African American Males Navigate Racial Microaggressions

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Background/Context: *High school educational environments find Black males experience systemic racial microaggressions in the form of discipline policies, academic tracking and hegemonic curriculum. Black males in high school are more likely than their White male peers to have high school truancies and be viewed as intentionally sinister. African American males are labeled by White teachers and administrators as deviant for issues like talking in class, dress code violations and being tardy. Deficit perceptions about African American students as held by White teachers and administrators serve as racial microaggressions within K–12 context.*

Purpose/Objective/Research Question/Focus of Study: *Racial microaggressions based on prejudicial White beliefs of teachers impedes the learning process of participants. Racial microaggressive acts are problematic due to being a symptom of the overarching campus racial climate, which is often indicative of the negative historic treatment of Black males by Whites. The cumulative impact of racial microaggressions on Black males negatively impacts self-image, academic performance, and social navigation skills. Examining how Black males responded to racial microaggressions by White teachers and administrators at culturally diverse high school settings was the impetus for this study.*

Research Design: *To understand how African American male students responded to racial microaggressions qualitative research was used. Conducting a study that focuses on multiple individualistic lived experiences, I am mindful that "human actions cannot be understood unless the meaning that humans assign to them is understood." This comparative case study allowed for narrative expression, which informed the experiential meanings participants assigned to enduring racial microaggressions by gathering in-depth information through multiple sources to understand participants' real life meanings to situations.*

Conclusions/Recommendations: *Participants' engaged in pro-active navigation strategies to minimize and counter racial microaggressions. Navigation strategies were influenced by in- and out-of-class interactions with White teachers and student peers. Analysis of the data gathered during interviews, focus groups, and observations confirmed the racial microaggressive lived experiences of participants. Three themes emerged: (1) monolithic targeting; (2) integrative fluidity; and (3) behavioral vacillation. Participants avoided monolithic targeted racial microaggression(s) by creating meaningful alliances within other racialized student populations by utilizing social and extracurricular relationships as protective barriers to lessen the adverse effects of racial microaggressive experiences.*

The adverse cultural, academic, and social effects of race-related interactions on African American students in K–20 educational learning environments has been broached by various scholars (Q. Allen, 2010; Guinier, 2004; Jennings & Lynn, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Sleeter, 1993; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007). These studies highlight the point that racism is endemic and harms those who experience it. Exposure to racism and racial microaggressions have been found to have unfavorable effects on African American students' learning outcomes across secondary and college contexts that are primarily related to academic and social-capital-accruing experiences. These experiences disrupt the acquisition of academic and social capital by African American students (Feagin, 1992; Loo & Rolison, 1986; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Strayhorn, 2010).

High school educational environments find Black males experience systemic racial microaggressions in the form of discipline policies (e.g. zero tolerance), academic tracking, and hegemonic curriculum (A. Allen, Scott, & Lewis, 2013); practices which limit in-class instructional time, that leads increases college unpreparedness and reinforce the miseducation of history. Black males in high school are more likely than their White male peers to have high school truancies and be viewed as intentionally sinister (Q. Allen, 2010; Osyerman, Gant, & Ager, 1995). African American males are labeled by White teachers and administrators as deviant for issues like talking in class, dress code violations, and being tardy (Skiba et al., 2011). Deficit perceptions about African American students as held by White teachers and administrators serve as sources of racial microaggressions within K–12 context. White teachers' stereotypical perceptions of Black males are due to cultural incongruences that are based on inaccurate racial assumptions of deviance and ultimately create hostile learning environments for these students (Q. Allen, 2012; Landsman & Lewis, 2011).

African American males endure adversarial relationships with White teachers who frequently apply culturally deficit thinking, a form of microinvalidation racial microaggression. Yosso's (2005) definition of deficit thinking is applicable: "Deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education" (p. 75). Deficit thinking has profound implications for the educational relationships between White teacher and Black students. Deficit thinking is a function of racism as practiced by White teachers who have apply an inherit superiority to use an educational system of exploitation and power to oppress Black males (Lorde, 1992; Marable, 1992). Deficit thinking then becomes a racial microaggressive tool, which when experienced by Black males results in feelings of isolation, self-doubt, and frustration

(Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Racial microaggressions based on prejudicial White beliefs of teachers not only impede the learning process, they also "prevent educational stakeholders from recognizing and acknowledging their student's strengths" (A. Allen et al., 2013, p. 122), which leads to ramifications that are immeasurable. Racial microaggressive acts are problematic due to being a symptom of the overarching campus racial climate, which is often indicative of the negative historic treatment of Black males by Whites within American educational settings (Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011). The cumulative impact of racial microaggressions on Black males negative impacts self-image (e.g., identity development), academic performance and social navigation skills (Solórzano et al., 2000; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Examining how Black males respond to racial microaggressions by White teachers and administrators at culturally diverse high school settings contributes to developing clear pathways of support. At the same time they demonstrate the necessity of educating White teachers and administrators about proper ways for engaging these students. Exploring the navigation strategies used by Black males to avert racial microaggressions was the impetus for this study.

When considering the extent to which African American male social mobility and positive academic performance are obstructed by culturally deficit White teacher interpretations of Black male behaviors, it is important to consider the effects of racial microaggressions on these students (Q. Allen, 2012; Cokley, 2006). African American males who endure racial microaggressions have experienced a negative sense of self and racial identity due to White teachers viewing these students as criminals who behave in what White teachers perceive to be aggressive, threatening ways (Q. Allen, 2012; Henfield, 2011). Considering the intersectionality of race and gender is essential in determining how interlocking systems of oppression and privilege influence the experiences of Black males within both high school educational and social locations.

This research uses a qualitative collective case study to explore how African American males strategically respond to the racial microaggressions of White teachers and administrators in their high school. Drawing upon data from six participants' experiences, this study contributes to previous research by offering Black male student racial microaggression avoidance narratives concerning how to navigate high school educational environments where White teachers view them in intellectual and culturally deficit terms. The strategies the students employ in these environments and discuss in these narratives contribute to the term *racially microaggressive avoidance strategies.* Based on the findings presented in this study, I define racial microaggression avoidance strategies as having an ability to identify racial microaggressive sources (e.g., White teachers)

then developing strategies of avoidance (e.g. utilizing peers) in efforts to limit exposure to racial trauma.

Although *Black* and *African American* are not typically synonymous, based on the responses of participants, as well as how they framed themselves as self-identifying with both terms, for the purpose of this study the two terms are used interchangeably.

QUESTIONS DURING THE STUDY

This study is based on the overarching query: How do African American males experience racial microaggressions in a high school with a diverse student body? Subsequent lines of query focus on the following:

1. How do African American males respond to racially microaggressive in-class teacher interactions?

2. How do African American males engage in out-of-class peer interactions in order to avert racial microaggressions?

I also asked participants questions about being involved in out-of-class extracurricular activities, expected gains from doing so, and to what extent race and gender influenced their self-perceptions of being Black.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

DEFINING RACIAL MICROAGGRESSION

Although the definition of racial microaggressions is currently applied across K–20 contexts, the initial binary framing focused on detrimental treatment of African Americans by Whites perpetrators. Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, and Willis (1978) framed racial microaggressions as subtle offenses that constituted a verification of Black inferiority based notions of White superiority (P. Davis, 1989). Recent literature extends the definition to include "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273).

