FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE RACIAL
MESSAGING BLACK MALES RECEIVED WHILE ATTENDING CONSERVATIVE
CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

EVAN WILLIS. From Egypt to Canaan: A Phenomenological Study of the Racial
Messaging Black Boys Received while Attending Conservative Christian Schools
(Under the direction of DR. CHANCE W. LEWIS)

Since the full desegregation of all Christian schools in 1983 there has been limited
inquiry into the role of race in these academic institutions. Furthermore, Christian
education literature has had limited exploration into the role of race. When race is
explored in Christian schools it often centers White voices. In the absence of much
research, it has led some to believe that there is greater racial harmony in these
environments. This study fills the void because it centers Black male voices in an
interpretive phenomenological analysis of concerning the racial messages that they
received while attending conservative Christian schools. This study explored the racial
messages that 14 Black males who attended both predominantly White and Black led
conservative Christian schools, born between 1981-2003, received while attending these
schools. This interpretive phenomenological study utilized the Black Critical Theory
framework to guide the research and asked the following questions: What were the racial
messages that Black boys received while attending Conservative Christian Schools? How
did the racial messaging shape their understanding of race and their self as Black males?
How did the Black males perceive Christian teachings to be a part of the racial dynamics
in these CCS? The research participants were recruited using criterion sampling and data
was collected through semi-structured interviews.

The findings from this study indicated that Black males received differing
messages based on the racial make-up of the school and its leadership. Four themes

emerged from the findings. Black males who attended Black-led conservative Christian Schools received a message that Black is excellent. In the environment the Participants saw that Black was free. They came view Blackness as diverse and developed a sense of Black pride. Finally, in the Black led conservative Christian school they perceived that religion was serious and it undergirded their anti-racist ethos of the environment. In the predominantly White conservative Christian school the research participants learned that Black is a racial trope. The environment that they entered revealed to them that Black was free with restrictions. Furthermore, the Black students came to view themselves as exceptional negroes, and some came view themselves as inferior when they attended the predominantly White conservative Christian school. Finally, in this environment Black students perceived that they religion was taken less seriously and utilized to normalize Eurocentric values. Finally, this study concluded with recommendations for school administrators, higher ed programs, and Christian school teachers.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Aleya for her sacrifice for the past 5 years of our marriage and for putting up with me and my schedules.

My Four Sons, and my nephew Jaiden

- Jeremiah the Leader

  o I hope that this dissertation will inspire you to be the leader God made you to be and to never allow another person to break you. I don't want you to be me be greater than me.

- James the Gifted

  o I hope that this dissertation helps you realize never to let another person to extinguish the light that God has place in you. Keep dreaming and work hard to see all that God has for you.

- John the Fighter

  o I hope that this dissertation helps you realize that this dissertation shows you how to channel the fighter in you so that you become a soldier for Jesus in the fight for justice.

- Joshua the Thermostat

  o I hope that this dissertation helps you realize that God wants to use you to set the atmosphere around you because your spirit and your energy is contagious.

- Jaiden the First

o I hope that as you pursue God's call on your life that you recognize how

special you are and don't allow the perspectives of others to shape who

you are.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BLCCS--------Black Led Conservative Christian Schools

CCS------------Conservative Christian Schools

DEI------------ Diversity Equity and Inclusion

IPA------------ Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

PWCCS------- Predominantly White Conservative Christian Schools

SDA----------- Seventh-Day Adventist

SES------------ Socio-economic Status

WAC---------- White American Christianity

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The predominant research concerning Black boys in Conservative Christian schools (CCS) places a heavy emphasis on the Christian nature of these institutions (Jeynes, 2008). However, the research overlooks the role of race in these academic environments. Furthermore, educational research does not explore the racial messages that these students receive while attending these CCS. Meanwhile, non-religious school research has demonstrated that Black boys in schools have their behaviors criminalized (Butler et al., 2009), experience social isolation (Coleman, 2017), and face low academic expectations and unnecessarily punitive discipline from their teachers (James, 2019; Little & Tolbert, 2018). Thus, Black boys enter hostile environments when they enroll in secular and religious schools (Coleman, 2017; Little & Tolbert, 2018).

It must be understood that schools are not socially neutral sites; as a matter of fact, the implicit curriculum of schools promotes racialized messages (DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1998). For instance, state-funded schooling began without African American students (Spring, 2018). Sending a message that schools were not for African Americans. Furthermore, while European immigrant parents sent their children into classrooms there were over 600,000 illiterate kidnapped descendants of Africa enslaved working in fields (Gibson & Jung, 2005). Hence, from the inception of American education, the schools provided a social message about race that Black people were ontologically inferior to their White counterparts. Moreover, even once African Americans were permitted access to American schools, their entrance came with yet another social message because the schools were racially segregated and equipped with inequitable classroom materials

(Ruchames, 1945; Willis, 2020). This message implied that their educational future was not important. Thus, the foundational implicit message of American schools promotes White supremacy due to their overt rejection of African American students, and a low prioritization of their learning.

Unfortunately, the design and desire for state funded American schools was also rooted in a religious ethos (Jeynes, 2005). For instance, American state-funded schooling was the brainchild of men like Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence (Spring, 2018). Rush (1786) espoused that for America to become a utopian society, it must provide a free universal education undergirded with Christian teachings. With an influential man like Rush promoting this form of schooling, early American Christians undergirded the school's curriculums with Christianity, and White supremacy (Smith, 1967; Spring, 2018). Thus, early American schools were both Christian and racist. For many, the moral message of Christianity and racism appear to be incongruent. However, due to a lack of criticality, White American Christianity (WAC) has merged many non-canonical traditions with their Christian theology, resulting in the incongruence between their beliefs and the canonical message of Jesus (Jennings, 2011). For instance, settler colonialism, which allowed early European settlers in America to take ownership of land through genocide and other heinous acts against indigenous populations, was what pushed European Christians across the world (Stephanson, 1998). However, these European Christians justified capturing people and claiming land through bloodshed because they proclaimed a message that they were the New Israelites and America their Promised Land (Jennings, 2011; Stephanson, 1998). Although these

European Christians felt justified in their actions, the ten commandments forbid coveting, stealing, and murder. Thus, this incongruence has happened because of WAC's merger between their Christian message, and White supremacy.

It must be understood that the CCS movement emerged from the early free public-school model (Slater, 2019). It emerged because in the early 20th century, American public schools moved away from their religious roots and became more secular (FitzGerald, 2017; Slater, 2019). For instance, public schools stopped teaching creationism and instead began to teach evolutionary theory (FitzGerald, 2017). This curricular decision in conjunction with the general loss of religiosity in society spurned the growth of CCS (Nollen, 1911; Slater, 2019). Furthermore, the second period of spurious CCS growth, which transpired in the 1960s, coincided with the removal of prayer and Bible readings in schools due to *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), and *Abington School District v Schempp* (1963). However, race coincided with this second growth period because Conservative Christian segregationist academies emerged in areas where school districts began desegregation efforts (Nevin & Bills, 1976). Thus, historically the CCS movement was not simply a matter of religious concern, but also a matter of racism much like its non-denominational public-school predecessor.

With this history as a backdrop, it must be understood that CCS do not exist as non-racialized spaces (Leo, 2018). To the contrary, race continues to be a significant factor and CCS exists as a producer of racial messaging to its constituents. For instance, the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) (2019) revealed that White students are now a school-aged minority. However, White families still patronize Christian private

schools so much that White students are the majority in K-12 Catholic schools and CCS making up 66% and 77% of the student population, respectively (NCES, 2019). Meanwhile, Black students make up 8% and 11% of Catholic and CCS, respectively (NCES, 2019). However, what the data fails to highlight is that CCS have various racial types. For instance, there has always existed Black led conservative Christian schools (BLCCS) (Anderson, 1988; Layman, 1994; Willis, 2020). Yet, there has been limited research into these types of institutions. Instead, research typically focuses on CCS with little consideration of the role of race. This study at the onset establishes that not all CCS' characteristics are equal, but the ethos of the school is determined by its denominational structure, racial makeup, and the personality of its leadership (Rose, 1988; Parsons, 1987; Peshkin, 1986). Furthermore, not all racialized groups experience CCS the same and this phenomenon must be explored. As a matter of fact, this study contends that there are Predominantly White Conservative Christian schools (PWCCS) and BLCCS. In short, race matters in CCS from both a school type, school experience, and a social messaging perspective. Furthermore, these CCS types produce differing racial messages for its constituents.

Although Christian school advocates contend that private religious schools have greater racial harmony (Jeynes, 2002), Black alumni contend that race played a prominent role in their negative experiences as students in PWCCS (Brown, 2018; Kendi, 2016; Little & Tolbert, 2018). These claims coincide with the literature concerning Black students in majority-White educational institutions (Carter-Andrews, 2005; Diamond & Lewis, 2019; Thomas et al., 2020). To be clear, Black boys in predominantly White

Christian schools experience racial microaggressions much like same raced counterparts in predominantly White public schools (Little & Tolbert, 2018). These racialized experiences are a byproduct of the racial makeup of the schools' leadership and their student body (Leo, 2018).

Black Students in Predominantly White Schools

Black students' negative experiences within PWCCS are not an anomaly to Christian schools but a byproduct of them being in predominantly White spaces. Researchers such as DeCuir-Gunby (2007) have explored the salience of race in predominately White independent schools by exploring Black students' experiences in these institutions. Their findings indicate that the predominantly White independent schools have created environments that make Black students uncomfortable (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; DeCuir-Gunby, & Dixson, 2009; Herr, 1999). White teachers, students, and administrators created environments that sent racial messages of Black intellectual and cultural inferiority. However, these findings were not just consistent for predominantly White independent schools but also predominantly White public schools (Carter-Andrews, 2005; Carter-Andrews, 2019; DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Thomas et al., 2020).

Carter Andrews (2005) and others moved the needle in the research about Black students in White schools beyond the work of researchers like Herr (1999) and DeCuir-Gunby (2007) when she explored the experiences of Black students in predominantly White public schools. Similar to findings concerning independent schools, White teachers, students, and administrators created an inhospitable environment that sent racial

messages of academic invisibility, and physical hyper-visibility. This hostile environment re-enforced messages of Black intellectual inferiority, Black physical superiority, and Black sexual deviance (Carter, 2007; 2012; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; James, 2019). These messages were derived from Black caricatures from the antebellum era which characterized Black men as beast like creatures, and painted Black women as sexual vixens (Kendi, 2016). Furthermore, through the excessively punitive discipline of Black students, these schools re-enforced negative racial messages of Black social deviance (Carter-Andrews et al., 2019; James, 2019). Thus, Black students in predominantly White public and private schools experience racial bias, social isolation, and racial stereotypes.

