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THE IMPACT OF COLOR EVASIVENESS ON BLACK MALES IN THE K-12 SETTING

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THE IMPACT OF COLOR EVASIVENESS ON BLACK MALES IN THE K-12 SETTING

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Organizational Leadership
in
Doctorate of Education

by
John Dwayne Richmond Jr.

May 20, 2023

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

In terms of scholastic success, African American males have historically lagged below their White counterparts, and this trend continues today. This phenomenological qualitative study looked at how African American male students perceived themselves after they graduated from high school and how color-evasive ideas in the K–12 environment affected their academic performance. In an effort to ascertain if the deliberate avoidance of substantial debates on race, perceived prejudices, and unequal application of exclusionary punishment influence student involvement and performance, the lived experiences of this minority population are gathered. Ten African American guys from one Southern California school district participated in this study. I interviewed each participant using open-ended questions, and the outcomes of their personal narratives suggest that the usage of color-evasive ideology does affect the learning of African American male students, which eventually results in low academic achievement. These findings suggest that discussing racial issues in the classroom would greatly benefit African American male pupils. Which would provide them a platform to talk about their real-life experiences and give others a chance to learn by hearing about them. By offering a story that challenges the deficit attitude that is promoted by the dominant culture's narrative, it would also allow instructors an opportunity to connect with their African American pupils.

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I would be remiss if I did not thank God the Father, his son Jesus and the precious gift of the Holy Spirit for directing my footsteps. It is only through you that all things become possible. Your love, mercy, and grace are the foundation of my worldview, and the cornerstone of my moral compass. It is my faith in your word and your promises that strengthen me. It is this faith in you that refuses to allow me to quit, even when the outcome is uncertain. I must also give thanks to the many who have modeled Black excellence before me. Your example set the tone and raised my personal expectations. It was your encouragement that inspired me to embark on this journey and without your inspiration, I am not sure I would have set my sites to accomplish this. To my daughter, you are my reason and my why, everything I do is so that you will have a better life than the generations before you. It's so that you can look at me and know that anything is possible and that anything you want to be is within your grasp. You are the miracle of joy God graced me and your mother with through prayer and long suffering. To my sisters I want to say thank you, others may have been models of inspiration but you are the standard by which I weigh myself. You two serve as the rulers that I measure my accomplishments by. To my wife I want to thank you for your unwavering support and for always choosing to see the best in me. You are an inspiration to me and your devotion to our family is sincerely appreciated. You have been the biggest blessing and a true manifestation of God in my life. There is nothing that I have accomplished since we met that you have not helped

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DEDICATION

I lovingly dedicate my work to my mother, Ruthie my wife, Marina and my sisters Shandria and Latressa. You four are my greatest inspiration. You are the strongest people I know, your Prayers, encouragement, and support are the reason I have achieved anything good in my life. My accomplishments are our accomplishments. I owe all that I am to the unconditional love you have shown me. I have not always made the right decisions but hopefully I have made you all proud.

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THE IMPACT OF COLOR-EVASIVENESS PRACTICES ON BLACK MALES IN

K-12 SETTINGS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The belief that the United States of America is the land of equal opportunity regardless of nationality, race, gender, sexual preference, or religious affiliation is a widely held notion by many White Americans (Horowitz, Brown, & Cox, 2021). This belief is the cornerstone of the American dream for many of these individuals. The facts however do not support this notion, any cursory research would clearly debunk any idea of equal and fair opportunity. America simply has not lived up to its promise of life liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Some groups continue to be shut out of the dream, as a result of a society that continues to be inequitable largely along racial lines. A poll by Pew Research Center, found that 53% of Whites respondents stated that the average Black person is about as well off financially or doing better than the average White person (Taylor et al., 2011). Shockingly, the poll also found that 36% of Black participants held the belief that the average Black person was doing better or just about as well as the average White person (Morin, 2011). According to scholars, there are many widely held ideologies that pull our attention towards a particular ideology, while simultaneously distracting us from others (Fine, 1991;

Hochschild, 1996). A few of these ideologies consist of the concept of a “post-racial society” and “everyone has equal opportunity to succeed” neither of which is true, nonetheless both are extremely pervasive in American culture (Taylor et al., 2011).

In spite of all of this America remains very much inequitable. For example, White households on average have a median net worth 20 times that of the average Black household and 18 times that of the average Latino household (Bhutta et., 2019). This study examines yet another impediment to any notion of equality, especially in the field of education, color-evasiveness. This ideology serves as a roadblock within the system of education, to any grand idea of equality, liberty, and freedom to many but none more than Black males. It is these racist ideologies such as these that afford many Americans the ability to pathologize and blame African American males for their educational performance, as well as the excessive use of exclusionary racialized discipline policies and practices that are often the result of a racist-deficit mindset adopted due to the subscription of a color-evasive lens.

Background of the Problem

In education, the current California School System is characterized by many opportunity gaps and disproportionalities with respect to traditionally underserved students. Despite the fact that African American students make up just 6% of school-aged students, they comprise approximately 14% of suspension rates and even higher expulsions; while their White counterparts

experience discipline infractions at rates significantly lower than the actual percentage of students (GAO, 2018, p. 12). African American and Latino students continue to experience significant gaps in graduation rates, compared to their White counterparts. In California, A-G requirements, which determine a student's college readiness for University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) admission, is another area where disproportionate numbers of African American and Latino students continue to experience gaps in academic achievement (Mattison & Aber, 2007).

Because the education system is not immune to this ideology, race-evasiveness and equal opportunity are clearly prevalent throughout. As a result, many teachers, counselors, administrators, and educational leaders now hold the belief that effort is the primary determinant of student achievement (Milner, 2010; Sleeter, 2001, Ullucci & Battey, 2011). They also hold the belief that race is no longer a disadvantage to some and provides an unfair advantage to others, and that the best method to address race in education was to simply ignore it altogether (Milner, 2010; Sleeter, 2001, Ullucci & Battey, 2011). Although students of varying backgrounds are subject to the impacts of these beliefs, it is worth noting that African American males from low socioeconomic environments had a higher propensity to suffer when race-evasiveness was adopted as the best response to issues of race in education (Atwater, 2008; Irvine, 2003; Milner, 2010; Sleeter, 2001).

Black male students are disproportionately represented in exclusionary discipline practices, poor academic performance, and classification in special education (Dutil, 2020). Many scholars argue that color-evasive racial ideologies are highly pervasive and lead some teachers to unconsciously contribute to sustaining inequities of student achievement along racial lines. These unconscious biases result in a deficit mindset and lead to noticeable gaps in achievement and discipline, which will later be discussed in greater detail. This mentality ignores the fact that African American males have an experience that is very unique to them, which is imperative that we listen to their fundamental voices in any attempt to address issues that directly impact them.

Research has also shown how Color-evasive racial practices adversely impact all students not just youth of color, as Larry Ferlazzo (2019) points out, implicit biases of teachers often result in color-blind teaching and perpetuates a one-sided, limited curriculum that does not value or emphasize teaching to or about “others.” Often, the voices of students are drowned out and their unique stories are ignored but none more so that the voices of African American males who historically have gotten the short end of the stick more often than any other demographic. Lewis (2001), pointed out that the color-evasive practices of educators and adults at a White school had severely negative consequences for all students regardless of racial identity or background, but none more than that of African American males. Lewis also pointed out that it also tended to serve as a defense for the unequal status quo (Lewis, 2001 p. 805). As an example, Lewis

uses a story that can only be understood through the lens of color-evasiveness. The story of Sylvie, a student who tells her teacher about a group of boys calling her racial slurs during recess. As a result, the teacher determines that Sylvie is “playing the race card” or using a race-neutral situation to rationalize a victim’s mentality. This resulted in Sylvie becoming increasingly uncomfortable at school, which resulted in frequent absences and ultimately poor grades. If one takes this perspective it becomes clear that it is virtually impossible to address and identify racial injustice in education through courageous conversations without first addressing the notion of color-evasiveness ideology and its impacts on students of color. When color evasiveness dominates a school culture students’ unique experiences, cultures, and identities are undervalued, underappreciated, and ignored. Leading to a cookie-cutter educational experience that only serves the dominant culture. Individuals that are unable to assimilate are left out or left behind.

A study of early-career teachers demonstrated that those with more color-evasive orientations were less willing to adapt their teaching to ethnic minoritized students’ needs (Hachfeld et al., 2015). The teachers were often apt to demonstrate an inflexibility in pedagogical implementation, had become insensitive to cultural issues, and felt uncomfortable when dealing with issues of race. As a result, many of their students of color were left feeling disconnected from the material presented. When students see themselves in the curriculum they are more likely to engage and be encouraged to achieve. The inverse is

also true. When teachers neglect to implement culturally aware pedagogy and commit to a culturally sensitive ideology students suffer and are negatively impacted. The fact is that when properly integrated into classroom instruction, culturally sensitive pedagogy elicits positive impacts such as strengthening students' sense of identity, promoting equity and inclusivity in the classroom, engaging students in the course material, and supporting critical thinking (Burnham, 2020). Further exacerbating the issue is the notion of cultural mismatch, as noted by (Gay, 2002; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Sleeter, 2001) who cautioned about the harmful affection of mismatched educational experiences on American students. Which include but are not limited to the following: increased special education referrals, lower graduation rates for African American students, increased referral for disciplinary action upon African American students, and decreased student achievement as a result of underperformance (Vavrus, 2008). Most often the negative effects were the result of White teachers not providing culturally responsive pedagogy in their delivery of instruction and lacking some understanding of cultural differences.

Problem Statement

This research will posit that color-evasive racism/color-evasiveness, as defined as the intentional avoidance and acknowledgment of racism by the refusal to engage in any substantive discussion on race (Annamma, 2017), has a negative impact on African American males in and out of the K-12 classroom. Which differs from color-blindness in that it acknowledges how "color-blind"

conversations are situated on ableism language, which devalues and positions individuals with disabilities as deficit. Drawing on color-evasive racism/color-evasiveness, research has shown how it underscores the refusal to recognize the uniqueness of Black students, and instead subscribe to the same treatment of all students regardless of racial and ethnic affiliation which continues to underserve this group of historically marginalized students (Annamma, Jackson & Morrison, 2017). School practitioners who align themselves with this racist ideology also demonstrate a deficit mindset, as they refuse to address issues of race and racism in the classroom, fail to provide a culturally enhancing experience, and disrupt racialized discipline practices and policies in schools, just to name a few, all which have shown to have a harmful impact on the wellness and academic performance of African American males in education (Verma, 2020). To this point, it is critical to increase the racial literacy and critical consciousness of individuals who positionally have the ability to impact those outcomes, this includes, teachers, administrators, and school staff; by directly granting access to African American males to inform their pedagogical approach that shifts away from race-evasiveness to recognizing and confronting systemic issues.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the experiences of African American males with color-evasiveness racial ideology as benign racism in the K-12 system. Specifically, the impact color-evasiveness had on their

achievement, disciplinary history, and teacher expectations. Which important because no other group has been impacted more than this population as a result of this racist ideology (Annamma et al., 2017). How this historical and cultural phenomenon affected their lived experience with racism in the form of microaggressions, deficit thinking, and zero-tolerance discipline in the K-12 system, as well as their academic success and mental wellness is vital to analyze. In the next section, I present the research questions that inform this dissertation study.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following three research questions:

1. How does the use of color-evasive ideologies impact the disengagement of African American males through the refusal to acknowledge their unique experiences?
2. What are the impacts of exclusionary racialized discipline practices employed in the classroom when teachers are insistent on color-evasive ideologies?
3. How does the purposeful avoidance of race and racism in a classroom setting impact the academic achievement of African American male students?

Significance of study

Race-evasiveness continues to have a negative impact on the student

achievement of African American male students in the K-12 classroom. The use of culturally insensitive pedagogy and exclusionary discipline practices that are historically embedded in the dominant culture of the U.S. K-12 education, have historically impacted the unique experience and outcomes of Black males. This is significant because the issue of color-evasiveness has plagued the educational system for many years. As the country begins to wake up to the need for social justice reform on many fronts, the field of education remains at the top of the list of systems needing addressing. The May 2020 murder of George Floyd became one of the many catalyst for nationwide protest of racial injustice the likes that have not been witnessed since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. This movement became a global phenomenon and inspired a global reckoning with racism. In addition, the world has found itself in the midst of a global pandemic as the Covid-19 virus ravaged many countries. In particular in the United States the virus highlighted the impact of systemic racism in the live experiences of people of color with regard to health care, housing and financial resources.

In education historically students of Color, especially African American males, have been the subject of an opportunity gap that is allowed to persist year in and year out. It is vital that the field of education address its shortcomings and the impact inequitable, unfair, biased, and culturally destructive racist ideologies have had on the overall education and development of African American males in particular. Many of them are ushered off to prison as a result of what is known as the school-to-prison pipeline.

This study aims to dispute the common narrative held by many White teachers in relation to color evasiveness in what some see as a post-racial society. It will also examine and challenge the majoritarian narrative that devalues and dismisses the lived experience of Black male students and how those experiences shape their academic outcomes by focusing on the “experiential knowledge of people of color” (Matsuda, Lawrawence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993, p.6). It will analyze the effects of color evasiveness on African American male students and the impact those effects take on their approach to learning. For example, decreased engagement due to the overuse of exclusionary disciplinary practices, and disengagement due to the unwilling differentiation of instruction by those who adopt a racist ideology. Which often creates rigid inflexible lessons that only account for the learning styles of the dominant culture. This becomes the norm and is generally accepted as true, causing a rejection by Black males of oppressive teaching that is neither effective nor culturally aware. This results in the underperformance of many Black male students, who feel disconnected from both teacher and curriculum. Similar to other Critical Race Theorist (CRT) who champion the “cultural wealth” or array of knowledge, skills abilities, and contacts possess and utilized by communities of color to survive and resist macro and microforms of oppression” of underrepresented and marginalized peoples to counter a false narrative, this study focuses on the gathering of data through interviews, recollections, and descriptions of students experiences with color-evasiveness in the classrooms

(Yosso, 2005, p.2).

Theoretical Framework

To understand the impact and structure of this covert form of racism and its impact on Black boys, a review of current literature was conducted. This critical literature review explores the racial experiences in the form of color-evasiveness of African American males in the K-12 school system. To this end, five bodies of literature were reviewed: (1) Color evasiveness/Color-Blind Racial Ideology (CBRI), (2) Critical Race Theory (CRT), (3) Discipline Gap (DG), (4) Achievement Gap (AG), and (5) Deficit Thinking (DT). A review with a specific focus on the experiences of Black male students provides an understanding of the importance of dismantling this covert form of racism that continues to plague American schooling and fail Black males, placing them squarely on the school to prison nexus.

The lens of Color Evasiveness and Critical Race Theory guides this study, as “CRT centers the research, pedagogy, and policy lens on Communities of Color and calls into question White middle-class communities as the standard by which all others are judged.” (p 82). Color evasiveness is characterized by the willful avoidance of any substantive discussion or acknowledgement of race. Those that subscribe to such doctrine are central to this study on the impact such ideologies have on the target group in relation to academic achievement and perceptions on schooling. Critical Race Theory as a framework is the understanding that race is a social construct that is systemically embedded within

nearly every structure of American society. CRT framework will serve as the backbone of this study, by highlighting how field of education, like many others suffers from the ills of racism through the adoption of racist ideologies like color evasiveness.

Assumptions.

There are three assumptions made regarding this study. The first was that the students of color responses would differ from the expected responses of non-color (White). It is presumed that the students of color would demonstrate an understanding of the permanence of racism. This assumption is based on one tenet of Critical Race Theory per Derrick Bell (1989). The basic premise is that racism is permanent and systemic. This philosophy posits that racism serves as an efficient method to stratify American society and that it is integral to its functioning. This view is also known as racial realism. The second assumption is that students would exhibit elements of realism in regards to race, while also displaying majoritarian rhetoric about color-blindness evasiveness and meritocracy. These contradictions would be made apparent by implicit biases embedded in their responses to the interviewer. This assumption is based on Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's (2003) analysis of how African Americans reconcile and internalize color-evasiveness ideology and rhetorical devices. Bonilla-Silva's (2003) exploration found that while African Americans internalized some mainstream color-evasiveness narratives about race, their perspectives are usually significantly different from Whites. In his study, Bonilla ascertained that African Americans held

the belief that racism and racial discrimination were a pillar of their lived experience. Bonilla also found that, even in cases where the individual had not fully adopted color-evasiveness ideology, they still in most cases made use of the frames of color-evasiveness racism in their description of their racial experiences.

The third assumption is that the lived experience of African American males would differ from that of their teachers. This would inherently foster a cultural mismatch between teachers and their Black male students. Cross (2003) stated that the cultural and racial mismatch between White teachers and their African American students has been significant. The effects of a cultural mismatch continue to be problematic, as Ladson-Billings (2006) suggested, because of this many White teachers are inadequately prepared to work within diverse classrooms. As a result, this study assumes their responses would differ from their students and that they would display some clear subscription to color-evasiveness rhetoric and racial bias. Furthermore, it assumed that while student participants may openly state a belief in the existence of color-evasiveness racial ideology their responses would demonstrate some degree of contradiction.

Limitations.

This study has the following limitations, as a researcher, I assume that many of the potential participants interviewed would meet all necessary criteria and would answer each question with honesty and integrity. This assumption presumes that participants will be honest even when cautious in their answers. I also assume that participants may at times provide answers that might be

politically correct. The possibility of a participant wanting to drop out has been accepted and accounted for; each participant will be given assurance that there would be no adverse consequences to any request to be removed from the study. Additionally, the possibility exist that participants might be cautious in their responses in relation to color-evasiveness ideology and cultural awareness/competency (Diller & Moule, 2005). Participants may also experience anxiety with regard to sounding judgmental or lacking personal responsibility (Narayan & Georg, 2003). Each participant will be provided a consent form that assures the confidentiality of the data collected and the ability to withdraw at any moment during the study.

Definition of Key Terms.

1. **African American:** a person whose identity and ancestry can be traced to African and African American society (Nobles, 2006).
2. **Black:** A population of people having darker skin from the African American culture (Black, n.d).
3. **Critical race theory:** a movement built by activists and scholars who share an interest in the study of race, racism, power, and the relationships that exist between those areas (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).
4. **Color-blindness:** color-blindness is the racial ideology that posits the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity (Williams, 2011).

5. **Color-blind Racial Ideology:** *Colorblind racial ideology* has been defined in a landmark *American Psychologist* article by Helen A. Neville and colleagues (2013) as consisting of two interrelated domains: *Color-evasion* - denial of racial differences by emphasizing sameness and *Power-evasion* - denial of racism by emphasizing equal opportunities.
6. **Color-evasive:** The intentional avoidance and acknowledgment of racism and its impact by the refusal to engage in any substantive discussion on race (Annamma, 2017).
 7. **Culturally-responsive teaching:** Instruction that uses “the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students” (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 31)
8. **Education:** the process of learning key concepts in the areas of mathematics, language arts, social studies, reading, science, and other subjects across the curriculum (Sobel, 2004).
9. **Equity:** Providing resources according to the need to help diverse populations achieve their highest state of health and other functioning. Equity is an ongoing process of assessing needs, correcting historical inequities, and creating conditions for optimal outcomes by members of all social identity groups (APA, 2021b).

10. **Equality:** “Promoting fairness and justice by giving everyone the same thing” (Mann, 2014).
11. **Race:** An organizing construct of American society, all around the world, its meaning is structured by and contingent on societal, political, and historical context, which may change at any given time, and is indicative of the struggle for dominance among groups of people (Omi & Winant, 1994).
12. **Racism:** “A system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress. People on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms and color” (Marable as cited in Solorzano and Yosso, 2002).
13. **White:** White, as a term describing people, refers to light-skinned people of European descent.
14. **Whiteness:** Whiteness refers to the construction of the White race, White culture, and the system of privileges and advantages afforded to white people in the U.S. (and across the globe) through government policies, media portrayal, and decision-making power within our corporations, schools, judicial systems.
15. **Underrepresentation:** to give inadequate representation to; to represent in numbers that are disproportionately low.