Microaggressions are subdivided into microassault (e.g., name-calling), microinsult (e.g., demeaning racial heritage), microinvalidation (e.g., being complimented for speaking good English), and environmental macromicroaggresions, (e.g., all university buildings named after White males) (Sue et. al, 2007). Within educational contexts racial microaggressions "are filtered through layers of racial stereotypes. That is, any negative actions by or deficiencies noted among one or more African American students are used to justify pejorative perceptions about all

African American students" (Solorzano et al., 2000, p. 68). Solorzano et al.'s (2000) findings indicate that racial microaggressions are detrimental to African American males in learning environments and impairs the performance of people of color across middle and high school secondary education environments (Q. Allen, 2012; Henfield, 2011; Omi & Winant, 1994). Whether in urban areas where students of color comprise a numerical majority or in suburban schools where they are few in number, racial microaggressions are harmful when perpetrated by White teachers. Learning how racial microaggressions impact African American males is useful because it provides a template for creating systemic supports to rebuff hostile White teachers and education environments that impinge upon the intellectual, cultural, and academic growth of this student demographic.

APPLIED RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

The current body of literature about African American male secondary educational experiences, concerning racial microaggressions, is primarily situated within the intersection of two categories. *Structural* pertains to systemic policies and climates (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Vega et al., 2012). *Individual* discusses teacher curriculum and deficit thinking (Q. Allen; 2012; Ighodaro & Wiggan, 2011; Landsman & Lewis, 2011). The first focuses on educational disenfranchisement related to systemic racism. Lewis, Bonner, Butler, and Joubert (2010) asserts that historically marginalized populations disproportionally receive greater punitive repercussions when compared to their White peers, and are punished harsher for less serious acts of delinquency (McFadden, Marsh, Prince, & Hwang, 1992; Shaw & Braden, 1990). Further studies explore perceptions of teachers caring little about Black male learning, administrators who disproportionately suspend Black males at greater rates than their White male peers and ever increasing expulsion rates of Black males for minor infractions (Howard, 2008; Noguera, 2003; Skiba & Noam, 2001). Along these same lines, Black males within secondary schools are frequently academically tracked into less rigorous courses, which denigrates their educational experiences thereby placing this group of students in further jeopardy of being unprepared to enter college (A. Allen et al., 2013). Being underprepared also has cultural connotations that are present in secondary classrooms where curriculum violence occurs. According to Ighodaro and Wiggan (2011), curriculum violence is representative of centering majoritarian values and narratives as relevant while excluding the truths of people color with the purpose of continuing oppression. These school institutional practices, which are coupled with teacher cultural biases, only serve to disadvantage

Black males systemically and individually. Although structural and individual factors shape the matriculation of African American males throughout secondary education, knowing how these students respond is imperative if K–12 schools are to aid in assuring Black male persistence.

STRUCTURAL EXAMINATION

Structural impediments pertain to high school or district policies, practices, or climates that create limited educational access for African American male students in secondary educational environments. Due to race Black males have fewer opportunities for exposure to STEM role models than White classmates and lack encouragement to enroll in advanced courses (Atwater, 2000; Farkas, 2003). These are examples of racial microaggressive exclusionary structural impediments that limit Black males full exposure to secondary education. If Black males are frequently being expelled, thereby removed from classroom learning, they are missing valuable instructional time. A. Allen, Scott, and Lewis (2013) postulated that racial microaggressions are eminent at the urban school- and district-level within in the whole of K–12, which provides a negative systemic effect on Black males and how they obtain an education. Even in instances when Black males are included in learning they encounter racial microaggressive expectation to underachieve, and are academically tracked out of college readiness courses (A. Allen, Scott, & Lewis, 2013). The investigative findings of Werblow, Urick, and Duesbery's (2013) study illuminate the fact that high school students in lower track academic courses were 60% more likely to drop out than their peers. In highlighting systemic patterns of exclusion against Black males, Raffaele Mendez and Knoff (2003) found almost half of students suspended in middle school fit this demographic, which supports the findings of Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, Feggins-Azziz, and Chung (2005) that disproportionate suspension patterns are independently predicted by race. These study findings are representative of persisting problems in secondary educational climates where Black males are treated in a racially microaggressive exclusionary manner while receiving excessive reprimands by school stakeholders.

In concert with the previously mentioned racial microaggression literature, race-based systemic limits to educational access position Black males as not only inadequately prepared to enter college but also limits their exposure to the gamut of high-paying, career-seeking options as adults due to not experiencing the fullness of a K–12 education. Further examples of race-based structural impediments focus on Black males being overly referred to mental health services and disproportionately disciplined at higher rates than their White peers for similar violations

(Hinshaw & Lee, 2003; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Skiba & Reece, 2000; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009). The issues of disproportionate school disciplinary patterns, which are represented by elevated levels of missed instructional time due to suspension or detention, negatively affect academic outcomes of Black males (Lewis et al., 2010). Although these studies provide examples of how African American male students are excluded from learning opportunities based on being Black, what remains unexplored are the psychological ramifications of lower academic performance as a result of being targeted by White administrator disciplinary practices. Moreover, books like A. A. Ferguson's (2001) *Bad Boys* and Reyes' (2006) *Discipline, Achievement and Race: Is Zero Tolerance the Answer?* confirm that Black males are highly reprimanded, criminalized, and expected by teachers and staff to exhibit rambunctious classroom disciplinary problems. These examples identify racial microaggressive systemic practices that place Black males in jeopardy of being adversely treated by White teachers, administrators, and staff to the point where their persistence is in question. Racial microaggressive educational outcomes, based on systemic deficit perceptions of Black males, negatively influence the interactions these students have with school officials and how they chose to engage in or disconnect from obtaining an education (Q. Allen, 2010; Mateu-Gelabert & Lune, 2007; Shujaa, 1994). Regardless of the numerous origins of Black male discontent with secondary education, these students are repeatedly treated by schools as a source of trepidation, and not viewed as the victims of indifferent, culturally biased treatment.

INDIVIDUAL EXAMINATION

When considering how Black males experience secondary education, two areas of emphasis are discussed across the literature pertaining to curriculum and White teacher deficit thinking. A. Allen, Scott, and Lewis (2013) frame hegemonic curriculum as "the ways in which curriculum in schools have been shaped to reflect the interest of the dominant social class" (p. 120), which frames White culture as representative of the dominant social class. Sharing this perspective, Ighodaro and Wiggan (2011) view the application of culturally biased curriculum as an act of violence that is based on "the deliberate manipulation of academic programming in a manner that ignores or compromises the intellectual and psychological well-being learners" (p. 2) who are typically students of color. Du Bois (1989/1903) explained how Africans were initially viewed by White dominant American culture as deficit, which justified their chattel enslavement and subsequent exclusion from K–20 learning opportunities. Culturally deficit thinking, which positions Black males as descendants

of an inherently inferior people, still functions across a variety of secondary context. Ethnocentric, Eurocentric culturally deficit thinking about Black males elevates Whiteness without mentioning the history of racism "a system of ignorance, exploitation and power used to oppress African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians, and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color" (Marable, 1992, p. 5). When assessing the impact of curriculum on Black male students it is important to note White teacher perceptions and racial macroaggressive actions are central to classroom climate, and when coupled with racial biases reinforce educational inequalities by White teachers against students of color (A. Allen et al., 2013; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; White, 2012).

