowley et al., 1998, Tatum, 1992, 1997; Toldson & Lewis, 2012).

Rashad shared this recent experience with a teacher and remembers another participant from the focus group witnessed the interaction:

> "I was actually in class with Dre when this happened. There was maybe five different kids talking around me and I just happened to get called out for

> talking. It wasn't necessarily kind of, 'Stop talking and be quiet.' The teacher stopped the whole lesson and called me out for probably a good 30 seconds to a minute. It felt longer. I was asking another student to clarify a question about something that we were working on. The teacher said, 'You know, I like you as a kid and as a person but you can leave because I don't want you disrupting my class.' There were other kids in other parts of the classroom laughing and making jokes and actually being disruptive. I was trying to better my learning experience by asking them questions. It made me feel disappointed and it was disappointing to have him call me out like that in front of the whole classroom when those other kids were being way more disruptive than I was."

Rashad perceived that the teacher disregarded and ignored the other students' behavior and spotlighted his behavior with judging it to be negative and thereby awarded him punishment: humiliation in front of others, devalued, and dismissed from class. Without skipping a beat, D said, "I experienced the same thing that he did and it happens a lot and the teacher will just assume that's it's me." The participants discussed feeling as if their thoughts or suggestions were not valued, specifically in the culture of their school context. Studies show that a school's racialized culture and climate have an overwhelming impact on students' academic performance, self-esteem levels, mental, emotional, and physical health (Carter Andrews, 2012; Cohen et al., 2013; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Koth et al., 2008).

Lamar described feelings of being unwelcomed in Cab Calloway High School because he's one of the few African American students in the school:

> "I felt like I wasn't welcomed in Calloway High School when I came here because it's a predominately white. At the time in my freshman year, there weren't a lot of African Americans that came to the school. Just side comments about race and being Black get to me from time to time, make me feel unwelcomed or unappreciated as a person because they don't take into consideration that every person here has feelings and everything that they had said to me has registered."

The emergent themes from this study refer to the negative aspects of what African American male students hear and how those racialized messages influence their self-esteem and their human development towards a positive and healthy racial identity. Positive racial ideology is the way an African American male student feels about being African American and their opinion towards the attitude on how the dominant voice judges their race "positively or negatively" (Sellers et al., 1998, 2003, p. 303; Spencer et al., 1997). Juju relates an experience with a teacher that doubted his academic ability and future job opportunity because he is African American:

> "I took this fire forestry class and I had this teacher named Mr. W. or something, and he was talking about the chances of a fire training, to get a job in this area. If you are Black, you have like barely any chance of being enrolled in that department because of your ethnicity. I just found that like. And he singled me out by telling me that I might not have a chance in the department."

With careful observation of his demeanor, Juju dropped his head with dismay and was visibly disappointment. This topic gave additional space for the participants to share

about their feelings in being African American/Black when they encounter racialized messages from teachers and students. Covin said, "When it happens it feels like I'm not wanted here." And Andre quickly followed with, "To add on to that you feel like you're picked on." Jackson from Cab Calloway High School shared, "That's why we don't get involved with everything, we're just like the second hand – they {*Referring to white people*} will pick us out at some point but we're not the top priority." Research is clear that when African American male students perceive from the dominant culture that they are "assumed to be less intelligent" or "being dehumanized", that these racial microaggressions combined with "institutional racism serve as risk factors that have the potential to create roadblocks or impede students' academic success" (Carter Andrews, 2012, p. 7; Carter et al., 1999; 2008; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Fordam & Ogbu, 1986; Franklin & Starr, 1967; Gay, 2002; Graves, 2014; hooks, 1992, 1994; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Noguera, 1997, 2008; Ogbu, 1978; Rowley et al., 1998, Solórzano et al., 1997; 2000; Spencer et al., 1997; Sue et al., 2008; Tatum, 1992, 1997; Toldson & Lewis, 2012).

Theme 6

Resiliency, Power, and Coping. The final theme focuses on the intersections of resiliency, power, coping, and racial identity awareness and how African American male students cope academically and socially. Researchers (Carter et al, 2008; Cross, 1971; Sellers et al., 1998; Solórzano et al., 2000) have concluded that adaptive behaviors surrounding racial ideology and the perception of race were "positively correlated with academic achievement" (Graves, 2014, p. 8). African Americans have been empowered to improvise, surpass, and overcome obstacles to succeed

academically, economically, spiritually, and socially, namely because of their self-awareness of racism and the social injustices that surround them (Berry & Asamen, 1989; Brown, 2008; Carter Andrews, 2012; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Cross, 1971; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1992; Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Marable & Clarke, 2009; Sanders, 1997; Sellers et al., 1998; Sterling, 1968). Barack shares his reflection on what it means to persevere and be African American/Black:

> "The young me, definitely crumbled but I don't know, I feel like the older you get, the wiser and stronger you should get, and like if you don't you're doing something wrong in your life. Everybody grows differently and I understand that, but at the end of the day, I think you should always be focused on getting better within yourself. Not physically strong, but mentally stronger, more durable. I feel like everything about the situation as far as a man has made me stronger. As far as a citizen of society has made me skeptical, doubtful a lot. Personally, I feel like being Black comes with a lot of weight. It comes with struggle, comes with learning to be strong and resilient, it really does."

To better understand how a group of people is able to overcome pain, setbacks and adversities, it is essential to explore the intersections of the African American culture, the learning environments of the people in it, and the cultural practices of a marginalized community (Graham & Anderson, 2008; Neblett et al., 2006). Marcus shared about what it means to be an African American male, academically successful, and what it takes to make it day to day:

> "Another way of dealing with this, I know how to refrain myself not trying to deal with violent acts, put on the headphones probably some music and keep

> pushing because you know, around school area you can tell people not to say it but, to some people this go in one ear and out in the other. I've got to take it with a grain of salt and move on because you know somehow, some day, it's going to come back to them. You're going to have to get along when they say it again."

