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Torine Champion has over 20 years of experience in K-12 public education. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, earned a Masters Degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and her doctorate is in Organizational Leadership. Torine has a passion for serving and coaching others to bring out the best in themselves and others.

Keywords

Cover Page Footnote

My research is in loving memory of my father, Charles Thomas, Sr., who gained his wings during this research study. I will love you always and forever, Daddy.

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Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to describe the lived experiences of teachers of color and identify commonalities within the lived experiences of teachers of color employed in predominately White K–12 schools. This study utilized interpretive phenomenological analysis, viewed through the White racial frame lens. There were 15 participants who were included in this research study. Participants were teachers of color with at least five years of teaching experience in predominately White K–12 environments. Data collection procedures included confidential virtual, semi-structured interviews with specific information the researcher wanted to explore. A lack of professional connectivity and microaggression was revealed as a theme. While teachers of color were silenced and marginalized, they maintained their professionalism in predominately White K–12 environments.

Keywords: racial microaggressions, teachers of color, racism, racial battle fatigue, White racial frame, teacher retention, job satisfaction, professional development, teacher preparation programs, race discussions

Introduction

For several years, diversifying the teaching profession has been an important goal (Amos, 2016; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020; Sun, 2018). Nonetheless, barriers exist for teachers of color. As a result, they experience additional challenges that impact their job satisfaction (Kohli, 2019). Teachers decide to transfer to another campus every year or leave the teaching profession. Teachers of color retention rates vary by state, but the overall rate is less than 15% (Amos, 2016; Brown, 2019). Moreover, Asian American teachers represent only 1.4% of all teachers (Endo, 2015). The number of students of color continues to rise, but the number of teachers of color does not increase (Amos, 2016; Brown, 2019; Endo, 2015). Nonetheless, teachers of color positively affect student achievement and social–emotional wellness (Brooks & Watson, 2019).

However, misconceptions about African-American teachers' teaching abilities continue to jeopardize their campus experience (Madsen et al., 2019). These microaggressions and biases impact teachers' job satisfaction (Bristol, 2018). The fatigue causes them to leave the profession. The retention rate for teachers of color is 24% higher than their White counterparts (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). These inequities negatively affect their job satisfaction.

Life's daily stressors as a teacher of color can affect wellness. Racial battle fatigue refers to the psychological and physiological impact of long-term exposure to racism on people of color (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). Isolation, stereotypes, and marginalization negatively impact campus experiences (Amos, 2016; Bristol, 2018). These experiences are harmful and emotionally draining to teachers of color (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). Black male teachers reported feelings of loneliness and wanting to leave campus. They cited gender isolation and poor relationships with colleagues as reasons for leaving (Bristol, 2018). Latino teachers share the same feelings of alienation. They revealed they felt used because their workloads were heavier than their peers (Amos, 2016). These inequalities resulted in feelings of inadequacy because they did not feel valued.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers of color face marginalization and microaggressions that their White counterparts do not have to face. African-American teachers experience microaggressions pathologizing their cultural values and communication styles, cultural or ethnic insensitivity, an ascription of intelligence, and being treated as second-class citizens that are hurtful, undermining, and disparaging (Brown, 2019). Asian American teachers face gendered, racial, and sexualized classroom expectations (Endo, 2015). A study of Latina bilingual teachers revealed that they felt alienated from colleagues, had larger workloads, and did not have access to available support (Amos, 2016). Teachers of color experience inequalities, microaggressions, and marginalization that impact their experiences as teachers (Amos, 2016; Brown, 2019; Endo, 2015).

District and school leaders understand the importance of cultivating an equitable environment. While this is the intention, the district knows a disconnect might exist. Previous research studies have found that teachers of color experience inequalities that impact their campus experience (Amos, 2016; Brown, 2019; Endo, 2015; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). However,

there is a lack of understanding of the relationship between racial microaggressions, teachers' job satisfaction, and teacher retention. Additionally, systems should be implemented to help leaders cultivate a more inclusive environment for all (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020; Swanson & Welton, 2019).