Summary

This chapter has provided a brief historical background of the educational experiences of African American males, specifically as it relates to race and racism in K-12 education system. It explores the historical context and phenomena of racial evasiveness that shapes the thinking of educators that

refuse to access how race and racism impact students in various ways. To highlight the magnitude of this problem, Chapter 1 discussed the statement of the problem and provided a detailed report regarding the attitudes, practices, and policies implemented by educators who subscribe to a color-evasiveness narrative. To situate the relevance of this study, Chapter 1 described the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the importance and potential contributions of the study. Finally, a definition of key terms was provided to clarify the meanings of specific words as they pertain to this research study. In the next sections, Chapter 2 will provide a review of the literature pertinent to this study, followed by Chapter 3 which focuses on the methodology of study, Chapter 4 will present the findings of the study, and finally, Chapter 5 will present the conclusion, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Literature Review

Problem Statement

This research will posit that color-evasive racism has a negative impact on African American males in and out of the K-12 classroom. The refusal to recognize the uniqueness of this population, and instead subscribe to the same treatment of all students regardless of racial and ethnic affiliation continues to underserve this group of historically marginalized students (Annamma, Jackson & Morrison, 2017). School practitioners who align themselves with this racist ideology also demonstrate a deficit mindset, as they refuse to address issues of race and racism in the classroom, fail to provide a culturally enhancing experience, and disrupt racialized discipline practices and policies in schools, just to name a few, all which have shown to have a harmful impact on the wellness and academic performance of African American males in education (Verma, 2020). To this point, it is critical to increase the racial literacy and critical consciousness of individuals who positionally have the ability to impact those outcomes, this includes, teachers, administrators, and school staff; by directly granting access to African American males to inform their pedagogical approach that shifts away from race-evasiveness to recognizing and confronting systemic issues.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the experiences of African American males with color-evasiveness racial ideology as benign racism in the K-12 system. Specifically, the impact color-evasiveness had on their achievement, disciplinary history, and teacher expectations. Which important because no other group has been impacted more than this population as a result of this racist ideology (Annamma et al., 2017). How this historical and cultural phenomenon affected their lived experience with racism in the form of microaggressions, deficit thinking, and zero-tolerance discipline in the K-12 system, as well as their academic success and mental wellness is vital to analyze. In the next section, I present an overview of the literature review that was conducted to help inform and guide this propose study.

Overview of Literature Review

To understand the impact and structure of this covert form of racism and its impact on Black boys, a review of current literature was conducted. This critical literature review explores the racial experiences in the form of color-evasiveness of African American males in the K-12 school system. To this end, five bodies of literature were reviewed: (1) Color Evasiveness/Color-Blind Racial Ideology (CBRI), (2) Critical Race Theory (CRT), (3) Discipline Gap (DG), (4) Achievement Gap (AG), and (5) Deficit Thinking (DT). A review with a specific focus on the experiences of Black male students provides an understanding of the importance of dismantling this covert form of racism that continues to plague

American schooling and fail Black males, placing them squarely on the school to prison nexus.

The literature review is divided into three major sections. These sections correspond with the bodies of literature that I have chosen to explore. In the first part of this review, I looked for the ways in which color-blind racial ideology has been discussed with an eye on Black males. I also looked for articles where color-blind racism seemed to focus attention on the experiences facing adolescents, and Black male adolescents in particular, and at the themes, major lines of inquiry, and methodological approaches discussed in articles on this topic. In addition, I discussed gaps in the literature and situated my research within these gaps. I linked the color-blind racial ideology on Critical Race Theory and Deficit Thinking to reveal recent approaches to exploring this topic that were relevant to this study. Each body of literature was discussed in terms of the way that it has informed and contributed to the conceptual framework for this study. The spelling color-blind is used throughout this research, nonetheless when reviewing and referencing other works the use of other terms such as color blind, color-evasive and colorblind were utilize in the same fashion as the authors.

African American Males Exclusionary Discipline and the Opportunity Gaps.

It is well documented that African American males have been subjected to gaps in achievement. These gaps represent deficits in opportunities available to them, and many are unique to their ethnic affiliation. Also well documented is the negative impacts disproportionate exclusionary discipline practices have

produced including the links to gaps in opportunity and access to curriculum. Across the United States, school discipline policies continue to demonstrate an inequitable approach to African American Males students. These policies, often exclusionary in nature, are more times than not detrimental to students of color, with little regard for the higher rate of trauma this population experiences. A review of the next articles gives more detail as to the impact these gaps have had on this population. The article, *The Achievement Gap and the Discipline Gap: Two Sides of the Same Coin?* Gregory, Russell, Skiba, & Noguera (2010), synthesizes a series of scholarly research on racial and ethnic patterns embedded in school discipline and then suggests how the racial discipline gap may influence racial patterns within achievement. Next, the article reviewed the evidence on variables that impact the discipline gap. The researchers highlighted that historically and presently schools tend to rely heavily on exclusionary practices, the removal of pupils from the school setting, as the primary strategy for discipline (Arcia, 2006). Also pointed out was that this often leads to a disproportionate amount of Black, Latino, and American Indian students being disciplined. Which they believe may contribute to the well-documented racial gaps in academic achievement.

According to Gregory, Russell, Skiba, and Noguera (2010), overwhelming evidence shows that Black students continue to be subjected to disproportionate rates of discipline in school settings, which was drawn from a wide variety of school dispositions and methodological approaches (e.g. suspensions, office

discipline referrals). In 1975, the issue of racial disproportionality was introduced by the Children's Defense Fund, which illustrated that Black students were over-represented in school suspensions as much as 2-3 times that of their local enrolment rates across the nation. Over the past 30 years, discipline rates have held an obvious pattern of disproportionality, with respect to suspensions (McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002), expulsions (KewelRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007), and office discipline referrals (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Greogory, Russell, Skiba, and Noguera (2010) pointed out that Black students had a significantly higher likelihood of being suspended than White or Asian students according to a nationally representative study (Greogry, Russell, Skiba & Noguera, 2010). In fact, according to the study 1 in 5 Black students (19.6%) were suspended at least once, compared to 1 in 10 White students (KewelRamani et al., 2007). Blacks also led suspensions among other racial groups with Asian and Pacific Islander students seeing a combined rate of 8.8%. A national survey of 74,000 10th graders determined that approximately 50% of Black Students reported having been suspended or expelled in comparison to 20% of their white counterparts (Wallace et al., 2008). The same study also demonstrated that expulsion rates for Black students actually increased from 1991 to 2005, while other ethnic groups held steady or declined (Wallace et al., 2008).

Furthermore, national data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003 showed that 35% of Black

students grades 7-12 had ever been suspended or expelled, which was significantly disproportionate compared to Latinos (20%) and Whites (15%) (Wallace et al., 2008). Upon review of the data, the rationale for focusing on males is justified. Data revealed that males may be treated and viewed differently along gender lines regardless of ethnic affiliation. Interestingly, males of all racial and ethnic groups dominated incidents of discipline in school settings. Male students demonstrated a higher likelihood of disciplinary sanctions than their female counterparts. Yet, recent research has also demonstrated the growing concerns and the pressing need to focus on girls of color, specifically Black girls as they are more likely to be suspended and expelled, in comparison to their white female counterparts (Morris, 2016).

Gregory, Russell, Skiba, and Noguera analyzed the impact of disproportionate discipline on the learning of students. In the first year following suspension students were three grade levels behind their non-suspended peers in reading skills and were almost 5 years behind by year two. The authors acknowledged that other risk factors may contribute to the witnessed differences, but posited that suspensions may have initiated or maintained a process by which students ultimately end up disengaging from the classroom. The short-term impact has been that school suspensions have presented themselves as a moderate to strong indicator of dropout and on-time graduation rates (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986; Raffaele Mendez, 2003; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). The basic premise is that disproportionate rates of exclusionary discipline

practices can damage the learning process of students in a variety of ways. For instance, students who have a history of suspension may disconnect from school, and become less invested in the academic process and school rules, leading to a lack of commitment to personal academic success. This may result in a willingness to engage in lawbreaking activities and failed academic performance.

Again, the study found that although certain ethnic-cultural characteristics have been overly used to explain the racial discipline gap (see, e.g., National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2000). There has yet to be significant evidence to support that these factors are significant enough to account for the observed gaps in education. Existing school discipline research suggests that student SES is limited in its explanatory power of the racial discipline gap (McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Wallace et al., 2008). For instance, race, socioeconomic status (SES), and characteristics of neighborhoods associated with the risk of negative outcomes are frequently connected to low achievement and poor academic performance in the United States (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; McLoyd, 1998). This is why, as previously mentioned, teacher and school factors must be considered as contributing factors to the over-representation of Black and Latino students in exclusionary disciplinary processes. In summation, disproportionate school discipline experienced by Black students has proven implications for lack of academic success.

Gregory, Russell, Skiba, and Noguera (2010) went on to state there is a need for research to identify the potential causes for racial disproportionality in discipline and what if any types of disciplinary practices would lessen negative impacts on academic performance. Furthermore, Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera (2010) stated that there is a need for research that accounts statistically for a measure of SES at the school level (Raffaele Mendez et al., 2002; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982) (i.e. percent of parents unemployed or percent of students on free or reduced lunch) or at the student level (parental education or qualification for free or reduced lunch McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Skiba et al., 2002), given that multivariate analysis have demonstrated that racial differences in discipline rates remain significant (i.e. single-parent household) and urbanicity of neighborhood. In conclusion, the study found that the while disproportionate rates of discipline continue to have an adverse effect on student achievement, and that witnessed disproportionate discipline gaps are in part explained by factors such as enrollment in schools with high rates of low-income students (Raffaele Mendez et al., 2002; Wu et al., 1982), and by membership in a low-income family (McCarthy & Hoge, 1987; Skiba et al., 2002). There remains sufficient evidence to support the notion that race/ethnicity serves as significant predictors of disciplinary involvement even after controlling for social-economic status (SES).

In her article, dismantling the School to Prison Pipeline. Stacey Dutil identifies school disciplinary policies and practices that re-traumatize and

criminalize youths and suggests the replacement of exclusionary discipline practices with trauma-informed ones. As a framework, Dutil relies on CRT to guide the construction of what she calls trauma-informed schools. She further suggests, that school social workers should play a role as change agents for students of color when it comes to disciplinary matters. Over the course of the article CRT and trauma-informed practices are emphasized as tools for the dismantling of the school-to-prison pipeline.

Because critical race theory rigorously examines the notions of racism, power, and policies that frame the legal field (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017), it was considered to be an appropriate theoretical framework for this study on the issue of school discipline in relation to race, historical oppression, and trauma. “School to prison pipeline” is a commonly used term that defines the pathway for youths from the education system to the criminal justice system in the United States (McCarter, 2017). The purpose of Dutil’s article was to develop a complete and thorough argument for the need to utilize both CRT as a framework and the trauma-informed approach as preventative measures against future harm being caused by the school to prison pipeline, which as previously stated is a pathway for students of color into the prison system through the use of policies and practices such as, exclusionary discipline practices in k-12 schools. In the United States, the public education system and the criminal justice system share similarities that have disproportionately impacted students of color. These impacts, negative in nature, are often the result of exclusionary practices and

policies that are anchored in the zero-tolerance approach to school discipline widely implemented in the 1990s. This has led to excessive suspensions, expulsions, and juvenile justice referrals that have disproportionately affected students of color (Morris & Perry, 2016; Simson, 2014; Teasley, 2014; Wood, 2014).

According to Dutil's article in 2012, Black male students who had been suspended (48.3 percent) were more than twice the rate experienced by any other ethnic group. Male Hispanics (22.6 percent), Whites (21.4 percent), Asian/Pacific Islanders (11.2 percent) had all been suspended at lower rates than African American males under the same policies. The study also indicated that Black female students experienced similar patterns of discipline with 29% of them being suspended at least once. While their counterparts fell way below that rate Hispanic females (11.8 percent), White female students (9.4 percent), and Asian/Pacific Islander female students at (7.9 percent). Dutil's article placed emphasis on CRT in education, which asserts that education is a tool for the continued oppression of minorities and maintenance of White supremacy (Gillborn, 2014). Dutil also pointed to Rector Arnada (2016), which stated that "Because education is foundational to culture, it is crucial that educators recognize how the things that happen in schools affect the outcomes and practices of other public institutions and the larger society" (p.3). According to Simmon, 2014, the use of retributive and exclusionary discipline practices can be rationalized to maintain order in schools and classrooms and to reduce violence

and drug-related offenses. This is in alignment with the notion that race matters and racism is a foundational and fundamental component of American Society. Within education individuals with authority may attempt to rationalize the use of such practices as deterrents for inappropriate behavior, similar to how lawmakers see it as a deterrent to criminal activity. However, this view is not supported by data. Zero-tolerance has not proven to be successful in the prevention or reduction of bad behavior, in fact, schools that employ such practices are often less safe than those that use inclusive evidence-based practices in response to inappropriate behavior (McCarter, 2017).

Dutil stated the use of punitive and exclusionary discipline practice continues to be problematic because the terms “disrespect” and “disruptive” are so subjective, infractions are at the discretion of classroom authority figures. This has resulted in disproportionate disciplinary actions under these labels. When applied to CRT’s tenet of neutrality, which posits the possibility of neutralizing race as a factor, then the dominant culture’s views become the lens by which student behavior is viewed and judged (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). As a result anything that is deemed to be “too loud” or “aggressive”, which in themselves house masked bias and prejudiced expectations of communication, is solely left to the discretion of an adult with mismatched cultural experiences. According to this study, Sullivan, Larke, and Webb-Hasan (2010) proposed that the primary reason for inappropriate disciplinary referrals may be “cultural differences and/or misunderstandings” between educators and students of color.

Dutil also pointed out that Simson (2014) referred to the notion of “cultural mismatch” between students of color and teachers as a significant factor in the disproportionate rates of discipline for Black students.

According to Gregory and Fergus (2017) even with the implementation of social-emotional learning (SEL) practices, there remains implicit bias in “color blindness” that refuses to consider racial and cultural differences while holding students of color to behavioral expectations from a Western European point of view. Usually, all considerations for counter experiences and narratives are confined to those courses exclusively. Dutil also pointed to (Thompson, 2016), who pointed out that the interpersonal level of racism consists of implicit bias that can affect how educators and other school staff experience students of color. Accordingly, Delale-O’Connor, Alvarez, Murray, and Milner (2017) stated that the most influential factor in classroom management and resulting discipline practices is often the teachers’ self-awareness with regard to beliefs in working with students of color and their subscribed worldview that filters those beliefs and assumptions. These authors extrapolated that teachers can increase awareness of beliefs and biases by developing genuine meaningful relationships with students of different cultural backgrounds, seeking to understand the social context that their students live in, and giving appropriate acknowledgment to trauma experiences. This can be accomplished through training and support that specifically targets self-efficacy and competence, which may result in the ability

to better manage conflict in the classroom setting, with the hope of eliminating the over-utilization and dependence on exclusionary discipline practices.

Dutil also pointed out that McGee and Stovall (2015) used CRT to examine the relationship between the concepts of “grit” and “resilience” commonly imposed on Black students by historically White institutions, which usually results in a blatant disregard for or minimization of the mental health needs of students of color who routinely are subjected to chronic stress. The study was conducted through a CRT lens, and the authors emphasized the need for educational practices to be accessed using a racially conscious approach. Dutil went on to use the study of Blitz, Anderson, and Saastamoinen (2016) to further illustrate educators’ perceptions of student behavior, and their understanding of toxic stress, trauma, and their self-reported stress levels in relation to teaching efficacy. The study utilized an urban elementary school with a population of 425 students, of which 90% are qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, of the 425 students more than half identify as non-White.

The study found that at the school students of color were overrepresented in both disciplinary referrals and low test scores. The most notable was the findings on the topic of race and culture. Researchers found that none of the participants directly discussed racial, ethnic, or class identity and its influence on their pedagogy, or its effects on their ability to engage with students, families, and communities on behavior-related issues. In the same manner that CRT proposes that legal practices cannot be color-blind, it is worth noting that

consideration should be given to different power dynamics and racial discrimination. Which have the power to impact school discipline through the establishment and implementation of policies and practices that are inequitable and centered in racism.

Dutill argued against the notion of color-blind racial ideology which implies that it is possible to approach various issues without considering race, which some see as an equitable approach by negating race and simply judging persons based on non-racial characteristics, skills, and accomplishments. This is in opposition to CRT, which posits that racial consideration is a must on issues such as the educational and judicial systems because these systems were designed to oppress and marginalize minority groups in order to maintain and establish a system of White dominance. Lastly, Dutil states that although the idea of education reform remains progressive in nature through “leveling the playing field” and the promotion of equity for students in the receiving of quality education by considering racial disparities, testing bias, and lack of funding leading to lack of resources. There still needs to be a consideration for racial bias and discrimination in disciplinary practices imposed on the same students. Dutil further argues, that if schools with exceptional academic rigor neglect to address the social-emotional needs, and negate trauma histories of students, families, and communities it will remain unlikely that equity will be achieved. Schools should use a critical race approach, which would promote racially conscious

disciplinary policies and provide educators and support providers with the necessary tools to serve students of color.

Dutil suggests, that future research should focus on the long-term effects of trauma-informed schools and the impact of a critical race framework for the implementations. Which she states is necessary to determine if positive results are maintained over time and whether the practice is sustainable in school settings. Further research on barriers to implementation and sustainability may identify methods by which the schools can construct optimal conditions for implementation. Dutil asserts that a CRT perspective on education demands that the status quo be disrupted by challenging prevailing oppressive structures, and argues that discipline is a foundational injustice within the education system (DeMatthews, 2016). Finally, Dutil pointed to Crosby (2016) who suggested that youth incarceration causes trauma that has a propensity to increase behavioral problems. In a similar fashion, school suspensions and other exclusionary discipline practices may cause retraumatization and increase behavioral issues, specifically for students of color who are already subjected to trauma outside of school at higher rates than their White counterparts.

Dutil is by no means the only scholar to examine the impact of exclusionary discipline practices, like Dutil, Milner also conducted a study on the trends and patterns of this approach and noticeable harmful impacts that lead to the underperformance of students of color.

Author H. Richard Milner IV asks a question in his article why are students of color (still) Punished more severely than White students? Alternatively, why in the United States do Black and Brown students continue to be referred to the office and subsequently suspended or put up for expulsion at higher rates than their white classmates? For years researchers such as (Davis& Jordan, 1994; Noguera, 1995; Sheets, 1996; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson, 2002) have been cogitating this dilemma as an ongoing phenomenon. Nonetheless, issues persist surrounding the disciplinary practices of both teachers and principals in relation to Black and Brown students, in particular those from a low socioeconomic environment.

Data overwhelmingly points to the fact that referrals originating from the classroom are disproportionate for students of color. In fact, when analyzed Racial disparities in school discipline illustrate issues along color lines as highlighted by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), the Council of State Governments Justice Center (Morgan, Salomon, Plotkin, & Cohen, 2014), and the Discipline Disparities Research to Practice Collaborative (Carter, Fine, & Russell, 2014). Although there has been a recent uptick in national attention on the subject, these disparities and their root causes have been the subject of debate for years amongst researchers. In particular, Black students continue to be the victims of disproportionate exclusionary discipline practices. Fabelo et al., 2011; Losen & Martinez, 2013;

Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008, found that Black students are 2-3 times more likely to be suspended than all other ethnic groups.