Jackson is making a decision to persevere and overcome not because he's African American but rather because being African American is a source of strength and power which enriches his academic success:

> "One way I deal with it, is just like what Marcus said, I put my head down and keep moving because some people will be like, we're Blacks and people will be like, 'Oh, you're not going to be successful or oh, you're not going to be successful because you're Black blah, blah, blah, you'll never make it out.' But in my mind, in one way or the other, I put my head down and keep pushing because I know I want to be successful at the end of the day. One day they're going to hear my name; they're going to see my picture in a book. They will be like, 'He actually was successful and Black.' Yes, that's what I thought you motherfucker - {*participants laugh*} keep on pushing through. I would say some more colorful language for this case study but I'm choosing to refrain."

Rayondre's response encapsulated the overall feelings of the Cab Calloway High School focus group with affirmations from everyone. He said, "When it comes to those situations – like wanting to fight or say something back – I just stay calm. I try to stay calm but -- you just have to take a breather and try not to think about it."

Research findings (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Sue et al., 2008; Solórzano et al., 2000; Tate, 1997; Tuitt & Carter, 2008) indicate that when African American male students are the recipients of racialized microaggressions that these experiences provoke situational anxiety, self-doubt, anger, and frustration. Yet these experiences "are likely often suppressed" because of the perception of fear of negative consequences" (Carter et al., 2008, p. 102; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Lamar from the Howard High School focus group said, "You don't want to be a snitch and you don't want to get somebody in trouble. Because that'll just make you look bad." Dontae shared his feelings about wanting to retaliate but chose to suppress them because of the foreseen negative consequences:

> "I feel like people say things like that like, call us the N-words and Black jokes to get us mad and wanting to fight them or do something about it. Just to see how we act. But I feel like -- I don't know, we all play sports, you're Black. I feel like playing sports, like in high school definitely helps me not want to fight them, because if I fight them, we get in trouble and we can't play sports if, playing sports definitely holds me back from wanting to do it."

As a researcher, there were several moments the spirit in the room was one of despair and hopelessness, and yet the power to succeed by any means necessary was prevalent and sure. Listening to the participants storytelling of their lived-experiences, not only recognizes the centrality of experiential knowledge but "exposes deficit-informed research and methods that silence and distort the experiences of People of Color and instead focuses on their racialized, gendered, and classed experiences as sources of strength" (Graves, 2014, p. 26). Andre shared his feelings on the impact of

his perceived racialized encounters and what he does to cope and become stronger. He said, "One of the ways that I deal with it is isolation. I just go into my room to be myself and just clear my mind and try to not think of it." Trejon has chosen to forget the experiences ever happen. He concluded with, "I feel like the best way to deal with it is forget because there's not really anything you can do about it because nobody else really cares." Both Andre and Trejon's choices to suppress the racialized experiences give an immediate solution but does not resolve the overall emotional and psychological stress from the incidents (Lee et al., 2003; Sellers et al., 2003; Solórzano et al., 1997; Spencer et al., 1997, 2003; Willis et al., 2015). Rashad shares a similar experience and adds the difficult factor of growing up in predominately white communities:

> "Growing up pretty much my whole life living in mostly white communities, I just learned to deal with it. When there's a majority of white people there's not too much you can do about it except learning to deal with it and just kinda gotta brush it off. I agree with what Trejon said because a lot of people just don't really understand. You can't really talk about it with someone that doesn't get where you're coming from. It's just forgetting about it because that's really all you can do."

The cumulative effect of microaggressions, racialized messages, and racism on African American male students impacts their academic success, mental health, and psychological well-being (Brown, 2008; Noguera, 2003; Rowley et al., 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Sellers et al., 2003). Yet "stories about oppression, about victimization, about one's own brutalization – far from deepening the despair of the

oppressed, led to healing, liberation, and mental health" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2437). Jackson's perception on how white people perceive his academic ability is quite different than how he sees his own academic ability. He said:

> "I'm a good academic student, getting A's and B's in all classes and when some of our white counterparts are not doing as well and they happen to be our friends, we get judged because they say, 'Oh, you're just passing this class because you cheat. Blah, blah, blah, you don't do any of your work or copy off of friends,' and stuff like that. It's like, 'No, I go home and do my homework, I don't know about you'."

Jackson academic ability is devalued and he is perceived to be "intellectually inferior". This phenomenon in feeling disenfranchised, unseen, or being *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* is shared with several participants from all four focus groups (Bell, 1992; Howard, 2008). Tey adds, "Last year, I got straight A's and all of my teachers and a lot of other people thought I was lying when I said that or they were really surprised. They feel like it shouldn't be like that." Although these African American male students perceive, describe, and feel the impact of racialized microaggressions and stereotypes, some African American male students "choose to dispel the myth by maintaining academic performance" (Tuitt & Carter, 2008, p. 59). Lamar's reflection on his experience is uncomfortable and dehumanizing but he adapts a coping strategy to respond appropriately that will increase resiliency levels and build a stronger foundation towards a positive and healthy racial identity (Spencer et al., 2003). He said:

> "A couple of weeks ago, I got a high score on a test, I got an A. And this white students came to me, and they were like, 'Oh, look at that, Black people are smart.' And at the moment, I felt a little angry and I wanted to say something to them in a negative way. But all I did was shut it off because I've been going to this school for quite some time and I'm presented with a lot of insults regarding my appearance and my skin color. And so I guess each insult is like a layer being taking off in a sense, figuratively. It doesn't really impact me that much anymore, but when people talk about how Colored people's intelligence -- when they're questioning or say sarcastically and they, like, 'Look at that, you guys can do something besides sports. That puts me down."