In effort to counteract the effects of culturally deficit thinking by White teachers, numerous scholars have offered culturally responsive teaching as a remedy (Ford & Grantham, 2003; hooks, 1994; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). The seminal work of Gay's (2000) framing of culturally responsive teaching serves as the template for antideficit thinking by validating, respecting, and learning from the cultures of students of color. The need for reframing the worth of "othered" groups by White teachers (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Vaught & Castagno, 2008) is reflected in additional literature that not only recognizes the pervasiveness of Whiteness but also acknowledges how Whiteness damages students of color by being normalized in educational spaces (Gusa, 2012; Picower, 2009). White teachers influence how education operates and they also shape how systemic inequity plays out in the classroom (Leonardo, 2009). White educators influence the racial identity development of Black students, self-efficacy, and feelings of invisibility are well documented as contingent upon direct interactions (Q. Allen, 2010; C. Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006; DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Good & Nichols, 2001; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Tatum, 1997). Concerning school social contexts, Osyerman, Gant, and Ager (1995) found that hostile high school environments had negative gendered effects for African American males, and that these explicit impacts shaped how Black males viewed themselves. When encountering racism and racial microaggressions in K–12 schools, Black males experience feelings of invisibility due to pejorative stereotypically based teacher attitudes (Q. Allen, 2010). White teachers who exhibit stereotypically based attitudes not only reinforce racially hostile climates and learning environments but also severely limits Black male collegiate trajectories. The Osyerman, Gant, and Ager (1995) and Q. Allen (2010) study findings reaffirm what we already know; when Black males are under racial siege in K–20 environments, their responses are often detrimental. However, this is not always the case.

Despite being viewed as disrespectful, aggressive and defiant by White

educators (J. E. Davis, 2003; R. F. Ferguson, 2005; Solórzano et al., 2000; Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003) Black males are resilient and still persist. Hemmings (1996) found high-achieving African American males are confronted with having to navigate academic and K–12 contextual expectations, most of which require them to adopt mainstream cultural traits that are incongruent with their Black identities. Within the context of feeling the need to adopt mainstream cultural norms is the concept of creating African American fictive kinship (Fordham, 1988). This allows Black students to develop Black communal relationships as places of cultural validation and support despite not being blood related.

As a result of Black males negative interactions with White educators, we better understand how these students are disenfranchised throughout secondary education. Across the previous research findings, Black students perceive school as not viewing "them as allies in education or as victims of the disruptive environment. Instead, they are frequently treated as the source of the problem, as hopeless cases against whom the school struggles" (Mateu-Gelabert & Lune, 2007, p. 188). Being treated as the K–12 problem source is a phenomenon experienced by Black males across a variety of systemic and individual racial microaggressions in secondary educational spaces. The common thread of the structural and individual research is that race- and gender-based impingements adversely impact the Black males holistically within K–12. This study contributes to the limited body of literature about the purposeful application of Black male avoidance strategies as a result of experiencing racial microaggressions in high school learning environments. For the purpose of this study, the Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994) definition of resilience is applied as a "heightened likelihood of success in school and in other aspects of life, despite environmental adversities, brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences" (p. 5) in racial terms to frame the navigational strategies of participants.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

This particular study examined the intersection of K–12 campus racial climate and racial microaggressions. Critical Race Theory (CRT) and multidimensionality (Mutua, 2013), as an extension of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), are used to identify: (a) racial systemic impediments impacting how African American males navigated their high school learning environment and (b) how African American males overcame these impediments. CRT was applied to challenge "the dominant discourse on race and racism as it relates to education" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 2) while also identifying the subjugation of people of color (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Tate, 1997; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009),

namely African American males. CRT was used to interrogate racism in the following four ways:

1. by theorizing about race along with other forms of subordination and the intersectionality of racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression in school curriculum;

2. by challenging dominant ideologies that call for objectivity and neutrality in educational research (CRT posits that notions of neutrality typically serve to camouflage the interests and ideology of dominant groups in the U.S., and that they should be challenged and dismantled;

3. by offering counterstorytelling as a liberatory and credible methodological tool in examining racial oppression; counterstorytelling has a long and rich history in communities of color that has utilized oral means of conveying stories and struggles that are often overlooked by those in positions of power, and it draws explicitly on experiential knowledge; and

4. by incorporating transdiciplinary bodies of knowledge to better understand various manifestations of discrimination. (Howard, 2008, pp. 943–964)

My application of CRT served to parse out race and gendered occurrences of racial microaggressions (P. Davis, 1989; Pierce et al., 1978; Sue et al., 2007) as experienced by Black males and in determining how they constructed and applied avoidance. CRT supported the conclusions of previous scholars (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Leonardo, 2009; Marx, 2006; Tatum, 1994) that was K–12 teachers replicate dominant White cultural norms and behaviors harmful to Black students (Howard, 2008; Warren, 2013; Warren & Hotchkins, 2014).

For the purpose of recognizing the intersection of race and gender of Black males in this study, multidimensionality (Hutchinson, 2001; Mutua, 2013) was applied as an extension of Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) was initially used "to denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences" (p. 1244). In broader terms, Bowleg (2008) frames intersectionality as the:

notion that social identities and social inequality based on ethnicity, sexual orientation and sex/gender (and one could add a host of other identities such as class, disability status, etc.) are interdependent and mutually constitutive, rather than independent and unidimensional [or additive]. (p. 312)

Mutua (2013) uses multidimensionality to consider how Black men, as a multidimensional whole, experience gendered racism at the intersection of race and gender within the context of being racially profiled in public spaces. Mutua (2013) views multidimensionality as "a framework that guides analysis of patterns and interactions between complex hierarchal systems" (p. 354) requiring observations and comprehensive contextual description about the experiential knowledge gathered by those within said systems. In short, while both Black males and females experience racism, racism is gendered in ways that sometimes result in Black men and women being treated differently, depending on the context. For instance, though both Black males and females are subject to racial profiling by police, Black males have a higher incident of police surveillance and profiling in the public sphere because in part, men in public spaces—on the streets—may be seen as more dangerous than women (Mutua, 2013). In this study, multidimensionality is applied to recognize that Black males' experiences in school reflect views of them as sinister, among other things, and thus they suffer gendered racism in schools. Multidimensionality posits that the various forms of identity and oppression "inextricably and forever intertwined" (Hutchinson, 2001, p. 310).

Therefore, in attempting to examine racial microaggressive types, I utilized participants' narratives to amplify their voices by informing the current dominant educational discourse about Black male in high school settings. As a result, this study advances previous literature by offering empirical evidence about the structural, individual, and environmental impediments faced and overcome by African American males in culturally diverse educational contexts.

METHODOLOGY

To understand how African American male students responded to racial microaggressions, while attending a culturally diverse high school, qualitative research was used to capture individual participant voices to gain a deeper perspective about racial microaggressive experiences. Conducting a study that focuses on multiple individualistic lived experiences, I am mindful that "human actions cannot be understood unless the meaning that humans assign to them is understood" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 53). Conducting a comparative case study allowed for narrative expression, which informed the experiential meanings participants assigned to enduring racial microaggressions. In line with understanding the value of participants' meaning-making, I realized comparative case studies are utilized when collecting in-depth information through multiple sources to understand participants' meanings while "closing in" on their real

life situations (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Merriam, 1998). This comparative case study contributes to the scholarly discussion about individualized African American male student experiences occurring at a specific high school.