Black Males in Education

While Black students face racial hostility in predominantly White schools, these hostilities are manifested differently depending on gender. Black males and females face other challenges within predominantly White schools. For instance, Black females have been disparaged because they do not exhibit Eurocentric femininity which positions women as docile and subject to White male protection (Fredrickson, 1971; Mendez, 2015). Simultaneously, teachers have hypersexualized Black females because their body types can contrast the White female body which can be more petite (Carter-Andrews, et al., 2019). Furthermore, Black females are overrepresented in school discipline (Blake, et al. 2011). However, the Black male experience is still important because researchers have characterized Black males as at-risk or in crisis for over 60 years (Howard, 2013; Moniyham, 1965, Noguera, 1996; 2003). While taking seriously the experiences of Black females in schools, this dissertation centers the experiences of Black males in schools.

The research concern of Black males exists on a spectrum. Researchers at one end of the spectrum blame Black males and their communities for their academic and economic underachievement (Coleman et al., 1966; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Moniyham, 1965; Wilson, 1987). On the other end, researchers blame the schools and a racist society for the Black male problems in schools, citing the lack of resources and unqualified teachers (Darling-Hammond 2010; Kozol, 2005; Slaughter, 1988). In essence, the experiences of Black males are unique because their race and gender have been characterized much differently than White people and women. For instance, men are positioned as hyper athletes, bestial, dangerous, and intellectually inferior (James, 2019; Kendi, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Moniyham, 1965). In short, Black males receive racial messages that purport them as socially, morally, and ontologically inferior to their White counterparts.

Black Males in Christian schools

Black males in Christian schools are faced with similar challenges in terms of racist characterizations. For instance, Thomas et al., 2020 and Johnson et al. (2020) found that Black student athletes in a private Catholic school were made to feel invisible in the classroom and hypervisible in the hallways. In addition, they were accustomed to hearing racial slurs and negative racial stereotypes in and around the school. Beyond this study, Little and Tolbert (2018) examined the experiences of two Black elementary students in two separate private schools, one of which was religious. Both boys were over disciplined and faced low academic expectations despite their superior academic achievement. Thus, Black males in Christian schools face racial discrimination and racial

messages that suggest that the schools they attended were not designed to accommodate them.

LeBlanc (2017) analyzed and detailed anti-Black interactions between Vietnamese and Black students in a classroom in an urban Catholic school. These negative interactions revealed a racial message of Black male students being intellectually inferior, religiously ignorant, and immoral. Thomas et al. (2020) reported findings consistent with these when they collected the racialized experiences of Black male student-athletes at a Catholic high school. The Black students attested to experiencing anti-Blackness and racial marginalization due to various racial stereotypes such as Black students resembling monkeys, being hyper athletes, and intellectually inferior. This emergence revealed that even Christian schools produce negative racial messages about Black people.

Beyond Catholic schools, Protestant schools grapple with race as well. Little and Tolbert (2018) found that race was an essential factor even in Protestant Christian elementary schools and that Black boys experienced labeling and racial hostility from their teachers. A Black student received a negative racial message that he had a learning disability although he had tested well above grade level in core content areas. Thus, even in predominantly White Protestant Christian K-12 schools, Black boys experience racial marginalization and messages of intellectual inferiority and social deviance.

Black Led Christian Schools

Some scholars and practitioners contend that Black students and their communities resist schooling due to these spaces existing as spaces of oppression and

their contemporaries labeling them as acting White (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Tyson et al., 2005). Despite these claims Black people and Black Christians have persistently desired education (Anderson, 1988; Butchart, 1980; Willis, 2020; Woodson, 1919). Before state-funded schooling and the arrival of northern missionaries in the south after emancipation, Black communities formed schools to educate their children (Anderson, 1988). During the antebellum period, northern Blacks in cities like Philadelphia, New York, and Boston created schools for their children, and churches started Sabbath schools that taught reading, writing, and arithmetic (Kammerer, 2017; Willis, 2020). Historically, education has always been a priority within Black communities because Black parents have viewed schools as a means of social uplift (Kammerer, 2017). Unfortunately, Black education has not been a priority of the White leadership (Silcox, 1973a; Spring, 2018; Willis, 2020). However, in the absence of opportunity, Black churches, and Black Christians have intervened and provided educational opportunities through Sabbath schools, parochial schools, Black boarding academies, social protests, tutoring, and church and public-school partnerships (Alexander-Snow, 2011; Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991; Foster, 1992; Kammerer, 2017; Ladson-Billing, 1994; McIntosh & Curry, 2020; Sepulveda, 2020; Silcox, 1977; Willis, 2020).

However, the racial messages of these White Christians schools were antithetical to the messages students received in Black Christian Schools (Willis, 2020). The messages received in these institutions were of racial affirmation and Black excellence (Willis, 2020). Furthermore, these schools have had academic success with Black male students who were low-performing students in urban public schools (Alexander-Snow,

2011; Foster 1994). Layman (1994) conducted an ethnographic case study which explored the existence of Black Christian schools. However, his research explored three separate sights, and the focus was not on the students as much as it was on the existence of these institutions. These institutions were in three separate metropolis areas in separate regions of the United States. Ultimately, Layman (1994) found that these schools prioritized their Christian identity in the same vein as White Evangelical schools (Rose, 1988). Layman provided critical insights into the existence of these spaces with an explicit emphasis on race. It was evident with some of these schools that race played a role in their creation. For instance, one school founder created their school because a local White Christian school did not want Black students. However, Layman's (1994) research looked for an explicit racial emphasis in these schools through interviews and school documents but may have missed critical links between belief and praxis. Furthermore, Layman did not consider the experiences of Black males that attended these BLCCS. Thus, our current understanding of this phenomenon is limited.

<div align="center">**Problem Statement**</div>

Despite the salience of race in America, CCS theorists and scholars have focused on these schools' Christian identities and not their racial constituency. In the rare instances when race and racism are explored in the CCS movement, these explorations center White voices (Jeynes, 2002; Leo, 2018), their racial prejudice (Collins, 1990), and their implicit biases (McCombs & Gay, 1988). This means that much of what we know empirically about race is derived from the perspectives of White people, making the message incomplete.

Unfortunately, there has been little to no research on CCS that centers Black male voices. Furthermore, there has been less research concerning CCS that has explored the racial messaging that these Black males receive in these spaces. In the absence of research, Black Millennials and Generation Z who have attended CCS have matriculated through their K-12 schooling with minimal probing into their racialized experiences as students and the racial messaging that they had received. This absence of probing has resulted in a research void concerning the racial messaging of these CCS. Adding a layer of complexity to this research void is the underexplored phenomenon of BLCCS. That is to say, CCS are distinct institutions. While there is significant overlap, each school operates differently depending on the temperament and perspectives of the leadership styles (Rose, 1988). Hence, if this is true from a personality and denominational perspective, then this must be true when one considers the cultural and racial makeup of the administration. In essence, these schools' racial messaging is not solely determined by the curriculum, but also due to these schools' administrations.

Unfortunately, most commentaries around these institutions mention their existence, but provide little to no detail around the phenomena. There is ample data concerning Christian schools, but much of the research concentrates on Christian schools in a color-blind manner. As a result, there is a shortage of research on BLCCS and their significance within the plenary of Christian educational options. Furthermore, due to this absence in research there is no empirical data concerning the racial messaging that Black students receive in these institutions and nothing that considers how these messages have shaped their sense of self and their identity.

The third and final layer that needs to be considered concerning this study is Black males. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2011) highlighted the paradox of Black males in modern society:

The clothes, the style, the language, and the effects of young, Black, urban males are visible throughout the nation and the world. It has left an indelible mark on Madison Avenue, Hollywood, and most forms of media. Everywhere I have traveled recently, Australia, Japan, the Caribbean, London, Paris, Ghana, and even Sweden have presented examples of this culture to me. The young people wear baggy pants, professional sports team jerseys, baseball caps, expensive sneakers, and have tattoos. The international youth heroes are music makers like P. Diddy, 50 Cent, Jay-Z, Lil Wayne, and athletes like LeBron James, Allen Iverson, and Shaquille O'Neal.

When we look at the "hate" aspect of this dichotomy, we see African American males as "problems" that our society must find ways to eradicate. We regularly determine them to be the root cause of most problems in schools and society. We seem to hate their dress, their language, and their effect. We hate that they challenge authority and command so much social power. We seem convinced that if they wouldn't act so… "Black", they would not be problems. (p. 9)

This quote highlighted the issues that Black males experience in society and school. White teachers psychologically criminalize their behaviors in school and are more likely

to discipline them than their White students and assume that Black males will disrupt the classroom (Butler et al., 2009; Carter-Andrews, 2012; James, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2011). From an academic standpoint, Black males face low academic expectations from their teachers (James, 2019; Thomas et al., 2020). There is no research concerning Black males as they traverse CCS and the racial messages that they receive from which there can be much to learn.

The final research void that exists within the literature is that no research examines the racial messages received by individuals that have traversed both PWCCS and BLCCS. There is research that explores the experiences of Black males in White Christian Schools. Yet there is no research that has explored the racial messaging that Black males receive as they traversed both PWCCS and BLCCS.

The gap in Christian education research is that researchers have not explored the racial messaging that Black males receive while they attended their PWCCS and their BLCCS. This study fills this gap in research by exploring the racial messages that Black male alumni born 1981-2003 received while attending their PWCCS and BLCCS. This study attempts to capture those racial messages by conducting an interpretative phenomenological study on Black males who attended both PWCCS and BLCCS. Therefore, this study conducts semi-structured interviews on Black males born 1981-2003 who attended both PWCCS and BLCCS and analyzes the data to gather information regarding the findings.

Research Questions

To better understand the racial messages that the Black males received in these schools, this study probes this phenomenon by capturing the experiences of Black males who attended both PWCCS and BLCCS and gathering the racial messages that they received from these experiences. The guiding research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What were the racial messages that the Black males received while attending their CCS?

   a. What were the racial messages that the Black males received while attending their BLCCS?

   b. What were the racial messages that the Black males received while attending their PWCCS?