Professional development is essential in fostering inclusive environments (Brooks & Watson, 2019). School districts should provide leaders with tools and strategies that promote a supportive and inclusive school culture. The steps to design meaningful professional development opportunities for leaders will equip them with the skillset needed to foster an equitable environment. As a result, teachers' job satisfaction and retention should improve (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020; Swanson & Welton, 2019).

Literature Review

Teacher retention is an issue that plagues many school districts. Teachers of color retention rates vary by state, but the overall retention rate is less than 15% (Amos, 2016; Brown, 2019). The daily stressors of marginalization and racial microaggressions contribute to the lack of teachers of color (Amos, 2016; Brown, 2019; Endo, 2015). Previous studies have been conducted on teachers' experiences with microaggressions. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between racial microaggressions, teacher retention, and job satisfaction (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020; Swanson & Welton, 2019).

Theoretical Lens Discussion

Teachers of color face difficulties navigating within a White racial frame (WRF), an in-group superiority, and out-group inferiority (Amos, 2020). Feagin (2013) described WRF as a view that centralizes whiteness as the dominant frame. This Eurocentric view creates inequalities between White people and people of color (Feagin, 2013). Consequently, people of color are oppressed. The WRF operates at the unconscious level in the minds of White people because it is ingrained in every facet of their lives. In addition, it is embedded in various structures and institutions and is connected to their privilege and power (Amos, 2020; Chubbuck, 2004). White ability is considered the norm for everyone (Chubbuck, 2004). As a result, people of color struggle with navigating within this frame. They try to fit in but cannot do so because it is not aligned with their cultural experiences and background.

The racism and racial microaggressions experienced by teachers of color result from the WRF. This narrow and oppressive view perpetuates stereotypes and hinders progress toward inclusion. Furthermore, it negatively impacts teachers of color and their white colleagues (Amos, 2020). Therefore, there must be antiracist counter-frames that people of color develop to combat racism and racist views. Counter-framing allows them to share their stories and promote a multiracial work environment that values everyone (Feagin, 2013). Thus, it is crucial to decenter whiteness and promote diversity and inclusion in all educational work environments (Toure & Thompson Dorsey, 2018). Amos (2020) used WRF to examine Latina teachers' relationship with their White counterparts.

Moreover, WRF was used to analyze the study's findings. Feagin and Cobas (2008) investigated WRF about the Latino experience and utilized it during their exploratory analysis and methodology. Likewise, I used WRF to influence my research methods and analyze this study's results.

Theories on the White Racial Frame

Studies have been conducted on the impact of WRF on minority groups. Toure and Thompson Dorsey (2018) discovered that school leaders operated within a WRF when interacting with minority groups in their school community. Leaders perpetuate stereotypes when engaging with students, teachers, and parents. They felt that minority parents were less involved in students' lives and believed African-American students needed to conform to a WRF. Amos (2020) shared that Latino students were stereotyped for language acquisition and behavior. They were viewed as inferior to White students. School leaders and nonminority teachers viewed Whiteness as the dominant frame to what one is compared. Latina teachers felt alienated and unappreciated by their colleagues (Amos, 2020). The teachers believed White colleagues thought their teaching skills were subpar compared to their abilities. Thus, WRF impacts teachers of color and their experience on campuses.

Diversifying the Teacher Workforce

Our nation's population continues to evolve, and the number of students of color increases. Researchers contend that students of color will make up 54% of the K–12 school-age population by 2026 (Madsen et al., 2019). These projections have created an urge to hire and retain more teachers of color to meet the needs of the changing demographics. District leaders

across the country understand the importance of diversifying the workforce to meet the needs of students (Grooms et al., 2021). A cultural match between students and teachers has resulted in higher engagement and motivation and improved reading and math scores (Darwich, 2021; Rasheed et al., 2020). Additionally, teachers of color serve as role models for all students, and students benefit from this (Darwich, 2021). However, teachers of color experience challenges that impact their experience on campuses.

Racism in Education

Racism is an unfortunate part of the fabric of this nation, defined as beliefs, acts, and attitudes that belittle individuals or groups of people because of their ethnic affiliation (Clark et al., 1999). The decision of the 1954 case, *Brown v. Board of Education,* resulted in the displacement of African-American teachers because White parents did not want their children educated by them (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). These prejudices resulted in a reduction in teachers of color. More than 38,000 African-American teachers and school leaders lost their positions (Holmes, 1990). Many students never experience being taught by a teacher of color, which can impact their socioemotional development and academic achievement (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Darwich, 2021). While *Board v. Board of Education* was a landmark case that desegregated schools, it also reduced teachers of color in the workforce. This impact encouraged the narrative that teachers of color were less effective than White teachers. These judgments continue to plague teachers of color.