Yin (2009) posited case studies render robust findings through using multiple opposed to single cases. In this study six participants were used as individual units of analysis. Since CRT recognizes the experiential knowledge of people of color as legitimate, via explicitly using such methods as storytelling to gather narratives (Bell, 1987, 1992, 1996) applying case study to document participants' lived experiences sufficed. Additionally, two brief in-person follow-up interviews helped clarify emergent themes, and two observations of each participant contextualized the interview data. One focus group was conducted. During data gathering, analytic and self-reflective memos were juxtaposed to enhance and broaden the data corpus by allowing for the consideration of my reactions to participants' narratives, as well as cross-referencing of codes and emerging categories.

PROCEDURES AND PARTICIPANTS

Friends High School (FHS) is situated within a Mountain West state. FHS is the oldest school in the state, and due to White attrition, is now situated within a demographically diverse community. FHS demographic data indicated there are 68% students of color, 22% of which are African/African American, and 32% White in attendance. FHS has a Global Baccalaureate College-bound Preparatory (GBCP) program, in which only one African American male student was enrolled. He was a participant in this study. Additionally, the GBCP program has 72% White student enrollees, while students of color are comprised of 28%. Although students of color constitute a majority at FHS, in the GBCP, their numbers are nearly three times smaller than that of White students. Informational flyers were strategically posted on campus informing possible participants about the study and focus group opportunity. After being contacted by 11 potential participants, each was given permission, assent, and consent forms to be signed and returned. Eight males returned the necessary forms, but only six participants were ultimately interviewed and observed. The remaining two declined for personal reasons. Of those who participated, three held peer-elected positions, while the other three did not hold leadership positions but were athletes. Participants' demographic data is presented in Table 1.1.

Purposeful criterion sampling was used to gather participants who met a predetermined set of criterion of importance (Patton, 1990). These criterion include: (1) self-identified African American; (2) currently in curricular or extracurricular activities; and (3) attended Friends High School. These criteria were selected to attract African American participants who

Table 1.1. Participant Demographic Information

Name	Organization	Title	College-aspiring	Age	GPA
Will	Basketball Team	Athlete	Yes	16	2.76
Carlton	Track Team	Athlete	Yes	18	3.23
Phillip	Student Government	Vice President	Yes	17	3.10
Geoffrey	Actor Guild	Actor	Undetermined	16	2.68
Jaz	Wrestler	Athlete	Yes	17	3.05
Nicky	Show Choir	Singer	Undetermined	15	3.50

were not only involved in school activities but also interested in sharing their perceptions about how they experience the high school environment. I spoke with the students, prior to the interviews, about their desires to offer in-depth information regarding their experiences. Participants selected interview locations and dates. Participant identities and confidentiality were protected by providing pseudonyms.

DATA COLLECTION

Two face-to-face, in-depth, 60–80 minute interviews were conducted with each participant during a 10-week timeframe (413 minutes), and two 30–60 minute in-person follow-up interviews (540 minutes). Five 75 minute in-class and lunchroom social observations of each participant contextualized the interview data (375 minutes). A 73-minute focus group was utilized for member checking purposes. Total time invested in data collection was approximately 23.5 hours. Participants were asked about racial experiences and interactions with White teachers, peers, and coaches to investigate key moments that shaped their gendered perspectives. Questions were open-ended, which allowed participants to state experiences in a transparent manner (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Interviews were audiotaped then transcribed. Observation notes and memos were included in the data corpus.

DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

To develop this collective case study, interview transcripts, observation notes, and focus group data were analyzed by applying CRT tenets to confirm participants' interactions with racism as endemically present in the form of racial microaggressions as communicated by White educators. To analyze and document the educational experiences of Black males the following CRT analytical constructs were employed to help make sense

of the data: (1) the intersectionality of race and racism; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; and (3) the centrality of experiential knowledge. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) and multidimensionality (Hutchinson, 2001; Mutua, 2013) were applied to parse out how participants interpreted being Black and male when interacting with White teachers. To illustrate, Black male descriptions of White teacher interactions as racially micro-aggressive were scrutinized, centered as valid, and confirmed by historic comparisons of racism used to subjugate African Americans throughout K–12. In these ways, the CRT frame served as the comparative lens.

In accordance with using cross-case synthesis techniques to analyze cases individually, then comparatively (Yin, 2009) for categorical convergence (Eisenhardt, 1989) to compare behavioral similarities (Stake, 1995) within the high school context. CRT and multidimensionality served as experiential filters. Data points (e.g., transcription data) were categorized by pseudonym names to assure data interpretation matched participant narratives. Creswell's (2007) data analysis techniques were applied and consisted of gathering, preparing, and organizing data, "then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes" (p. 148). In order to arrange data in thematic segments, I exhaustively familiarized myself by listening to the interviews numerous times and rereading the transcripts. Agar (1980) proposed researchers should "read transcripts in their entirety several times. Immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts" (p. 103) which bolsters the organization of data into categories.

I ensured inductive analysis (Patton, 2002), which led to identifying salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A constant comparative, open line-by-line coding method was utilized to arrive at themes rendered from participant data (Merriman, 1998). In-class and general interactive observations with White teachers and peers were included in the data corpus and used as a supplement to interviews by comparing Black male narratives to bolster participants perceptions of their interactions within their culturally diverse high school. In doing so, 12 salient themes emerged, which were coded analytically into three main findings, which took into account emergent racially microaggressive commonalities and differences to provide substantiated meaning and interpretation of participant experiences (Richards, 2009).

CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Multiple strategies of rigor and trustworthiness were established to avoid distorting participant voices. I employed the following strategies: (1) triangulation; (2) peer debriefing; (3) reflexivity; and (4) member checking (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Triangulation was achieved by comparing coded interview and focus group data (Merriman, 1998), direct observation, field notes (Yin, 2009), and previous research concerning how African American males persist within racist educational situations. These multiple data points revealed the uniqueness of racial microaggressions as experienced by participants. The primary purpose of triangulation is to allow varieties of data to confirm participants' experiences of the phenomenon. Through triangulation, I determined how participants experienced White teachers and peers within a culturally diverse high school. After completing data analysis and arriving at themes, findings were distributed to three peer researchers, with whom I met individually in an effort to gain insights from multiple peer reviewers (Seale, 1999). Reflexivity was conducted to make certain that I, as researcher, was able to understand how having a critical scholarly ontology, epistemology, and axiology influenced the research design, study site selection, interaction with participants, and discussion of findings. Upon arriving at the findings, member checking with participants was conducted and transcripts were reviewed in an effort to ensure that emergent themes were an accurate depiction of how African American males experience racial microaggressions. Doing so allowed for a greater understanding of participant's avoidance responses.