Furthermore, Black students remain overrepresented in school discipline sanctions when achievement, socioeconomic status, and teacher self-efficacy are accounted for, as stated by Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Fabelo et al., 2011; Finn & Servoss (2015). Just like Dutil, Milner stressed the authority administrators have to suspend or expel students at their discretion based on their interpretation of the incident as described by classroom teachers and their interpretation of the rules and policies that govern the school. As a result, students who are routinely disciplined miss vital seat time and consequently demonstrate lower academic achievement. Milner asked, "how can we expect students to succeed on academic measures when they are not experiencing learning opportunities that allow them to participate in the types of learning necessary for them to be successful because they are sent out of the classroom and possibly school? (Milner, 2013). In order to emphasize this point, Milner pointed to Davis and Jordan (1994), which analyzed the data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 administered by the National Center for Educational Statistics. In their study, Davis and Jordan employed a stratified, two-stage randomized sample of 25,000 eighth-grade students in 1,000 schools. Ultimately, the researchers found a connection between disciplinary practices and the academic performance/achievement of Black male students.

Davis and Jordan correlated that the more time out of the classroom for discipline, the more Black male achievement suffers (p.585).

The researchers went on to explain that the use of such disciplinary practices results in classroom and school disengagement, and that student achievement suffers because the practices actually served as disincentives for these students (Davis & Jordan, 1994, p.585). Next, Milner referred to a study by Skiba et al. (2002) that analyzed the disciplinary records of 11,001 students in 19 middle schools situated in a large urban Midwestern public school district. The study found that differential patterns of discipline existed, where Black students were sent to the office for infractions of a more subjective nature, as opposed to White students being sent for infractions that are objective in nature (p.137). As a result, Milner (2013) asks Why are students of color and those of lower socioeconomic backgrounds punished more severely and more frequently (Milner, 2013). His article further postulated that students of color and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds still disproportionately receive harsher exclusionary practices (see, for instance, Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Lewis, Butler, Bonner, Fred, & Joubert, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011).

As the researchers explained, “the time teachers spend handling disciplinary problems is time taken away from instruction; Black male achievement suffers as a result” (p. 585). Milner listed six possible reasons for the observed phenomenon of disproportionate disciplinary practices aimed at Black school-age children. **1) Teacher and administrative fear:** Milner posited

that teachers and administrators may possess an irrational fear of Black and Brown students, making them less willing to use other means of correction in order to keep them in the classroom and teach them. **2. Institutional and individual racism:** in alignment with CRT's assumption that racism is both permanent and institutionalized Milner stated that policies at the district and school level (e.g. as zero-tolerance) can be embedded with racism, in particular when they are developed and follow White normative expectations in exclusion of the behavioral, interactional, and practices of non-White people. **3. Under-preparation in teacher education:** unfortunately both traditional and non-traditional teacher credentialing programs routinely fail to address the needs of pre-service teachers in equipping them with the necessary tools to service the needs of students of color. Often teacher education programs neglect to even offer courses on "classroom management" leaving them to figure out for themselves the complexities of effectively working with students in the classroom. **4. Instructional practices and Cultural conflict:** Milner here reflects on Delp (2012) which stressed the disconnect that exists between students and educators. Delp extrapolated that these inconsistencies may alter what and why teachers teach what they teach, as well as how they react to different learning styles. **5. Ineffective leadership:** Here Milner states that state, district, and school leaders play key roles in the exclusionary practices that encourage the removal of particular groups from the classroom setting, under the assumption that they are better served elsewhere. When teachers refer students to the office,

administrators have several options. (a) address and dissolve the conflict between student and educator through mediation; (b) collaborate with parents and family members to build better unity and teamwork between teacher and student; (c) Send to in-school-suspension (ISS); (d) assign other means of correction, such as campus beautification or lunch detention; (e) suspension; or (f) expulsion. Making matters worse when administrations intervene, teachers are not allowed to grow from the situation through reflective processes, nor are they asked to participate in restorative practices that offer a chance of improving the relationship with the student. More often than not the responsibility for growth falls solely at the feet of the student. **6. Inadequate counseling and psychological services:** lack of support for students' mental health following student discipline and corrective action increases the chances that a student will revisit the behavior or engage in worse behavior at a later time. These services are essential for students experiencing trauma outside of school.

Overall, in his writings Milner sought to communicate the negative effects of exclusionary discipline practices such as (a) increased student dropout, (b) increased referral to special education due to behavioral “disorders,” (c) decrease in achievement (and accordingly test scores), and (d) increased student absenteeism.

Deficit Thinking.

As pointed out by Noguera’s (1995) the predisposed view point of educators can drive the use of the exclusionary discipline measures they

implement in their schools. Unfortunately, a deficit mindset usually lies at the heart of the disproportional discipline we see that often results in underachievement. The social construct of the American educational system is based on the relationships of students and teachers. In the study, “The Impact of White Teachers on the Academic Achievement of Black Students: An Exploratory Qualitative Analysis” (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008). Students are identified as dependent persons, while teachers are considered as independent persons. Also worth noting is the fact that the United States student population is increasingly being made up of Black students (Lewis, 2006). In fact, presently in urban environments students of color consistently comprise the majority of the student population (Lewis, Hancock, James, & Larke, in press). On the contrary, the data routinely shows that the majority of educators are white, which results in a mismatch of cultures and subjects Black students to pressures not faced by White students. In 2004, the United States Department of Education reported that nearly 87% of all U.S. secondary school teachers were White, and only 8% of those teachers identified as Black.

Oftentimes, any discussion on the academic performance of Black students lends itself toward a “blame the victim” approach, with much of the dialogue focused on efforts to intervene on the student’s behalf. This is usually centered on a deficit mindset that begins with the notion of fixing the child instead of correcting the system. A few examples of this include analyzing external factors like (a) Black student achievement data, (b) inadequate academic

preparation, and (c) lack of family support both in and out of school. With this being said this article took a more in-depth look at the impact White teachers have on the educational outcomes of Black students and what factors most contribute to those outcomes.

Additional research suggests that the failure of White teachers to address, acknowledge, and value the unique primary culture of Black students is a major factor in whether or not they are successful academically. The gap observed between the academic achievements of Black and White students continues to be a source of frustration for many in education. Namely, because there are no genetic, or innate traits that would serve as a cause for such a gap. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What role do White teachers play in facilitating Black students' success or contributing to their academic failure?
2. Do White teachers' views of Black students allow them to address the educational needs of these Black students?
3. Do Black students have perceptions of White teachers' ideas, beliefs, and values that get in the way of their academic achievement?

Qualitative data collected during the study were analyzed after transcribing all interviews and coding them in three phases—open coding, refinement of coding, and axial coding (Glaser, 1992). During the final phase, key themes and patterns were identified and developed that transcended each of the coding categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The key themes and patterns identified by the eight

students in two different high schools were treated as one cohort group based on their experiences with their White teachers, but were not compared to one another (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008).

Four key themes were identified as recurring from analyzed data and the authenticity was verified through the application of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) notions of trustworthiness for the data collection process. Potential researcher bias and expectations were monitored frequently by the team throughout the course of data analysis. In addition team members were consistent in the checking and monitoring of each other's work by discussing decisions to ensure the most accurate data. Which offers the assurance of enhanced dependability and conformability of results during data analysis (Guba, 1985). This study on Black students' perceptions of their White teachers is rooted in Milner's (2006) theoretical assumptions, which centers around the difficulties White teachers routinely face when teaching students of color, in particular African American students in the k-12 setting. A featured assumption that is discussed by the author is the deficit mindset of White teachers with regard to Black students.

Milner posits that teachers' perceptions of the academic ability of students of color from a deficit mindset can lead to the development of curriculum and instruction that falls short of effective teaching and learning. Some of these assumptions include that students of color innately lack the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to succeed and learn. This assumption is counter to any notion of color blindness, which suggests that White teachers "do not see color"

or any distinction of students based on color. A multitude of scholars have noted that deficit thinking by White teachers continues to have an adverse impact on the outcomes of students of color primarily. In fact, (Hale, 2001; Milner, 2006; Thompson, 2004) stated that “inferior educational outcomes are accepted for African American students day in and day out, in the inner-city, suburban and rural areas. This not only undermines the notion of a color-blind narrative on a systemic level but also counters the notion that individual teachers do not see color.

This study implemented a qualitative research design that administered retrospective interviews (Reif, Gerber, & Ginsberg, 1997). The Purposive sampling method was used to select the sample used in the study, which is typical when a researcher seeks to understand, discover, or gain insight of a particular population (Merriam, 1998). This approach is often used when the researcher needs the participation of a knowledgeable and informative source on a phenomenon under investigation. The study consisted of eight Black students, five female and three males, who were all currently being taught by at least one White teacher. It is worth noting that the majority of the students who participated in the study had all White teachers for their core classes (History, Math, English, and Science). At the time of the study each student held at least a minimum cumulative Grade point average (GPA) of 2.5-4.0 on a grading scale and was in grades 10-12. Students attended two different high schools, but had the same curricular material in the core subjects based on State Department of Education

requirements. The 10 interview questions were open-ended in nature and derived from literature on race and schooling, cultural mismatches between students and teachers, and the impact of racism in the educational system.

Questions were designed to elicit a detailed response by students as to their experiences with White teachers in their core classes. Interview duration ranged from 90 minutes to well over 120 minutes. All interviews were conducted in a face-to-face manner by the research team at a local public library in northern Colorado. Data collected during interviews revealed four key themes. The four were viewed as significant based on the lived experiences of the Black students in this study. The themes include the following (a) Respect: I Need Respect, (b) Stereotypes: Do not Pass Judgment on Me, (c) The Administrations Need to Check Themselves, and (d) We Like This Environment. Two themes emerged as support for the basis of this study: I Need Respect and Do not Pass Judgment on Me. Both themes are counter to the notion that race is not observed, teachers are color-blind, and we live in a post-racial society. As a result, four suggestions aimed at improving the relationship between Black students and White teachers were developed, two of which are relevant to this study. These two suggestions clearly acknowledge that not only do teachers see color, but color is a significant factor in the relationship and perception of Black students.

1. Every effort should be made to understand your personal epistemologies and the effect they have on the Black student in the classroom. These biases and assumptions can possibly have a negative

effect on addressing the educational needs of the Black student (Landsman & Lewis, 2006).

2. Do not judge Black students solely on their appearance. Many of these students are just as good as their White peers in the classroom but are not given a chance because of the clothes they wear or their hairstyle (Landsman & Lewis, 2006).

Several key conclusions can be drawn from this research. First, Black students have a strong feeling of being treated differently because of their cultural background, race, different beliefs and values that are not consistent with the dominant White culture in their school setting. Secondly, increased efforts are in great need to reverse stereotypes White teachers have of Black students. White teachers need to become more culturally aware and sensitive to the needs of their Black students. Lastly, professional development workshops are needed that will aid White teachers in their understanding of a different culture than their own. Nonetheless, none of the finds of this study support the notion of color-blindness. In fact, they serve as a stark warning of the negative impacts inflicted on Black students when teachers do not acknowledge their own bias and subscribe to the fallacy of color-blind racial ideology, which leads to a deficit mindset and fosters low academic achievement.

Color-Blind Racial Ideology.

This section is presented as an introduction to color-blind racial ideology and is presented to demonstrate how it has been implemented in k-12 education.

Although its implementation is well documented, it is important to recognize the limitations and critiques of this framework. Racism is difficult to address or cure: color-blindness or “Formal” conceptions of equality, Insist on treatment that is the same across the board. Thus only has the ability to address blatantly obvious forms of discrimination. The CBRI framework consists of two interrelated dimensions, color-evasion, and power-evasion. Color-evasion, as a color-blind strategy, focuses on the idea that “we are all the same” and consequently “do not see race” as a way to claim “we are not racist” using a race-neutral perspective. They argue; this strategy does not reduce racism because it merely ignores the reality of racism. Rather, color evasion can enhance and perpetuate racism.

Over the last 20 years, the American Psychological Association (APA) published a pamphlet (1997) and a report (Task Force on Preventing Discrimination and Promoting Diversity, 2012) which emphasized, contrary to dominant color-blind beliefs in psychology, that Race Does Matter and encouraged psychologists to learn about race and racial discrimination. The second dimension, power-evasion, minimizes the role that power relationships have on racial disparities. Neville et al. (2013) list three different types of power-evasion that characterize CBRI, including “the denial, minimization, and/or distortion of (a) blatant forms of racism..., (b) institutional racism..., and (c) racial privilege...” (p. 458) For example, individuals who state (a) “In this day and age, racism does not matter anymore”, (b) “affirmative action unfairly advantages People of Color”, Color-Blind Racial Ideology (Racial Privilege, Institutional

Discrimination, Blatant Racial Issues) Emotion Regulation/ Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Inflexibility (Stigmatizing Thoughts about Race). Conceptual model of the relationship between color-blind racial ideology, emotion regulation/difficulties with emotion regulation, and inflexibility with stigmatizing thoughts about race. Difficulties with emotion regulation serve as a mediator and moderator for color-blind racial ideology and inflexibility. J.T. DeCuir-Gunby, et al. Contemporary Educational Psychology 60 (2020) 101836 2 and (c) “people do not receive an unfair amount of advantage because they are White”, reflects the ways individuals espouse the three types of power-evasion, respectively. Individuals using a power-evasion strategy believe everyone has equal opportunities to succeed and if a Person of Color does not succeed, then it’s that person’s fault.

One of the first claims on color blindness grants that whites have a tendency to endorse color blindness more often than individuals of color, the article cites (Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000) in support of this claim. This is attributed to the ego-protective features embedded in the model's constructs. This allows members groups, associated with the perpetrating of racism the ability to maintain a self-image tied to egalitarianism and just cause to believe they are in fact non-prejudiced and self-present as such. Because color blindness has the ability to be sculpted as egalitarian it is often used to negate the occurrence of racism. According to schofiel (1986), a case study of a newly integrated middle school that embraced color blindness as an institutional value with the intention of reducing cultural bias and engineering as a welcoming

environment for Black students. Although many teachers stated they did not know the number of Black and white students on their roster, there was ample evidence that teachers practiced discrimination associated with harsher punishments, altering class elections in favor of white male students, and grading practices.

The establishment of a color-blind culture, however, serves to remove the option for racism being the root cause and therefore removes the opportunity to address it. The article also highlights that literature puts forward that another consequence of color-blindness is that people often are often less sensitive to racism and subsequently are less attuned to the unique realities of minorities. (Neville et al., 2000). This led to an unwillingness to adopt the pedagogy of teachers to the needs of the ethnic minority students they served in many cases (Hachfeld, Hahn, Schroeder, Anders, & Kunter, 2015). Another implication was that there was a connection between the color-blind racial dispositions and increased adoption of inclusive teaching practices by educators (Aragón, Dovidio, & Gram, 2017), and increased apathy towards racism (Tynes & Markoe, 2010). This was often accompanied by an unwillingness to support diversity efforts aimed at the reduction of discrimination (Awad, Cokley, & Ravitch, 2006).

According to (Purdie-Vaughns, 2002; Plaut et al. Steele, Davies, Dittmann, & Crosby, 2008), Color-blind messages often result in the subversion of organizational diversity efforts by fostering perceptions of and expectations for people of color that do not apply to the dominant culture. For instance, one study

found that Black professionals expressed greater distrust for institutional systems that exhibit low racial diversity after having been exposed to color-blind messages. In another study, women of color expressed lower expectations of performance and often performed worse after being subjected to color-blind conditions, whereas their White counterparts seemingly experienced more positive outcomes. Furthermore, another study demonstrated that when exposed to a color-blind message and multicultural messaging from a university, students perceived a lower level of organizational diversity and increased risk of systemic racism and discrimination in the color-blind culture (Wilton, Good, Moss-Racusin, & Sanchez, 2015).

Color-blindness in the Classroom.

Another study by L. C. Stoll examined teachers' perspectives on race and the educating of students in the K-12 system. Also explored is the way in which race is done in contemporary "color-blind" schooling environments where social location is not regarded as having any significant influence on student success (Stoll, 2014). The study collected data via observations and thorough one-on-one interviews of teachers in three settings. The study utilized three schools belonging to a school district situated in the northern part of Chicago, a predominantly Black school, a predominantly Hispanic school, and a predominantly White school. According to the study, teachers regularly implemented color-blind ideologies in order to reinforce their notions and understanding of race within education. This research was conducted over the

2010-2011 school year and utilized observations and interviews of 18 volunteer teachers. The 18 teachers work at three different elementary schools in the same district located in North Chicago. Teachers varied in gender and age, 12 of the teachers identified as women the other 6 identified as men. The average age of the teachers was 50, the oldest teacher was 61 while the youngest participant was 25 years of age. The racial makeup of the teachers was diverse and included White, Black, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Asian, and biracial. The socio-economic background of the teachers consisted of four from the upper-middle class, eight from the middle class, and six from the working class. Lastly, all-volunteer teachers worked with different grade level students and different curricular programs. Thirteen taught in general education, four taught in dual language programs, and one teacher taught special education.

Each teacher was interviewed twice, once at the outset and again following observations. Interview questions were formulated using Lorties's (1975) classic study of the teaching profession and teachers. Teachers were asked a series of questions concerning their teaching career path, philosophy, and pedagogical strategy. All formal observations were conducted in their classrooms, and had an accumulated duration of approximately 15 hours. The researcher served as a participant-observer in these settings, which granted in-depth access to record how teachers interacted with students. As well as how they interacted with colleagues, parents, and administration. This afforded additional opportunities to observe how the participants responded to the issue of

race in differing contexts. Over the course of the study, four to five days each week were spent in one or more of the schools throughout the academic year.

Following all formal observations a second semi-structured interview was conducted, where teachers were asked questions pertaining to the attitudes on educational policy in general, with an emphasis on race-based policies. The researcher stated two reasons for the selection of these schools, first personal ties as a former resident and secondly the uniqueness of the community, which is diverse in population as demonstrated by table 2. All participating teachers acknowledged that racial inequality existed and was still a significant issue, with the exception of one teacher. According to the researcher, the issues teachers faced regarding this phenomenon were (1) how to explain it, and (2) what to do to address it. The research suggested that when asked to pontificate on perspectives on race and education, often teachers subscribed to a color-blind racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). None of the teachers in the study used genetic or immutable deficiencies to defend racial inequalities, and the researcher did not expect them to give the stigma attached to this mentality post-Civil Rights era. The study demonstrated that the participants relied largely on the minimization of the racism frame, cultural racism frame, and abstract liberalism frame to reconcile witnessed racial inequality.

As stated by the researcher, the minimization of racism attempts to diminish, or possibly eliminate the significance of current racial inequities, by connecting them to factors unrelated to race (Stoll, 2014). Bonilla-Silva (2006)

illustrates this with statements such as “there is discrimination, but there are plenty of jobs out here” and “it’s better now than in the past” (29). The fallacy of cultural racism blames the ‘cultural deficiencies’ of non-Whites as the primary reason for why Blacks and Hispanics have continued to struggle with achieving social, economic, and political equivalence with Whites (Bonilla-Silva 2006). For example, that “good” parenting is a cultural matter. The logic of abstract liberalism asserts that no group should be singled out for ‘special treatment. This leads to teachers appropriating this flawed logic when discussing multiculturalism as a method for addressing racial equality. According to the research, Whites tend to utilize abstract liberalism (Bonilla-Silva 2006) to rationalize their object to policies implemented to rectify racial inequalities like affirmative action when such policies are seen as ‘privileging’ certain (non-White) groups over other (White) groups.

Anti-Racism in Schools.

According to Mica Pollock (2008), there are four foundational principles for doing anti-racism in schooling: (1) rejecting false notions of human difference; (2) acknowledging lived experiences shaped along racial lines; (3) learning from diverse forms of knowledge and experience; and (4) challenging systems of racial inequality (xx)” (Stoll, 2014, 701).