White teachers might have values and beliefs about children of color that affect the quality of education. For example, some White teachers have referred to minority students as "those kids" and blamed their families for factors beyond their control (Boske, 2015, p. 131). These statements and thoughts can hinder students from achieving in class. Moreover, it can impact their socio-emotional well-being. For example, African-American male students reported being targeted by teachers and administrators. They shared that they are blamed for things they did not do and that the school staff was judgmental and uncaring (Webster & Knaus, 2021). Native American students have experienced tokenism on campuses. They experience stereotypes about where they live and cannot relate to teachers or their peers. In addition, they feel silenced and ignored (Hunt et al., 2020). Latino students hear "jokes" about cleaning houses, while Asian students are asked about the types of food they consume (Shields, 2019). Students of color are

plagued with racist comments and rhetoric. Today, school systems understand the importance of diverse teaching staff and teachers' impact on all students. Consequently, schools are working to recruit and retain more teachers of color.

Recruitment Practices for Teachers of Color

School districts are making efforts to recruit and retain teachers of color. The changing demographics of students have created a need for an ethnic match (Rasheed et al., 2020). In addition, the social unrest that has resulted from recent events has created a sense of urgency (Davis, 2021). Teachers of color can help foster empathy for cultural differences and facilitate race discussions. Moreover, teacher diversity can benefit students who experience frustrations at school, isolation, and fatigue (Carver-Thomas, 2018). African-American male teachers have been heavily recruited because of the connections that they can make with African-American boys (Turaga, 2020).

Moreover, teachers of color can be role models and help them navigate challenges (Brooms, 2020). Many Latino teachers have been recruited through paraprofessional pools, and being bilingual provides them with an added advantage (Amos, 2016). They can communicate with new arrival students, emerging English language learners, and their parents. Consequently, they can make connections that help them foster relationships. Teachers of color provide students with unique experiences that benefit their growth and development.

Factors That Impact Teacher Retention

Teachers decide to transfer to another campus every year or leave the teaching profession. While turnover rates vary from state to state, the teaching profession's turnover rates are higher than in other occupations (Bressman et al., 2018). Researchers assert that approximately 50% of teachers leave within their first five years in the profession (Redding et al., 2019). In addition, teachers of color have higher attrition rates than White teachers (Texas Education Agency, 1996). Thus, various factors impact teacher retention.

Racial Microaggressions. Microaggressions are subtle, verbal, and nonverbal insults directed at people of color (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Pierce et al., 1977; Turaga, 2020). They can be intentional or unintentional (Dalton & Villagran, 2018; Turaga, 2020). Microaggressions include targeting a person of color who looks different, ascribing intelligence, and overcriticizing (Turaga, 2020). Additionally, there are various types of microaggressions. Microassaults refer to

intentional acts that are harmful to people of color. Microinsults are subtle but harmful comments about marginalized people. Microinvalidations seek to invalidate the experiences of people of color (Dalton & Villagran, 2018; Turaga, 2020). Nonetheless, all microaggressions harm teachers of color (Brown, 2019; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020; Turaga, 2020). They contribute to hostile work environments, devalue social group identities, and lower work productivity (Dalton & Villagran, 2018).

Asian Americans have been impacted by microaggressions in the workplace as well. They have reported feeling invisible and ignored when they offer comments (Kim & Cooc, 2021). Moreover, they share that their contributions are often taken from them, and someone else receives credit for their work. In addition, they are often passed over for leadership roles (Kim & Cooc, 2021). Asian Americans experience overvaluations, which are microaggressions based on positive stereotypes, like aptitude for math and a strong work ethic (Kim & Cooc, 2021). Asian American women are more prone to microaggressions than men (Endo, 2015). They are considered hypersexualized, domesticated, and easy to please. These assertions are problematic and belittling.