Research has shown that African American male students are in the predicament of choosing between their racial identity and academic achievement (Graham & Anderson, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The participants' responses show the "environmental and cultural factors have a profound influence on human behaviors, including academic performance" (Noguera, 2003, p. 433). Rashad expressed the overwhelming challenges to his resiliency and academic achievement. He said:

> "The experiences put me down and makes me like not even care about the class anymore. Not necessarily for the rest of the classes but just for that day. It puts me down and it makes me not want to do anything for the rest of the class, not listen. Not to do anything to disrupt the class but just makes me get to thinking about stuff. Gets me thinking about other microaggressions that

happen. Just how many times throughout the day I have to deal with stuff like that, ruins the rest of my school day. It can make it challenging to learn. And if happens a couple times a week, that's like just more time that gets wasted during my school week that I could be learning. But instead, I'm worrying about just stuff the teachers say and do that put me down."

Although D agrees with Rashad and has experienced a similar incident, the impact it has on his desire to learn, engage, achieve, and succeed remains difficult to hear. D shared this:

> "And I feel what Rashad is saying because when that happens, it makes you not like that class anymore. It makes you not focus on your learning and be focused on why the teacher called you out of everyone else."

In spite of the academic, social, and cultural challenges to an African American male student's resiliency and their ability to persevere through racism, "African American male students find ways to overcome the pressures exerted on them and manage to avoid choosing between their racial and gender identity and academic success" (Graves, 2014; Noguera, 2003, p. 446). The phenomenon of these lived-experiences give hope to other African American male students who also identify with the struggle to become academic resilient. Juju proudly said, "These experiences and their impact have taught me how to overcome people's opinions and how I think about me or what I'm doing in my life." Marcus quickly agreed with saying:

> "And like Juju said, yes, everybody has their opinion. You can't change everybody's opinion and you've got to just keep moving because you'll have

> some people in your life that are just completely bluntly racist towards you and say stuff that makes you offended and irritated but you have to just keep moving. If you're going to be successful, you don't have to worry about what anybody else is talking about nor what they think."

Maurice agreed with Marcus and JuJu but in his response, he's has chosen to "prove them wrong" which reveals a working-adaptive coping strategy yet some research refer to it as psychological response to forms of racism – confirming the stereotype threat that African American are intellectually inferior (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Tuitt & Carter, 2008)

> "I agree definitely with what Marcus said, you can't change everybody's opinion but if everybody has a stereotype that Black people do this, Black people do that. You can either follow that stereotype or be good at that or you can just do the opposite like, 'Black people aren't educationally as smart as white people.' Well, if they think that, then we can go into the classroom and get straight A's and nobody is going to be thinking that about you at least. You are going to be changing his or her opinion and so will every person that you affect or who notices what you're doing. If Black people don't go to college, be that Black person that goes to college. You can change everybody's opinion that at least notices you."

Summary

The primary goal of this phenomenological study was to examine the intersectionality of race, microaggressions, and resiliency for African American male students in a high school setting and to discover the impact racism has on African

American male students in a high school setting. Four focus groups from four different high schools with a total of 25 self-identified African American male students were asked seven questions using a focus group protocol to address the research questions. From those questions, the following six themes emerged: microaggressions, racialized stereotypes, racial identity struggle, feelings of being unheard, unseen, invisible and a 2nd class citizen; and resiliency, power, and coping. The findings from the study identified the presence and perception of racial microaggressions among African American male students and used previous research to intersect their experiences with racial identity, feelings of power, strength, and resiliency in a high school setting. The focus group sessions created space to listen to the students' stories and understand their perceptions while allowing them the "therapeutic support in validating one another – paralleling the sanity check" about their lived-experiences (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000, p. 20; Graves, 2014; Holt, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). All the participants in this study exhibited a strong awareness of racialized stereotypes, microaggressions, racialized messages, and racism in their school culture and context. The study also demonstrated how African American male students develop adaptive coping strategies to manage these experiences and navigate towards academic attainment, a positive racial identity, racial socialization, and resiliency (Bynum et al., 2008; Carter Andrews, 2012; Graves, 2014; Lee et al., 2003; Pierce, 1989; Sellers et al., 2006).

Chapter 5: Discussion

This concluding chapter provides a summary of the study, which details a brief discussion, limitations, summary of the research findings, implications for practice, and possibilities for future research. The discussion of this chapter is organized by the research questions and how those findings are relevant to the literature. This phenomenological study sought to examine the intersectionality of race, microaggressions, and resiliency for African American male students in a high school setting and to discover the impact racism has on African American male students in a high school setting. The research had three questions:

1. To what extent are racial microaggressions present and perceived in the educational experience of an African American male student?
2. What deterrents do African American male students identify as threats to their resiliency as a high school student?
3. What protective factors lead to strength, power, and resiliency within a high school setting for African American male students?

In this study, the African American male students perceived the presence of and experienced racial microaggressions in their school context. The participants exhibited a heightened awareness to these racialized experiences and their behavioral responses towards self and others caused, in some instances, internal conflict and external dilemmas. Several participants perceived lowered expectations from teachers and occasionally felt targeted and singled out because of their race. Thus, creating a situation of being hypervisible, put-down, treated differently, devalued, and dehumanized. For example, Jordan remembers this experience with a teacher, "Last

week I raised my hand to answer a question and I had the right answer. Some other kid answered. He had his hand raised and had a wrong answer. The teacher went to all the other kids around me and he still didn't ask me." Or how about Tyrel's encounter with a teacher, "Sometimes the teacher is taking a question from someone else and as they're talking, you put your hand up. Then they're still talking about the topic and then some white kid puts his hand up and they go on to them, instead of you, even though you had your hand up first!" These racialized experiences are not new among African American male students and nor do they happen in isolated incidents. Besides, they can easily be told if an educator were to ask African American students about racialized experiences, "the easy ability of African Americans to catalog and obtain corroboration of prejudice and discrimination experiences from each other often serves as validating evidence" (Franklin & Franklin, 2000, p. 33).