RESULTS

Using CRT aided in determining participant's primary sources of racial microaggressions as directly resulting from interactions with White teachers. These are individuals whom the participant perceived often targeted and discriminated against them in a variety of ways. Participants viewed White teachers employing deficit thinking as a way of reinforcing dominant ideologies about a lack of Black male educational engagement. Participants perceived White teachers to also view them in monolithic yet multidimensional wholes—Black males, which facilitated their experiences of gendered racism (Mutua, 2013). African American males in this study described two distinct avoidance-related strategies as a response to the racial microaggressions experienced by White teachers, and administrators in their culturally diverse high school. Integrative Mobility (IM) and Behavioral vacillation (BV) constitute avoidance-related strategies

in response to White teachers racially microaggressive acts of Monolithic Targeting (MT). Participants' responses to racial microaggressions are listed in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2. Responsive Strategies to Racial Microaggressions

Monolithic Targeting (MT) Racial Microaggression(s)	Behavioral Vacillation (BV) Avoidance Strategy	Integrative Mobility (IM) Avoidance Strategy
Participant perceptions that White teachers viewed Black males in collective deficit terms (e.g., incapable of exceeding expectations and not interested in being successful academically). Participants these perceptions, and actions as racial microaggressions. Example: Participants were verbally labeled by White teachers as being mischievous, having problematic behaviors and disengaged with the educational process.	Student's ability to adjust their behavior, based on proximity to the high school environment, in order to avoid reinforcing teacher perceptions of stereotypical African American male behavior. Example: Participants wore hats to the back, baggier pants and listened to music loudly when away from school, while when attending FHS they dressed up, and rarely displayed headwear.	Responsive actions taken by Black males when they formed meaningful alliances with racialized student populations not within African American social circles. Example: Participants used racially diverse out-of-class learning spaces as supportive encouragement. Peer interactions provided opportunities to receive academic support while reflecting on the value of social acceptance.

MONOLITHIC TARGETING

> I feel like actions really get a teacher's attention. If a group of African American males does something bad or doesn't pay attention it gives the teacher the impression that "we" don't care. Unfortunately, those rare instances are pushed onto the rest of us so teachers think the next group of Black kids is just like the first. They have an eye for disruption, but it only watches us [Black males]. (Jaz)

Monolithic targeting refers to perceptions of participants that White teachers framed Black males in collective deficit terms, including being incapable of exceeding expectations and not interested in being successful academically, based on a singular experience. Monolithic targeting was interpreted by African American males as a source of racial microaggressions when delivered by White teachers and administrators. The above quote from Jaz speaks to his interpretation of teacher actions as unfairly grouping Black male behaviors, which rarely allow participants to be treated as individuals. Participants were labeled by White teachers as being involved in mischief, involved with problematic behavior, and disengaged with the

educational process. Within the classroom context, participants acknowledged perceiving themselves as being viewed in troublesome terms as a direct result of race and gender coupling that was based on modern Black male stereotypes (e.g., unintelligent athletes and rappers). This theme related to in-class teacher interactions where African American males were also viewed as disruptive or intellectual outliers. Monolithic targeting is defined as teachers acting on deficit framing of Black males by viewing and treating students in collective ways that limited participants' willingness to be involved in class. The awareness of monolithic targeting served as the catalyst for Black males enacting avoidance strategies to counteract the racial microaggressions of White teachers.

Jaz's perspective is indicative of feeling like his actions were directly connected to other African American males regardless of his association. In slight contrast, Geoffrey added the following concerning his experiences:

> I'm always the only Black male in my classes, plus I'm an actor. For me, I think teachers think I'm this super kid who never messes up, but when I do make mistakes they come down on me hard. It's like they see me as different than the other Black kids in normal classes, like I'm special. The GBCP [Global Baccalaureate College-bound Preparatory] program is hard so I have to get my homework done and do it well. At first some teachers acted surprised when my grades came back, one even asked if I had a private tutor. I'm as smart as everyone else so I don't know what that was about.

Negative teacher behavior, in the form of monolithic targeting, reinforced what participants perceived as a confrontational in-class environment, which served as the catalyst for not only behaving differently, but also avoiding racial microaggressions experienced. During observations, White teachers responded as surprised when participants did well on assignments. To illustrate, upon grading Geoffrey's test, his teacher responded, "Excellent paper! You must be more Denzel than Hustle & Flow!" Interactions like these showed participants that even in exceeding expectations they were considered as exceptionally different from the rest of Black males.

Carlton had a different experience with his teacher than Geoffrey: "I frequently get asked about my affiliations with other Black males who are assumed to be involved in illegal activity. One time I got sent to the office for wearing all red to class. Really? I don't bang!" Nicky had a similar narrative: "How can I get sent to detention for asking someone if they took notes? Problem is I can't contest it. The system don't allow for teachers to be wrong so I have to leave. Getting sick of it!" These

occurrences contributed to participants in this study feeling singled out due to disproportionately getting in trouble and sent to the office more than other peers. Not being present during learning opportunities, after being removed from class, exacerbated the Black male belief that they did not take education seriously.

Monolithic targeting speaks to why participants viewed interactions with White teachers as combative. Carlton explained "They'll be on you like completely. Like calling you out when you're not even guilty of doing stuff wrong. So like every other day I'd be getting you in trouble. It's unfair!" Phillip interjected:

> Like some times when people are talking teachers look at me. Someone could throw paper or be laughing and I get looked at. Teachers never say good things. Do one bad thing and I get watched for the rest of the week. It's like some teachers are waiting for me to mess up so they can send me to the office. I get tired of going to the office!

Participants perceived White teacher actions as a response to viewing them monolithically. Unfortunately, participants were expected to behave negatively like other Black males, yet seen as oddly exemplary if they exceeded expectations. According to participants, this double standard was only applied to Black males "because we had to prove we belonged there despite our academic prowess" said Geoffrey. Carlton, Phillip, and Geoffrey recognized that White teachers having the power to punish them based on gendered racism (Mutua, 2013) not only confirmed systemic patterns of exclusion against Black males (Raffaele Mendez & Knoff, 2003) but also served as microassaults (Sue et al., 2007) to remind participants to "stay in our place or be put in it!" (Nicky).

The monolithic targeting exhibited by teachers reinforces research positioning White teachers as having inherent racial biases (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Sleeter, 1993; Tatum, 1994) that were rooted in deficit thinking (A. Allen et al., 2013; Landsman & Lewis, 2011; Yosso, 2005). To this point, during observations, whenever Black males were ignored or removed from class, doing so separated them from peers rendering them unable to engage intellectually within the classroom setting. Teacher-enforced absences from class served as a self-fulfilling prophesy that Black males were unable to stop but could counteract by attempting to avoid teacher responses through disengaging in class. Participants perceived being ignored or removal from class as race-, gender-based, purposeful, and rooted in bias, prejudice, or discrimination, which in some instances led to negative academic ramifications for Black males like receiving zeros for late assignments (Ogbu, 2003). Consequently, White teacher monolithic

targeting resulted in participants' perceiving themselves as being under hypersurveillance (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007) and having to respond with behavioral vacillation in order to further avoid racial microaggressive exchanges with White teachers.

Finally, both classroom observations and the perceptions of study participants confirmed that White teachers engaged in monolithic targeting. Because participants were aware that they were targets of racism (e.g., deficit-thinking-informed racial microaggressions) their perceptions informed strategies they employed and itself formed a basis for their practiced avoidance.