2. How did the racial messaging shape their understanding of race and their self as Black males?

3. How did the Black males perceive Christian teachings to be a part of the racial dynamics in these CCS?

Theoretical Framework

This study draws heavily on the theoretical assumptions of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Legal scholar Derrick Bell popularized the CRT in the 1980s. Bell (1992) held an unusual position that even though the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) created opportunities for economic progress for the Black community through programs like affirmative action, it failed to eradicate racism. For Bell, the Black community remained

systematically disenfranchised and at the bottom of the American social hierarchy due to the CRM's inability to address racism. Bell and other CRT scholars posited that America, at its foundation, is racist and that racism cannot be destroyed because it is not just a moral issue but a structural dilemma; racist ideologies are seamlessly intertwined with the political structure of the United States. For instance, American elections are not decided by the popular vote but through the electoral college, which disempowers the Black vote because of gerrymandering. Bell also contended that *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which deemed it illegal to have racially segregated schools, was not a byproduct of America becoming less racist, but was due to the temporary shared interests between White liberals and African Americans (Bell, 1980). However, the gains recognized through desegregating schools were receded once White liberal political interests changed (Bell, 1980).

CRT's core tenets posit that due to structural racism, racist behavior is not abnormal but normative within the United States (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Yosso, 2005). Therefore, to address the racialized issues in society, one must not seek to address racism but address the structural impediments responsible for creating racial inequality, which is foundational to America and WAC and is interwoven into law and policy. The CRT scholars further established that Black progress was not a result of White America's concessions due to an end of racism but a result of interest convergence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Interest convergence is a concept that contends that White America made concessions because it benefited the White community, not because racist policies were inequitable.

Ladson Billings and Tate (1995) took CRT from the legal field and brought it into education. In their contribution, a significant point of emphasis was that property ownership and race must be considered collectively. Property ownership was more than physical property; but it also related to White privilege. That is to say. Whiteness granted Whites the authority to inherent advantages such as White representation in the curriculum and cultural congruence with the teachers and administrators. White communities have the right to exclude people of color from specific spaces. White communities have the authority to deem certain behaviors acceptable and a right to cherish their reputation and status in society. Ladson-Billings (1998) built on this work by grounding the CRT issues in education and by examining five educational disparities: curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation. CRT in education analyzes curriculum because it has the power to enforce White supremacy through its creation of a master script that tells a Eurocentric story (Ladson-Billing, 1998). Ladson-Billing (1998) highlighted that the school funding system, which is based on property tax inequitably, funds schools with a large percentage of minorities because Non-White neighborhoods' property values are generally lower than White communities' property taxes. Ladson-Billings and Tate critically analyzed the influence of race on the American educational landscape and have exposed how race has been weaponized to create an inequitable educational system for people of color.

Black Critical Theory

Michael Dumas and Kihana Ross (2016) felt as if CRT was insufficient to really analyze the struggles of Black people in education and noticed that its focus was concerned with critiquing Whiteness. Out of this void they developed a new theoretical concept called Black critical theory (BlackCrit) which took account for CRT's limitations and focused more on Blackness. Dumas and Ross (2016) resisted the urge to place firm tenants on BlackCrit. Instead, they posited a foundational idea that anti-Blackness is central to how many people make sense of the world and resists the humanity of Black people. Also, they assert that Blackness is at odds with the neo-liberal multi-cultural imagination. Dumas and Ross (2016) also pushed toward this idea of creating space for Black liberatory fantasy. This notion is critical in an analysis of BLCCS because these are spaces in which social oppression is minimized, and Black students can experience a space of single consciousness. Thus, BlackCrit is not simply a theory that analyzes and critiques Whiteness, but it also makes room to celebrate and explore Black spaces away from the White Gaze (Du Bois, 1903; Duman & Ross, 2016).

Dumas and Ross's (2016) concept that anti-blackness is central to how people make sense of the world is a more detailed articulation of CRT's assertion that racism is normal. The critical difference is that this articulation refers to an antagonism between Blackness and humanity (Ross, 2019). As a matter of fact, this conceptualization derives from afro-pessimism which argues that Black people exist in the social imagination of society as property or slaves (Ross, 2019). For instance, often in education Black males are positioned as intellectually inferior, immoral, sexual deviants and in need of redemption (Coleman, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2011). These characterizations are derived

from the historical links to slavery in which America's social imagination of Black

people positioned their identity in these deficit characterizations (Carter-Andrews &

Cosby, 2021; Fredrickson, 1971).

Blackness existence in tensions with the neo-liberal agenda is aligned with the

first tenant of BlackCrit. However, this tenant focuses on America's shift from anti-

racism after Jim Crow towards a belief that the nation was no longer racist (Ross, 2019).

In turn, once the nation's interests turned from the establishment of programs like

affirmative action which attempted counter racism, the nation began to prioritize the

market (Ross, 2019). This change in focus, believed that the market would provide equal

opportunity to everyone. Thus, when one considers the reason Black people lag in wealth

accumulation or in academic performance metrics it is because there is a deficiency with

Blackness. People can draw this conclusion because the underlying assumption concludes

that racism is no longer an impediment to upward mobility.

The third and final tenant which can be difficult to understand is Black liberatory

fantasy. Black liberatory fantasy allows individuals to imagine a reality in the absence of

Black oppression. Yet, this imagining does not come through the erasure of White people

and their role of dominance. Instead, this radical re-imagining depicts a future that

includes the removal of these dominating White institutions. For instance, one could

fanaticize about a future in which school funding is not shaped by property taxes, but

instead this racist system is abolished and funding structure supported educating the

neediest students as opposed to rewarding the students born into the wealthiest

communities.

Purpose of The Study

This interpretive phenomenological study is designed to center the voices of Black males that have traversed both PWCCS and BLCCS because: 1) there exists a gap in this research since their full inclusion into PWCCS; 2) in the rare instances when there has been an empirical inquiry into these schools it has centered White voices; 3) The research community has focused primarily on PWCCS, and little is empirically known about BLCCS. As a byproduct of these research gaps the allowance of scholars to hypothesize that there is greater racial harmony in these institutions between White and Black students in these educational spaces. Thus, this study gathered data through semi-structured interviews that attempted to unpack and uncover the racial messaging that the Black males received while students in these institutions.

Significance of Study

This study is significant because there is little to no research that explores the contemporary phenomena of Black male students in CCS. Beyond this research void, there has been even less work conducted on the existence and persistence of BLCCS. In the absence of research, it has allowed one Christian school educational theorist to posit that Christian schools have greater racial harmony (Jeynes, 2002). Additionally, this interpretive phenomenological study finally allowed for the centering of Black voices and experiences in the realm of Christian schooling. Beyond the centering of Black voices, this research allowed for PWCCS to have a period of introspection to critique their policies and praxes to create more equitable schooling experiences and craft more racially affirming messages for the students who attend their schools. Additionally, a greater

understanding of BLCCS allows for other schooling sectors to understand best practices for educating and developing Black male students in their schools. Finally, there is such a void in empirical data concerning race and Christian schooling from a research perspective that this research is only be the tip of the iceberg and allows for more studies to launch from this space.

Dissertation Overview

The overarching purpose of this dissertation is to explore the racial messages that Black males received while attending both PWCCS and BLCCS. This phenomenological study gathers this data through conducting semi-structured interviews with a group of Black males. Due to the lack of empirical inquiry into this area of research, this study fills in this void. This dissertation is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 discussed the purpose, necessity, and significance of this study. Also, this chapter provided a brief overview of the theoretical framework that undergirded the study. Chapter 2 provides the literature review, which explores the racialized experiences of Black students in predominantly White schools, and the racial messages Black males perceived in these institutions. Afterwards, the literature review transitions to discuss the intersections of race and Christian schooling. Unfortunately, these discussions on race and Christianity typically focus on White teachers and students instead of those adversely affected by racism which are Black students. Also, chapter 2 reviews the literature concerning White American Christianity (WAC) and its influence on the CCS movement from the antebellum era until the early 90s. Afterwards, chapter 2 reviews the history and existence of BLCCS movement in America. Finally, chapter 2 synthesizes these three

divergent concepts, bring them into congruence, and demonstrate how they overlap with the research study. Chapter 3 discusses the methodological approaches that went into this research and procedures that were followed to ensure that the study met meticulous research standards, such as the characteristics of the research participants and the coding schematics. Chapter 4 provides the results from the study. Chapter 5 provides the conclusions as well as the implications of the study results.

Key Terminology

The key terms for this study are listed below and defined to ensure greater clarity.

Black led Conservative Christian Schools: Predominantly Black Conservative Christian Schools that have all-Black School boards, and school administrators (Layman, 1994).

Christian Schooling: a formal approach to schooling that is independent and Christian in nature and vastly different from Christian education which can be inclusive of Christian schooling but can also refer to congregations' approaches to membership education (Sunday school, discipleship, small groups) (Rose, 1988).

Critical Race Theory: An academic theory that was derived from legal studies that espouses that racism is ingrained in American law and policies which favor White Americans over other racial minorities and functions as a lens to critically analyze society including education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Conservative Christian Schools: Christian schools that attempt to undergird their curriculum with biblical Christianity because these schools believe the Bible is a divinely inspired book and the source of all true knowledge (Knight, 2016).

Generation-Z: Americans who were born between 1997-2012 who are typically defined by the fact that they grew up in the age of technological advancements and had early exposure to devices like smart phones (Dimock, 2019).

Racial Messages: Messages that are either implicit or explicit about a certain racial group that express an understanding about that group as a whole. These messages can be stated or enforced by silence around the topic but come off as a common understanding (Gaskin, 2015).

Racialized Experiences: An experience that correlates with a racist encounter such as an individual being racially stereotyped, or experiencing a micro-aggression (Hollis, 2017)/

Millennial: Americans who were born between 1981-1996 who are notable because they are the largest generation since the Baby Boomers (Dimock, 2019; Stark, 2016).

Predominantly White Conservative Christian Schools: Conservative Christian Schools that are made up of majority White students and faculty, and under the direction of a White congregation or a cluster of White Christians at the board level.

Segregationist Academies: religious and non-religious private schools that received state funds that were designed to circumvent racial integration efforts that maintained all-White schools until the IRS threatened to remove their tax-exempt status (Nevin & Bills, 1976; Onion, 2019).