The research design for this phenomenological study was conducted with a qualitative methodology using the integration of the PVEST framework (Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory). The PVEST model argues that racialized experiences and encounters, cultural stereotypes, and societal expectations, can be chronic stressors that occur and must be dealt with as part of the normative developmental process of African American adolescents (Spencer et al., 1997). Previous empirical research has measured African American students' risk and resiliency levels, racial identity, racial socialization and support factors, and psychological well-being (Bynum et al., 2008; Clark et al., 1999; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2012; Howard, 2008; Sellers, 1998, 2003, 2006; Rowley et al., 1998), however, the present scholarship intersects an African American male student's perception in their

words of how race, microaggressions, and resiliency within a high school setting influences their racial identity and educational attainment. By integrating Critical Race Theory (CRT) to listen to the counter-narratives (or stories) that allowed the students to name the experience from their perception and then examine the phenomena-taking place was instrumental in gathering the data.

The framework for the study is multidimensional to accentuate the importance of one's perception of experiences and how racial discrimination can alter behavioral, academic, and social outcomes, and racial identity in human development (Sellers et al., 1998, 2003, 2006; Spencer et al., 1997, 2003; Tatum, 1992). Although PVEST sets the foundation for analyzing self-processes for coping and human development, CRT provided the critical lens to understand the complex structures of race and colorblindness (*the denial, distortion, refusal to acknowledge and/or minimization of race and racism*) (Alexander, 2012; Lee, 2003, Neville et al., 2006). By incorporating this multi-analysis approach, the African American male students in the study were not only able to name their reality and illuminate the factors of cultural distrust, which is a significant predictor of academic achievement but were also able to see how microaggressions and race challenge their resiliency and impact racial identity development (Cross, 1991; Rowley et al., 1998; Sellers, et al., 1998, 2006, Tuitt & Carter, 2008). More specifically, this scholarship identified six emerging themes: microaggressions, racialized stereotypes, racial identity struggle, feelings of being unheard, unseen, invisible and a 2nd class citizen; and resiliency, power, and coping. The study also provides intervention strategies to help educators who work with and teach African American male students. As a researcher, it is vital to better understand

African American male students and how to apply a developmental framework that foregrounds the relevance of their environment with a bioecological and phenomenological study that intersects race, microaggressions, and resiliency in a public high school setting (Connell, 1994; Spencer et al., 1997)

African American male students who encounter day-to-day racialized messages (*everyday behavioral, visible and verbal expressions that demean an individual's racial heritage or identity*) (Pollock, 2008, Tuitt & Carter, 2008) need an opportunity to have their voices heard and make meaning of those experiences (Graves, 2014; Holt, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The current study used a traditional method of focus group-storytelling to listen, describe, analyze, clarify, expose, and highlight the lived-experiences of African American male high school students to help reveal the experiences of microaggressions, racism, and racialized messages (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Delgado, 1989). Researchers have found that *counter*-storytelling "can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Utilizing as a guide Spencer's theoretical framework (1995, 1997) and Delgado & Stefancic's (1989, 2001) thorough analysis on race, counter-stories were created from (a) gathering existing literature, (b) reviewing empirical and theoretical data, and (c) obtaining information from focus groups as the primary sources. The protocol used during the focus group sessions created an atmosphere of trust, engagement, and participation.

Limitations

This phenomenological study sought to examine the intersectionality of race, microaggressions, and resiliency for African American male students in a high school setting and to discover the impact racism has on African American male students in a high school setting. Qualitative research methods represented a useful and effective approach to understanding the "experiences as expressed in lived and told stories" of the African American male students (Creswell, 1998, p. 54; Moustakas, 1994; Walker & Myrick, 2006). The phenomenological perspective (understanding the lived-experiences including the social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of the students involved within the study) gave the meaning of a phenomenon while it was happening for the African American male students who shared common lived-experiences, similar life course stages, racial identity, along with identifying the resiliency and adaptive skills to cope with racism, microaggressions, and discrimination (Groenewald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Rowley et al., 1998; Sellers et al., 1998, 2003, 2006; Solórzano et al., 2000; Spencer et al., 1995, 1997). By using qualitative methods, researchers can better understand the life experiences and meanings that an oppressed group of people who have been historically made invisible, unheard, marginalized, forgotten, or silenced (Sue et al., 2008). More explicitly, four focus groups (a total of 25 African American male students) from four high schools were asked questions about their perceptions, feelings of, and responses to microaggressions within their school context. Secondly, students were given space to "name their own reality" as they were being asked to explore the presence and impact of those microaggressions as it pertains to their education (Ladson-Billings &

Tate, 2016, p. 57). Thirdly, students were asked if those perceived experiences were deterrents to their resiliency, and what protective factors do they employ that lead to strength, power, and resiliency in a high school setting.

However, the African American male population in the United States was 21.5 million in 2013, between 10 and 11 million are under the age of 18 (DeShay & Byndom, 2013). The data analysis collected from the 25 African American male students does not represent the voices of all African American male students. While collecting the data and listening to the students' stories, the identical themes and patterns surfaced in each focus group without students having prior knowledge of that data. It is also noteworthy to mention that the researcher identifies as an African American male and is an assistant principal within the district. Because of my race and role, some students may have responded with ease and familiarity while others may have assumed I was looking for a particular answer to address a school or personal concern. Additionally, there are some demographic and geographical limitations in this study that could influence the racial identity and lived-experiences among the African American students sampled in the given population. For example, African Americans living in the Pacific Northwest are fewer in number and their experiences in being African American would be different as compared to a greater number of African Americans living in the southern region of United States. Finally, this current scholarship is limited to African American male students in a purposefully selected school district in the Portland metropolitan area and does not focus on other racial and gender identities. The demographics present in this exploratory study are narrow and cannot be generalized to all African American male students in a high

school setting.