BEHAVIORAL VACILLATION

> It is better to be invisible and left alone than to be myself, and be watched, then singled-out, then made a mockery of for little or no obvious reasons. I just fade to black and try not to be noticed, then turn up when I am away from school! (Nicky)

Nicky's engagement in behavioral vacillation is a proactive strategy meant to avoid or minimize negative interactions with White teachers. Behavioral vacillation is defined as a student's ability to adjust their behavior, based on proximity to the high school environment, in order to avoid reinforcing teacher perceptions of stereotypical African American male behavior. Nicky's perspective highlights his belief that muting his Blackness meant he would not be bothered and would be less likely to have to deal with the repercussions of being authentically Black, which was enduring additional racial microaggressions. Study participants described the high school environment as a less safe place for them to 'be' authentically Black and male. Specifically, while attending FHS, participants made a conscious effort to avoid drawing negative attention to themselves by culturally withdrawing from the environment. However, when away from FHS, participants authentic selves were more pronounced. To illustrate, some participants wore hats to the back, baggier pants and listened to music loudly when away from school, while when attending FHS they dressed up and rarely displayed headwear. Behavioral vacillation was the first form of avoidance Black males deployed to create environmental buffers against what they perceived as unsafe spaces and persons at FHS. Carlton described his high school versus off campus behavior: "Outside of school I can be me! Sarcastic or whatever, but not here [School]. It is bad enough I have to tip-toe at school because I know they watching so I give them the calm, relaxed dude." Phillip provided a similar insight about how he interacts in class:

> Usually I'm really social, but not in class. I'm not really worried about talking to people unless they are talking to me. I'm not going to initiate a conversation, don't want to get in trouble. Plus, I know after school I can get back to doing me minus the scrutiny so why interact?

Phillip's response speaks of his hesitancy to interact due to an assumption that doing so will lead to his being reprimanded. Will offered a similar perspective that explained his hesitancy to be himself in school: "I love Hip Hop, it is a part of who I am, but these teachers see it as negative so I can't bring all of myself to class or school because I don't got time for the extra!" Each participant spoke of being authentic with friends outside of school, yet consciously adjusting the ways in which they engaged persons and their surroundings while attending school. Jaz spoke to this point:

> Last year there was a fight between a group of African Americans and Mexicans, all of them got in trouble! What was funny was that since then sometimes when I'm in a group of African American males the teachers immediately tell us to go to class or ask us "staying out of trouble?" Because they expect me to do dirt, I try to lay low.

In furthering Hemmings' (1996) findings, where African American males who experienced having to adopt mainstream cultural traits, participants used behavioral vacillation as a strategy to deflect attention away from themselves, thereby decreasing the expectation that they would be involved in class or otherwise. These behavioral vacillations were in response to being seen, by White teachers, in adversarial terms (Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007), which positioned participants as combative, thereby justifying in-class racial microaggressive commentary and treatment by White teachers. Similarly, participants were highly aware of their individual behaviors. Plus, they understood White teacher expectations of African American males to be lesser than any other racial group of males in the high school. Will added Jaz's point by stating the following: "It's not just the teachers, it's the security officers too. It's kinda like they see all Black males as wanting to do something bad even though all of us haven't kicked up dust!" During general observations White teachers often made comments to students about being better citizens despite some participants having never been in trouble outside of class. Furthermore, participants decreased their volume in the halls when White teachers were present and made an effort to be seen as studious by reading newspapers at lunch to reinforce the notion that they had global concerns.

In having these perceptions, participants believed in a need to avoid

trouble by "blending in" in an effort to curtail the likelihood of White teacher racial aggressions. Moreover, behavioral vacillation stemmed from participants' ability to adjust their behaviors (introverted versus extroverted), based on the context (in-class versus out of class), and with whom they were interacting (friends versus associates). Although they saw themselves as confident, cocky, funny, and outgoing, yet humble, participants often toned down their behavior, especially in class, in an effort to not bring attention to themselves for worry of hearing racially insensitive comments or experiencing further racial isolation. Consequently, participants' purposeful actions to mute themselves served to decrease the amount of racial microaggressions experienced due to further limiting the possibility of hostile White teacher interactions. Moreover, in attempting to negotiate perceived environmental hostility, for the sake of averting conflict, participants' attempted to avoid what they deemed White teacher's viewed as stereotypically Black behavior (e.g., speaking slang). Being able to switch behaviors, as a survival mechanism, was referred to "avoiding the drama" (Nicky) of high school and White teachers who were perceived as not invested in African American males' successes.

INTEGRATIVE MOBILITY

Integrative mobility refers to responsive actions taken by Black males when they form meaningful alliances with racialized student populations not within African American social circles. While attending classes at FHS participants cited White teachers as central to impeding their learning processes by applying deficit thinking (e.g., viewing them as a distraction) and acting in ways that led to a lack of Black male participation (e.g., repeatedly sending them to the office). Will lamented, "One day at lunch I talked to four other dudes [Black] who were sent to the office like I was as little as being persistent when asking clarifying questions, which was seen by Ms. Gilcrease as being disrespectful." This type of action was interpreted by participants as purposeful race-based isolation. In response, participants created alliances with peers of all racial groups to provide out-of-class learning spaces and supportive encouragement. Interactions with peers provided participants with opportunities to receive additional academic support while reflecting on the value of social acceptance. These opportunities created moments for determining the best ways to gather information about environmental resistance and supports. Furthermore, the peers of Black males acted as conduits for building educational and cultural networks across race and gender. Moreover, Black males enacted integrative mobility as the second form of avoidance in attempt to avert racial microaggressions experienced when interacting with White teachers.

Although participants' primary source of racial microaggressions was White teachers, each reflected on the contextual racial microaggressive incidents (e.g., in-class versus extracurricular) they experienced within their culturally diverse high school. Jaz reminisces:

> During Black History Month I wanted to do a Negro Leagues paper, but I was told this is Utah, the district does not acknowledge that month. Had my friend Jean not came to my defense and explained that Black history was American history, I probably would've got in trouble. Mr. Lyon was salty and ignored me for the rest of the class.

This example describes not only individual racial microaggressive treatment, but also highlights a systemic level of cultural invalidation that was perceived by each participant at FHS. Nicky explained, "It is difficult fitting in at FHS. The teachers are all White so I don't connect well in class. Most days it's like I'm invisible so I link up with different kids to be seen and heard here." Carlton confirmed this point:

> If I didn't have friends like Stephane [White] and David, this Chinese dude, I'd definitely be in trouble in class. They keep me attached to not only the assignments, but try to get me involved. We study together. Always get in the same work group. They ask my questions for me because teachers usually ignore me, but responds to them. That works for me!

Observations confirmed Carlton's perspective, as I watched numerous instances when participants raised their hands to answer questions, but were passed over and not recognized by White teachers. Jaz spoke of noticeable teacher similarities between FHS and his previous high school: "It is the same at FHS because teachers aren't really invested in my education. I try to create a rapport, but most are slow to respond so I feel like they don't care. They got favorites, I'm not one." To this point, Will lamented, "One time I stayed after class to ask about how to complete this trigonometry problem and my teacher said 'shouldn't you be more concerned with triggernometry?' After that remark I never asked for help again." Perspectives like these contributed to participants' belief that their ability to integrate fully in class was limited by White teachers who appeared disinterested by not personally engaging Black males, which is a form of microinvalidation (Sue et al., 2007). When teachers did engage, participants interpreted the interactions as combative. Phillip explains:

> In history class Mr. Bias referred to Africa as the 'Dark Continent' so I began to speak about African greatness and he wasn't having it. He mentioned about how although Africa was the cradle of humanity, Europe was the point of innovation and ingenuity. He always dismisses my perspectives so I just zone out, turn in my work and keep it moving!