When asked the teachers in this study to defined anti-racism at the individual level. In short, they defined an anti-racist teacher as one who has no preconceived notion about race (someone who is not prejudiced), does not treat

their students favorably or unfavorably on the basis of race, and indeed celebrates racial diversity (someone who supports multiculturalism), and consciously attempts to create an environment for their students that is not bound by race (the essence of the color-blind classroom) (Stoll, 2014). In essence, the respondents mirrored Pollack's criteria with the exception of the last principle which is not surprising considering the current color-blind and post-racial political era.

The teachers in this study heavily depended on color-blind racism as a frame to explain their understandings of race and schooling. The study determined that teachers should be held accountable at the individual level when they behave in and comment in ways that exacerbate racial injustice. However, the study highlights the price some teachers pay for challenging the color-blind ideologies and informal policies such as multiculturalism being carried out at the district level. In particular non-tenured teachers have the greatest liability when they challenge the social equality maxim of the institution.

Stoll took issue with the educational system's ability to alleviate institutional racism on a macro-level, however, she concluded that addressing inequalities in education is an important step in working towards change in other social institutions, given the fact that progressive comprehensive change will require addressing more than one social institution. Furthermore, Stoll, found that active recruitment and retention of "anti-racist" teachers would increase the probability of social justice advocacy in education. The researcher specified that

anti-racist did not inherently mean teachers of color, as they are also subject to relying on color-blind racism frames (Bonilla-Silva 2006) and the tools of Whiteness (Picower 2009).

Stoll suggested future research to explore what attracts and repels anti-racist individuals from pursuing careers as educators. In addition, Stoll suggested research focused on how to best retain anti-racist teachers once they enter the classrooms. "Focusing on the recruitment and retention of anti-racist teachers may be the key to building a coalition of educators who will work to problematize the social equality maxim and question the efficacy of color-blind classrooms" (Stoll, 2014, 703).

Color-Evasive Ideology.

In recent years in research there has been an increasing push among scholars to move away for the term Color Blindness. Which some feel does not accurately demonstrate the willful intent associated with evading a subject. For instance, Annamma (2017) states Color blindness should instead be labeled "color evasiveness" to more accurately reflect that people are simply avoiding substantive discussion or acknowledgment of race. Since the historic case of *Plessy vs. Fergusson* scholars on both sides of the political aisle have subscribed to the racial ideology of color-blindness. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas was one such proponent according to Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, (2017). As a sign of his deep commitment to this doctrine in 1995, Thomas wrote: "As far as the Constitution is concerned, it is irrelevant whether a

government's racial classifications are drawn by those who wish to oppress a race or by those who have a sincere desire to help those thought to be disadvantaged. In each instance, it is racial discrimination, plain and simple". *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña*, 515 U.S. 200, 240–1 (1995) (Thomas, J., concurring).

In alignment with Justice Thomas's ideology Wells' (2014) critique of educational policy and reformation elicited similarities between law and the subscription to colorblind racial ideology within U.S. education. Which he believed amalgamated acknowledging race in a classroom with actually being racist, as a result, many educators adopted a stance that refused to see race as morally and ethically superior (Rogers and Christian 2007). Nonetheless, the researchers in this article point out that educational outcomes in the United States contradict such thinking, in fact as a result of the examination of facts it is clear on many levels that race does matter and has implications for achievement, discipline, and special education classification (Annamma, Morrison, and Jackson 2014; Berlak 2001; Fabelo et al. 2011). Or as Ladson-Billings (2006) puts it, educational debt as a result of racialized factors cannot be denied. Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, (2017).

This article was a critical review of Gotanda's 1991 seminal law review that conceptualized and critiqued the notion of color-blind racial ideology as to reinforce white supremacy. Gotanda argued that color-blind racial ideology actually did more to preserve White supremacy by maintaining the social,

economic, and political privileges whites in this country possess. The purpose of Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, (2017) is to explore Gotanda's (1991) critique of Color-Blind racial Ideology, examine the expansion of Gotanda's theoretical work within the legal and educational literature, and further his perspective on color-blind racial ideology into the concept of color evasiveness. In his seminal law review Gotanda (1991) posited that the use of color-blind constitutionalism by the U.S. Supreme Court "Our Constitution is color-blind", actually incites White racial domination (2), and through his analysis of multiple cases, Gotanda determined that under the umbrella of public-private distinction. Public officials are guided by the idea that race is not to be considered in the execution of their state powers.

According to Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, (2017) Gotanda recognized that non-recognition of race, a theme that addresses that race can be noticed but not considered, which Gotanda perceived as an inherent self-contradiction or dialectical logic: meaning to intentionally avoid consideration, insist that you first consider that which you seek to avoid by default, Gotanda (1991). Gotanda went on to note that attempts to see race classification as an objective issue confuses the matter and fail to acknowledge that race as a social construct has created unequal status between Blacks and Whites and the real social conditions underlying litigation or other constitutional dispute (7). Finally, Gotanda emphasized the problem presented by the adoption of a colorblind narrative within American Society. Noting that it is extremely problematic that "Under the color-blind constitutional model, the prescription for racial problems in American

society is for the government to adopt a position of “never” considering race’ (Gotanda 1991, 7). Gotanda concluded that the U.S. The Supreme Court should renounce any application of the current color-blind ideology in a similar fashion as its adopted policy of ignoring religion.

Color-Evasiveness Ideology in Education.

In the field of education Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) expounded on Gontanda’s Theoretical framework and critical examination of a color-blind racial ideology by identifying how it had infiltrated the educational institution as a whole. Critical race theorists recognized that as a result of color-blind racial ideology’s insistence on treating everyone the same regardless of race, culture, or lived experiences only the most flagrant forms of discrimination’ are produced (Delgado and Stefancic 2001, 8). Using a CRT analysis education scholars argued that ‘The guise of color-blindness, fairness, and equality is lifted to reveal the biased nature of the policy’ (Valles and Villalpando 2013, 264), in educational research and teacher education disquisition. In support of this claim Dixon & Rousseau (2005) found that teachers who adopt a color-blind ideology struggle to engage in self-reflection in relation to racism in their personal classrooms.

As a result of their critical analysis of color-blind racial ideology, the authors came to the conclusion that the conceptualization of the refusal to see race as color-blindness limits the options for disrupting and dismantling the ideology (S. Annamma, D. Jackson & D.Morrison, 2017). Therefore they used the following question to explore the legal studies and related educational

literature, “How do theoretical expansions of color-blind racial ideology afford and constrain those working to disrupt white supremacy?”

As a framework for this process they were guided by these practices and procedures:

1. Reviewed expansive notions of color-blind ideology in law and education to understand the foundational importance of Gotanda’s critique.
2. Introduced a Dis/ability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) framework (Annamma, Connor, and Ferri 2013b) in order to recognize and address the inherent limitations of color-blindness to describe a racial ideology wherein the recognition of racial realities is viewed as negative.
3. Expanded a color-blind racial ideology to color-evasiveness in order to capture ways that the ideology of refusing to acknowledge race functions in society more accurately (S. Annamma, D. Jackson & D.Morrison, 2017).

The goal of this article was not to examine every product that utilized Gotanda’s definition of color-blindness but to examine only works that expounded upon Gontanda’s (1991) argument. As a result, articles that failed to further Gotanda’s work were excluded from the process. For example, articles that (1) referenced color-blindness as a tenet of Critical Race Theory or racial ideology (Cooper 2009; Han 2006); (2) discussed color-blindness but did not build on Gotanda’s work; or (3) applied analysis of color-blindness in law or education (e.g., curriculum, teaching, and/or discourse) using qualitative or quantitative

measures with no theoretical expansion (Briscoe 2014; Niemonen 2007) were excluded from examination in this study.

As a component of the process, two areas were explored, the first of which was legal studies because the law was where Gotanda's works were first published. The three primary legal research tools were used in order to complete this search, West Law, Lexus Nexu, and Hein Online. The search yielded 97 articles, utilizing the key terms colorblind, critique, and critical, also used was the phrase 'critique of color blindness'. Secondly, the researchers explored education and its adoption of color-blindness. They used the ERIC database because it is frequently used as a research tool in the field of education. Their search began by using the same phrase applied to the legal study 'critique of color blindness' but found the results therein to be too narrow. Further exploration led to the altering of the term critique, which was switched to analysis. This yielded a broader range of articles for review; a net total of 98 articles were produced by this search, for a grand total of 195 articles compiled. Researchers limited the results to articles between 1991 and 2015 and rationalized that because Gontanda's seminal work was produced in 1991, any prior works would not have theoretically expounded on his work.

Omitted were book reviews, books, and dissertations due to inconsistencies found within peer-review status. Lastly, the researchers reviewed the remaining papers and excluded any work that exclusively referenced or cited color-blindness but neglected to expand on Gotanda's

theoretical work. The addition of these parameters rendered a net total of 13 articles, 12 on law which were all subsequently reviewed during the study. For the purpose of this study educational results were most relevant, according to Annamma, Jackson & Morrison, (2017) scholarly research found that 'In effect, educational practices that appropriate "colorblind" ideologies are not color-blind at all – these strategies of erasure are simultaneous practices of whiteness' (Rios, López, and Morrell 2014, 3).

In addition Annamma, Jackson & Morrison, (2017) highlighted the fact that Williams and Land (2006), summarized that standardized tests being utilized served to reinforce a culture of white supremacy, through its positioning of students of color as inferior. This, according to them, reproduced racism through what they termed differential access to "post-educational opportunities". This was viewed as a direct result of the educational institution's adoption and implementation of a color-blind racial ideology framework. Ultimately, both legal and education scholars began to implement and further Gotanda's concepts and critiques of color-blindness in their fields. This provided an ability to demonstrate the various ways in which communities, people, and students of color have had positive outcomes limited by some legal and educational policies and practices (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). However, in course of a thorough review of the literature researchers identified a problematic issue. They concluded that the term color-blindness in many cases actually limited the authors of the selected articles.

The authors of the research article utilized Critical Race Theory and Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory in Education as the framework for their interrogation of color-blind racial ideology. The authors rationalized that because CRT has no singular list of canonical categories, it was more appropriate to address this topic with an intersectional concept combining CRT with DisCRT (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). The creation of CRT is derived from Critical Legal Studies, in its infancy stages, scholars applied class analysis to law but excluded engagement with race (Crenshaw et al. 1995). Following the exponential development of CRT in the field of law (Bell 1976; Crenshaw 1989; Delgado 1987; Matsuda 1987), CRT was applied to education (Landson-Billings and Tate 1995).

As a result, CRT provided a tool for addressing specific issues faced by particular groups through branches such as LatCrit (Solorzano and Bernal 2001; Villapando 2003), interrogating whiteness within the system of white supremacy (Gillborn 2005; Leonard 2004; Matias 2013), and the centrality of race and racism in education (Dixson 2006; Lynn 1999; Parker 1998; Stovall 2004). Seemingly CRT is responsible for the development of various branches that address the multiple ways racism has infiltrated society.

Additionally, DisCrit, elaborates on “the legacy of historical beliefs about race and ability, which were clearly based on white supremacy, and how they have become intertwined in complex ways that carry into the present day” (Annamma, Connor, and Ferri 2013b, 2). As such, it recognizes how the process

of normalizing racism and ableism has positioned unwanted bodies outside the category of desirable which provides justification for the exclusion, segregation, and termination of individuals who fall into this category. The authors argued that because racism and ableism are normalizing processes that are viewed as interdependent, bodies that fall outside of the norm are classified as undesirable, which results in them being seen as abnormal and thus being labeled as deficits. Consequently, once labeled a justification for exclusion, and remediation of individuals falling into this category is assumed and the only way to oppose this master narrative is to provide space for the counter-narratives of the oppressed (S. Annamma, D. Jackson & D.Morrison, 2017).

Furthermore, according to S. Annamma, D. Jackson & D.Morrison (2017) DisCrit recognizes that racism and ableism shape the ideology of colorblindness by positioning differences as abnormal, instead of insisting that different bodies need to be corrected. In opposition to the belief that differences are deficits, DisCrit elects to see the strength embedded in those differences. In the past scholars have used a metaphor to describe a dis/ability as a disadvantage. For instance, crippling racism, deaf to the issue of social justice, and shortsighted on racial issues. But this negates the fact that those who have disabilities also experience racism, which makes these metaphors extremely problematic. Because deaf people of color can still be called racial epithets, and those with sight issues can still understand complex racial issues, the use of such metaphors does not accurately reflect the intentional refusal to acknowledge race

(Watts and Ereveles 2004). As a result, the authors of this article summarized that it was more feasible to utilize the term color-evasiveness, which resists the labeling of individuals with disabilities as problematic and removes dis/ability as a metaphor for undesired (S. Annamma, D. Jackson & D.Morrison, 2017).

S. Annamma, D. Jackson & D.Morrison (2017) stated that racial ideology actually conflates disabilities with ignorance, which does not equate because blindness offers blind people a unique way to experience the world that is not accessible to the sighted. As a result, Discrit discourages the positioning of blind people at a deficit (Annamma, Connor, and Ferri 2013b). S. Annamma, D. Jackson & D.Morrison (2017) further expounded that by identifying racial ideology as color-blindness, critical scholars of race and racism were actually perpetuating what Gotanda (1991) opposed, non-recognition, and that when CRT and other scholars utilize such metaphors for dis/ability, it illustrates a deep lack of understanding as to social constructs of ability and disability (May and Ferri 2005). This according to the authors was guided by a narrow understanding of blindness by sighted people, blindness is seen as something that one is afflicted with or victim to and this implies passivity. That passivity disregards the assertiveness of white supremacy and whiteness to intentionally and actively evade discussions on race, which maintain white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

Furthermore, the use of the term blindness implies that the problem of color-blindness positions the problem and the power to overcome it at the will of

the individual, eradicating racism is a simple matter of ignoring race (Gontanda 1991). Basically, the racial ideology of color-blindness is that if race is ignored then everyone will be treated fairly. Obsaogie (2010) also argued labeling the refusal to see color as color-blindness under the banner of racial ideology, implies that racism is derived only through sight and can be eradicated through sightlessness. Nonetheless, racism is multimodal and is informed by visual, graphic text, speech, and audio (Lopez 2015).

As noted by expansions of Gotanda (1991) the racial ideology of color-blindness is historical and racism has been built into the framework of the country. Tyack (1973) extrapolated this in his use of such examples as black being considered three-fifths of a man and native people being considered fodder. The authors of this article highlighted the belief that people of color are perpetually fighting the erasure of their lived experiences as stated by Gontanda (1991). As a result, they noted that the use of the term color-blindness would mean one would have to fail to see race in their everyday life (S. Annamma, D. Jackson & D.Morrison, 2017). Leading them to conclude that expanding color-blindness to color evasiveness performs the important function of contrasting color-blindness which has very important implications. One such implication is that it not only updates our language but also provides an opportunity to expose (un) spoken norms that are situated within the racial ideology of color-blindness. Thus according to S. Annamma, D. Jackson & D.Morrison (2017), the expansion of Gotanda's racial ideology to color-evasiveness using an intersectional

framework, enables the addressment of current views on race through a color-blind lens by dismantling hidden norms and providing more productive racial ideological dimensions in conjunction with the conjunctuary study of the manifestations of race and racism by unpacking implications.

In conclusion, S. Annamma, D. Jackson & D. Morrison (2017) found that it was clear that color-blind racial ideology was constructed inside the framework of white supremacy and its (un) spoken norms and that it is a form of racial jujitsu. They determined that the term color-blindness actually co-opts the morality of the civil rights movement and subsequently has the ability to simultaneously defend structural racism and attack racial remediation. In their study S. Annamma, D. Jackson & D. Morrison (2017) attempted to address the importance of Gotanda's seminal critique of the racial ideology of color-blindness and the embedded limitations of that label within the fight for racial equality. The authors began by first establishing an understanding that racism and ablism are mutually constitutive and then using DisCrit to acknowledge Gotanda's examination of color-blindness as a racial ideology. In doing so they found that through the refusal to recognize race, racism, and the material realities they create in society, the culture of white supremacy is reinforced (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri 2013b; Delgado and Stefancic 2001; Erevelles 2011). Next, they explored the manner by which color-blind racial ideology supported and fosters racism throughout American society through institutions such as law and education. Resulting in the exposure of the normalization that can occur through racism and ableism and

the distinguishing of how discussions and literature on the subject can be advanced when analyzing intersectionality within education and other fields of study. Lastly, they suggested an expansion and more nuanced understanding of the racial ideology of refusing to address race as color-evasiveness (Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, 2017).

The article, *The pursuit of Justice: Moving Past Color-Evasive Efforts*, focuses on efforts in the U.S. public school system to improve and expand equity, but instead of disrupting the status quo, have actually done more harm than good. This article was grounded in Critical Race Theory, and its key tenets of racial realism (Bell, 1992). Which is that racism and race are permanent ever-present fixtures in American society, especially when left unnamed. The Authors posited that these efforts have been variable and unsafe in their attempts to dissuade racist systems, even more so when educators purposely evade the role of race and racism, or consciously obscure or refuse to acknowledge the constructs of race and racism which have been well documented by Milner (2010, 2012). The article examines the expansion of Colorblind Racial Ideology into the framework of Color-evasiveness, the researchers point to Annamma et al. (2017) who challenged critical theorists to expand upon the tenets of colorblindness and advocated for the framework of color-evasiveness. Annamma (2017) expanded Gotanda's (1991) critical analysis of Colorblindness, where he points to implied ableism and the passiveness that the term color-blindness conveys.

For example, Wells (2014), analyzed NO Child Left Behind (NCLB) as an example of colorblindness, by addressing racial disparities by ignoring racial inequality and then lamenting glaring racial inequities in educational outcomes (p.1). Because of this Color-evasiveness has been used as an expansion of Color-Blindness, one that acknowledges that to avoid talking about race is a way to intentionally ignore the racial experiences of people of color, and make the aim of erasure fully apparent. The authors stated that the term “evade” is an example of an intentional effort to avoid and obliterate, which directly questions the assumed goodness of intentionally ignoring race. In other words, evasion is about avoidance or escape, not about confronting issues of race. One particular volume pushed back on patterns in education to evade discussion and critical examination of race and racism. The article posited that when race is overlooked in the design and/or implementation of educational equity efforts, these efforts may be more than ineffective (Simona, Goldin & Debi Khasnabis, 2022), and this can happen regardless of the intended or stated goal of promoting equity within education.

Critical Race Theory Framework.

The movement known as critical race theory is the most appropriate theoretical framework for this study and is a collection of authors, scholars, and activists who engage in studying and transforming the relationship between race racism and power in society. The movement accesses the same issues tackled by civil rights and ethnic studies discussions of the past but places them within a

wider construct which includes history, setting, economics, group and self-interest, emotions, and the unconscious. In opposition to traditional civil rights discourses, critical race theory questions the liberal order equality theory, legal reasoning, enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law. Whereas past civil rights scholars have primarily focused on incrementalism and step-by-step progress (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Essential to the constructs of critical race theory (CRT) is the concept that racism is an ordinary, normal, and aberrational part of American society (Bell, 1987; 1993; 1995; Berry & Stovall, 2013). The naturalization of racism leads to the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others, and thus perpetuates the belief in the right to dominance, manifest, is implied, and is seen in many circumstances, experiences, and instances of past and present forms of oppression (Lorde, 1984, p.124).

Berry and Stovall (2013) analyzed the death of Travon Martin as a recent example of how the right of dominance over young Black males manifests in the actions and views of members of the dominant culture. They argued that the actions of George Zimmerman signaled a feeling of empowerment, so that his right to stand his ground in the presence of a perceived threat, irrational or not, outweighed any rights Travon held to life. Similar to his decisions are the countless decisions of police officers and citizens to shoot out of a presumed “fear for their life”, illustrating a clear picture of the “right to dominance” which ultimately leads to a disregard of Black life supported by law. Namely, in Florida

and other states stand your ground laws that continue to be the basis for a defense in controversial killings of Black males. According to research Whites who killed Blacks were 354% less likely to be found guilty of a crime when they utilized deadly force, as opposed to the fact that Blacks who used deadly force upon Whites were only 54% likely to be seen as justified in their actions (Roman & Downey, 2012). These and laws like these exemplify how embedded and prevalent racism is within American society.