White American Christianity: A form of Christianity that is normative to White Americans which is intertwined with White supremacy and patriotism (Stephanson 1998; Willis, 2020).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Regardless of school type, race still matters for Black students in American schools. However, the racial make-up of a school and its administration is a more significant determinant that Black students experience negative racial messages. When the school is majority White or used to be majority White, Black students are more likely to receive deficit-based racial messaging from their teachers and peers. Also, when the school administration is majority White, Black students are more likely to experience racial trauma. Thus, whether the school is public, independent, or religious, as long as it is under White leadership, Black students are more likely to receive negative racial messages about Black people (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). These deficit-based racial messages manifest differently for Black males in schools because of America's love-hate relationship with Black men and boys (Ladson-Billings, 2011). Americans have fetishized Black males' clothing styles, music, and athletes, but villainized them as thugs and sought to find ways to control their bodies (Ladson-Billings, 2011). In turn, school personnel have labeled, punished, and criminalized Black male student behavior even for typical adolescent playful behavior (Butler et al., 2009; Ferguson, 2001). Implicit within these punishments are racial messages of Black people being social deviants. White educators and students in predominantly White schools have contributed to the adverse racialized experiences of Black students, particularly Black males.

Some may assume that a Christian school environment is more hospitable towards Black males. Some scholars even suggest that Christian school environments are less racist and provide greater racial harmony than other academic environments (Jeynes,

2002). However, race matters in Christian schools in implicit and explicit manners. Racial animus is couched in PWCCS's teacher treatment of Black students. However, there are straightforward ways that race has mattered, and messages of anti-Blackness have manifested in these educational environments through microaggressions (Thomas et al., 2020). However, the school's racial makeup is a more significant determinant of the racial messaging than, per se, the institution's religious character. That is to say, the racial messages that Black males receive from PWCCS can be vastly different than the messages received when they attend a BLCCS.

This literature review is broken down between three divergent concepts that converge into one. This convergence drives home the point that these three conceptual worlds come together to form this critical research problem. Thus, each section begins broad and gradually narrows to a focus point within the literature, and these three themes better explicate the research problem. The first core concept is the racial messages that Black students receive in schools, concludes with an emphasis on Black males in Predominantly White Christian schools. Followed by the concept of WAC and Racism in Christian schooling, narrowing to this phenomenon within CCS. Finally, the literature review examines the underexplored existence of Black led schooling, concluding with a special emphasis on the lack of clarity concerning the BLCCS environment.

Black Students' Perceived Racial Messages

Predominantly White Public Schools

Historically, White independent school's students and teachers enact racist behavior, but these are not the only kind of White schools that perpetuate racist messages

(Decuir-Gunby & Dixson, 2004). White teachers and students in predominantly White public schools enact racist behavior (Carter-Andrews, 2005). White independent schools can be typified by being schools for the wealthy and many could contend that these negative racial messages are not a race issue as much as they are a social class issue. However, Black students in predominantly White public schools can consist of people from all social classes.

While much of the research had initially focused on independent schools Dorinda Carter-Andrews (2005) placed an emphasis on the racialized experiences and messages of Black students in predominantly White public schools. Carter-Andrews (2005) conducted a case study that illustrated the experiences of nine high achieving Black students, ages 15-18, who were bussed into a predominantly White Bostonian public high school consisting of 2081 students. Carter-Andrews (2005) found that Black students experienced two primary forms of micro-aggressions racial spotlighting or ignoring. Students felt as if they were the voice for all things Black, especially from their peers in class. Furthermore, Black students experienced White students staring at them during uncomfortable racial topics, and they encountered the support staff assuming Black student's deviant behavior (Carter-Andrews, 2005). The other forms of microaggressions were summed up in racial ignoring by White teachers and students. This racial ignoring manifested in being overlooked in class, ignored during small group discussions, and the use of racial slurs in their presence. This predominantly White northeastern public school demonstrated that negative racialized experiences were regular occurrences. These experiences communicated a racial message that Black students' academic contributions

were not important, unless it was concerning the Black experience. In essence, Black people's contributions to knowledge was null unless it was to add clarity to and insights into the Black world. Although these students were high achieving, their teachers and peers' racism and negative racial stereotypes still shaped their experiences.

Carter-Andrews (2007) built on her initial study on the experiences of nine Black students in a predominantly White Bostonian public high school but explored the ways Black kids survived in this school. This study focused less on the experiences and how these Black students achieved and focused on identity-affirming counter-spaces. Carter-Andrews' (2007) findings suggested that the reason Black students assembled in the stairwell at this predominantly White school was to decompress from their negative racist experiences. Also, they gathered at the stairwell to counter the negative racial messages that they had received throughout the school day. They countered their hyper-visualization from their White onlookers and their invisibility for these same White onlookers by forming an identity-affirming counter space. For instance, they spotlighted each another for enacting their Blackness which revealed that Black students did not mind being seen as long as their recognition provided affirmation. These findings are not unique, Tatum (2017) had a similar outlook and found that Black students formed fictive kinships in these educational spaces to survive. These findings counter Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) analysis of the Black students' peer networks, termed "fictive kinships" because these groups were paramount to students' social survival and academic perseverance (Carter-Andrews, 2007). In essence, White public and independent schools

can be classified as culturally unsupportive, but their survival in both environments is a result of these Black relationships in these hostile White spaces (Carter, 2007).

Simone Ispa-Landa and Jordan Conwell (2015) conducted a case study of 38 urban Black students that attended a predominantly White public school through a school bussing initiative and 16 other students who had been waitlisted for the program but were dispersed between 15 other schools. This study differs from other studies that examine the experiences of Black students because the researchers introduced the perspectives of White students on their perceptions of Black students. Also, this study is unique because it compares and contrasts the experiences of students that were a part of the same program but attended different schools. Also, Ispa-Landa and Conwell (2015) examined how these experiences shaped participants' understanding of race and schooling. The findings suggest that Black students encountered racial messages of Black low academic expectations, Black cultural inferiority, and Black criminality (Ispa-Landa & Conwell, 2015). In turn, certain students who were a part of the program came to believe that they were better than their racial counterparts who attended their former school and began to classify them as ghetto, disorderly, and dangerous. Furthermore, these students who attended the predominantly White school began to believe that Black and underachievement were synonymous. In comparison, the students who were waitlisted for those schools felt as if the schools they attended pushed them and worked to prepare them for college while these students felt comfortable in their neighborhood schools (Ispa-Landa & Conwell, 2015). In essence the racial messages that were received was that the Black schooling was deficient, Blacks were social deviants, and the White ways

of being was their ticket out of their impoverished Black mindsets. Thus, the environment of the predominantly White school was racially hostile, but the environment of the predominantly Black school was more comfortable. Within the Black school environment, they received a racial message that Black people were capable, but in order to achieve you must work hard. The critical difference between the two environments consisted of the racial makeup of these environments.

Racially Integrated Schools

Racially integrated schools have been positioned as the goal of education. For instance, *Brown vs. the Board of Education* (1954) had been argued in a way that made people believe that Black students would benefit from being in the same classroom as White people (Kendi, 2016). This argument insinuated that the problem was not the funding disparity, but that Black people needed assistance from the ontologically superior White students and teacher. However, recent research has demonstrated that integrated schools may not be the utopian environment that many had hoped it would be for Black males. Thandeka Chapman (2014) conducted a multisite case study between six different school sites and interviewed nearly 100 students in racially integrated schools, most of which were predominantly White. Chapman attempted to capture the experiences of these Black students to see if desegregation had led to a more inclusive social and academic environment for Black students. Chapman did this by probing into the students' relationships with their teachers and peers. The Black students believed that their White teachers held racist assumptions. Students noticed that the White teachers assumed that the Black students were intellectually inferior. For instance, teachers would assume that a

student was wrong when they answered a question in class. Students also felt that the teachers exercised punitive discipline towards Black students based on their experiences at this predominantly White public school. The Black students in the study also noted the differential treatment by teachers toward the Black and Latinx students compared to their White counterparts. Also, the Black students complained about their school counselors having doubts about their academic capabilities and attempting to keep them in non-college preparatory classes. Students also complained of counselors discouraging them from going to their ideal college and pushing them towards lower-tracked degrees regardless of their GPA or prior academic performance. Chapman's (2014) work focused on the teacher micro-aggressions demonstrating that the White school environment is challenging to navigate because the teachers and the school counselors do not feel like safe people for Black high school students. Thus, Black students in White spaces often have no safe space to turn unless they turn towards their same-race counterparts (Carter, 2007).

Diamond and Lewis (2019) conducted a four-year longitudinal ethnographic study at an integrated midwestern public school in which they interviewed over 170 students. Diamond and Lewis (2019) had a similar assessment to Chapman (2014) concerning the disparity in discipline. Their findings indicated a disparity in those selected for punishment and a discrepancy in processing their disciplinary actions (Diamond & Lewis, 2019). That is to say, that teachers reprimanded Black students for doing the same thing as other White students, and school administrators penalized Black students more harshly than their White student counterparts. Diamond and Lewis's

(2019) findings suggested that the reason for these disparities was due to the rules in the school handbook being more subjective, which allowed teacher bias to disproportionately penalize Black students. Thus, the racial messages Black males received in racially integrated schools are such that Black students are excessively disciplined and assumed to be intellectually inferior.

Chapman and Bhopal (2019) merged their two datasets together and compared their findings. Chapman brought data from her six multi-site case studies concerning racial integration and compared it with Bhopal's phenomenological study which interviewed 30 Afro-Caribbean students in rural schools in England. After Chapman and Bhopal re-analyzed the data, they found that although the students were in two different countries their experiences were similar. For instance, they all experienced racial stereotyping from their teachers and peers. This study had three unique focuses; it brought an international perspective because it looked at Black kids in America and England, it parsed out the gendered experiences of Black students, and it focused on the racialized experiences of Black students generally. There was a remarkable level of overlap between the experiences. Both groups experienced racial stereotyping, racial surveillance, and an intersection between race and gender (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). The racial stereotyping played out slightly differently here than in other studies due to what the researchers suggested to be a fear of being labeled as racist (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). For instance, instead of expressing their low expectations by being disinterested in their students' performance, these students stated that the teachers provided unrequested assistance due to an assumption that they were not capable of

understanding (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). These assumptions of intellectual inferiority result in Black students feeling anxiety because they desire to counter these stereotypes (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). The Black students also reported feeling as if they were under surveillance and would get into trouble for less serious offenses or doing the same thing as their White counterparts because teachers assumed Black deviance (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). Also, Black students' punishment would be more punitive because their behavior was labeled in problematic ways. Black boys were labeled as being aggressive by their teachers; meanwhile, Black girls felt the need to become invisible to not stand out as much due to their body shapes and skin color (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). School personnel penalized Black males more excessively due to their problematic assumptions, and Black female students received more dress code infractions due to their shapelier hips (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). Thus, Black students were disturbed by their experiences in K-12 to the extent that the Black girls desired to blend in and become colorless (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). Thus, the research surrounding the experiences of Black students in predominantly White schools is consistent in that it demonstrates that the school's racial climate is unwelcome and psychologically violent towards Black students. Furthermore, Black students received racial messaging that proposed Black people as social deviants, culturally and academically inferior, and positioned Black schooling as something of little value.