Summary of Findings

The research findings from this study indicate that the African American male students can perceive the presence of and identify microaggressions. Research is clear that when African American male students perceive from the dominant culture that they are assumed to be less intelligent or being overlooked, invisible and dehumanized, that these racial microaggressions combined with racial hierarchies, white privilege and power, and institutional racism operate as damaging influences that limit their academic success (Carter Andrews, 2012; Carter et al., 1999, 2008; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Franklin & Franklin-Boyd, 2000; Gay, 2002; Graves, 2014; hooks, 1994; Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Noguera, 1997, 2008; Ogbu, 1978; Rowley et al., 1998, Tatum, 1992, 1997; Toldson & Lewis, 2012; Spencer et al., 1997; Sue et al., 2008; Solórzano et al., 1997, 2000; Torres et al., 2010).

Throughout the students' storytelling, they described feeling devalued or dismissed by teachers because of their race. Teachers who teach African American male students need to be ever-so eager to let go of outdated pedagogical styles of instruction for a greater emphasis on self-reflection, scrutinize all systems of white power, privilege, and influence, and check personal biases at the door (Banks, 1993; Bell, 1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Garibaldi, 1992; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

> For something to count as an example of critical learning, critical analysis or critical reflection, I believe that the persons concerned must engage in some sort of power analysis of the situation or context in which the learning is

> happening. They must also try to identify assumptions they hold dear that are actually destroying their sense of well being and serving the interests of others: that is, hegemonic assumptions (Illeris, 2009, p. 97).

According to Ladson-Billings (2004, 2016), teachers who are able to practice culturally relevant pedagogies are able to make a significant impact and academic gains in their students' performance. CRT scholars stress the need to allow students of Color to "name their own reality" (p. 57). Students from traditionally oppressed groups are encouraged to share their experiences and stories with their classmates in order to create a critical dialogue on issues of race, gender, and class. By taking a critical analysis view of what it means to have race at the forefront in the conversation, a teacher will be able to address racist concepts and racial inequalities. Thus, equalizing the playing field for those students who have historically been marginalized and not seen in the curriculum.

For bell hooks, Beverly Tatum, Derrick Bell, and other researchers, such as Paolo Freire, they believe if students are not able to transform their lived-experiences into knowledge and to use the already acquired knowledge as a process to unveil new knowledge, they will never be able to participate rigorously in a dialogue as a process of learning and knowing (Freire, 1970). Consequently, when students are unable to transform their day-to-day experiences, struggles, and pains within a safe place, a critical part of learning is lost. hooks (1994) demanded that regardless of location, the necessary plight to engage in a thoughtful debate and struggle and to work together to eradicate domination at its very core. The present study allowed counter-storytelling told by the African American male students to illuminate some of the challenges to

their resiliency and how they respond to those challenging circumstances – especially when there are limited opportunities to share their story (Harper & Davis, 2012). For instance, Lamar recalls, "And what I feel like is you can't really tell anybody. Because being in this room gives you a new opportunity to tell people. Because when in school, it's not like you can just go to your counselor." Lamar is expressing his need to be heard and seen. By using a CRT framework (Solórzano, 1997) within the classroom to address race and racism, students such as Lamar will have a platform to speak on. Solórzano (1997, 2000, 2002) contends that there is a direct correlation between the practices of CRT and its relation to the concepts of race, racism and stereotypes in teacher education. Research also advocates that African American students who have a relationship with someone other than their immediate family can impact their levels of resiliency (Brown, 2008; Toldson & Lewis, 2012).

The African American male students gave vivid accounts on how these microaggressions impacted their resiliency and could identify them as threats to their racial identity and academic attainment. As the researcher, by intersecting the emergent themes, this study aligns with previous research that links racial discrimination and psychological development to academic outcomes (Graves, 2014; Howard, 2008; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014; Noguera, 2003; Sue et al., 2008). Tate (1997) posits the intersectionality is fundamental because:

> When we move into the complexities of real life we recognize that we each represent multiple identities – race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, and many more. We perform our identities in myriad ways and can never be certain to which of those identities others react. However, since race has been

> such a flashpoint in this society we almost always believe that our challenges stem solely from racial injustice. (p. 39)

When Mace was asked about his feelings on being invisible and how racialized stereotypes impact him, he said,

> "I haven't experienced not being noticed because of my voice, because I have a pretty loud voice and I usually get everyone's attention. I would say when I've experienced someone saying the N-word to me, I have gotten -- I felt very uncomfortable. I dealt with it by talking to that person and told them how I felt, but at the end of the day it still makes me feel uneasy, because knowing that person is going to say that word without hesitating."

This study highlights that when African American male students are the recipients of microaggressions and racialized messages and knowing how to respond to the perpetrator can be difficult and uncomfortable (Sue et al., 2008). Additionally, the African American male students experienced invisibility that generated feelings of internal struggle and conflict "because it requires choices about ways in which to make oneself visible while striving for acceptance" (Franklin & Franklin, 2000, p. 34).

Although all the participants perceived experiencing microaggressions and racialized messages, some participants found difficulty in coping and navigating through the challenges that impacted their resiliency. Rashad shared about his experiences with being called names and his perception of how the school solved the problem, "I've had instances last year when people just called me names, called me stuff and called my friend group things. We bring it to the school and they will talk about it but it doesn't really matter. They brush it off. That's the hardest part about it

because we want something to be done about it and nothing is being done about it." Rashad exemplifies the internal struggle of existing within a system that does not see nor hear him but he has to make a conscious choice to move forward. His ability to avoid additional consequences, create protective and survival strategies, cope through, and move forward in spite of the challenges will be affirmed by a social support network of friends, family, extended family, role models who share the same racial identity, and religious affiliations (Brown, 2008; Clark Andrews, 2012; Graham & Anderson, 2008). Tyrel also shared about how often he experiences racialized messages and the impact it has on him, "It happens a lot, there's no real point in me doing anything. It'll always just come up again. I could go the office or to the counselor's office one day. Might happen the next day, might happen the day after that. There's no point in going in every time it happens." Research validates these experiences will eventually create a spirit of resiliency to cope and survive, overcome, and develop adaptive strategies to protect their psychological well-being yet "their cumulative nature can sap the spiritual and psychological energies of the recipients" (Carter Andrews, 2012; Connell et al., 1994; Howard, 2008; Lee et al., 2003; Spencer et al., 1998, 2003, 2006; Sue et al., 2008, p. 330).