According to critical race theorist and legal scholar Derrick Bell, abstract principles lead to results that harm Blacks and perpetuate their inferior status. Racism provides a basis for a judge to select one available premise rather than another when incompatible claims arise” (Bell, 1992, p.369). As a theoretical framework Critical Race Theory, which posits that “race and racism are defining characteristics in American society and that these two elements are embedded in the structures, practices, and discourses of American education (Solórzano, 2005).”

Critical Race Theory in Education Basic Tenants.

The Centrality and Intersectionality of Race and Racism. Racism is normal and not aberrational, i.e. it is a part of the everyday nature of the way America does business. It is embedded in every facet of life and thus is part of the common experience of individuals of color living in the United States (Russell, 1992).

The challenge to dominant ideology. A system of white over color ascendancy serves an important purpose for the dominant group. This feature sometimes called “interest convergence” or “Material Determination” is basically the idea that because the system advances the interest of both white elites and working-class whites, they have little incentive to eradicate it (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xix).

The commitment to social justice. The concept called, “social construction” is the belief that race and races are products of social thought and relations. Furthermore that they are not objective, inherent, or fixed, and it corresponds to no biological or genetic reality. But rather races are categorized by society when it is convenient, as such CRT enforces a commitment to the elimination of all forms of subordination of people (Matsuda, 1991; Wing, 1997).

The centrality of experiential knowledge. This holds that because of the unique experiences and histories with oppression, Blacks, Latino, Asians, and American Indian educators are critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education. Indeed, critical race theory views this knowledge as a strength and draws explicitly on the person of color’s lived experiences through such methods as storytelling, family history, biographies, scenarios, parables, cuentos, chronicles, and narratives (Bell, 1987; Carrasco, 1996; Delgado, 1989, 1995a, b, 1996; Olivas, 1990).

The interdisciplinary perspective. This CRT tenet asks that race and racism be presented in both a contemporary and historical context using

interdisciplinary techniques, challenging historical inaccuracies and the unidisciplinary focuses of most analyses (Delgado, 1984, 1992; Garcia, 1995; Harris, 1994 ; Olivas, 1990).

Summary

The history of racism in American society is deep rooted and has long standing social structural divides that are apparent in every aspect of American life, including k-12 public education. Previous research has focused on racism in the classroom, and its effects on teachers, pedagogy, and the disparaging ramifications for students of color. However, this does little to address the shift towards a color-evasive racist attitude embedded in modern racism. The literature presented in this study details the impact of color-evasive mentalities on African American males. Literature reviewed indicated that racial conditions, color-evasive attitudes, and implicit biases significantly impede the academic achievement of Black males through exclusionary disciplinary practices, deficit thinking, and gaps in opportunities. When viewed through lens of critical race theory and its tenants these impediments illustrate barriers to a positive educational experience that is unique to African American males. It is my intention to provide a space for the voices of these students to be highlighted in the findings chapter, through focused interviews that testify of their experience in K-12 education with regard to the racial climate at their schools, teacher's attitudes towards race, how teachers address race, disciplinary practices, and if they felt recognized.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Methodology

In this chapter, I will elaborate on my research methodology. I begin with an outline and justification of my research design. Next, I will provide context regarding the research setting, research sample, data collection methods, data analysis process, and my approach to ensure I establish validity and reliability in the research process. Additionally, I present a positionality statement that provides insight into my personal and professional roles in doing this work. In the next section, I begin with an overview of the research design.

Research Design

This study attempts to better understand the impact that color-evasiveness ideologies and practice have on African American males as they matriculate through the K-12 school system. As such, I selected a qualitative design for my study, as I conducted semi-structured interviews through the use of open-ended questions with 10 African-American males at one school site located in a school district situated in Southern California. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) defined qualitative methods as to “detail all of what goes on in a particular activity or situation rather than on comparing the effects of a particular treatment” (p. 430). Because my interest is situated in understanding the perceptions of

African American male students with Color Blindness/Color Evasiveness as benign racism and the implications on the achievement for Black Male K-12 students, a qualitative research method was determined to be the most appropriate for this study.

A qualitative approach can be used in multiple ways according to Frankel & Wallen (2006). One manner is the use of phenomenology to deal with reactions and perceptions of certain situations and phenomena. As illustrated by As Yüksel and Yildirim (2015), "The general purpose of the phenomenological study is to understand and describe a specific phenomenon in-depth and reach at the essence of participants' lived experience of the phenomenon" (p. 3). For instance, in this study, the approach consisted of speaking with Black male students about their experience with racism and color-evasiveness attitudes and their perceptions of their teacher's actions towards addressing racism in the classroom. Individual semi-structured interviews were selected to be the most appropriate vehicle for conducting a phenomenological study. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), interviews serve three purposes for researchers: description of personal experiences, and reflection on and sharing of personal thoughts about their experiences.

The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to test hypotheses, and not to "evaluate" as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning

they make of that experience... At the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals' stories because they are of worth (p 9).

For this study, I asked participants to share their experiences with color-evasive teachers and the discussion of race and racism in the classrooms. Through individual interviews with each student, it afforded me with the opportunity to get to know each participant in ways that are relevant to the study and provide them with the space to share openly. These interviews are beneficial in two primary ways. First, participants can benefit from the research and allowed for the sharing of experiences, and granted insight into the impact these experiences have on students. Second, they afford each participant the opportunity to reflect on how these experiences may have shaped their views and achievement in school, giving them a chance to acknowledge the trauma they may be struggling with. McVee (2004) wrote, "... individuals can be transformed by stories... stories can be a means for teachers to express beliefs about theory, practice, and curriculum" (p. 881).

Research Setting

The study was conducted in Southern California region, each participant is a former student of the same high school from a large district situated approximately 60 miles east of the Los Angeles. Nearly 22, 200 students enrolled across the district qualify for free or reduced lunch (88.5%). The district serves roughly 25, 066 students, and has an African American population of approximately 2,080 (8.3%) students. Each student spent all four years in

attendance at one of the district's 3 comprehensive high schools. The target population of the study is African American males who reside within close proximity each other and attended the same secondary high school. The former students selected attended a school with a population of approximately 2,300 students, with an African American population of roughly 227 (9.6%) in attendance. Of the 227 African American students 101 identify as male and 126 self-identify as female. Of those in enrolled in the overall population 2,161 (91.6%) qualify for free or reduced lunch. No other concerning bodies will be included as study population (CA DEPT of Education/ Dataquest, 2022).

Research Sample

In order to conduct this research with fidelity, I established clear criteria in the selection of participants. Because the study focused on African American male students' perceptions and experiences of color-evasive teachers in the classroom, I only recruited Black males for this study. Next, the males needed to be within a five-year window post-graduation, so that their experiences were recent enough to recall accurate information and give more authentic responses. The participants also had to be at least 18 years of age or older, as this will allow post-graduate students to reflect on their K-12 educational experiences. Finally, I interviewed participants who attended a school situated in a district with 80% of its students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, which are indicators for institutions that enroll and serve low-income student and working-class families (CA DEPT of Education/ Dataquest, 2022).

I purposely recruited 10 African American males by different means; purposive in that all the participants need to have graduated no more than five years ago, they had to have graduated on time, or no more than 1 year past their original graduation date, and they had to have had at least one White teacher in high school. According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2015), purposive sampling is utilized in qualitative research when the researcher knows what qualifications their participants need to possess. In this research, the recent K-12 graduate students I recruited all met the criteria discussed and were willing to share their unique experiences as African American students.

Description of the Participants

Ten African American male former students of a district situated in southern California approximately 1 hour east of Los Angeles were interviewed. Of the ten participants six were currently enrolled in some form of higher education. Four were attending a two year community college, and two were attending a four year college in Arizona. Three of the remaining four participants are currently employed but not enrolled in any educational program. The last participant was neither employed nor in school. For the protection of the participants pseudonyms were used instead of actual names. All participants with the exception of one were 18 years of age and had graduated just one year prior at the time of the interview, the only exception was 19 and finished school two years prior. In the next section, I present a profile of each of the participants.

Chris was 18 and stated that he was currently enrolled in fall classes at a local community college and is playing football. He hopes that this will lead him to a scholarship at a division 1 university. He is living at home, as he focuses much of his attention on his sport. He was a member of his high school football team but not heavily recruited. He is not currently employed because he feels the demands of his schedule would not allow for it.

Lawrence, 18, is currently attending a 4 year private college and is majoring in business administration. His plan is to move into international business after he graduates. He is commuting to school and was not employed at the time of the study. Lawrence currently lives at home with his mother and would like to move out one day on his own.

Mike, an 18 year old post graduate, stated he was hoping to join the armed forces but was having a hard time passing the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) exam. He is living at home and working full time, but was not happy with his current salary.

Desmond was currently working at a local fast food restaurant and is hoping to eventually save up to purchase his first car. As for now he is being driven to work by his mother. He is living at home with family and has no plans to enroll in any form of post-secondary education.

Tyler was the only participant who was neither working nor pursuing any formal post-secondary education. He is currently looking for a job and trying to figure out what his next move will be. He was living at home and did not have a source of

transportation. Tyler truthfully admitted that he is receiving some pressure from family to get a job but wants to do something he loves and is struggling to find a sense of direction.

John is attending a 4 year private university in Arizona. He was unsure as to what exactly he would like to major in. He is living off campus with his girlfriend, who enrolled in the same school. He would like to work in a field that allows him to give back but has no plans to return to California.

Harold stated that he was working and going to school, he was attending a Junior college at the time of the interview. He was the only 19 year old participant. Harold expressed how hard it was to make ends meet as an adult. His hopes are to pursue a successful career in football. He is not currently being recruited by any major colleges. Harold lives at home now but wants to move out on his own soon.

Stanley, an 18 year old participant, was working as a freelance videographer. He shoots videos all over the Southern California. He was also enrolled in a community college and hopes to pursue a film degree. He is dedicated and his face lit up when asked what he was currently doing. Stanley was living at home but did have reliable transportation to and from school.

Raymond was currently working although he did not want to state where. According to Raymond he is living at home but would like to start attending a junior college. Although he would like to attend a junior college Raymond is not

sure exactly how to start that process and is still working through the logistics of transportation and enrollment.

Tony is 18 years old and was attending a junior college. He stated that he was in school for now but only part time, limiting his classes. He made it clear that this is more of a trial to see how he likes it. He said far it has been okay, it's definitely different from high school. He was living at home with his mother and was excited about the possibility of moving out although he was not sure exactly how that was going to happen.

Data Collection.

This qualitative study was conducted during the 2022-23 academic year. This study was run remotely online and utilize the online Zoom Communications platform to orchestrate one on one interview with each participant. After defending my dissertation proposal, I submitted all documents to receive approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). Once IRB approved the study, I began data collection efforts in the fall semester. I purposely recruited 10 African American male former K-12 students who graduated from a local public school district situated in a large urban area in Southern California. All interviews with participants lasted approximately 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in various location and via Zoom communication. This afforded participants the ability to remain in locations that provided the most comfortability.

During the interview, I asked each participant a range of questions that gave me insight into their perception of racial experiences, their teacher's response to racism, and how their teachers addressed race and racism in the classroom (see Appendix A). My hope was to first understand students' personal experiences with race and racism and how they felt those experiences impacted their educational outcomes and performance in the classroom. This was necessary because I hoped they would keep these personal experiences in mind when I later asked them in the interview about their teachers' approaches to racism and disciplinary disproportionality. Furthermore, I shared with each participant how data has shown that African American students continue to fall behind their white counterparts in academic achievement (CAASP, 2019), and then I asked if they believe that racial issues contribute to this gap. In addition, I wanted to know their perspectives on why African American males experience higher rates of discipline than other ethnic groups (Milner, 2013). My rationale for this line of questioning was to see if students would perceive differences in treatment and if they would associate these differences as explanations for lack of achievement. I also wanted participants to share their perceptions of how race and racism plays a role in their educational experience holistically. Finally, I asked the participants, how has issues of race and racism in the community impacted your education and civic engagement? These questions were designed to give me insight into the educational experience of Black male students in K-12, their unique experiences with race and racism, if and how their teachers addressed it, and

how they internalized those experiences. They also allowed me to demonstrate that color-evasive teachers damage Black students when they fail to address race and racism in their classroom and acknowledge the personal biases in regard to race.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze data, I used a general inductive approach, which according to Thomas (2006) is “a systematic procedure for analyzing qualitative data in which the analysis is likely to be guided by specific evaluation objectives” (p. 238). I personally acted the sole evaluator and researcher for this study, and as such, in this role I conducted the interviews, transcribed them, coded them, and developed themes. After I received participant permission, I recorded all interviews. Interviews were then coded using manual coding and coding software (HyperRESEARCH, Version 4.01). Coding is defined by Frankel and Wallen (2006) as “The specification of categories in content analysis research.” They surmised that coding is a process of assigning relevant components of all text to categories that develop as each interview is accessed. Each recording was transcribed and entered into the selected software. A file was then created and codes were added for source material. The codes allowed me to identify and group reoccurring ideas into categories and ultimately establish clear themes from emerging patterns in participant statements. Next, I reviewed data by meticulously reading each interview transcript, and review each code that was developed, lastly, I combined and eliminated unnecessary codes. Once any

codes were eliminated major themes became apparent, which provides the structure of my findings later in chapter four.

Validity and Trustworthiness/Reliability

The overall validity of the study was determined through the randomization in selection of the 10 person sample group, and the use of the scientific method as the basic structure of the experimental design. In an effort to create internal validity the study was conducted in the most accurate and consistent collection of data. Also the possibility for external causes to the observed phenomena was examined and questioned throughout the process to establish external validity. As a researcher I fully acknowledge the use of a randomized control group can lessen the problems of external validity, it will not fully eradicate the issue all together. The study was conducted in a fashion that allows for the collection of data and the using methods that allow for the repetition of the result, which serve as the mechanism for establishing the reliability of the study. In order to establish credibility the questions ask of each participant were constructed to generate the most accurate response, allowing for the most accurate interpretation of the participants meaning. Authenticity, was garnered through the selection of 10 participants, ensuring the hearing of different voices on the same subject. A critical appraisal of all aspects of the research, including the self-critical analysis of the researcher was conducted throughout for the purpose of maintaining criticality and sustaining the integrity of the study.

Positionality of the Researcher.

The first thing I believe shapes my role as a researcher is my upbringing. I am the son of two African American parents from the south. They, although not inherently racist, held some predisposed views of the dominant culture. These beliefs were not born of choice, as much as they were born from necessity. In their minds being distrustful of white America meant safety, safety for them and their children. My father's school shut down during his senior year, as students were being bussed to the nearby white school. In compliance with newly passed legislation prohibiting the segregation of schools based on race. In response white students and parents protested, hurling insults at black students as they passed into the school. This led to altercations, between students of color and their white peers, and fault was assigned to black students predominantly. As a result, many students of color, including my father dropped out of school and never completed their senior year. My mother did not experience this but did have to survive a southern culture rich with racism and danger.

Although my parents decided to move to California, they brought with them the scars of their personal experiences. They instilled in their children a basic distrust for members of the dominant race, and out of fear for our well-being made sure their children were aware of the unspoken rules that would keep them safe. I was then raised in a majority black and Hispanic city and attended school, where among other things the threat of violence was a real concern. Gangs and tension between black and brown students were at a high, with both groups competing for limited resources. Following high school, I

enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. This was my first experience with being immersed in the dominant culture. I quickly found out that even in the military race was an issue. I was stationed in Cheyenne, Wyoming for a period of 18 months. Over the course of this stretch, I was called a series of racist epithets by my fellow Airman. I witnessed African American Airmen being kicked out unfairly and receiving dishonorable discharges disproportionately. The majority of officers making these decisions were white and conformed to some overt and covert prejudiced views even if they did not vocalize personal agreement with them.

Another personal experience that may have an impact on my research would be my work as a Correctional Officer, for the state of California. I am in the unique position of having seen both where students of color begin and where they end if they do not get the education they have a God-given the right to. In addition to all the before mentioned, I am a black man, who has experienced a plethora of overt and covert incidents that have left me feeling less than others. These experiences have been at the hands of law enforcement, professors, stores, etc. Nonetheless, I have grown a lot over my 40 years of life and have developed a number of close ties with individuals of other races. I have worked hard to reconstruct my feelings, and although not totally trusting, I am light years from where I started. However, I am aware that these roots feed the tree. It is my experiences that shape my worldview and help me analyze data. In order to be as objective as possible, I need to be keenly aware of how these experiences impact the questions I ask, who I chose as participants and my

ability to relate to the participant responses. In order to address this a self-critical analysis must be conducted throughout and a clear objective method for the construction, analyzation, and interpretation of data collected must clearly be established from the onset.

Summary

This study was an in-depth analysis of the impact of color-evasive ideologies and their conjoined practices on African American males as they matriculate through the K-12 setting. This study phenomenological in nature used a qualitative approach, which can be varied in utilization (Frankel & Walden 2006), sought to gain insight into the unique experiences of the control group with regard to Color Blindness/Color Evasiveness as benign racism and how the implementations of such ideologies impact achievement for Black males in the K-12 system. The study consisted of one on one interviews using a range of questions in order to better understand the lived racial experiences of each participant, their teacher response and addressment of race in the classroom and the impact this had on their educational experience and Achievement. The analyzation of data was conducted through an inductive approach, each interview was then coded as defined by Frankel and Wallen (2006), using a manual coding and coding software (HyperRESEARCH, Version 4.01). The study followed the basic structure of the scientific method and a random sample of 10 participants was selected in order to support validity. It was also conducted in such a manner as to allow for the repetition of results making the study

reliable. Throughout the process I engaged in self-critical analysis in order to account for any biases I may hold from personal experience.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Results

Understanding the devastating impact the adoption of color-evasive practices can have on the lived experience of African American males as they navigate through the K-12 setting aids in the establishment of a race-critical, emotionally stable, engaging educational experience that is in alignment with the belief in high expectations and academic achievement that should be central to the system of education (Mattison & Aber, 2007). Individual interviews with 10 former African-American male students were used to study the research topic. The goal of the interviews was to elicit responses from the participants to explain the phenomenon from a first-person perspective. This phenomenological inquiry revealed the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of African American males on the addressing or avoidance of race/racism in the classroom based on their own unique lived experiences. Three research questions guided this study:

1. How does the use of color-evasive ideologies impact the disengagement of African American males through the refusal to acknowledge their unique experiences?

2. What are the impacts of exclusionary racialized discipline practices employed in the classroom when teachers are insistent on color-evasive ideologies?
3. How does the purposeful avoidance of race and racism in a classroom setting impact the academic achievement of African American male students?

After collecting and analyzing data, five themes emerged in this process. These themes consist of the following: 1) avoidance of issues surrounding race and racism; 2) teachers should address racism in the classroom; 3) overuse of exclusionary discipline leads to disengagement; 4) teachers' negative perceptions of African American male students; and 5) a cultural mismatch between teachers and their African American male students. In this section, I will expand on each of the five themes as I will start with an introduction of each theme as each finding will be supported with the perspective of students. Lastly, the chapter will end with a conclusion discussing the findings in relation to the research questions and the literature and theoretical frameworks informing the study.

Avoidance of Issues Surrounding Race and Racism.