Black students in integrated and predominantly White public schools both face the racist assumptions of intellectual inferiority, and hyper surveillance. Its manifestation

differs in subtle ways but there is a substantial level of overlap. Black students in all of these schools experience racial trauma and encounter racially hostile environments.

Predominantly White Independent Schools

Beyond the racial messaging that is disseminated in public schools, White Independent schools have served as bastions for White resistance. For instance, after desegregation efforts were enforced in the 1960s many segregationists' academies were formed to maintain segregated schools (Nevin & Bills, 1976). The full inclusion of Black students in all private schools came as a byproduct of the threat of the removal of segregationist academies' tax-exempt statuses by the IRS (Greenhouse, 1983). Although Black students have been in White independent schools, this move did not happen without force. Also, historically teachers and students at White independent schools treated certain Black students with hostility once schools granted them access to their institutions (Slaughter & Johnson, 1988; Purdy, 2018). For instance, White independent schools did not re-shape their curriculum to become inclusive of their Black students because their admission centered around Black educational environments being functionally inferior to these White institutions (Kendi, 2016; Slaughter & Johnson, 1988). Thus, White institutions felt that Black students' admission into their space was for Black students' benefits. These White independent schools could not conceptualize that they were ill equipped to educate Black students (Foster, 1997; Slaughter & Johnson, 1988). Hence, Black students enrolled in socially hostile White schools that were ill equipped to adequately educate them in humanizing and non-deficit approaches (Foster, 1997; Milner IV & Howard, 2004).

Unfortunately, White teacher inefficiency did not result in White educators considering their need to correct their pedagogical approaches (Ladson-Billing, 1994). Instead, Black families' communities and schools were blamed, and Black parents were left disappointed in the educational quality that their pedagogues received (Brookins, 1988). However, it has not just been the parents who have been disappointed by the shortcomings that have resulted in victimization of Black students by their White teachers and peers for over 30 years (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007). Black students have attended predominantly White schools that were non-inclusive and socially hostile. Despite this hostility Black students have found ways to persevere in these environments largely due to their Black peer network as opposed to teacher or faculty support (Datnow & Cooper, 1997). Thus, Black students have navigated these culturally ill-prepared pedagogical spaces through their Black social network support.

Herr (1999) conducted a three-year ethnographic study investigating the micropolitics of race and privilege as a practitioner of an elite predominantly White independent school. Herr (1999) found that Black students struggled to socially adjust to the schools' micropolitics in large part due to their race. Race and class played significant roles in the negative experiences of these Black students, but the most profound effect appeared in their struggles with racial identity. For instance, a particular Black student spoke of feeling isolated, felt the need to defy the racial stereotypes, and opted for a more raceless identity to survive. The school's racial messages only served to re-enforce the racial stereotypes that persisted in these environments. These stories were not just perpetuated by teachers and peers but also by a non-inclusive curriculum.

Herr's study critiqued Fordham's (1988) findings which suggested that Black students disengaged in schools because schools are spaces of social oppression. However, Herr's study demonstrated that Black students clung to their fellow Black counterparts in school to counter these problematic narratives that the schools and curricula perpetuated. For instance, Black students formed a group that discussed issues surrounding minority awareness. They discussed minority issues and even became a focal point of the school as it navigated adverse racialized incidences. This group was beneficial for the Black students as they traversed their school experiences by aiding them in processing their experiences because these students did not feel isolated. Evidently, Black students counter the negative racialized messages that they received in school through each other.

Datnow and Cooper (1997) conducted a three-year longitudinal multisite case study on 42 Black students attending 20 Baltimore area Elite predominantly White independent schools on needs-based scholarships. Datnow and Cooper (1997) also found that formal and informal groups were beneficial for Black students as they matriculated through these predominantly White independent schools. For instance, the Black students initially felt isolated but used the formal and informal Black peer groups to help them cope while at these schools. As a matter of fact, although they heard deficit-based messages about Black people who looked like them, it was actually their peer group that transformed the negative racial messages they heard from their neighborhoods about being smart. They shifted smart from being an extension of Whiteness and said that that being smart and doing well in school was actually cool.

DeCuir-Gunby (2007) conducted a phenomenological study about six Black students at a predominantly White independent school and took a more intersectional approach to analyzing Black students in these schools. For instance, DeCuir-Gunby (2007) explored the intersection of race and class in independent schools while utilizing Critical Race Theory as her theoretical framework. The study focused on how Black students who attended a historically White independent school maintained their racial identity. However, it captured the racial messaging that these Black students received as well. Students who attended this school were aware that they were seen as charity cases by their peers. However, the school had a racially hostile climate, and the students felt as if the curriculum ignored Black contributions and prioritized the needs of the wealthy White students. Implicit within this action was the racial message that suggested that Blacks were simply recipients and not contributors, and that White desires trumped Black needs. Black students critiqued the school because it promoted meritocracy and colorblindness, but the Black students experienced racism and saw social networks benefitting White legacy students. Thus, these predominantly White independent schools were not racially affirming, nor socially inclusive towards their Black students.

DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2011) built on her previous study by reanalyzing the same six Black students' experiences. DeCuir- Gunby et al. (2011) continued down the line of scholars who disagreed with Fordham and Ogbu's assessment of Black students acting White. However, the focus shifts from experiences and focuses on racial identity development. The Black students attribute their positive racial identity development to their parents, churches, Black school peer network, and overcome the negative racial

messages of Black people while students at an elite White independent school. The findings demonstrated that the Black peer network was a positive influence and aided Black students in making it as they progressed through school. The Black students needed their Black peer group due to the school environment. Also, these students learned to lean on their support system outside of school because the school did not provide adequate support. This finding demonstrated that although these schools can be spaces of oppression, Black students and people find outlets to get what they need as opposed to underperforming.

Predominantly White Independent school environments are spaces of racial hostility for Black students because of the negative racial messages. However, the research has demonstrated that Black survival and messages of racial affirmation in these spaces are derived from Black social groups. The findings suggested that Black students socialized during lunch or outside of school. Also, these social supports may also be found outside of the school and in the community. A critical difference with many of these studies is that they push against the assumptions of Fordham and Ogbu (1986) which pathologize Black failure and place the blame on the student and their community. In short, Black students maintain strong racial identities and receive messages of racial affirmation from their Black social network which serves to counteract the racially hostile environment.

Black Males Students Perception of Racial messages

The racialized experiences of Black males in schools differ from the experiences of Black females (Carter-Andrews et al., 2019). To this point in the literature review the

studies have examined the racial experiences of Black students in general, but this next subheading transitions toward focusing on the unique experiences of Black males. Furthermore, the literature examines the racial messages that Black boys have received while being a part of these schools. From slavery onward there have been various stereotypical tropes that depict Black males as violent, lazy, bestial, aggressive, simple, and mentally inferior (Fredrickson, 1971; Kendi, 2016). These conceptualizations of Black males have influenced their treatment by people in power. This section unpacks the racialized experiences of Black males and the racial messages that they received in school.

Chapman and Bhopal's (2019) work demonstrated that racism and racial microaggressions manifest differently depending on the gender of the students. Scholars such as Carter-Andrews, Brown, and Id-Deen (2019) and Ispa-Landa (2015) have explored how racial and gendered oppression manifest in schools. However, their focus was primarily on the Black female students' experiences findings that Black girls were hypersexualized, masculinized, and labeled as loud or ghetto by their White teachers and peers (Carter-Andrews et al., 2019; Ispa-Landa, 2015). However, White teachers have criminalized Black male student behavior deeming their behavior as violent or criminal (Butler et al., 2009; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). Other studies suggest that Black males have been granted privileges due to their status as athletes or because they are seen as excellent for enacting certain acceptable forms of Blackness and desired by White female students (Carter-Andrews et al., 2019; Ispa-Landa, 2015). It is critical to examine the intersectional experiences of Black males because their identities and experiences are not

compartmentalized to certain aspects of their identity. Instead, their experiences overlap with their race and gender because their Blackness and their maleness determine their teachers' and peers' interactions with them. Beyond these experiences, Black males receive racial messages based on their teachers, peers, and environments.

Polite (1993) conducted a three-year ethnographic case study on 115 African American male students. The study explored underachievement in a desegregated suburban school in the Midwest. This desegregated school also experienced White flight at some point during integration. In this study, Polite served as a participatory action researcher, making him a part of the academic environment. Polite (1993) found that the Black students' underachievement was due to a lack of teacher care and teacher disinterest in Black male students, which the teachers demonstrated by not encouraging their Black males for higher academic achievement. After students graduated and enrolled in college, they realized that teachers and guidance counselors did not prepare them for college because they did not encourage Black males to take college-preparatory courses or motivate them when they underperformed (Diamond & Lewis, 2019; Polite, 1993; 1994). The White teachers and administrators made the environment unaccommodating. As a result of their failure to accommodate Black males, many fell into peer pressure which led to problematic behavior. The findings suggested that Black males in engaging learning environments that promote high academic achievement may be less likely to be pressured by their peers into destructive behaviors that may result in them being incarcerated. A lack of teacher interest in the Black males' academic potential is revelatory concerning the assumptions of Black males' intellectual inferiority held by

certain White teachers (James, 2019). Although the teachers may not have said much the students perceived their teachers disinterest and later recognized that their teachers did not attempt to prepare them for college. The racial message that Black males received was that Black learning was unimportant.

James (2019) conducted a phenomenological study on the racialized experiences of nine middle school-aged Black males who attended a predominantly White school in the greater Toronto area. James (2019) found that the Black males experienced racial micro-aggressions. These micro-aggressions ranged from students being pushed towards athletics, assumptions of student involvement in deviant behavior, and expectations of low academic potential (James 2019). This study demonstrated that the beliefs concerning Black students are not an American problem but a North American issue. These middle school Black males' academic environment was not supportive, but one that was socially challenging due to the racial micro-aggressions administered by educators. Schools should be places that encourage and push Black students toward being the best version of themselves both academically and socially. However, schools have become places that promote negative racial and masculinized images of Black males and push them towards prison and sites of social oppression (Noguera, 2003; Polite, 1993; 1994). Schools do not serve as non-racist sites but as social institutions with implicit messages concerning Black males (Noguera, 2003; Slaughter, 1988). For many Black males, school is a site of Black suffering in which Black male students have been traumatized, which can result in social deviance or academic disengagement (Ford & Moore, 2013; Noguera, 2003). James (2019) findings reveal that Black teachers perceived Black males to be

troublemakers in the classroom, uneducable, and that their physical bodies were more important than their minds.