Latino teachers are often marginalized and alienated by their peers. Teachers did not have collaborative work relationships with White colleagues (Amos, 2016, 2020). They have weak professional networks and are often isolated and given larger workloads (Amos, 2020). Moreover, they contend they experience unequal power relations, lack access to leadership opportunities, and feel silenced (Amos, 2016). Teachers shared that their status as bilingual teachers hindered them from improving their power position (Amos, 2016). While their Spanish language skills and cultural knowledge helped them build relationships with Latino students, their skills negatively impacted their relationships with nonminority teachers (Amos, 2020). As a result, Latino teachers shared that their nonminority colleagues responded with emotionally driven responses like microaggressions, sabotage, and surveillance. Teachers did not feel appreciated, valued, or understood, which led to a hostile work environment (Amos, 2020).

African-American teachers encounter microaggressions as well. African-American men try to conform to White masculine norms for self-preservation and protection (Turaga, 2020). African-American male and female teachers work twice or three times as hard as their nonminority counterparts while ignoring microaggressions (Brown, 2019; Pitcan et al., 2018).

They believe their performance must be exemplary to maintain positive representations for all African Americans (Brown, 2019; Pitcan et al., 2018). African-American men often face isolation because they are feared. Consequently, they leave their campus because of racial tension (Bristol, 2018). African American females feel invisible as women and African Americans (Pitcan et al., 2018). These events impact their job satisfaction and campus experiences (Brown, 2019; Pitcan et al., 2018).

Teachers of color have encountered microaggressions regarding their intelligence, competence, and capabilities (Bristol, 2018; Brown, 2019; Endo, 2015). They feel trapped in these negative stereotypes and are unsure how to address them. These microaggressions can occur multiple times daily (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). Often, the perpetrators of microaggressions are unaware of their acts, which adds to the frustration level of teachers of color (Brown, 2019). They are unaware of how they perpetuate whiteness, which seeks to uphold and center practices that reinforce White dominance over society (Swanson & Welton, 2019). Teachers of color had to face White teachers with lighter workloads, support access, and professional growth opportunities. The complacency of White school leaders was harmful to teachers of color. These incidents can harm teachers of color (Smith et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2006).

Racial Battle Fatigue. Teachers of color accrue emotional and psychological damage when attempting to perform, strive, and achieve in an environment that perpetuates Whiteness (Acuff, 2018). Racial battle fatigue refers to stress from racial microaggressions that impact people of color's physical, emotional, and mental well-being (Smith et al., 2006). Moreover, it includes the energy spent addressing and fighting microaggressions (Martin, 2015). These daily stressors can lead to exhaustion, high blood pressure, anger, and hypervigilance (Smith et al., 2007).

Teachers have reported varying experiences with racial battle fatigue. They shared that they were always highly alert for the subsequent racist encounter (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). This leads to feelings of hopelessness and depression. Teachers revealed they experienced hypertension and problems eating and sleeping (Acuff, 2018; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). Pizarro and Kohli (2020) shared that one teacher of color experienced a nervous breakdown due to constant battles. Acuff (2018) shared that she was depressed, irrational, and had migraines and

anxiety. She began to dread the career that she once loved. The ongoing stress of racism and racial microaggressions impact their well-being.

Research Method

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of teachers of color employed in predominantly White K–12 schools. It examined their experiences as teachers of color and how these experiences in predominately White environments impacted job satisfaction and retention. Their interactions with others can be harmful and cause them to leave their campus or the teaching profession (Amos, 2016; Brown, 2019; Endo, 2015). There was limited research conducted on this crucial topic. This research study examined the lived experiences of teachers using personal interviews, which allowed me to understand better their unique experiences, feelings, and thoughts about being a teacher of color:

R.Q.: How do teachers of color describe their lived experiences working in predominately White K–12 environments?

Research Design and Method

This qualitative research study utilized IPA as viewed through the WRF lens, a research method used to understand individuals' lived experiences through detailed accounts (Smith et al., 2009). This approach allowed me to examine how teachers make meaning of various campus encounters. Moreover, it gave me a detailed account and understanding of their day-to-day experiences (Smith & Nizza, 2022). WRF best explains the difficulties teachers of color experience navigating an in-group majority and out-group inferiority (Amos, 2020; Feagin, 2013). Therefore, this qualitative study helped me understand their unique experiences, feelings, and thoughts about racial microaggressions.