Implications for Practice

Important academic implications for the student, family, educator, school counselors, and research interventionist work can be derived from the detailed findings and student counter-narratives in this study. Counselors may use the information obtained from the study of racial identity development to better support African American male students through individual, family, and peer-group

counseling. The information from this study can provide a multi-lens approach towards the removal of oppressive practices and recognize the experiences "that leave students feeling disenfranchised and/or lead to school drop out or delinquency" (Spencer, 1997, p. 829). From phenomenological and ecological perspectives, the "race-related stressors" that influence a student's racial identity and their adaptive coping responses towards resiliency represent a critical component that impacts academic achievement, self perceptions, and positive or negative learning attitudes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Clark et al., 1999; Gaylord-Harden et al., 2012, p. 266; Lee et al., 2003; Sellers et al., 1998; Spencer et al., 2003).

Can a teacher make a connection between what is being taught in the classroom and a student's everyday-lived experiences – including those issues involving social status, race, and sexual and cultural identities? Lynn found in his study (2002) that if teachers utilized their classrooms as spaces to educate students about their individual cultures then students would be able to appreciate who they are and see the positive connections between race, gender, and class. Additional researchers (Banks, 2004; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2002, 2010; Ladson-Billings et al., 1995, 2004) in culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) support the findings of Lynn (1999, 2002) and Iseke-Barnes (2000) in their studies to show the important link between CRT's themes of the intersectionality, colorblindness, and marginalized voices of Color. Using CRT as the framework in mathematics, Iseke-Barnes (2000) suggests that while teaching math – teachers should consider a student's language, culture, and ethnicity. This style of teaching known as ethnomathematics could help address racial biases and reveals a teacher's colorblindness in their teaching practices.

CRP aims to ensure that educators acknowledge and honor diverse viewpoints of their student population and refrain from promoting homogeneous perspectives as universal beliefs (Banks, 1993, 2001, 2004; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2002, 2010; Ladson-Billings et al., 1995, 2004, 2016).

Future Research

Students come through the doors of our schools everyday wearing their social meanings associated with race, ethnic identity, religion, culture, class and social status, and gender classifications. They proudly walk down the hallways and into classrooms with these badges of honor that can only be detected if the teachers were wide-awake – some would say *woke*. Certain students are enthused with a sheer eagerness to learn while others are only present in body. Sadly, teachers who open the textbook before connecting with the learners oftentimes undermine the lived substance or experience of their students' racial and social identities, personal issues and struggles, and experiential realities. This research advocates that CRT – including a concentration in ethnic studies and forming affinity groups – could be the context to restructure education to more effectively address the needs of not only males of Color but also *all* students of Color. CRT in the educational setting took on a different perspective when Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) contended that in order to address these existing disparities and racial inequalities within school discipline, curriculum and instruction, and high stakes testing, having a critical lens to better understand race was absolutely necessary. CRT is that pedagogical tool to better understand racial inequality and create space to allow students to name and share their own realities. Research (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Naegele, 2017; Sleeter,

2011; Tatum, 1992) stresses the recognition of and voices from a standpoint of racial consciousness that are essential to radical reform and eradicating institutional racism. "Because race is the scaffolding that structures American society, there can be no perch outside the social dynamics of racial power from which to merely observe and analyze" (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. 13). Moreover, CRT unequivocally states that analysis of the law cannot be neutral and objective. But not dealing with issues of race, ethnicity, and culture may be interpreted by a student as being overlooked and the important aspects of their life experiences are viewed as unimportant. Consequently, students then become marginalized, unseen, invisible, and unheard. And if we fail to hear our students, the opportunity gap widens and our students fall through the cracks (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

Another area to consider for research is Gender-Relevant Pedagogy (GRP). Given the ecological factors that boys, and in particular boys of Color, bring with them to school (Noguera, 2008), some teachers lack the requisite skills to facilitate engagement and learning. The theory of Gender-Relevant Pedagogy (GRP) serves as a framework to inform teachers' dispositions when interacting with boys and provides the content to increase engagement and learning. Bristol (2015) believes that this theoretical groundwork of GRP can – and should – be applied to all teachers working with boys who are disengaged and underperform in school.

Whereby GRP is a framework with classroom strategies of best practices to improve the learning outcomes for boys who underperform and are also disengaged, teachers will have to actively be aware of their practices and choose to improve their performance. A pedagogy that is gender-relevant requires teachers to use observed

interests from all students, both male and female, in order to create and implement curricula that can facilitate engagement and further content goals. Cohen and Ball (1999), state that reform efforts must provide designs, specifications, materials, and processes for enactment in order to affect practice. They define GRP as a gendered curricular response to male underachievement and disengagement in schools that lays out a theoretical framework for examining some of the potential root influences for male academic underperformance in schools, as well as providing teachers, both pre- and in-service, with practical tools to facilitate learning for boys.

From this research, student perceptions about race, microaggressions, and resiliency matter. Each teacher's perspective and influence on a school's climate and culture *also* matter because they contribute to positive interactions and successful student learning. Schools are structured around the common belief and practice that students can learn, and that the school has power to change things (Fulton & Elbot, 2008). Learning is not easy but quitting can be. "Learning can broadly be defined as any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity of change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing" (Illeris, 2009, p. 7). Adult learners learn best when the information given is relevant, practical, and meaningful (E. L. Arwood, personal communication, February 1, 2017). Sharing the research findings with the teachers who teach and influence these particular African American male students could create a real-time teaching paradigm shift in their practice. A change within ability takes place based on the capacity to withstand, engage with or embrace the new learning (Bangura, 2005).