Allen (2013) explored how a pair of six Black fathers and their sons handled school-based micro-aggressions in a suburban west coast school with more than 200 students. The study found that Black male students faced low academic expectations and were believed to be social deviants by their teachers. At times they were written off as having learning disabilities and faced differentiated treatment for Black males and their White counterparts. Allen's research also explored the role that these Black fathers played in countering the racial micro-aggressions such as showing up at the school and building rapport with their sons' teachers. Black parents play a prominent role in disrupting the racist experiences of Black males. Cross Jr. (1978) highlighted the power of the Black family to disrupt the negative racial microaggressions from living in a racially hostile society. Furthermore, Decuir-Gunby et al. (2012) demonstrated that Black students leaned on their families and churches to counteract the negative racial messages that they received about their race. Thus, although Black males received negative racial messages and received racially disparaging treatment, they did not allow these experiences to negatively shape their identities.

Henfield (2011) conducted a qualitative study on five Black male eighth-grade students who attended a predominantly White middle school in the Midwest. They found that these Black male students experienced racial microaggressions such as the assumption of social deviance by their fellow students, and the belief that Black males were physically superior but intellectual inferior. Also, these Black students felt as if the

environment catered towards White culture and promoted White interests. For instance, many White students loved White country music, and these were the songs of choice during the school dance as opposed to songs that Black students would appreciate. Also, the White students assumed that the Black American experience was monolithic. Thus, White students thought those students fit into the role of rappers and gangbangers just because they were Black, failing to realize that there is a broader Black experience. These stereotypes reveal that White teachers and students see Black people in a particular light, expect them to fulfill specific roles, that they can lose the right to be Black boys, and are instantly seen as aggressive and violent. These experiences are not atypical but a part of a consistent historical pattern for Black males with White teachers. For instance, James (2019) found that Black male students in Toronto, Canada experienced similar treatment. Butler et al. (2009) found that White teachers criminalized the playful behaviors of Black males in the classroom. Thus, Black males have not found a safe haven in White educational environments.

Coleman (2017) conducted a narrative analysis of the stories of seven Black males who attended predominantly White independent schools, and five of their parents, and found that they constantly felt their Blackness in school. They sensed their Blackness which led them to seek friendships with other Black males, and this was critical to their survival because these students were sources of academic and emotional support. Implicit in this finding is that the Black students did not feel comfortable enough in their interactions with their teachers to lean on them for academic assistance outside of the classroom. Also, these Black students leaned on their home life for support and nurture. It

was in their homes and same-raced peers that these students perceived acceptance and comfort in their Black skin. However, the unaccommodating environment may be due to students feeling uncomfortable because they are not accustomed to being around White people or their experience of constant racial micro-aggressions (Carter-Andrews, 2005; Tatum, 2017). However, Coleman's research suggested that Black males do not feel comfortable in predominantly White independent schools. These findings are consistent with other literature that analyzes Black students in predominantly White Schools. For instance, Herr (1999) found that some black students in a predominantly White independent school felt isolated in these environments and were forced to choose a raceless identity. Consequently, Black males in this environment formed relationships and collaborations with each other to advocate for changes and for support (Herr, 1999). Coleman's findings are critical because they sharply contrast the Fordham and Ogbu (1986) research which characterized the Black community as anti-schooling. The Black students in these schools were influential in reforming the definition of cool to being high achieving as opposed to a form of acting White. Coleman's findings add greater clarity to the importance of community for Black students in schools.

The experiences of Black males in schools are unique due to the racial stereotypes of their teachers and peers. The school environment for Black males is hostile much like it is for Black students in general. Black males experienced teacher disinterest in their learning, punitive treatment in comparison to their White counterparts, were perceived as rappers and gang bangers, and as having superior physical abilities to their White

classmates. Additionally, their Black female counterparts are masculinized, and hypersexualized.

The Racialized Messages of Black Boys in Predominantly White Christian Schools

Many perceive Christian schools to be morally superior to non-religious schools (Rose, 1988). As a result, many assume that Christian schools provide greater love and treatment towards their racially minoritized students (Jeynes, 2002). However, this section of the literature review added greater clarity around the experiences of Black males in Christian schools and the racial messages that they receive as students in these schools.

Thomas et al. (2020) broke from the consistent research pattern and focused on the experiences of Black males in these predominantly White Christian spaces. Their case study examined the experiences of six Black male scholarship athletes encountering anti-Blackness in a predominantly White Catholic high school. They found that the Black male athletes were made to feel invisible in the classroom but hypervisible as athletes, called racial slurs, and isolated by their White peers in class and the cafeteria (Thomas et al., 2020). These experiences sent racial messages that Black students were intellectually incapable, held a singular identity as athletes, and came from culturally broken environments. The study's findings confirmed the accounts of Kendi (2016) and Channing Brown (2018), who both discussed their negative racialized experiences in their Christian school experiences. These findings suggest that Black students in White Christian spaces face the same experiences as Black students in predominantly White schools in general (Carter-Andrews, 2007; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019).

Little and Tolbert (2018) examined the racialized experiences of two Black boys in both a private and a Christian private school by interviewing their mothers. These Black boys were known to be high-achieving students, both performing above grade level. However, once their parents enrolled them in the Christian school environment, teachers attempted to label one of the students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Both boys were constantly in trouble and faced detentions and suspensions (Little & Tolbert, 2018). Despite not having any behavioral issues in their prior schools, these students were deemed as troublemakers by their White Christian teachers (Little & Tolbert, 2018). Ultimately, the parents disenrolled both students and placed them in environments that were academically and socially emotionally beneficial. Predominantly White Christian schools are not non-racist spaces, but one could even argue that these spaces could be classified as racist. These schools attempted to break the spirits of these two young Black males and shared a message that Black males were dangerous and disruptive.

This section of the literature review has demonstrated that Black males in predominantly White schools, regardless of school type, experience racial marginalization and receive negative racial messaging. Unfortunately, American society's racist stereotypes have bled through the fabric of schools through their racially insensitive White teachers and classmates. These findings are inclusive of Christian schools as well. Thus, due to the normativity of racism even Christian schools are complicit with perpetuating the racial hierarchy found in American Society. While there is research that examines the racial messaging that Black males receive in Christian

schools, there is a gap in the literature concerning the racial messages that they received as students in CCS.

Racism and Christian Schools

Many would assume that Christian Schools are safe spaces for children to attend school (Rose, 1988). Some scholars have even contended that Christian schools provide greater racial harmony (Jeynes, 2002). Thus, the literature regarding racism and Christian schools appears to be inconsistent with their expectations of Christianity or to be a unique anomaly. However, if one were to analyze the history of Christian education in America one would recognize that racism is commonplace in Christian schools.

Contemporary Christian schools are private, but the earliest American Christian schools were the state funded public schools (Smith, 1967). These schools had a clear agenda to create a shared American identity (Spring, 2018). Benjamin Rush (1786), an early proponent of free education for all, believed that these schools needed to have Biblical teaching from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. He believed that America was the new Israel and to gain prosperity and blessings from God the new Israelites needed to be compliant to God's covenant or risk losing God's blessings as the Biblical Israelites did when they practiced idolatry. Thus, the early American Schools were purposefully Christian, but they were not denominational (Smith, 1967). While this schooling approach was decidedly Christian, it was also racist because the only children receiving this education were White. Meanwhile, their Black counterparts were working in fields as slaves (Gibson & Jung, 2005). The implicit Christian school curriculum emphasized nationalism, racism, and Christianity. This trifecta is what I term WAC.

Thus, American public schools were intentional about forming a unique American and Christian identity.

America's free public schooling was decidedly Protestant, and the public schools taught a non-denominational Protestant message (McCluskey, 2018; Smith, 1967). These schools taught common Protestant doctrine and did not teach a particular denominational principle but doctrines that were universally agreed upon. In turn, this educational approach marginalized many religious minorities like Catholics and Seventh-day Adventists because their views were vastly different than normative Protestants (Spring, 2018). For instance, Catholics used a different Bible than Protestants and when there were Bible readings it would cause conflict. Thus, these school sites were not religiously inclusive and since schooling was still segregated, they were not racially inclusive (Ruchames, 1945). Thus, at the onset these schools were implicitly exclusive for those who were religiously, or racially minorities. Furthermore, these individuals who existed on the margins of society were considered less American.

In the early 20th century, American schools were gradually becoming less Christian in part because the American Christian churches started to fracture over various doctrinal disagreements, one of which being evolutionary theory (FitzGerald, 2017). In the mid-1910s, American schools replaced creationism with evolutionary theory. This resulted in a massive surge in the creation of American private Christian Schools (Slater, 2019). There was a sense among Christian parents, churches, and theorists that America had become too secular because people were pushing against prayer and bible reading in schools (Nollen, 1911).

Christian leaders began to criticize families for moving away from having family worship, which in their minds was leading to an overall decline in morality in society (Nollen, 1911). In addition, conservative Christians felt as if the church was losing influence over the schools (Harris, 1927, Nollen, 1911). As a result, there was a deeper turn towards the creation of Christian schools (Slater, 2019). In essence, the Protestant majority became the religious minority and in turn they created their own schools (Rensselaer, 1856). Christian schools shared the same vision of Benjamin Rush to build a great nation which required Americans to keep the covenant of God. Thus, the Christian school movement that developed in the 1920s and onward derived from the early common school movement and promoted WAC. In essence, these schools promoted Christian teachings, nationalism, and White supremacy because these schools were attempting to restore Christianity in America while maintaining racial segregation (Slater 2019). This was an attempt to restore the WAC that the common school movement had initially provided. Thus, it is, evident that race and religion were instrumental in this growth.

There was another period of spurious Christian school growth which happened between 1960-1980. This period of growth coincided with local school racial integration efforts and the removal of prayer and bible readings from schools by the Supreme Court (Blosser, 2017; Nevin & Bills, 1976). This led to the formation of segregationist academies which were in existence and many of which were run by Conservative Christian churches (Nevin & Bills, 1976). These segregationist academies denied racial minority admission into their schools (Blosser, 2017). There was a sentiment that

America was becoming too secular and to save their children parents enrolled them in schools that were White, Christian, and maintained traditional American values (Blosser, 2017). These Supreme Court rulings led to the spurious growth of Christian schools and the creation of Christian segregationist academies. Thus, once again there was the emergence of schools that desired to create and maintain WAC values that excluded Black students and promoted Christian nationalism.