From the research results five themes emerge as significant to this study. The first theme that emerge in this study was the avoidance of issues surrounding race and racism. According to Bonilla-Silva (2006) failure to

acknowledge racism has given way to a covert form of hidden racism a “new racism” that in some ways is more difficult to eradicate than the blatant forms of the past. When teachers practice color-evasive racial methodologies they rob themselves and students of other cultures of the chance to hear and grow from the unique experiences of others. It also negates any platform African American males have to share their experience and silences their voices. During and after the collection of data, it was apparent that students were not only cognizant of their teacher's unwillingness to discuss race in the classroom, but that this led many of the participants to view their teachers as apathetic and prejudiced as a result of their observations. Students varied as to their interpretation of their teacher actions but were consistent in feeling like their teacher was no longer a trusted source of help. This was made evident in their responses during the interview, as participants were asked to reflect on issues of race and racism were addressed by teachers or educators at their school. In response, Chris, an African-American Male, stated the following:

“They really didn't address it unless they had to, like I remember we used to have like months for, like certain things we would support, or whatever, and one of them would be like to stop racism or something, but that was only like once a year.”

In his experience, Chris was not alone in his assertion that teachers have repeatedly failed to address issues of race in the class. When asked the same question Tony responded with the following, “It wasn't really. Only when we were talking about slavery in our textbooks, which we didn't really talk about much other than that, it really wasn't addressed at all.” Which highlights that not only

do student like Tony notice when teachers are avoiding conversations on race, they also notice when and under what context it is being discussed. Here, Tony notices that the only time his teachers actually addressed these issues is when they had too. This observation by Tony evolved into the rationale for distrust and feelings of alienation that were present in his later responses.

When participants were asked the same exact question, to reflect on discussions of race and racism and how they were addressed by teachers or educators in schools, John provided insight and highlighted that some teachers actually begin to “blame the victim” by insinuating his possible misinterpretation of situations might actually be the catalyst for his perceived problems. Illustrated in statements like the following shared by John:

“I think they're doing this because of my race, and every time it was like no it's not because of that well maybe they're picking on you, you know when I was like, when I was younger, it was always maybe they're picking on you, because you're short, once you got older, maybe they're picking on you because you're talking to this girl.”

This experience was not unique to John, many of the participants expressed that in some cases they went from being the person who had a problem, to the person who was the problem when confronting issues of race within a K-12 setting. John goes on to illustrate and briefly discussed the impact attempts to avoid issues of racism in the classroom had on him. As John fully stated:

“No, they just kind of gave you like a backhand compliment, and this made it seem like if I was just taking it out of proportion. But then it kind of

gets you into thinking of. Well, if you're a teacher that doesn't understand that, then how can you describe racism if you're not that color, or if you don't understand where you're coming from? So that was my huge problem with it. When I would go to someone and tell them well hell I think they're doing this because of my race, and every time it was like no it's not because of that well maybe they're picking on you, you know when I was like, when I was younger, it was always maybe they're picking on you, because you're short, once you got older, maybe they're picking on you because you're talking to this girl. But when you would show them actions and some of the things that they would call you, and they wouldn't understand it, and they would just like kind of like tell you to knock it off your shoulder and try to tell you to like push through it instead helping you. They never talked about it at all other than that you know. It kind of affects you every time you hear something, or you notice something that's like typically done in your race.”

Notice here John’s acknowledgement of the avoidance of race on the part of his teachers. He immediately answers no when responding to a question on whether his teachers address race in the classroom. Then as noted earlier expands on their use of blaming the victim, to reconcile racial matters. Another example of this according to John was that responsibility for adaptation, tolerance and understanding were placed on the shoulders of the person suffering the injustice. Which led him to call into question their ability to understand from a cultural perspective, demonstrated when he asked, “But then it kind of gets you into thinking of. Well, if you're a teacher that doesn't understand that, then how can you describe racism if you're not that color, or if you don't understand where you're coming from?”.

What became evident by the responses of each participant is not only were they aware that teachers were avoiding discussions on race. If an issue

requires addressment they themselves may actually be seen as the catalyst. This observation led many to feel isolated and unable to seek help from adult educators. In many cases teachers were no longer viewed as an ally as a result of their avoidance of any substantive discussion or racism even when warranted. Observed within this theme was the fact that participants keenly noted when race was addressed, under what circumstances it was addressed and what tactics educators used to reconcile these issues when they raised. Furthermore these observations had varying impacts from, feelings of isolation, alienation, and blame to name a few. As noted by Stoll (2014) when teachers who evade issues on race do so at the expense of their students. She points out that the use of this ideological approach leads to the minimization of racism and cultural racism. Both of which in her findings had a detrimental impact on non-White students.

Recognizing the Need for Teachers to Discuss Issues of Race and Racism in the Classroom.

A major theme that emerged in the findings is the pressing need for teachers to discuss issues of race and racism in the classroom, but should exercise caution as to how they engage in these approaches. Several researchers have emphasized in their work, the dangers of avoiding any substantive discussions on race and racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Neville, 2009). This makes it vital that educators in the classroom do their best to intentionally broker conversations on race. The benefits of doing so include personal growth

and a wider perspective that may help to dismantle biases that lead to the over use of exclusionary punishments and serve to continue the horrible cycle of the school to prison pipeline (Dutil, 2020). Interestingly, 8-out-of -10 participants noted potential benefits of addressing racism, with only two participants feeling like addressing it could do more harm than good, one participant who did not want it addressed felt like it would cause unnecessary embarrassment, although he did acknowledge others may in fact want it addressed. Lawrence was one such student, in his response to one of the interview questions focusing on how research shows that African Americans experience racism differently than other racial/ethnic groups, does he believe that teachers should address issues of race and racism in the classroom, he shared his response:

“I think, I think it may help. I know that's probably like a tough conversation for teachers to have a lot of. But that tough conversation might help address some issues that need to be addressed. So I feel like it would help. It can help definitely.”

Lawrence states, that he believes these conversations should indeed take place. Nonetheless, he was also very reflective in his assessment of the difficulty this might present to some teacher. For Lawrence however the potential benefits for students of color created a need to address that superseded any discomfort felt by a teacher. Lawrence was obviously not alone in his thinking when it came to this question, similar to Lawrence, Harold responded in the following way:

“Yeah, so basically it could make life a little bit better, basically because when you're Black, you're gonna have different experiences than everybody else will. Personally, I don't really think the teachers addressing that will help anything, because the most racism in school I seen isn't

really from student to student, it is teachers against the students. So I think it should be like addressed at like teacher to teacher meeting. Not like you to me, like a teacher meeting, at like the district, or something like this, or just among themselves, because students don't really have problems with other students with race like that.”

In his response, Harold demonstrated that he also felt that the addressing of such matters was a necessity. However, Harold also pointed to teachers being the primary source of racial issues from his personal perspective. Harold indicated, in his assessment most of his experienced racism had been from teacher to student, that the addressing of issues related to race would be best suited for meetings amongst teachers and district staff. In Harold’s case not students but teachers bared the blame for racial incidents which puts the responsibility for change and adaptation on the teacher, which is counter to the blaming the victim tactic that is often used by teachers practicing color-evasiveness.

While majority of the students responded to the pressing need of addressing issues of race and racism in the classroom, other participants highlighted the potential dangers of addressing race in a reckless manner without giving thought to the negative impacts it may have on some students was illustrated eloquently by Chris, who out of fear of embarrassment stated the following:

“Yeah, it's for sure different, I don't think it should be addressed in the classroom. I don't know, I would feel low-key embarrassed if somebody addressed me in the classroom talking about some don't be disrespectful to this kid, or whatever, just because it is race. I don't know, some people they might want it. They might want that low-key.”

Here Chris surmises that the thought of being singled out recklessly by a teacher is off putting. Noticeably he does not discount the need for discussion based on the lack of racial issues, but rather the embarrassment that he would feel to have it addressed in a public fashion. In many cases this leaves students like Chris to silently suffer feelings of racial discord and injustice. Chris here is forced to juggle between feeling embarrassed and feeling racially unsupported in the classroom. Lastly, Chris acknowledges that some may want that but for him the embarrassment of having racial incidents addressed in class out weight any potential benefits of having it addressed. In short he would rather suffer the injustice of these incidents than to have a teacher make things worse.

Participants were asked to reflect on what impact the avoidance of race had on them and their education during the interview. The participants made it clear that this approach had an adverse effect on their relationships with their teachers and subsequently led to isolation and feelings of being unsupported. For instance Tony stated:

"Yeah in a way it made me more guarded toward my teachers. If I needed help with something I probably would not be going to them for help. I mean it kind of opened my eyes like yeah they are foul too. I was just like they are not on my side and tried to avoid them or not deal with them that much ."

According to Tony the noticeable avoidance of racial issues by his teachers, caused him to not seek them in times of need. For him these teachers were no longer trusted resources, their indifference to racial incidents led him to associate them with the actual perpetrators of such incidents. This for him

resulted in avoiding any unnecessary interaction with his teachers. Which ultimately cut Tony and students like him off from the support they need in mastering content. In a similar manner John, noted the impact this approach had on his relationships with teachers but also began to extrapolate on whether or not he could have even been better had he felt more supported. John shared the following:

“Yeah, I mean it made it harder for me to just focus on school. The way they ignored what was happening to me just gave me more to handle than other people. Maybe if all I had to worry about was school maybe who knows I would have actually liked school and gotten better grades. I mean my grades were good enough to get me here but who knows maybe they could have been better and gave me more options.”

As seen by John’s statement the willfull ingnoring of racial incidents placed unnecessary pressure on him. Pressure that is not common to members of other ethnic backgrounds. John makes it clear that he was aware and spent time analyzing how his teachers addressed or ignored race in the classroom, especially when relevant issues would arise. According to John this unique experience may have had a direct impact on his abililty to focus solely on academic performance. John reflecing on his experiences, comes to the very real possibility of having gotten better grades and enjoying school had these issues been addressed in a effective manner. Likewise Lawrence stated that this approach had taken a negative toll on him while in school. He stated the following when asked to reflect on the impact the avoidance of race had on them and their education:

“I guess in a way yeah, because it made me more closed off, so I didn’t get the help other students probably got. I really didn’t go to the teachers for help because I didn’t think I could trust nobody to care about me. They may seem like they cared but then you see how they act at times and you just be like no I’m not about to go to them. Or you get that bad grade and you just know they ain’t going to help you. You know they already had they mind made up about you and they not going to help you with that. Plus you already know why they gave that grade anyway, so what’s going to them going to change. So I just focused on getting my work done myself.”

Here Lawrence states that he like John struggled to view his teachers as allies and supports in the classroom following what he deemed as the willful ignoring of racism. According to Lawrence his observations fostered detachment from seeking the help of teachers he felt were no longer trustworthy. His perceived interpretation of the teachers actions derived assumptions that his teachers were not caring, could not be trusted to help, and were bias in their assessment of his efforts leading to bad grades. As a result Lawrence here indicates succumbing to becoming closed off and thus not receiving equitable support. Lawrence ascertains the realization that going to his teachers would not server him and relegates himself to independently seeking to complete his work without the aid and support of a credentialed specialist.

Overall, it was apparent that African-American male students expressed the need for more teachers to address issues of race and racism in the classroom. Ultimately, what became apparent was the notion that not only were students aware of how educators addressed this issue but also the approach they took in addressing it had the potential to foster disengagement, resentment, and withdrawal from seeking help academically. Participants repeatedly stated

that they found it hard to utilize teachers as a resource for help when they perceived them as unwilling to address racism in the classroom.

Overuse of Exclusionary Discipline Contributes to Disengagement.

The overuse of exclusionary discipline emerged as one of the central themes of this study, the use of discipline that continues to remove student color from the classroom setting and perpetuate the achievement gap is no secret. In fact, it is well documented by many scholars and a consistent theme amongst the participants in this study. Milner (2013), pointed to the use of exclusionary practices and the overuse of those practices in his study titled: “Why are students of Color Punished More Severely and Frequently than White Students”. Unfortunately, this question remains even though there is plenty of well documented research on the detrimental impact of such practices (Gregory, Russell, ‘Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). The participants highlighted that they felt they were disciplined more often and oftentimes more severely due to how they were perceived by their teachers. Students stated that the perception of educators in the form of stereotypes led to differing punishments for similar incidents in the classroom. For instance Mike stated the following, when asked do you think you were ever disciplined more harshly than other students because of your race. He responded:

“Yes, yes, I used to let stuff slide. It could be a student talking inside the class or running around. They're not paying the other student no attention. But as soon as I say something, or get up out my seat without asking the teacher. The same thing the other Student is doing, but just because I'm a

Black student I'm doing too much. I need to sit down or I'm going to office, and that has happened a lot.”

Here, Mike points to what he perceived as a difference in the reactions of teachers towards him for committing similar infractions as other students. He clearly saw these action as an injustice but notes that the majority of time he use to not address it with the teacher. The over use of exclusionary discipline is also seen here as Mike gives the example of being sent to the office. Lastly, Mike asserts that not only was it experienced but it was experienced repeatedly. Mike went on to later acknowledge that these experiences took a negative toll on his educational experience. John in a similar fashion to Mike made note of his experiences, when he stated,

“Yes, I mean come on man. I don't even think I've had one Black principal, and many of the things that I got into wasn't handled right you know, like, yeah, most definitely, you know I had whole little case where things happened and nothing ever got handled. And you know, yeah it was so much things that should have been handled the way they were supposed to be handled and it never got handled. It just felt like because I'm a Black student, because I am Black it just felt like, well what is he gonna do or what can he do? Or what do I know, and it was just allowed you know, sometimes you just gotta let things go and that's what I learned from it, you know, dealing with the whole case. There was times where they were talking about my case to other families and trying to get me off campus, even with me not even doing anything but trying to just protect myself.

Mike described his experiences with educators in schools, as he described the lack of representation of Black administrators in schools and how often times he felt targeted and criminalized. Mike further elaborated on his experience in schools, as he shared:

I did get disciplined worse than other students because there were other students that were doing worse things. I even reported them committing sexual acts and everything, and it did not get taken to the level that I felt it was supposed to. They said that I was supposed to be the one to contact the police instead of them, but when it was the opposite way, and it was on school campus, let me make that clear, they sent the police to my house. So basically it was never taken seriously and things were handled very differently when it can to me, but you just gotta let some things go.”

Here it is obvious that Mike felt that not only was he disciplined harsher but went on to annotate noticeable differences in how similar situations were handle differently. Even to the point, where the responsibility for investigating and reporting serious violations of others was placed on him. Whereas, in his situations the matters where handled in a very different fashion.

Many of the participants also indicated feeling a sense of helplessness as a result of harsher punishments. Which participants felt left them in an unwinnable position on occasion. Lawrence pointed to this when he stated:

“For sure yeah. There are just some times when you know they wouldn’t take things this far if you were someone else. It’s hard when the teacher is the same as the other students and you know you can’t win in that situation. So yeah, you know you about to get the worse end of the stick.”

Lawrence’s statement clearly express a feeling of favoritism imposed by teachers who identify as a member of the same ethnic group of other students. Unfortunately, from Lawrence’s perspective this puts him and other students of color in an unfavorable position of excepting less than fair treatment.

Many participants perceived harsher punishments and unfair treatment led to them disengaging within the classroom and overall learning environment. Often the assignment of harsher punishments resulting in feelings of

helplessness appears to contribute to a reluctance to engage in activities that would have connected them to the school community and their education. Through the withdrawal and unwillingness to ask for help when needed. It was overly apparent that students are keenly aware of harsher punishments and that these punishments have a negative impact on them academically and socially resulting in various forms of disengagement.

Teacher's Negative Perceptions of African American Male Students.

Another emergent theme was that participants possessed the belief that their teachers held negative perceptions of them that originated from racial prejudice and stereotyping. Historically this is a symptom of what is known as deficit thinking. In Milner, 2006 he posits that White teachers routinely express a deficit mindset when educating students of color in the K-12 setting. Milner discusses the deficit attitude of White instructors toward Black kids as a prominent assumption. Milner contends that instructors' deficit mentality of children of color's academic aptitude might lead to the formulation of curriculum and instruction that falls short of good teaching and learning. Some of these assumptions include the belief that pupils of color are born with a lack of the abilities, information, and attitudes required to succeed and learn. This issue was made evident in the responses of participants as they reflected on their experiences and if they ever felt as they had been viewed differently by their teachers because of their race. Interestingly, the majority of participants felt as though they had indeed been viewed differently from others based on race and in

every case where this was acknowledged the participants stated that the views of their teachers were negative in nature and had varying negative impacts on their academics.

To provide further information, Mike during the interview shared the following:

“Yes, for instance, like I was saying like, you know sometimes, when you're a student of color, the teacher really does that, you know, pay you no attention, insides the class, they just kind of put you off into your own island. Now I do remember growing up, from elementary school, I could say that. But I used to have like, Okay, It was me, and, like 2 other people, growing up. I've never been to school with a whole lot of you know African American students. It has always been majority Latinos. Yeah, I used to have my own little island in the class to where I was branched off from everybody.”

Mike stated the above when asked about the negative perceptions of his teachers from his personal experience. Upon analysis of his statement you can see that Mike interpreted his teachers feelings about him as the reasoning behind his exile to what he called his “own island”. Mike also pointed to being paid no attention in class, all of which he contributed to his teachers negative views on the aspirations of African American males with regard to quality education. As one-of-three African American males in a classroom Mike was acutely aware of the teacher’s actions and culture of the classroom. He also noted the ramifications when teachers held negative views of him and others that resemble him. Tyler, another participant stated:

“Yeah, I feel like they've viewed me different a couple of times. Not a lot but it has happened, when I was in middle school. I had a teacher for one of my computer classes, and he just acted like I just didn't know anything

about the computers and things of that nature not cause like I was a student, just like he just tried to make it seem like there was no way I could have known about certain things and things of that nature.”

Tyler’s and Stanley’s statements indicate, they genuinely felt their teachers negative perceptions of African American students impacted everything from expectations to access to the restroom. Tyler points to the fact that one teacher in particular judged his ability to comprehend content based solely on his appearance. And Stanley stated:

“Yes, because my race yes, how could I say this? They be like just okay I'm going to view this person different. You know, everything is not sweet and smooth with your teachers. You know, on the first mess up I feel like some teachers do like okay, Yeah, he's Black, he's crazy. But you know, he's one of the crazier Black people and that's why you know like when it comes to bathroom passes some teachers don't let Black students go. I've seen it. They don't let Black students go. You know, they don't. They don't let Black students hardly do anything.”

Which emphasizes that he felt like his teachers granted or withheld grace based in part on the color of his skin. For him this grace came with the rejection access to basic human needs like restroom passes based on the perception of his teachers. In his eyes being Black meant that he was not going to be given the same king of leniency that students of non-color would be. This realization led him to conclude that things are not always good with teachers and subsequently disengagement.

Based on the statements from the participants it became clear that they were consistent in their assessment of the negative views of their teachers. What also became apparent was the narrative that each participant felt their teacher held negative views of them that impacted their expectations, use of exclusion

discipline, and tolerance. Participants were honest and authentic, using specific examples to demonstrate exactly what happened to them and how they were impacted by the actions of their teachers. In most cases the reaction was withdrawal, distrust, and feelings of helplessness, which is consistent with Stoll's (2014) findings mentioned earlier. When teachers hold negative perceptions of Black boys they lead to disastrous outcomes for many students but none are more marginalized and criminalized by this than African American males as seen by reviewed literature (Milner, 2013; Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

Cultural Mismatch Between Teachers and their African American Male Students.

This final theme became prevalent as data was collected, that of cultural mismatches and the resulting consequences of teachers who cannot identify with the experiences of their students. Cultural mismatches exacerbate disconnections between students and teachers; several participants shared that they felt an inability of teachers to understand their lived experiences. Which to them resulted in the adoption of negative stereotypes. Arguments for school failure that are based on cultural factors are supported by effects of the culture of power, such as instructors' acceptance of their own frames of reference as normative (Delpit, 1995). Importantly, those in positions of authority frequently are not conscious of the privileges that come with being a part of the group that is dominant. The culture of power extends to instructors' explicit and implicit expectations for students' interpersonal and personal behavior in the classroom.