Research is clear that microaggressions do affect the psychological well-being and academic attainment for African American male students in a high school setting (Duncan, 2002; Garibaldi, 1992; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Howard, 2008; Kunjufu, 1985; Noguera, 2003; Steele, 1992). Research is also clear that race still remains to be a significant contributor when African American male students perceive that they are being treated differently in their everyday lived-experiences (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016; Pierce, 1989; Toldson & Lewis, 2012; Sue et al, 2008). The rationale of this current study to use narratives or *counter*-storytelling to create space for their voices to be heard is grounded in rich tradition, ancestry, and truth (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). There are numerous scholars and profound researchers (Alexander, Baldwin, Banks, Bell, Bristol, Carter, Clark, Coates, Crenshaw, Cross, Curry, Davis, Delgado, Delpit, DuBois, Fordham, Franklin, Friere, Gay, Gaylord-Harden, Helms, Higginbotham, hooks, Irvine, Kozol, Kunjufu, Ladson-Billings, Matsuda, Noguera, Ogbu, Pierce, Rowley, Singleton, Sleeter, Solórzano, Tatum, Tate, Tillman, Sellers, Stefancic, West, Woodson, Yates) who have given immeasurable time, energy, and sacrifice to the plight in redeeming our male students of Color – and many of them have successfully created intervention-life-altering-pedagogical-classroom strategies so our young African American male students can academically, socially, and emotionally thrive. And yet there remains a void…why? Ten years ago, Howard (2008) completed a study from a CRT perspective on the disenfranchisement of African American males in preK-12 schools. He concluded that the use of *counter*-storytelling to hear the voice of African American male students was a necessary and missing platform in the

educational system. Secondly, African American male students were clearly aware in how race-related issues influenced staff's perception of them. And thirdly, the study revealed the African American male students had to combat the day-to-day racialized experiences and negative societal expectations. Today, just 10 years later – I follow in those same footsteps. Although I use a phenomenological praxis to guide this research with a multi-lens analysis approach, the stories told from those young African American male students a decade ago are an eerie shadow of truth told by the students in this study. I believe there is a gap but it does dwell within the literature. In the Baldwin-Buckley debate at Cambridge University in England, Baldwin asserts:

> In the case of the American Negro, from the moment you are born every stick and stone, every face, is white. Since you have not yet seen a mirror, you suppose you are, too. It comes as a great shock around the age of 5, 6 or 7 to discover that the flag to which you have pledged allegiance, along with everybody else, has not pledged allegiance to you. It comes as a great shock to discover that the country, which is your birthplace, and to which you owe your life and identity has not, in its whole system of reality, evolved any place for you. The disaffection and the gap between people, only on the basis of their skins, begins there and accelerates throughout your whole lifetime. (Franklin & Starr, 1967, p. 250)

The gap is one of race relations and not a lack of literature. Is there more work to be done? Yes. Is there a correlation between African American male students feeling hopeless and yet become resilient against the odds to academically excel? Yes.

This current scholarship began with referencing a quote from hooks (1992) about the lack of change towards racial reformations and the violent stability concerning white supremacy. Hence, I find it fitting to end with the words of one of the participants: Barack. He said, "From the day you're born as a Black man or a minority you're at a disadvantage. It just really hit me because it really is like that. You're at a disadvantage and you don't even know it." As an educator who happens to be a proud African American man, I will continue to ask the hard questions: What will it take for us to wake up and challenge the inequities our children of Color confront each day in schools across the Country? When will we finally convince ourselves that all children can learn and that Black lives do matter? Optimistically speaking, I hope we wake up sooner than later. And once we do wake up, I also hope we take into account who has paid the price while we were sleeping.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Focus Group Script and Protocol

Introduction –

Thanks for coming to participate in the focus group. As the letter explained, this is a study that *examines the intersectionality of race, microaggressions, and resiliency, among African American Males in a public high school setting*. I will be meeting with you for about 90 minutes and our conversation will be recorded for this study. I've also provided refreshments for you – you're welcome to help yourself. I'll be asking you a series of questions about this study. If at any time you need to clarity on a question or terminology used just let me know. This is voluntary participation and there are no right or wrong answers. Do not feel as though you have to answer each question. If you are uncomfortable with a particular question, please let me know.

For confidentiality, we'll be using pseudo or fake names during this session. I ask that you refer to the name on the nametag if you choose to address someone here. I'll introduce myself first and feel free to share something about yourself with the group if you wish.

When answering the questions, a thought or experience may come up after you've already spoken. This is common during focus groups. Please write down (paper/pens are provided) or remember your additional comments and I'll return to you promptly. You're more than welcome to answer a question more than once. Again, welcome and thanks your participation. Are we ready to start? Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Date: _________