After the IRS threatened to remove tax-exempt status from institutions that excluded students on the basis of race, segregationist academies began to accept Black students into their institutions. There is no empirical research that examines the experiences of the Black students that came into this policy change, but it should be no surprise that Black students in Christian schools experience racial microaggressions because race has always been a mitigating factor within Christian schools. Thus, although racism has been manifested in disturbing ways race has always been a factor in these schools both implicitly and explicitly.

Contemporary Racialized Views of White Christians

Not only is racism in Christian schools not surprising due to their history, but even now the contemporary racial views of White Christians make it evident that racial microaggressions would be commonplace. This point is significant concerning Christian schools because Christian congregations and their congregants financially support, govern, and teach in these academic institutions. Not only do the White congregations support these spaces, but their doctrinal positions and their congregants develop their schools' policies. The literature reveals that White Christians are not exempt from

perpetuating racism and resorting to victim-blaming. This portion of the literature review discusses White Evangelical Christians' racial and political views.

Emerson and Smith (2000) conducted a mixed-methods national study amongst Black and White Evangelical Christians that consisted of randomized sampling and interviews. Emerson and Smith (2000) contacted over 2500 people utilizing phone surveys and conducted nearly 200 interviews. This study defined Evangelicals as Protestant Christians who hold the Bible as the ultimate authority for truth, believe that Jesus Christ died for the salvation of all, believe that one must accept Christ and be born again, and are convinced they must share their teachings so that others can be converted and embrace their teachings (Emerson & Smith, 2000). The findings from this study indicate that amongst Black and White Evangelicals, there exists differing views concerning race and inequality in America. For instance, White Evangelicals believed that White and Black people are equals and that America is a meritocratic society. Black Evangelicals saw how race had shaped their economic opportunities and social outcomes. Also, the team found that White Evangelicals viewed race as a moral issue instead of an issue that the governments should legislate against (Emerson & Smith, 2000). Ultimately, White Evangelicals resorted to characterizing Black Americans' lack of social progress as laziness and lack of discipline. However, Emerson and Smith stopped short of labeling White Evangelicals as racists (Tranby & Hartman, 2008). Emerson and Smith (2000) purported that congregational segregation is part of these White Evangelicals' stereotypes. This would help them better understand that the race issue is structural instead of a personal moral failure.

Edgell and Tranby (2007) used data from a national telephone survey of 2081 participants to understand the correlation with non-racial factors concerning attitudes towards American racial inequality. The study found that women, Catholics, well educated, and Black and Latinx participants were more likely to attribute racial inequality to structural issues. Also, these groups believed in the necessity of greater government involvement to address this inequality. In contrast, White people, men, less educated people, and conservative Protestants were less likely to view racial inequality as an issue to be addressed through more socially progressive policies (Edgell & Tranby, 2007). Thus, these findings coincided with Emerson and Smith's research, revealing that White Evangelicals, who can also be identified as conservative Protestants, look at the world through a more individualistic lens. These two studies indicate that White Evangelicalism has more racist views than other faith groups. Edgell and Tranby's (2007) study also suggested that White Evangelicals fit into their White subgroup because their opinions are distinct and possibly more conservative than White individuals who classify as White, atheist, or Catholic.

While Black and White congregations share theological views, they have differing sociological views. Thus, the racial makeup of the congregation has a profound influence on the ways individuals view race. One can imagine that different congregations utilize differing frames of reference concerning scriptural truths and how they are applied across the spectrum of social justice. Thus, one can imagine that these congregations' discussions concerning justice and morality differ along racial lines.

Perry and Whitehead (2019) collected data from the 2014 General Social Survey that conducted and analyzed the essential variables using a binary logistic regression model to identify the racial inequality views of research participants who viewed being Christian as essential to being American. The findings of this study reveal a similar pattern that White people who viewed being Christian as a crucial part of being American did not attribute racial inequality to structural issues. However, Black Christians who shared these same views concerning the American identity attributed racial inequality to structural racism. These findings coincided with earlier research and indicated that an individual's racial identity has a pronounced influence on their world views. Black Christians in majority Black congregations view racial inequality as a significant determinant toward Black social progress, but White congregants in White and multi-racial congregations prioritize meritocracy and hard work (Cobb et al., 2015; Perry & Whitehead, 2019). The contemporary racial views of White Christians reveal that even though there is a moral message to Christianity this does not always shape their social views. Thus, White Christians resort to blaming Black people for social inequality and adamantly oppose social reforms.

Based on the history of Christian education in America and the contemporary views of White Christians, it serves as no surprise that Black students experience racial trauma in Christian schools. It is because racism permeates society and influences every element of it (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). From the foundation of the educational experience, racism was a part of the Christian school movement because it excluded Black students and the schooling was always segregated (Spring, 2018). Then

sociological inquiry revealed the current perspectives of White Christians, and these

views are racist (Tranby & Hartman, 2008).

Explicit Racism and Christian Schools

Racism has revealed itself in both explicit and implicit ways within the Christian

school movement. First, this next subsection of the literature review explores the explicit

ways that race has mattered. Secondly, it discusses the implicit ways racism has been

manifested in CCS research.

Collins (1990) conducted a quantitative study to gather data concerning the racial

attitudes of White ninth and twelfth grade students, their parents, and their White religion

teachers towards Black students at four Catholic all-boys schools. In total the study

consisted of 208 White male students, 144 parents of these 208 White male students, and

16 religion teachers. Collins (1990) used McConahay's (1986) racism scale to determine

if the research participants expressed modern racism, racial ambivalence, or early old-

time racism. Old-time racism was classified by early 20th century forms of racism from

the Jim Crow era. For instance, they did not believe in de-jure segregation, justifying

racial violence, or promoting White supremacy (Collins, 1990). Collins (1990) defined

modern racism as symbolic racism that demonstrated the same negative feelings of old-

fashioned racism but was more socially acceptable and manifested in different attitudes

and behaviors. For instance, they determined what a racial minority group deserved based

on their perceptions of that group's actions; they opposed affirmative action, school and

house desegregation, and wanted to maintain society as it currently stands. Ultimately,

people who have this mentality believe that Black people demand too much and receive

more than they have earned. Collins (1990) found that students expressed mild disagreement with the old-time racist statement but were neutral concerning modern racist views. The religion teachers indicated a mild to strong disagreement with old-time racist ideas and with modern racist statements. Finally, research participants were more likely to endorse modern racist opinions than old-time racist views. Collins's (1990) work is dated; however, it provides insight into the significance that race is not too far removed from this era. It is also noteworthy that this literature focuses on the potential perpetrators of racism but does not centralize the voices of the victims of racism. While the research participants can articulate or voice their perceptions of their levels of racism, it does not give the reader insight into how Black students in these spaces may feel. DiAngelo (2021) and Bonilla-Silva (2021) highlight that White people have a hard time acknowledging their racism and perpetuating racist systems.

McCombs and Gay (1988) conducted a quantitative study that examined 80 White parochial grade schoolteachers' snap judgment calls considering IQ score expectations of White and Latinx students. The study utilized photos of White and Latinx students with a fictitious profile, but the images differed for various teachers. The images varied from White and Latinx students dressed in lower-class attire or middle-class attire. The researchers mixed and matched photos but always kept four students, two White and two Latinx, in both racial categories. One was middle-class, and the other same raced peer was lower-class. Then the teachers were asked to imagine they were second-grade teachers and to rank their academic expectations for that student in a class of 30. McCombs and Gay (1988) found that the teachers consistently ranked the lower-class

students in the bottom portion of the class, and they assumed that the Latinx student would finish lower than their White students. These findings revealed that teachers had lower expectations based on class and race solely based on limited information. While this does not speak to how this would affect teachers' approaches towards these students, it was an indication that race matters even to Christian school teachers and that their bias informs their expectations. These findings are consistent with literature concerning the influence of White teacher bias in the classroom (Hancock & Warren, 2017; Zucker & Prieto, 1977). The findings disagree with Jeynes (2002) who purported that Christian schools provide greater racial harmony than public schools.

Hitherto, the research surrounding explicit racism in Christian schooling only focuses on the White perspective and how researching them helps researchers better understand the manifestations of racism in the Christian school environment. The voices of Black students and Black males have not been centered but placed on the periphery of research. Outside of Christian school research, the voices of Black males have been explored, but within the K-12 Christian school advocate research space, there is little to no voice thus far in the literature concerning the experiences of these students. In addition, the focus has been psychological but has yet to explore these issues within the framework of the larger social world. There has not been a correlation between racism in America and its influence on Christian school discipline, policy, or praxis.

Candal and Glenn (2012) conducted a mixed method study that considered the race relations in an Evangelical and an urban Catholic high school. The findings suggested that a school's mission determines the way an individual develops social

relationships. The mission for both schools did not focus on proselytizing but more so on social transformation (Candal & Glenn, 2012). The Catholic school focused more on preparing racial minorities to enter a society that was unjust, but the Evangelical school focused on developing the students to change the unjust society. In preparation for that the students needed to develop better interracial friendships. Thus, the race relations in the Protestant school were stronger than the Catholic school.

In an urban Catholic school, Robert Jean Leblanc (2017) conducted an interactional ethnographic study that lasted one academic school year and involved classroom interactions between 8th grade Vietnamese American and African American students in a Philadelphian urban Catholic school. Leblanc (2017) found that the students used racial and religious categorizations to exclude a Black student from class interactions. In reading through some of these interactions, one can find anti-Black sentiment interwoven into their social interactions. For instance, on one occasion, an African American student was excluded from a classroom group assignment by a Vietnamese student because of his race. Then in a separate exchange, the students in the classroom assumed that because a student was Black, he was not a Christian. Throughout the classroom interactions, the non-Black students espoused many anti-Black assumptions such as poor money management, superior athleticism, and unintelligent. Leblanc's (2017) findings demonstrated that racism and anti-Blackness are a part of the everyday interactions of classroom exchanges between students. However, while this research considers the Black experience, it still does not center Black voices. Instead, it provides a perspective, but it does not allow the Black male student who was socially

marginalized to reflect on that interaction. Leblanc also did not investigate the anti-Black sentiments that were interwoven within the school.