Study Sample

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants. Purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants intentionally based on their experience and position (Gentles et al., 2015). I posted a recruitment invitation in the groups that explained the research topic, specific inclusion or exclusion criteria, expectations, and timeline. The post indicated the selection criteria for participants: teachers of color with at least five years of experience. In addition, teachers selected were employed in predominately White school settings. I interviewed a minimum of 10 teachers of color. Smith and Nizza (2022) asserted that small sample sizes

should be utilized to allow for comparisons and identify themes. This method focuses on participants' detailed accounts of their lived experiences. Moreover, there is a heightened focus on the data quality over a higher number of participants (Smith et al., 2009).

Materials and Instruments

Participants were located at different locations; therefore, interviews were conducted via Zoom. As the researcher, I cultivated a safe environment that fostered mutual respect and trust (Chenail, 2011). Consequently, participants shared their lived experiences in predominantly White schools. Participants provided detailed, first-person accounts of lived experiences, allowing them to reflect on their experiences and express themselves judgment-free (Smith & Nizza, 2022). Smith and Nizza (2022) asserted that in-depth interviews are the most common method to gather information for IPA. Interviews should be conversational to allow the conversation to flow organically.

<div align="center">Data Collection and Analysis Procedures</div>

Participants and Selection Criteria.

The participants for this study were teachers of color currently or previously employed in K–12 predominantly White environments and were either members of the Facebook groups National Alliance of Black School Educators or Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators. The groups allowed me access to teachers of color who fit the description needed for my participants. In addition, snowball sampling was used to locate other participants based on their roles, ethnicity, and experience. The teachers of color identified provided unique insights about their experiences as teachers in predominately White environments.

Data Analysis

Smith and Nizza (2022) shared that verbatim transcripts should be generated following each interview. The transcript included everything mentioned by the participants and me. I anonymized participants' responses during transcription and replaced their names with pseudonyms. Additionally, participants could review their interview transcript to ensure accuracy. The audio files, transcripts, and paperwork will remain on my computer (protected by a password) for three years, and then the data will be digitally shredded.

I used fundamental principles in IPA to analyze the research data (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Nizza, 2022). This method requires researchers to utilize an idiographic and inductive

approach, which includes analyzing each participant's data independently (Smith & Nizza, 2022). Specific steps were followed (Smith & Nizza, 2022).

1. I organized and prepared the data for analysis. This included transcripts from virtual interviews.

2. The data were reviewed to formulate general ideas from each participant's interview.

3. The data were coded, and all findings were grouped into sections based on similar participant responses.

4. Categories were generated based on themes found within the analysis of transcripts for each participant.

5. A narrative was created to explain the similarities in responses from the participants.

6. Similar themes were generated to answer the identified research question for this study.

7. The coding process was utilized to identify recurring patterns based on the participants' lived experiences.

8. I determined how each theme would be identified within the study.

9. The data collected were interpreted and analyzed for the study.

Results

The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of teachers of color employed in predominately White K–12 schools. Also, this study sought to identify commonalities among participants. This research is necessary because it seeks to help leaders foster a more inclusive work environment for teachers of color. I provided the emergent theme from the data revealed based on the interviews presented in the words of the participants with a summary paragraph and introductory quotes. Previous studies revealed that teachers of color experience microaggressions that can impact job satisfaction and other effects previously mentioned in the literature review. This is consistent with this study of 15 teachers of color.

The Interview Process

The 15 participants in this study shared their experiences in confidential, semi-structured interviews using the Zoom conference platform. Each participant received a link and password for their interview. The interview protocol included six demographic and seven open-ended questions aligned with the research question. Each interview was recorded and consisted of the

participant and me in a private Zoom conferencing session. Following the interviews, the audio from each Zoom interview was transcribed into textual data utilizing NoNotes transcription services. I emailed participants a copy of the transcript that included the interview questions and their responses to check for accuracy, referred to as member checking. Consequently, the data was coded and analyzed for recurring patterns and themes.