This above interaction, a microassault (Sue et al., 2007), was characteristic of exchanges with White teachers who served as examples to participants that the Black male presence, and perspectives were devalued and seen as a deficit. For instance, in comparison to other students, who were frequently asked questions, chosen to lead exercises, and selected as "teachers' helpers" during class, Black males were rendered invisible by never being selected to participate or sent to the office. During classroom observations, participants were rarely called on unless topics were race related, which kept them from fully interacting with teachers and peers within their educational learning environments. Additionally, participants were sent to the office or asked to stand outside of the classroom for whispering, frequently asking for explanations to assignments, or for being assumed to use cell phones for cheating on test. For these participants, integrative mobility served as a buffer to the racial isolation felt at FHS when interacting with White teachers, and also served as a realization that being successful meant having a connectedness with other racial peer groups. The racial microaggressions experienced when interacting with White teachers presents a hurtful realization that the high school classroom is not a safe, welcoming place for Black males who are attempting to learn. However, the purposeful engaging of peers, to rebuff White teacher racial microaggressions was a frequent avoidance strategy used by each study participant.

PEER INTERACTIONS

Due to Black males being the smallest numerical group, they experienced a hyperawareness to their lack of cultural representation and visibility in school and thus attempted to develop cross-cultural relationships with peers to broaden their community. Will explained, "There are too few of us [Black males] to do well in school if we never reach out, that means I purposefully connect with others to assure my success." Phillip pointed out that "being accepted by race, is a lot easier here because of all the ethnicities. Nobody really belongs to a certain group here. I'm Black, but hang with everybody." Although Jaz agrees, his experience speaks to the freedom to access across varied peer groups, which was an infrequent option

at his previous predominantly White high school. To this point, Geoffrey described the value of having meaningful peer relationships outside of African American peer circles: "Because other students are welcoming, it's easier to fit in. I know almost every Black kid, but I also know Mexicans, Chinese and Mormons. I'm cool with everyone, which is good because it makes being here [FHS] easier." Each participant mentioned how being connected to a variety of racial friend groups aided in navigating the high school, especially when assessing which White teachers and administrator were "safe, and would treat Black males fairly" (Jaz).

Concerning peer interactions, participants found comfort in using integrative mobility to secure friendships with members of varied racial social circles, thereby enabling them to not solely depend on African American student networks. Participants' usage of integrative mobility aligns with Fordham's (1988) concept of accessing homogenous African American fictive kin as a way of creating a sense of belongingness. However, participants also used heterogeneous non-Black racial kinships to create spaces to exist within the school for the purpose combating what they experienced as "racial exclusion" (Jaz). By interacting cross-culturally participants were able to gather, vocalize, and compare ways for "how to get around" (Nicky), which provided vetted pathways toward navigating FHS or the framework for developing avoidance strategies. Phillip explained:

> Having different groups of friends is important because each person sees the school different. For instance, as a new student, I was told which White teachers don't like kids of color. The dudes I hang with have my back so I have theirs. We make sure we look out for each other, part of that is making sure we know the school rules so we talk to each other because the rules are different based on your group.

Phillip's connectedness is important because it was predicated on having a perceived freedom to interact interracially, which afforded participants opportunities to feel valued outside of the hostility experienced in classrooms. Although participants' concepts of belonging varied based on the racial constitution of each social circle, they were first and foremost aligned with attempting to avoid microaggressive interactions. Despite being most comfortable amongst Black students, using integrative mobility allowed for participation in cross cultural, fictive kin (Fordham, 1988) relationships with a variety of peers, which created moments where participants could show being Black and male as positively coupled to counter existing cultural stereotypes. When interacting with

peers in their previous predominately White high schools there was a perceived pressure to embrace normalized majoritarian norms, values, and beliefs (Ogbu, 1991; Osyerman, Gant & Ager, 1995) or face cultural isolation. However, the FHS peer environment welcomed African American male perspectives and culture, which led to participants being socially integrated across peer groups. It is also important to note that the successful social integration of Black males was in direct opposition to classroom segregation experienced when interacting with White teachers. For example, during in-class observations, although participants rarely sat together with other Black students, being ignored created a segregation of opportunity to contribute to course discussions and interactions.

DISCUSSION

Using a CRT framework, I demonstrated that African American males at a culturally diverse high school are navigating an adverse, even contentious, learning environment, one in which they withstand frequent overt racial insults, assaults, and invalidations. Enduring structural and individual racial microaggressions was achieved by participants employing integrative mobility (IM) and behavioral vacillation (BV) to avoid monolithic targeting (MT) enacted by White teachers. In using IM and BV, racial microaggressions in the form of MT were successfully mediated within participants' culturally diverse high school. Students believed using IM and BV aided in not only avoiding MT but also helped to identify peer allies and techniques for navigating their high school. IM allowed participants to build mutually beneficially sociocultural relationships across racially diverse friend groups, while BV provided moments to counteract stereotypical assumptions of Black males, which gave participants a sense of fulfillment.

CRT challenges dominant ideologies that call for objectivity and neutrality in educational research. As it pertains why Black males enacted integrative mobility (IM), CRT allows for decisively opposing notions of colorblindness, meritocracy, fairness and neutrality in education (Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 1999; Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2003). Specifically, the disproportionate disciplining of Black males, assumptions of cheating, and being ignored when wanting to contribute to classroom discussions created an unfair, exclusionary environment where race and maleness were central to how these students were treated. Applying culturally responsive classroom management strategies (Weinstein et al., 2003) would allow for an understanding of "self" and "others" within a classroom context; an acknowledgement of cultural, racial, ethnic, and class differences, and allow

for communicating with students in culturally consistent ways. Application of these practices would empower teachers to begin examining the intersection of White supremacist institutional policy, practices, White racist teaching styles and monolithic targeting (MT) as a practiced racial microaggression. As a result, teachers could apply asset-based approaches (Delano-Oriaran, 2012) to African American males, which would counter culturally deficit thinking, a form of MT, and allow these students to be seen as having strengths that bring added value to the class. Furthermore, educating teachers about how meritocracy myths are operationalized would aid in the creation of inclusive curriculum that accounts for a variety of historically marginalized viewpoints that are directly in opposition to that of the majoritarian narrative.

CRT offers counterstorytelling as a credible liberatory methodological tool in examining racial oppression. CRT is extremely useful in probing and locating points of racism within K–20 educational systems, which allow for explicitly focusing on identifying context-based racial inequities (Solorzano, 1998). When examining the behavioral vacillation (BV) of Black males attending a culturally diverse high school, CRT values their in-class racial and gendered oppressions as communicated in personal narratives. To illustrate, Black males expressing counterstories (e.g., stories that are counter to dominant interpretations of their behaviors) about how they experience racial microaggressions provides a liberatory outlet for emancipating themselves from in-class oppression as facilitated by White teachers. Additionally, doing so culturally affirms the acknowledgment their Black and male identities are overcoming gendered racism (Mutua, 2013). Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano (2007) acknowledged that within educational spaces the racial microaggressive acts Black males endure constitutes racial misandry, which is experientially synonymous with gendered racism (Mutua, 2013). When using CRT as a mechanism for pinpointing racism in education it is important to identify racist sources and the damage caused. Locating White teachers as a source of racism, through the act of monolithic targeting (MT) used as racial microaggressions, allows for Black male students to communicate the impact of adverse interactions with youth and discuss how they responded. The location process aided in the development of responsive strategies (e.g., integrative mobility and behavioral vacillation) that confirmed Black males' marginalization and proactive resistance to White teacher subjugation. Consequently, participants found ways of not being alone in their maltreatment.