When asked whether or not he felt issues of race and racism contributed to observable gaps in the academic performance of African Americans, Desmond responded by stating:

“I do believe that it's because of the stereotypes that are placed on African American students and such that causes this. But for the most part, I do believe it's also other issues, and stuff, other than just that. Sometimes kids just don't like school, at least I know that was me, but yeah sometimes it's stereotypes that people think of Black students”.

Here, Desmond centers in on the stereotypes that teachers adopt and place on African American students. Many of these stereotypes are the direct result of cultural mismatches between students and teachers. When teachers struggle to find common ground in their lived experiences and the lived experience of their students they begin to adopt the ideology of the dominant culture about these students and stereotypes manifest as a consequence (Bruce, Lewis, Douglas, Earl-Scott, & Garrison-Wade 2008). In this case, Desmond perceives stereotypes as the basis by which his teachers judge him. He posits that this is why subsequently these gaps in education and the continued lower level of achievement of African American males exist, which is supported in literature (Dutil, 2020).

“Yeah in some ways, teachers don't necessarily feel like you there to learn so how much do they want to put into teaching you anyway, or they just think you about to be clowning so it's whatever. They don't expect much, so you failing ain't really an issue to them low key. Yeah they not going out they way to help you, I seen them help other students but watching us fail. I know we be on some stuff sometimes but they don't be really want to help that much anyway, Just get they check and go home”.

Here, Chris analyzes the attitude of his teachers towards students of color, he implies like Desmond that these attitudes are derived from perceptions the teachers have adopted concerning the intentions of these students. Chris illustrates this in statements such as, “they don’t expect much” and “ I seen them help other students but watch us fail”. The cultural mismatch between student and teacher may be contributing to the misinterpretation of both student’s intentions and teacher actions, which may foster the adoption of stereotypes by both parties. When teachers began the process of understanding the culture of their students, stereotypes began to break down, adjustments are made in pedagogy, compassion is granted and high level learning is accomplished.

In some cases, participants poignantly noted the lack of addressment on the behalf of the teacher, as an indication that they simply did not understand or care about the issues that are unique to their demographic. This led some to believe receiving a fair and objectionable judgement when racial issues manifest was not possible. This lack of understanding can be traced to a lack of familiarity with the cultural norms of Black students. As such, John begins to elaborate on the frustration associated with feeling misunderstood. He expresses how his perceived anger is a manifestation of the environment he is subject to. John notes, for some his reality is not normal but was nonetheless a very real experience to him. Which he states was in some ways the impetus for a lot of his frustration. This outward expression of frustration presents as problematic, especially when educators from the dominant culture or those that identify with

the dominant culture, lack the ability to empathize and relate to the source of that frustration. As a result John stated:

“So I always felt like everything was always taken from me, and no one knows how to react to the Black student. You know, someone that's just upset and growing up around the surroundings that I grew up around. So yeah, I mean, I'm upset with a lot of things, so I can't say fully it was because of my color. It was kinda my anger and everything that I dealt with, but when you're put in a place that you're put in, you know. That's kind of something that you have to grow up with, and there's a lot of people that don't think that's normal. It's just the reality that we live in, something we had to face, and because of that, yes, I do feel that it was because of my race”.

John's statement indicates that feels like teachers are unable to relate to the circumstances, cultural experiences, and background of Black students.

These experiences according to John lead him to feelings of anger and resentment. John states that for a lot of people the experiences that shape his world view are not normal, which indicates an inability to reconcile the cultural norms of one environment to that of the dominant group. Ultimately, John determines that race is an integral component in this lack of understanding.

In addition, as seen below one participant in particular highlighted that a cultural mismatch actually led to a lack of empathy when issues related to race came up. John again when asked, how was the issue of racism addressed by your teachers or educators at your school? Did they address it, or did they dismiss it? He began, by highlighting his feelings that his teachers lack empathy when confronting race related issues. John stated:

“No, they just kind of gave a backhand compliment, and this made it seem like if I was just taking it out of proportion. But then it kind of gets

you into thinking of. Well, if you're a teacher that doesn't understand that, then how can you describe racism if you're not that color, or if you don't understand where you're coming from? So that was my huge problem with it.”

John extrapolates here that the cultural mismatch of his teachers may in fact have made it hard for them to make fair judgements as mentioned before, instead opting for what he labeled as “back handed compliments”. John’s assessment can be very dangerous given the subjective nature of punishments in the classroom, as pointed out by Milner (2013). John finds it difficult to believe in his teachers ability to relate when they themselves are not members of his culture. This leads him to doubt their ability to be fair and objective when dealing with issues of racism. Which is problematic considering the fact that in many cases teachers and administrators act as judge, jury, and executioner handing out punishments with impunity. When teachers lack an understanding of one culture they may naturally align themselves with students that are part of their affinity group. This was emphasize by Lawrence who made clear his skepticism about getting fair and equal treatment from teachers of another ethnic group. When asked if he thought he was punished more harsh simply because of his race, Lawrence pointed to what he thinks results from this cultural mismatch when he stated:

“For sure yeah. There are just some times when you know they wouldn’t take things this far if you were someone else. It’s hard when the teacher is the same as the other students and you know you can’t win in that situation. So yeah, you know you about to get the worse end of the stick.”

It would appear that cultural mismatches lead many teachers to unfairly judge, stereotype, show clear signs of favoritism, and label their students. As noted by Milner (2013), misinterpretation of student behavior contributes to overuse of exclusionary discipline and the abiding achievement gap which is personified when participants such as John and Lawrence believe teachers had an unwillingness to help, which they viewed as a blatant disregard for their academic wellbeing. These mismatches exacerbate a relational divide between educators and pupils, whether authentic or perceived, these ideas result in a lack of understanding between teachers and students. Cultural mismatches foster the idea that teachers willfully allow students to fail despite being responsible for their education. This can best be summed up in this statement from John “Well, if you're a teacher that doesn't understand that, then how can you describe racism if you're not that color, or if you don't understand where you're coming from?” which perfectly illustrates the issues and feelings attached to cultural mismatches.

Conclusion

The findings in this study illuminate the need to purposely address race and racism in schools on the part of educators. Current literature surrounding color-evasiveness suggests it leads to harsher punishments, disengagement, deficit thinking on the part of teachers towards African American males, over use of exclusionary discipline, and poor academic performance (Stoll, 2014; Dutil, 2020). Historically K-12 schooling has not been characterized by a propensity to

address race willingly. Without the critical analysis of the impact this approach has had on the experiences of African American male students, witnessed gaps are allowed to exist, relegating this group to a substandard educational experience on a permanent basis. To better understand the experiences of African American males in K-12 education, it becomes essential to revisit the theoretical framework of this study and the methodology chosen to gather the data from the understanding of their unique stories. This chapter comprises the results of ten semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Each participant gave insight as to what shaped their experiences within the public K-12 system. All findings were anchored by a robust literature review and aligned with the study's problem statement. The aspiration of this study is to firmly establish the need to purposely engage in substantive discussions on race in the classroom. In an effort to dismantle false narratives assigned to Black students and to foster understanding through the sharing of their lived experiences. Which may combat the prejudices and cultural mismatches that currently underpin some of the gaps witnessed in education.

This chapter sought to inform the reader about the study's findings. Participants were eager to offer their perspectives and thoughts on a variety of themes. The data provided detailed and thorough answers to the research questions. The prevalent themes that emerged from the data collected from the participants were: Avoidance of issues surrounding race and racism, teachers should address race in the classroom, the overuse of exclusionary discipline lead

to disengagement, teacher's negative perceptions of African American male students, cultural mismatch between teachers and their African American male students. The topic that was most predominant in the interview responses was the marked avoidance of topics pertaining to race resulting in a failure to recognize and value the uniqueness of African American males in the classroom. The participants also focused on the need for teachers to be more purposeful in discussions on race rather than succumbing to the lack of comfortability of the topic and ignoring the obvious, which they feel leads to unfairness in discipline and disengagement. Another topic that came up for discussion was the impression that students had that they could not or were not willing to ask teachers for help since they saw them avoiding discriminatory behavior by staff and other students. Chapter 5 will provide an overview of the study along with recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

OVERVIEW

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the experiences of African American males with color-evasiveness racial ideology as benign racism in the K-12 system. Specifically, the impact color-evasiveness had on their achievement, disciplinary history, and teacher expectations. Which important because no other group has been impacted more than this population as a result of this racist ideology (Annamma et al., 2017). How this historical and cultural phenomenon affected their lived experience with racism in the form of microaggressions, deficit thinking, and zero-tolerance discipline in the K-12 system, as well as their academic success and mental wellness is vital to analyze.

Problem Statement

This research will posit that color-evasive racism/color-evasiveness, as defined as the intentional avoidance and acknowledgment of racism by the refusal to engage in any substantive discussion on race (Annamma, 2017), has a negative impact on African American males in and out of the K-12 classroom. Which differs from color-blindness in that it acknowledges how “color-blind” conversations are situated on ableism language, which devalues and positions individuals with disabilities as deficit. Drawing on color-evasive racism/color-

evasiveness, research has shown how it underscores the refusal to recognize the uniqueness of Black students, and instead subscribe to the same treatment of all students regardless of racial and ethnic affiliation which continues to underserve this group of historically marginalized students (Annamma, Jackson & Morrison, 2017). School practitioners who align themselves with this racist ideology also demonstrate a deficit mindset, as they refuse to address issues of race and racism in the classroom, fail to provide a culturally enhancing experience, and disrupt racialized discipline practices and policies in schools, just to name a few, all which have shown to have a harmful impact on the wellness and academic performance of African American males in education (Verma, 2020). To this point, it is critical to increase the racial literacy and critical consciousness of individuals who positionally have the ability to impact those outcomes, this includes, teachers, administrators, and school staff; by directly granting access to African American males to inform their pedagogical approach that shifts away from race-evasiveness to recognizing and confronting systemic issues. This study is guided by the following three research questions:

1. How does the use of color-evasive ideologies impact the disengagement of African American males through the refusal to acknowledge their unique experiences?
2. What are the impacts of exclusionary racialized discipline practices employed in the classroom when teachers are insistent on color-evasive ideologies?

3. How does the purposeful avoidance of race and racism in a classroom setting impact the academic achievement of African American male students?

Research Methodology

This qualitative study attempts to better understand the impact that color-evasiveness ideologies and practice have on African American males as they matriculate through the K-12 school system. As such, semi-structured interviews were conducted through the use of open-ended questions with 10 African-American males. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) defined qualitative methods as to “detail all of what goes on in a particular activity or situation rather than on comparing the effects of a particular treatment” (p. 430). Because my interest is situated in understanding the perceptions of African American male students with Color Blindness/Color Evasiveness as benign racism and the implications on the achievement for Black Male K-12 students, a qualitative research method was determined to be the most appropriate for this study.

A qualitative approach can be used in multiples way according to Frankel & Wallen (2006). One manner is the use of phenomenology to deal with reactions and perceptions of certain situations and phenomena. As illustrated by As Yüksel and Yildirim (2015), “The general purpose of the phenomenological study is to understand and describe a specific phenomenon in-depth and reach at the essence of participants’ lived experience of the phenomenon” (p. 3). For instance, in this study, the approach consisted of speaking with Black male

students about their experience with racism and color-evasiveness attitudes and their perceptions of their teacher's actions towards addressing racism in the classroom. Individual semi-structured interviews were selected to be the most appropriate vehicle for conducting a phenomenological study. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), interviews serve three purposes for researchers: description of personal experiences, and reflection on and sharing of personal thoughts about their experiences.

The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to test hypotheses, and not to "evaluate" as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience... At the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals' stories because they are of worth (p 9).

For this study, I asked participants to share their experiences with color-evasive teachers and the discussion of race and racism in the classrooms. Through individual interviews with each student, it afforded me with the opportunity to get to know each participant in ways that are relevant to the study and provide them with the space to share openly. These interviews are beneficial in two primary ways. First, participants can benefit from the research and allowed for the sharing of experiences, and granted insight into the impact these experiences have on students. Second, they afford each participant the opportunity to reflect on how these experiences may have shaped their views and achievement in school, giving them a chance to acknowledge the trauma they may be struggling

with. McVee (2004) wrote, "... individuals can be transformed by stories... stories can be a means for teachers to express beliefs about theory, practice, and curriculum" (p. 881).

Recommendations for Educational Leaders

In order to address issues such as overuse of exclusionary discipline, gaps in academic achievement, and inequitable educational outcomes for Black males it is essential that the following recommendations must be taken to broker meaningful conversations about race both in and outside of the classroom. In the next section, we present the following recommendations for educational leaders to implement in their practice and policies that emerged from the findings of this study.

Need for Discussions in the Classroom to Disrupt Deficit Thinking.

The participants described the *need for discussion* as impactful when attempting to resolve the cycle of deficit thinking, disproportion of African American males in the discipline, and poor academic performance. They noted that it would serve as useful for discussion on race to take place in the classroom, where all can see, learn and grow from the experience. This would make it more likely that students of color's voices are heard and valued, and grant others the opportunity to bridge cultural differences. Most of the participants stated that they would have welcomed such conversations. However, educators are encouraged to think critically about how they broach such topics.

Nonetheless, the need for conversations on race when appropriate and authentic can help students understand why people may view them differently and teach all involved to hold an appreciation for people of different races and cultural backgrounds. Discussions that manifest in the classroom have the ability to create awareness of the unique feelings that come from the experiences of this population. Awareness is essential to the changing of mindsets that perpetuate use of exclusionary discipline, decrease expectations, and limit access. Authentic awareness requires individuals to acknowledge their role in racial injustices perpetrated on people of color. As well as to choose to demonstrate a willingness to grow and learn, setting aside uncomfortable feelings of shame, guilt, anger, and fear in order to exhibit the humility needed to take corrective action (Simmons, 2022). The hearing of others stories through robust intentional discussion is imperative to the breaking down of stereotypes and prejudices. The continued avoidance of such conversations based on discomfort, and lack of understanding should no longer be tolerated. Instead educators need to recognize that the benefits of providing a platform for African American males to share their stories allowing others to learn and grow from hearing their stories. It is obvious at this point that the benefits in doing so outweigh any potential temporary discomfort experienced.

The exclusion of the Black male voice still exist as an obstacles that might completely prevent African American males from achieving the same degree of academic success as their white contemporaries. The exclusion of their voice

allows for the continued adoption of the dominate cultures narrative without opposition. This characteristic shows that the educational system is still primarily based on western European thought and that it was not created with the achievement of African American males as a priority (Gillborn, 2014). Existing evidence shows that African American male students in the public K–12 system have a significant numerical disadvantage when it comes to academic attainment. Because White American teachers sometimes work from a deficit mentality and establish lower expectations for this class of pupils, research has revealed that African American male students have to tackle being worried about not meeting a predetermined standard or having to prove their abilities in the classroom. Without substantive discussions on race these observed issues will continue without ceasing.

Outside of the classroom however, in order to provide support to its educators institutions need to develop oppurtunities for educators to have meaningful conversations surrounding race, discipline, and stereotypes. These discussions should foster self reflective process for adult learning and growth. Just as with students, serious thought should be given to how and when these conversations take place in order to limit any unnecessary discomfort and resentment. Furthermore, avoiding having any meaningful dialogues about this reality has resulted in and continues to result in Black male students needing to overcome institutional hurdles that other ethnic groups do not experience. For example, according to Dutil (2020), African American males missed class more

frequently than other groups and were penalized more harshly than other groups. This led to low academic performance, for African American males seeking success in the academic context, understanding how to negotiate white standards of behavior in the classroom has become increasingly crucial (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Despite district programs supporting ethnic studies, racial discourse, teacher diversity, universal design for learning, and equitable systems, some institutions have not yet established a foundation for cultural awareness and competency amongst its educators.

Addressing Inequitable Use of Exclusionary Discipline.

According to the participants in this study, *inequitable use of exclusionary discipline* practices played a major role in how they as African American males are viewed in the educational system. In most instances, when African American males commit rule violations, the system often chooses removal from the education setting as the best way to mitigate the matter. Derrick Bell, a professor of law and thought leader in the field of critical race theory, asserts that one reason for this is Interest Convergence Theory. This suggests that subordinate groups will never fully recognize and embrace their differences until the dominant group sees how those differences further their interests. According to Bell (1980), “the interests of Blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of Whites.” This suggests that one reason the use of exclusionary practice, which has been proven ineffective, continues is that it does not serve the interest of the dominant

culture to find alternative means of correction. Especially if it does not involve immediate removal of what is deemed a problem student.

For the betterment of shifting away from punitive practices towards humanizing African American males, it is vital that institutions began the process of educating their staff as to why the outcome of this population serves not only their best interest but the interest of all stakeholders. Having data driven focused conversations on the long and short term benefits of finding alternatives to exclusionary discipline as well as the impact of its over use should be a point of emphasis moving forward. This is merely one example of the barriers that allow the continued use of exclusionary disciplinary practices that assault the academic achievement of African American Males.

Despite the scholarly attention that has been dedicated to the examination of contributing factors that lead to the disproportionately African American male discipline, current knowledge of African American males' perception of such practices is limited. The intentional studying of the voice and experience of African American males and how their perspective might help resolve this conundrum is even more constrained. Institutions of learning should provide structured support to educators that afford them the tools to support students in a culturally sensitive fashion. Extensive and exhaustive cultural awareness and sensitivity trainings that include the voices of student participants in particular African American males, would grant educators the opportunity to listen, relate to, and grow from the experiences of others. Which could inform their decisions

making process with regard to discipline. When educators understand the antecedent, function and motivation behind behaviors they develop the ability to empathize. When decisions on discipline are devoid of empathy the results are catastrophic.

Addressing Cultural Mismatch.

The problematic nature of existing *cultural mismatch* was apparent throughout participant responses. As noted African Americans males are disproportionately overrepresented in exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions in the K-12 system (Milner, 2013). The subjective nature of these practices often leaves teachers and administrators from different backgrounds and experiences with the role of judge, jury and executioner. Which has a direct relation to observed cultural mismatches that exist between teachers and their students. In K–12 environments, African American males are associated with unfavorable stereotypes that limit their access to the same opportunities as their white counterparts. In contrast to other ethnic groups, these prejudices may generate obstacles that are harmful to their academic progress. These stereotypes include demeaning representations of them as aggressive, criminals, failures in society, and hypersexual people. Some of the participants talked about the prejudices they have come across when it comes to the arbitrary opinions of teachers who don't share their cultural background. They also mentioned how, in their opinion, discipline was handled incorrectly since they were seen as challenging as a result of teachers not understanding them

culturally. Some students expressed being labeled difficult and intimidating for what they described as actions that are cultural norms in the African American community. Additionally, they said that there was a racial disparity in the harshness of punishment for similar offenses committed by them and their peers.

In this study, African American male participants believed they were perceived differently depending on the cultural alignment of the teacher. However, due to the avoidance of any meaningful discussions on race that would have a positive impact on these students' daily experiences in the k–12 system, it was clear that for the participants interviewed, the journey of navigating through the educational system was quite different for these students when their teachers did not possess a certain level of cultural awareness. This can be because teachers frequently are unable to understand students' cultural and lived experiences. When investigating the rationale for the cultural mismatches shown between African American male students and their teachers, the participants' interviewed made it evident that internal and external obstacles are significant. The participants, for instance, frequently stated that teachers refused to give them the benefit of the doubt because they believed their acts to be rude or lacking in comprehension on their behalf. When attempting to negotiate a system that persistently presents African American males as uneducated and uncivil, Milner (2013) discovered that unfavorable preconceptions about African Americans are reinforced in the media as well, which is then exacerbated by

cultural mismatches and a unwillingness to have substantive discussions on race in the classroom. This makes it much more difficult to overcome these beliefs.

For this reason districts should engage in meaningful targeted trainings for new and existing educators on the cultural norms of its community along the lines of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, average education level, and culture.