Data Analysis and Theme

The theme was developed based on participants' responses during the interviews. Some participants were not included in the findings, and not all were utilized to determine recurring themes. Thus, some responses were omitted and considered outliers. Participants shared their experiences as teachers working in a K–12 predominately White environment. The information obtained from the interviews was used to answer the research question previously discussed. The following represents the recurring theme from the participants' interview responses.

Lack of Professional Connectivity and Microaggressions

The participants discussed how experiences with microaggressions had impacted their job satisfaction. Based on their responses, (a) they deal with microaggressions, feelings of isolation, and invisibility, and (b) they mute themselves for fear of penalty. Participants revealed that they feel ignored and undervalued. Some of their colleagues and leaders do not engage them in conversations when they are near them. Following these interactions, a few participants shared that they may receive an email about an issue or learn from another teacher of color that there is an issue. Teachers of color might not immediately hear that they have offended someone. Instead, information is gathered and given to them later. As a result, teachers of color feel compelled to walk on eggshells and mute their responses to avoid offending anyone. They feel uncomfortable in their skin. Some participants shared that they began questioning themselves, their teaching ability, and their career choices.

Participant 1 responded:

> I got a new assistant principal, and she was very intimidated by me. Although, I do not know why because I am a very easy-going person. I do not ask anybody to call me by my earned title (doctor). I have never been that way. If they do great, if they do not, it is okay. My assistant principal hates talking to me in person and is my appraiser. She would

send me emails after passing by me in the hallway. She would not say anything to me directly. Instead, she would go to her office and send me an email. It perturbed me.

Participant 6 commented:

It makes you frustrated. You sometimes wonder, "Am I supposed to be there?" You start thinking that. "Am I smart enough?" Because you look around and there are all these little, small things. Like, what does that mean? If I am in a meeting and trying to explain something, they might say, "Well, what do you mean by that?" Then, someone else says the same thing, and they understand. You start getting voiceless and quiet. It would be best to choose your battles; however, it gets tiring. Will I fight this battle or remain silent and keep my job?

Participant 7 said:

It comes down to feeling supported and feeling appreciated. I can think of a campus that I have worked at, and I can bring up a problem or a concern, and I get the shrug.… My ideas are irrelevant or not being considered, impacting my satisfaction. I heard from a radio D.J. [disc jockey] that you go where you are appreciated, not tolerated. I live with that. If I am not being appreciated, and that is from the top down, by the team I work with and by the leaders I work under, if I am not feeling appreciated, I do not need to be in this environment.

Discussion and Conclusions

Teachers of color employed in predominately White K–12 schools experience marginalization and microaggressions. It has been revealed that these experiences can impact teachers' job satisfaction and teacher retention (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020; Swanson & Welton, 2019). This qualitative study aimed to describe the lived experiences of teachers of color employed in predominately White K–12 schools to gain insights into their unique experiences, feelings, and thoughts about being a teacher of color. The results from this study will benefit the development and implementation of a professional development framework that can enhance leadership development curricula. In addition, it can equip district and school leaders with tools to foster more inclusive and equitable practices.

Discussion of Findings

White Racial Frame

A reoccurring theme was identified based on the interviews conducted with 15 participants. The theme was consistent with Feagin's (2013) WRF, which is described as a view that centralizes whiteness as the dominant frame. This Eurocentric view creates inequalities between White people and people of color (Feagin, 2013). The WRF operates at a nonconscious level in the minds of White people because it is ingrained in every facet of their lives. In addition, it is embedded in various structures and institutions and is connected to their privilege and power (Amos, 2020; Chubbuck, 2004). Amos (2020) contended that WRF operates with in-group superiority and out-group inferiority. This notion creates inequalities for people of color.

Teachers of color experience racism and microaggressions because of the WRF (Amos, 2020). White people are considered superior to other races, while teachers of color are stereotyped and marginalized (Amos, 2020). The findings of this study indicate that teachers of color experience racism and racial microaggressions as they work in predominately White K–12 environments. Additionally, these experiences can impact their job satisfaction. Participants' responses revealed that WRF is displayed in these work settings. Teachers felt like they were in the out-group. Toure and Thompson Dorsey (2018) asserted that it is crucial to decenter whiteness and promote diversity and inclusion in all educational work environments.