Enacting the racial microaggressive avoidance strategies IM and BV allowed Black males to become empowered students who through sharing narratives amongst themselves, and with supportive peer, learned to better avoid racist sources. Black male student experiences in this study confirm

that racism and deficit-thinking influenced racial microaggressions in the form of insults, assaults, and invalidations exist even in a culturally diverse high school and are evident in the form of low expectations, disproportionate discipline, cultural disparagement, and collective deficit framing. As experienced by participants in this study "battling racial microaggressions drains the energies and enthusiasm" (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009, p. 680) of recipients, which left Black male students choosing to render themselves "invisible and left alone" (Nicky) opposed to being authentically Black and harassed. Though certainly harmed by the racism exhibited by White teachers, participants considered themselves vigilant in being able to enact racial microaggressive avoidance strategies. Black males responding in avoidant ways indicated a desire to be successful, while purposefully averting actual and potential sources of racism. Throughout their culturally diverse high school participants exhibited navigational skills in social and academic settings. Participants' experiences remained unacknowledged at the structural and individual levels within their school, although these narratives are indicative of what it means to be Black and male in secondary education.

This study's findings firmly establish that African American male monolithic targeting (MT), racial microaggressive avoidance strategies are contextually bound and enacted based on participants based on their direct proximity to racism (e.g., classroom versus hallways). Although within education, Wang et al. (1994) definition of resilience is an applicable consideration of perpetual exposure to endemic racism within educational settings, deploying purposeful racial microaggressive avoidance strategies is of the utmost concern when filtered through Black male experiences that conclude in the successful navigation of secondary educational spaces. The findings from this study are consistent with previous research that found Black males who endured racial microaggressive interactions experienced adverse psychological, physiological, and behavioral affects as a result (Harper, 2013; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Smith et al., 2011). When considering participant's multidimensionality (Mutua, 2013) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), the data illustrate that even when students of color numerically represent the majority, deficit-based racial microaggressions are present, and when aimed at students who are Black and male, these assaults, invalidations, and insults often facilitate the invisibility of Black males. FHS is a culturally diverse high school. Still, each participant had only been taught by White teachers during their high school tenure and were used to experiencing and identifying gendered racial microaggressions in class.

According to participants, they struggled with relating to their teachers and found it difficult to believe teachers cared about them as Black, male

students, which is a function of multidimensionality. Through analyzing Black male experiences through the application of multidimensionality we learn that using IM and BV as avoidance strategies allowed for not only self-removal of the hostile in-class climate but served to frame participants as less aggressive or threatening in response to the holistic altering of authentically Black behaviors. Participants being mindful of their multidimensional whole(s) influenced their movements, actions, and interactions with White teachers because Black males understood that being seen as "that" Black male could have dire consequences beyond just being sent to the office or suspension. Mutua's (2013) use of multidimensionality allowed for seeing the ways Black males used IM and BV to avoid systemic and individual oppressions that they perceived would never grant them "the fair shake" (Will) or afford the benefit of the doubt when dealing with this student group. Using multidimensionality to validate the overlap of racial and gendered identities aided in acknowledging that: (1) multidimensional analysis problematizes the notion of intersecting subordination; and that (2) multidimensionality complicates the very notions of privilege and subordination (Hutchinson, 2001) the application of theory to participants lives provided a clear understanding of why IM and BV were used. These moments confirm previous research about how students of color are systemically marginalized within the classroom, due to stereotypes stemming from deficit cultural models, which position them as unconcerned with educational attainment (Howard, 2008; Solórzano, 1998; Thomas & Stevenson, 2009); a phenomenon primarily applied to Black males. In validating the experiential knowledge of people of color, CRT allows for unearthing White teacher racial bias against Black males. Additionally, CRT challenges the presumptive legitimacy of a high school discipline policy that facilitates the disproportionate application of structural "law" against Black male students who do not have a systemic mechanism for recourse.

CRT theorized about race along with other forms of subordination and the intersectionality of racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression. Notably, racism is normal, pertinent (Bell, 1992) and deeply connected to American racial inequities as perpetrated against people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). As it pertains to monolithic targeting (MT), CRT allows for recognizing that Black males are viewed as Black and male and those coupled, the active oppression of those identities represent gendered racism (Mutua, 2013) as a more subversive way to marginalize this student demographic. If White teachers are to begin avoiding MT acts of racial microaggressions, they must first understand that racism occurs within the classroom due to White teacher deficit, culturally race-based biases applied to Black males within secondary educational environments. These

biases have placed people of color at an extreme disadvantage, especially those who are culturally different and resist being assimilated or acculturated—understanding this point is essential.

CRT also supports the determination that even though similar lived realities are experienced by the six African American males in this study, the factors influencing their responses must not be essentialized. White teacher racial microaggressions, based on the deficit thinking of Black males reinforced the targeted monolithic treatment of participants and significantly shaped how this demographic perceived White teachers as racial microaggressive sources of racism. In this study, participants described purposefully enacting self-preserving coping through the employment of racial microaggressive avoidance tactics like integrative mobility and behavioral vacillation, which served as conscious modes of coping. In doing so, participants purposefully created bonds with peers outside of Black athletic and social circles to bolster their ability to navigate the high school environment. Finally, participants' strategized behaviors, which were based on their proximity to the high school and racism therein, served to not only disrupt perceived stereotypes about African American males but also acted to limit additional opportunities to experience racial trauma.

LIMITATIONS

There are three main limitations to this study. First, each of the participants transferred to FHS from a predominately White high school, which provided them with similar frames of reference about identifying racial microaggressive experiences and previous exposure to racism. Secondly, participants assumed that by attending a culturally diverse high school they would experience less racism, which was untrue. Finally, FHS is situated in a state where African Americans barely constitute 1% of the total population thereby making the context transferability of results difficult to replicate or apply to other regions of the country.

CONCLUSION

African American males navigate racial microaggressions in culturally diverse high schools by employing integrative mobility and behavioral vacillation to rebuff the racial microaggression of monolithic targeting as enacted by White teachers. It is clear that the endemic nature of racism is located within K–12 environments where White teacher instructional practices, curriculum development, and disciplinary policies play a crucial role in truncating the educational experiences of Black males. Despite this, African American male students found ways to advocate for their own learning through selecting allied relationships (e.g., integrated

mobility) and refusing to reinforce stereotypical notions of Black males (behavioral vacillation). By creating outlets of avoidance they successful mitigated hostile cultural spaces, and people (e.g., White teacher monolithic targeting) to their holistic benefit. Doing so minimized exposure to structural and individual racial microaggressions within their cultural diverse high school. In establishing the need to create opportunities to assess power relationships within K–12 context, the findings make it clear that the racial microaggressive effects on Black males are cumulative, and negatively impactful, but can be overcome. A step toward empowering Black males who endure racial microaggressions is best enacted by committing resources toward White teacher learning and professional development that facilitates the understanding that "where people in authority are predominantly white and male and where authority is silent on the unfairness of this patter and does not include explicit and concerted means of changing it, racism and sexism are present and maintained," (Chesler & Crowfoot, 2000, p. 451). If White teachers are to become empowered to facilitate the avoidance of Black male students from racial microaggressions, culturally diverse schools must be wholly devoted to dismantling systemic and individual racist and racially microaggressive practices of White teachers and administrators who operate within the confinements of K–12 educational institutions.

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