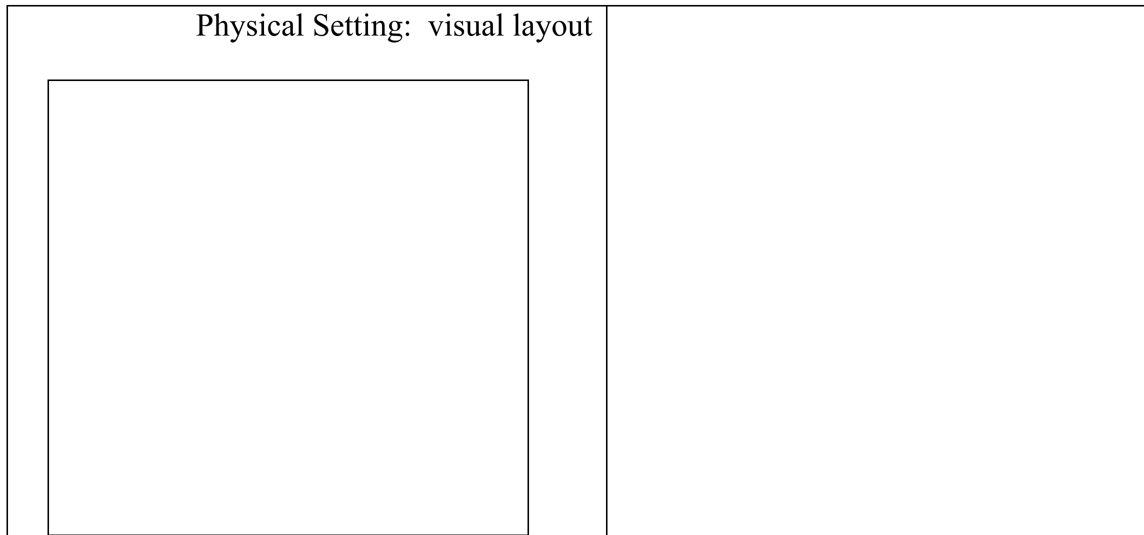
Time: _________

Length of time: Start time: _______ End time: _______

School: _________________________(pseudo names)

Participants:

____(pseudo names)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Study Topic:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Descriptive Notes:</td><td>Reflective Notes:</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Reflective comments: questions to self, observations of nonverbal behavior, my Interpretations</td></tr>
</table>



Description of participants:	Reflective comments: questions to self, observations of nonverbal behavior, my interpretations
Description of materials used:	
Describe the themes or patterns surfacing:	
Describe student interactions with one another:	

Participants comments: expressed in quotes	
Additional thoughts:	

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

1. What are some subtle ways that teachers/staff/students treat you differently because of your race?
2. Describe a situation in which you felt uncomfortable, insulted, or disrespected by a comment that had racialized language?
3. Think of some stereotypes that exist about your racial identity. How have others (within the school environment) expressed their stereotypical beliefs or biases about you?
4. In what ways have others made you feel "put down or less than" because of your racial identity, cultural values or communication style? Describe your feelings.
5. In what ways have teachers/staff/students expressed to you that they think you're a second-class citizen, inferior to them or invisible?
6. How have teachers/staff/students expressed or suggested that you do not belong here because of your race?
7. When you experience these incidents or encounters, how have you felt?

Transition/Concluding Questions

1. What are some of the ways that you dealt with these experiences, incidents?
2. What do you think the overall impact of these experiences and incidents has been on your lives/identity? School experience? Academic achievement?
3. So today during our focus group time, each of you have shared several experiences of racism, microaggressions/racialized language, discrimination

and resiliency. There were several themes or patterns that were consistent across many of your school experiences. These themes or patterns include…Does that sound accurate? If not, what themes or patterns might you add?

Appendix C: Administration Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Irvin M Brown from the University of Portland School of Education. I hope to learn about the African American male's experiences and perceptions about race, microaggressions, and resiliency in a public high school setting. All four high schools in the district will be invited to participate in the study.

If your school should choose to participate, the researcher will conduct one 90-minute session after school in a focus group setting. There will be no compensation given to the school or the students for participating in the study. All information will be reported anonymously or via the pseudonym that is assigned to your school and the participants. If you choose not to participate, I will not conduct a focus group in your school. Participating in this research will help us – as a District – better understand the lived experiences and encounters our African American male students go through in a high school setting. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your school and the students will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Subject identities will be kept confidential by assigning pseudonyms.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the school district. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Irvin M Brown at (503) 353-5842 or browni19@up.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@up.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

____

Signature Date

Appendix D: Student Informed Consent Form

As part of the requirements for the Doctor of Education Program at University of Portland and Portland Public Schools, I am informing you about a research study in which your child has the opportunity to participate and ask you for permission for your child to participate in this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to discover to what extent racism affects African American male students in high school. While there are some generalizations that can be made about day-to-day life experiences of African Americans, African American men go through different experiences than white males. The primary goal of this research is to identify the extent of the presence of racial microaggressions among African American male students and explore their experiences about racial identity, feelings of power, strength, and resiliency in schools. The following research questions are explored in this study:

1. To what extent are racial microaggressions present and perceived in the educational experience of an African American male student?
2. What deterrents do African American male students identify as threats to their resiliency as a high school student?
3. What protective factors lead to strength, power, and resiliency within a high school setting for African American male students?

What your Child will be doing

The researcher will conduct one 90-minute session after school with all participants in a focus group setting. All students will use pseudo/fake names throughout the session. The information gathered will be recorded and transcribed for the study. There will be no compensation given to your student for participating in the study.

All information will be reported anonymously. If your child chooses not to participate, he will not be in the focus group. Participating in this research will help us better understand an African American male's perceptions about race, microaggressions and resiliency within a school setting. However, I cannot guarantee that your child personally will receive any benefits from this research.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Subject identities will be kept confidential by assigning pseudonyms. All raw research data will be destroyed three years after this study has ended.

Your child's participation is voluntary. The decision whether or not to participate will not affect the relationship with the school district, teacher, or classmates. If you decide to allow your child to participate, they are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Mr. Irvin M Brown at (503) 353-5842 or browni19@up.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@up.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to allow your child to participate, that your child may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that your child will receive a copy of this form, and that your child is not waiving any legal claims.

____

Print Child's Name Date

____

Parent/ Legal Guardian Signature Date

Child's Age/Grade ______________________

____

Child's Signature (not required) Date

Appendix E: Open-ended Preliminary Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this study. Please answer the following questions about your perceptions and experiences in your school setting.

1. How do describe your racial identity?

2. Have you ever experienced a “put down” or negative reaction because of your race? Please explain.

3. How do you define a microaggression?

Continuation of Open-Ended Preliminary Questionnaire

Please mark below how do you identify racially/ethnically:

_______ Asian

_______ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

_______ Black/African American

_______ Native American/Alaska Native

_______ Biracial/Multiracial

_______ Hispanic/Latino

_______ White

_______ ____________________________ If necessary, please add to this list.

Please identify your gender: ____________________________