Interpretation of Participant Responses

Teachers of color who currently or previously worked in predominately White K–12 environments and were members of the Facebook groups National Alliance of Black School Educators or Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators shared their experiences. Some of the participants were identified based on their experiences, as well. Based on responses to the interview questions, a reoccurring theme emerged which answered the study's research question. The following theme was discussed throughout this section: lack of professional connectivity and microaggressions.

Lack of Professional Connectivity and Microaggressions. Participants discussed how microaggressions and a lack of collegiality impacted their job satisfaction. Most of the participants shared specific instances of racial microaggressions. Teachers of color experience inequalities, microaggressions, and marginalization that impact their experiences as teachers

(Amos, 2016; Brown, 2019; Endo, 2015). A participant recalled an incident when she was referred to as "articulate." It was meant as a compliment, but the remark offended the teacher. Also, participants shared that they have been excluded from the decision-making process. This caused feelings of unappreciation. One participant earned her doctorate; however, her assistant principal did not address her by title, ignored her in the hallway, and only communicated with her by email.

Several participants indicated a lack of professional relationships in the workplace (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Mayfield, 2020). A participant shared that she speaks to White teachers during her morning duty, but they do not respond to her. Several participants shared that they must mute themselves to avoid offending their colleagues or being perceived as "aggressive." This leads to feeling voiceless and can hinder professional relationships. Another participant noticed that a White coworker continuously watched her to be sure she was at her assigned locations on campus. Participants felt they had to be "on guard" around their peers. A participant mentioned that a co-teacher came to her room and reported her actions to another teacher. The teacher felt a lack of trust from her coworkers and, in turn, did not trust them. Some participants mentioned that their White peers would not discuss an issue with them directly. Instead, they would speak to their school leaders about it, which resulted in a one-on-one conference with the teacher and leader.

Conclusion

The Black Lives Matter movement put a spotlight on the inequities that plague people of color. The study's findings indicated that teachers of color continue to experience racism and racial microaggressions that impact their experience in predominately White K–12 environments. Their experiences on their campus are harmful and can affect their job satisfaction. Unfortunately, the impact of these racist encounters has caused some teachers to leave their campus, which can impact the teachers, students, and the school community.

School districts should develop intentional and ongoing systems to ensure equitable and inclusive work environments. Professional development opportunities should focus on providing people of color with emotionally safe work environments. In addition, cultural competency training should be provided to help increase awareness and build campus capacity. Campuses should provide teachers of color with safe spaces to engage in race conversations, which can

facilitate understanding. Practices should be developed to normalize the discomfort and encourage vulnerability, which includes establishing norms for communication, being aware of triggering language and regulating your emotions, focusing on how the conversations can lead to equitable change for students and staff, and evaluating the discussion to evaluate the protocol and improve the process. Race discussions can heighten self-awareness because transformative learning allows learners to self-reflect and examine their biases (Hutchins & Goldstein Hoed, 2021; Mayfield, 2020).

Teacher education programs prepare all teachers to participate actively in a diverse workforce (Kohli, 2019). Therefore, programs should include coursework on racism, equity, and diversity (Brown, 2019). The courses could help future teachers and leaders understand how microaggressions and unconscious biases impact teachers of color and students of color. This could have a significant impact on combatting racism and working toward solutions. Kohli (2019) contended that future educators should address racism as a collective group because it shows that they might not transform a system alone. Also, programs should offer critical theory access to allow future educators to gain insights from theorists of color. Lastly, teacher preparation programs should equip teachers to address racism on their campuses and become an advocate for students.

Fourteen African American participants and one Hispanic participant were included in this study. I recommend that future studies include a more racially diverse group of teachers. Moreover, one male teacher participated in this study. It would be interesting to see if additional male participants would result in different findings. This will allow district leaders to gain better insights into the experiences of teachers of color who work in predominately White K–12 environments.

Moreover, identifying specific ethnicities and gaining additional demographic information about their culture could result in additional insights. Additionally, a narrative approach could broaden the research and determine if the findings can be replicated. This study was limited to teachers of color working in predominately White environments. A future study could examine different environments to see if the findings would be replicated. Lastly, a quantitative study could provide additional insights into the retention and aggression rates.

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