Teachers would greatly benefit from a better understanding of the social and economic hurdles facing the students that they serve. This will increase compassion and empathy with regard to discipline and academic grace. Having a keen understanding of the community will connect those who issue discipline to the students and circumstances surrounding the choices being made. When teachers assume these student are not committed to learning out of pure laziness, it is usually out of an abundance of ignorance concerning the everyday lived experiences that detract from primarily focusing on learning. When they make statement such as “where are the parents”, it usually because they lack the understanding that most of the kids they educate either live with one parent who is working or live with two parents who must juggle between providing financial support and educational support. Educating teachers on the above mentioned would greatly increase their capacity to relate to and empathize with their students bridging the gap between what teachers think and what is a reality for their students. Teachers may better understand why decisions are made by students and parents and the rationale for those decisions. This will humanize students and families allowing for teachers to place themselves in the shoes of

their students. It will also allow teachers to familiarize themselves with cultural norms eliminating misconceptions over nonverbal response and body language which due to the subjective nature of discipline is imperative in order to address any existing cultural mismatches.

Facilitating Purposeful and Intentional Discussions on Race and Racism.

According to Jenkins (2018), teachers must understand their role in the classroom, be aware of the differences between their culture and that of their students, and develop cultural consciousness by getting to know their students' cultures. This will help them become proficient and responsive to different cultural perspectives. What needs to happen is the ***facilitation of purposeful and intentional discussions on race and racism***. As stated before the need for discussion is apparent according to the findings in this study, however that discussion must be structured and purposeful in order to have the needed impact. When teachers engage in discussions on race they provide space for Black students to be seen and understood. These discussions also serve to dismantle preconceived negative stereotypes they have concerning these students. Substantive discussions on cultural differences help bridge mismatches between teacher and student and provide students of other cultures opportunities to learn and grow from the lived experiences of their Black classmates. Discussions the educational outlook, financial literacy, music, food, family structure, etc, would close the divide between students of different ethnic backgrounds, teachers, the community, and educational leaders.

According to several experts, cultural friction causes academic failure in pupils of color, especially in young people from low-income households (Byers & Byers, 1972; Nieto, 1999, 2000; Gay, 2000). Arguments for school failure that are based on cultural factors are supported by effects of the culture of power, such as instructors' acceptance of their own frames of reference as normative (Delpit, 1995). Importantly, those in positions of authority frequently are not conscious of the privileges that come with being a member of the dominant culture. The culture of power extends to teachers' explicit and implicit expectations for students' interpersonal and personal behavior in the classroom. The discipline gap is strongly correlated with the cultural standards that are accepted without question, particularly among instructors. Having direct and focused conversations that address prejudices and assumptions would serve to diminish some of the cultural frictions plaguing African American males in education, especially those from a low socioeconomic background. For instance, according to numerous studies, non-Black teachers view a loud voice, self-initiated student speech, self-directed student movement, emotional displays, and pupil-to-pupil engagement as improper classroom behaviors (Everhart, 1983; D'Amato, 1993/1996). However, these behaviors are linked to numerous African American cultural pillars of communication (Irvine, 1990). Because of this, students' behavioral success is intimately related to their capacity to interpret implicit cues and expectations from teachers. Accordingly, successful African American students must have "an almost intuitive knowledge" of how classroom norms work,

according to Gouldner (1979, p. 85). This places the burden on conforming solely on the shoulders of African American students when the primary responsibility for this mismatch is on the teachers. African American students do not have the responsibility to bridge this cultural gap between themselves and their teachers. Teachers should seek to build relationships based on mutual respect and understanding in an effort to bolster the academic achievement of this population. The first step in this process is engaging in discussions that allow for reflection and personal growth. These conversations will aid them in the deconstruction of biases that drive deficit thinking and overuse of exclusionary discipline practices. Discussions on cultural norms associated with education, financial literacy, music, food, and family structure would serve the best interest of both parties and relieve Black male students of the sole responsibility to adapt and change.

Implementing Culturally Responsive Practices to Address Discipline.

Composite studies of culturally sensitive teachers show that these professionals behave as driven, loving people whose disciplinary tactics mirror those seen in students' homes. It should be the goal of districts to ***implement culturally responsive practices*** and capacity through professional development, training, and induction programs that include culturally responsive skill acquisition. Given the holistic success of culturally responsive instructors with African American kids, particularly in terms of maintaining classroom discipline, educators would be well served to broaden their definition

of teacher excellence to include culturally responsive approaches. Teachers may be taught to use disciplinary strategies that address inappropriate behavior in constructive and meaningful ways and avoid tactics that invite negative outcomes associated with many traditional responses, such as office referrals, as a result of the shift to culturally responsive discipline. According to a small body of empirical evidence, culturally responsive disciplinary practices appear to improve student outcomes by addressing behavioral issues in the classroom rather than referring children to administrators, where they might face punishments like suspension. It is crucial to emphasize that using inclusive teaching methods to address student issues in the classroom helps students develop the skills necessary to succeed in modern society and gives them access to the culture of power (Nieto, 1999). (Delpit, 1995). Teachers who properly handle disciplinary issues may assist kids in avoiding adverse life outcomes that are connected to repeated school disciplinary action.

When educators fail to consider the cultural roots of their disciplinary policies and beliefs they face the risk of misinterpretations of student actions that deviate from their expectations. Results from the limited number of research studies that have already been conducted indicate that Black students are frequently reprimanded for culturally related activities that are not meant to be disruptive. Experts in the field of current African American education contend that culturally relevant instruction is the key to the achievement of low-income Black pupils (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Hilliard, 1995). Parallels between the home and

school contexts are known as "cultural synchronization," according to Irvine (1990). By functioning in line with a mutually agreed-upon protocol of expectations, culturally responsive teachers can reduce the chances of student failure by fostering inclusive classroom environments. Additionally, their classroom methodology fights off divisive forces like the overuse of exclusionary discipline.

Encouraging More Students of Color to Pursue Careers as Teachers.

One of the most likely strategies for bridging the racial opportunity gap is to ***encourage more students of color to choose careers as teachers***. This can be done through the creation of teacher pathways in secondary education, and future teachers academies throughout the K-12 system. According to Sleeter's (2001) study of the literature on preservice teacher programs for impoverished kids, students of color typically enroll in teacher preparation programs that are more firmly based on social justice and equitable ideals than their White counterparts. Sleeter (2001, p. 212) points out that while students of color do not have greater pedagogical knowledge than their peers, some studies show that they express a "strong commitment to creating more just schools, assisting children of color gain access to educational opportunities, and respecting diverse cultures." On the other hand, White teacher applicants frequently enroll in programs that follow colorblind ideologies (Nieto, 1999). Increasing the likelihood that more students of color enroll in teacher

preparation programs, also increases the likelihood that students of color will experience a teachers with a commitment to social justice.

Due to their propensity to be sensitive to problems of equality and anti-discrimination, teachers of color in particular may approach the classroom with strong views on how students should behave. These views may influence both their disciplinary procedures and overall classroom pedagogy. African American preservice teachers, especially those from low-income families, may contribute intangible cultural knowledge to their job that encourages cultural synchronization in the classroom as a result of their personal upbringing. White educators with Black or bicultural frames of reference frequently share comparable personal ideologies and occupational philosophies (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Furthermore, recruitment of antiracist teachers in the field of education should also be viewed as a necessary move towards addressing the color-evasive environment of the many K-12 systems. This approach encompasses both white and black preservice teachers since both are subject to the influence of the inherent biases perpetuated in the media and shaped by their upbringings (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). An antiracist teacher is one who practices the purposeful challenging of the dominant culture that systematically oppresses and marginalized students of color. They often engage in antiracist teaching which is defined as "an approach to education that: emphasizes knowledge deconstruction and critique, assumes an overtly political stance, analyzes racial and economic oppression simultaneously, and emphasizes social activism"

(Husband, 2016, p. 1). Antiracist teaching is the practice or enactment of antiracist education. Significant academic research has been done on antiracist teaching in U.S. teacher education over the past three decades; most of it has focused on teacher educators' interventionist antiracist teaching techniques and students' reactions to them. This has a significant ability to aid in the erosion of the colorblind practices and cultures that are persistent today. As a recruitment tool all interviews should include at least one question designed to illicit a response that will highlight the candidates views on social justices, cultural awareness, and commitment to equitable outcomes. This will give the panel the ability to gage the candidates relatability to their students, community, and staff.

Next Steps for Educational Reform

As a result of the findings of this study, the following are some additional steps that should be implemented to ensure there is structural changes to ensure African-American males and other students from historically and contemporary marginalized groups are provided with a space to discuss issues of race and racism in the classroom, which ultimately will benefit all students in schools and communities. First in order for the continued growth and progression of this work, it is necessary for policy makers to introduce legislation to perseve and protect the right of state funded public education institutions to develop and implement curriculum, programs and practices that address race and racism at the systemic level. Current political rhetoric such Florida's HB 7, formally called "Individual Freedom" measure has endangered the free discussion of race related issues in

the classroom making the notion of addressing prejudices and historical oppression problematic. The need for states and school districts to acknowledge and address race and racism in all public K-12 systems cannot be overstated. Systemic racism has long been a pervasive issue in American society, and it has infiltrated the education system as well. Acknowledging the problem is the first step in addressing it, and this means recognizing the need for active measures to counteract it. This includes actively recruiting teachers of color, developing curricula that focus on ethnic studies and appreciation for all, and reviewing discipline data to minimize the use of exclusionary discipline. The recruitment of teachers of color is critical because it ensures that students have access to role models who share their experiences and can help them navigate the challenges of systemic racism. This is especially important in communities where students of color are the majority but are not seeing themselves reflected in the teaching staff. Developing curricula that focus on ethnic studies and appreciation for all is also crucial. This helps to address racial stereotypes and deficit thinking that can perpetuate negative attitudes towards certain groups of people.

The use of exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, has been shown to disproportionately affect students of color. Reviewing discipline data and working to minimize the use of such practices is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn in a safe and supportive environment. Providing professional development on cultural awareness and culturally responsive pedagogy is also important to ensure that teachers are

equipped to address these issues and create a more inclusive learning environment for all students. Local programs such as Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning Professional Development Opportunities in Rialto California & Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Courses in k-12 education by Vector Solutions aid in the reduction of exclusionary discipline by equipping educators with the tools they need to address and recognize inappropriate behaviors versus actions that may be cultural in nature, and implementation of cultural responsive pedagogy that ecreases engagement. By acknowledging and addressing these issues, states and school districts can work towards a more equitable and just education system.

Districts should prioritize creating committees made up of school and district personnel to assess the district's present hiring and promotion procedures for all staff, particularly for African American males, in addition to implementing strategic mentorship programs for male African American male students. School districts can look into the systematic adoption of mentorship programs specifically designed to help African American boys better negotiate the systemic injustice of the K–12 setting, in particular at the classroom level. As well as giving them the tool to better understand and vocalize their experiences. Continued efforts should be made to increase diversity, which, while not guaranteed, as pointed out by Bonilla-Silva (2003), may help to ease the cultural mismatch between students and staff. Additionally, it is advised that districts look for instructors, White and non-White, who are anti-racist and willing to confront the

narrative as promoted by the dominant culture. Additionally, they should offer training on how to facilitate, navigate, and manage challenging classroom discussions about race. Having productive conversations about race can be challenging, but there are ways to make them more effective. These trainings should be focused and aimed at helping educators facilitate productive and meaningful conversations about race in the classroom. They should highlight proven steps for having difficult conversations on race. One such step is to check your own biases before beginning a conversation. It's essential to be mindful of the lens through which you approach the topic. Another helpful tip is to set guidelines, boundaries, and goals to create a safe space for everyone to share their perspectives. Starting on common ground, such as discussing a book or movie, can also be a useful way to center the conversation. Using facts and data to examine structural and institutional racism can help ground the discussion. It's also important to recognize that not all conversations about race will end in agreement, and that it's okay to agree to disagree when necessary. When expressing yourself, using statements like I felt, I found out, and so now I feel can be helpful in avoiding defensiveness. Finally, actively listening to others and allowing them to finish their thoughts can lead to unexpected insights. To start the conversation, suggested conversation starters include discussing early memories connected to race, exploring stereotypes, reflecting on the state of racial justice today, and sharing thoughts on recent books or media about race. It is also recommended that cultural awareness training become a precursor to

employment in an effort to address the prevalence of exclusionary disciplinary practices. Lastly, districts should complete a self-study on their disciplinary practices and identify disproportionalities while employing alternatives to the use of exclusionary discipline.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Numerous areas for further investigation in this work emerged from my research findings. There are specific topics there that deal with disciplinary practices, teacher perceptions of students, discussions of racial issues and racism, and cultural mismatches. One such area for future research is the beneficial practices of teachers currently emerged in intentional discussions on race in the classroom. Future research should focus on useful strategies for navigating such difficult strategies. Furthermore research in this area could explore the responses of students who are currently exposed to these discussions for both beneficial and harmful effects. Another area for future research would be to examine how are teachers navigating some of these potentially divisive conversations in light of the recent restrictions now facing some educators in some areas. In addition this work would be well advised to explore the various ways students are responding to this work. Another area to explore in future research is the impact of same race/ethnic teachers on Black students. Exploration of data both positive and negative may support the need for increased recruitment of teachers of color, data such as grad rate and A-G rates. This study should examine the beneficial affects of programs such as Project Impact at California State University San Bernardino, and Los Angeles Urban Teacher Residency at California State University Los Angeles which are both aimed at the increased recruitment of teachers of color. Furthermore, future research could explore the disciplinary practices of teachers who subscribe to

color-evasive ideology and draw a direct comparison to those who practice culturally aware disciplinary practices.

Lastly, as a result of this study additional potential future research could examine if African American male and female students have comparable perspectives on race and how it is discussed in the classroom. It is also advised to investigate whether African Americans with lighter complexion receive preferential treatment in the classroom compared to those with darker skin. It would also be beneficial to examine the impact of color-evasive approaches on the Latino male population to ascertain if they express similar experiences.. Since the research suggests that there are racial biases present, this information should help districts assess the legitimacy of how disciplinary methods are applied and the inequity presented to African American boys. The establishment of district policies to address the need for purposeful direct talks on race at all levels, including the employment of anti-racist instructors, will be encouraged by future research, which will also guarantee that present district practices are improved.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Even though I took deliberate attempts to execute research without any predicted limitations there were still certain limitations that existed. The participants were from a single local school district, and as a result, their demographics are not typical of school districts across the nation. The researcher knew some of the subjects, which might have impacted their responses. Third, a

larger sample size would give a clearer picture of how African American male students view the issue of color evasiveness in K-12.

CONCLUSIONS

In addition to increased district attempts to address structural problems that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline, there has been an increased interest in the equitable academic results of African American boys. It would be advantageous to take into account regular, concentrated discussions about race in the classroom as well as the development of programs aimed at the recruitment of anti-racist teachers, development of culturally responsive teachers and the addressing of cultural mismatches. These options might improve African American boys' academic opportunities as well as their chances of succeeding in post-high school professional contexts.

As stated consideration should be given to the development, hiring, and retention of antiracist teachers that are thoroughly equipped to manage difficult conversations on race without fear. The belief that increased implementation of programs on cultural awareness and sensitivity makes it obvious that school districts have not yet exhausted all necessary resources to ensure that potential African American male students are equally college and career ready. The fact that these students are not supported, and motivated to be successful as future leaders has received a lot of criticism, both within and outside of the educational realm, despite previous attempts to identify workable solutions for this increased concern. Yet, difficult conversations on race and racism at the management and

instructional level continue to be scarce and met with the objection as seen in recent objections to Critical Race Theory in the K-12 setting.

My research involved interviewing ten Black male students to learn their perceptions of color evasiveness in the K-12 setting based on their personal experiences. I intended to determine if those perceptions influenced their academic performance and their disengagement from their education. The following three research questions guided my study: **Research Question 1:** How does the use of color-evasive ideologies impact the disengagement of African American males through the refusal to acknowledge their unique experiences? When teachers practice color-evasive ideologies and fail to acknowledge the unique experiences of African American male students it results in a disjointed relationship between them and these students steeped in a cultural mismatch. Students view them as overly harsh and unwilling to help them. Which removes them as a resource for the vital information and support they need to be successful in the classroom. As a result, these students feel alone in their experiences, and when teachers fail to address racial issues students feel unseen and uncared for. Without a perceived ally in the classroom, African American male students attempt to navigate a Western European academic environment by themselves. This often leads to what appears as withdrawal from participation and reinforces negative stereotypes.

Research Question 2: What are the impacts of exclusionary racialized discipline practices employed in the classroom when teachers are insistent on

color-evasive ideologies? The use of racialized exclusionary disciplinary practices reveals that African American males perceived themselves as being disciplined at a far higher rate than other students, and attributed this to a teacher-held negative perception of their race. This leads to an excessive number of referrals for discipline. Resulting in missed classroom time, which has significant implications for students educational pathway. This ultimately places barriers in front of Black students not faced by other students in the classroom. Which has also led to a tendency to foster disengagement in school and an unwillingness to self-advocate for needed help from teachers practicing such strategies. This is a destructive cycle.

Research Question 3: How does the purposeful avoidance of race and racism in a classroom setting impact the academic achievement of African American male students? When African American males observe the use of color-evasive strategies to deal with race in the classroom this may lead to a feeling of helplessness and ultimately disengagement. When African American boys become disengaged in school, they may become disruptive in the classroom, which impacts not only their learning but the learning of others. Some students are quick to blame themselves for their perceived poor academic achievement, thereby absolving a system based on white supremacy of any responsibility. Many students blamed only themselves and attributed the failures of Black students' on immutable traits, which have frequently been opposed as a viable explanation for observed gaps in academic performance which results in a

blame-the-victim culture (Georgy, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). In reality, it was the teachers' actions in many cases that caused African American students to become disengaged and underperform. In addition, when students perceive an unwillingness to engage in any substantive conversations on race, teacher bias, teacher-held negative perceptions of Black students, and the overuse of exclusionary discipline they are less likely to view the teacher as a viable resource to aid in their learning. As a result, some teachers have passed up important opportunities to learn more from their relationships and attitudes toward their African American students. Instead, students solely shoulder responsibility for their learning and do not allow teachers to question themselves when students of any race struggle in the classroom.

In conclusion this research found that there is both a need and a want for purposeful discussion on race. We are way past the time for tip toeing around conversation regarding race in the classroom. Black male students and my like them currently are allowed to undergo continued under achievement, harsher punishments, and inequitable treatment day and day out simply because it has become acceptable to turn a blind eye. Intentional conversations on race must become the status quo and we must get serious about the work of being anti-racist if we ever hope to address the current observable gaps we currently witness but do nothing about. Milner (2013), ask the question *Why are Students of Color (Still) Punished More Severely and Frequently Than White Students?*

The simple answer to this and many other questions along this line of thinking is because we allow them to continue to be, which needs to end.

APPENDIX A

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol Questions

1. What are you currently doing post high school and what are your educational and professional aspirations?
2. In your own words, how do you define racism?
3. Did you ever encounter experiences with racism in K-12? If so, how do you believe that experience affected you in your education and mental health?
4. How was the issue of racism addressed by your teachers or educators at your school? Did they address, or did they dismiss it? (Probe: Classroom Discussion; Assignments, etc.)
5. Do you believe the way your teacher chose to address issues of race and racism had any impact on your academic performance in school?
6. Research also shows that African Americans experience racism differently than other racial/ethnic groups. Do you believe teachers should address issues of race and racism in the classroom? If so, in what ways?
7. Data shows that African American students are behind their peers in academic achievement. Do you think issues of race and racism contribute to this gap?
8. Have you ever felt as though you were viewed differently by your teachers because of your race?

9. Do you think you were ever disciplined more harshly than other students because of your race?
10. Data shows that African American male students experience higher rates of discipline than other racial/ethnic groups, to what do you contribute to this?
11. How has issues of race and racism in in the community impacted your education and civic engagement?

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