Leo (2018) conducted a non-traditional ethnographic study that focused on how Whiteness worked in three predominantly White Reformed Christian schools in a midwestern city. Leo (2018) gathered data through field observations, pre-existing school records, and semi-structured interviews with 18 married parent couples between the three schools. This study found that these schools were steeped in implicit White supremacy. For instance, the pictures on the walls and the school board members were all White men. Leo (2018) assigned the three sites individual characteristics: traditional American conservativism, settler colonialism, and respectability politics. Leo (2018) found that each school implicitly reinforced these messages towards the students and their families, which often overlooked White America's history of slavery, genocide, and racism. In addition, the curriculum conflated patriotism and Christianity. Leo (2018) concluded that race and racism are overlooked in the reformed Christian education space by over-explaining the importance of Christian identity and ignoring social identities students bring with them into the classroom. Leo's work centers on the experiences and the brokenness of White people but never keys into the perspectives of the Black students who have been socially maligned or ostracized in these educational spaces. Thus far, there has been a lack of diversity of concern about the influence of race in White Christian spaces in the Christian education space. Those who discuss race spend most of their research focused on those who benefit from the social system instead of the ones who have been disenfranchised.

Blosser (2019) conducted a three-year ethnographic study on a PWCCS attempt to address racial diversity in their school. The findings suggested that PWCCS struggle with diversity because their curricular focus is ontologically opposed to diversity (Blosser, 2019). For instance, due to their high view of scripture and general distain for things that can be termed secular, the school struggled to implement diversity initiatives. Also, the school struggled with diversity because teachers and administrators did not intend to evaluate their curriculum or provide lesson plans (Blosser, 2019). Beyond this distain, Blosser (2019) found that the school officials held racist beliefs about Black students being intellectual inferior and superior athletes.

The literature revealed that WAC is not non-racist, and despite their claims of being nonracist, they still resort to perpetuating racist ideas. This claim is not only true of their congregations but also their schools. However, despite the claims that these institutions provide greater racial harmony, research suggests that White Christians in these schools have racial biases. Even their non-White peers express anti-Black sentiments. Unfortunately, the literature concerning racism in Christian schools' centers White voices and does minimal exploration into the experiences of Black students who experience this racism. The literature that centers Black voices is done outside of PWCCS and instead is conducted by Catholic schools despite the research concerning the experiences of Black males in predominately White schools. At this point, no research explores the voices of Black males, let alone Black students in PWCCS.

The literature concerning Christian education considers both explicit and implicit research concerning race and racism. Catholic schools more explicitly discuss race and

racism. However, these discussion about racism center the voices and perspective of White students and teachers. Even the study conducted on racism in a Protestant school centered Whiteness studies and White voices. However, even the sociological analyses of CCS never touch on race, and instead focus on the experiences of White students in these schools. The greatest problem that this research presented on CCS is that it normalizes WAC as the norm. That is to say in their examination of various school sites they did not classify these CCS in racial terms or in social class terms but rather by their denominational status. As a matter of fact, the overwhelming focus of Christian educational research centers PWCCS as the only form of Christian education and does not consider the potential nuance and differences two separate cultural expressions of Christianity might have between the two spaces.

Thus far in the literature review we have focused on the perspectives of White people concerning racial inequality, racist behavior, and their racist environments. The gap in the research is that most of the research centralizes White voices and perspectives on all issues concerning race in CCS and as a byproduct silenced Black voices. This next section discussed the underexplored literature concerning BLCCS.

Implicit Racism in Conservative Christian Schooling

CCS differ from other expressions of Christianity because these schools are Protestant and place a heavy emphasis on truth as it is expressed through the Bible (FitzGerald, 2017). While Catholics can be classified as Christian it is evident that they prioritize tradition over scripture (Brattston & Ryman, 2020). As a matter of fact, Catholics view scripture in line with tradition and do not demarcate scripture from the

traditions of "Church Fathers" who have handed down truth post the period of Biblical inspiration (Brattston & Ryman, 2020). Furthermore, Conservative Christians share many similarities with fundamentalists, and Evangelicals in the sense that both groups prioritize scripture as foundational to the Christian experience (FitzGerald, 2017). Since Conservative Christians have vastly different theological views it is important to examine CCS as separate than just Christian schools.

An initial survey on the contemporary literature concerning CCS would make one believe that race is an insignificant portion of the research. For instance, CCS are typically not classified in racial terms, such as predominantly White or Black. The modifiers that typically classify Christian schools in academic journals or books utilize the locale (urban, suburban, etc.), region (northern, southern, etc.), or denomination (Catholic, Baptist, etc.). However, this does not mean that race is an insignificant area of research in Christian education. Instead, it requires the researcher to understand the intrinsic racial arguments and assumptions interwoven in particular research agendas to explain the significance of race in Christian education. The second theme is the prevalence of White Supremacy in Christian schools. White supremacy shapes the attitudes of teachers, students, and the institutional ethos.

As was previously stated, the rise of conservative Christian schools was born out of a sense of rejection of traditional Christian values. However, these Christian values were WAC values which meant that they were intertwined with White Supremacy (Porter et al., 2014). For instance, after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the 1960s saw a dramatic spike in private Christian school enrollment and the formation of Christian

segregationist academies (Blosser, 2017). However, the rise of these institutions also coincided with the removal of prayer with *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), and Bible readings with *Abington School District v Schempp* (1963) from schools (Blosser, 2017). Thus, the CCS movement rose to prominence due to the increasing secularization of American society concerning issues of race and religion. However, the literature that conducted a sociological analysis of the CCS movement never discussed the role of race. Instead, it discussed other social phenomena like patriarchy, sexism, religion, and theological beliefs but it never delved into the confluence of race.

Peshkin (1986) conducted an 18-month ethnographic study on a small fundamentalist Christian School in Illinois. His findings suggested that these schools placed a heavy emphasis on absolute truth, modernity, and idolization of the past (Peshkin, 1986). In essence, these schools were determined to squelch secular influences by promoting rigidity in their dress codes and permissible hair styles (Peshkin, 1986). These schools did not attempt to introduce divergent ways of seeing the world and only taught it from one moral or right perspective (Peshkin, 1986). If an individual takes a moment to take note of their educational approach, the goal was to transfer knowledge and critical thinking while innovation was discouraged. Unfortunately, this study never discussed the role of race or the experiences of minorities; it had a heavy focus on the religious aspects of the school and focused less on the sociological implications.

Rose (1988) conducted a two-year ethnographic study on two different conservative Christian schools. One of the schools was Pentecostal and the other was Baptist, but both were predominantly White. Once again race was not a factor in this

study, but nonetheless some fascinating findings emerged. Rose's (1988) findings

suggested that no two Christian schools were the same, but the school's characteristics

were driven by the supporting congregation and the parents. The Baptist school was more

rigid, depended less on teachers, and focused on the Accelerated Christian Education

(ACE) curriculum which emphasized rote memorization and merged capitalism and

Christianity as synonymous (Rose, 1988). Whereas the Pentecostal school emphasized

the importance of the being directed by God, it attempted to prepare the students for

college and beyond (Rose, 1988). In addition, the themes of traditional gender roles and

social and class reproduction emerged (Rose, 1988). For instance, in these schools, boys

were prepared to be leaders in their households and girls were taught to wait on men to

provide leadership (Rose, 1988). However, in the Baptist school, college was not a

priority as much as students learning to obey rules, follow instructions, and accept the

teachings of the church (Rose, 1988). The study provided critical insights into the

uniqueness of these institutions but did not address race relations in any way because

these schools were predominantly White. However, the text did give the readers insights

into the ACE curriculum. The curriculum was littered with racial messaging speaking of

Native Americans as savages, downplaying the role of slavery, and being anti-socialist.

While explicit racial messaging was given, the author did not explore the ways in which

this curriculum provided damaging effects on the students' worldviews.

Wagner (1990) conducted an ethnographic study on nine Conservative Christian

schools in the same city. Wagner's findings (1990) suggested a considerable amount of

diversity of praxis amongst these institutions although they were all Christians derived

from different denominations. For instance, while these schools prioritized scripture and conservative Christian values such as having a high view of scripture, these institutions were not entirely closed off from the world. Unlike the schools in Pehskin's (1986) study, these schools allowed certain non-Christian influences into the school. In essence, everything that they did does not have to revolve around Christ. All these studies took a sociological look at conservative Christian schooling; however, none of these studies discussed the racial components that undergird Christian education. Thus, the research surrounding Christian education in the 1980s and 1990s does not address race. Instead, the research focused on theological praxis, gender roles, and the social dynamics between the church schools, students, and parents.

Black Schooling

Black education in America has existed since slavery (Willis, 2020; Woodson, 1919). However, much of the research concerning Black education has a myopic focus on schooling but does not delve into the Christianity that undergirds these schools (Willis, 2020). In truth, it is impossible to have a holistic discussion concerning the Black educational experience in America without including the role of Christianity. For instance, after the manumission of many freed Blacks in the North, they were educated by Black and White churches in major metropolitan areas like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia (Foster, 1975; Ruchames, 1945; Woodson, 1919). However, Foster (1975) highlighted that many White Christian abolitionist educators bore concepts of intellectual inferiority concerning the recently freed African Americans they educated. Thus, Christian Black schooling under the direction of White leadership was both Christian and

racist. In contrast, the Black churches like Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (Bethel AME) provided Sabbath schools that focused on educating the recently freed Slaves in more humanizing ways (Kammerer, 2017). For instance, Bethel AME provided an education for children and adults during lesson study that taught congregants basic literacy. While there are tidbits concerning Black Christian schooling, most research provides explicit details concerning White-directed Christian education. Still, there is even less information concerning Black-led Christian Schools.

Northern Black Schools

Ruchames (1945) analyzed the intersections of race and education in Boston in the early 19th century. Ruchames (1945) initially began his discussion by detailing the beginning of Black education in Boston and suggested that Black parents wanted a different form of education in Boston due to prejudice experienced within the White-led schooling system. Ruchames (1945) found that factions in the community thought that the Black students had special needs that would require them to have a separate form of education. The Black community did not attend the state-funded schools because there was a stigma that public schools were for economically disadvantaged children (Ruchames, 1945). Most of Ruchames's (1945) work focused on the fights for Black citizens to receive full inclusion into the Boston Public School system. During the mid-19th century, there was a strong push from the Black community to receive an equal education in which Black and White students could attend school together (Ruchames, 1945). From 1840-1855 there were protests, peaceful demonstrations, school boycotts, and litigation to allow integrated schools (Ruchames, 1945). Ultimately, Ruchames

(1945) argued legal support was placed behind Sarah Roberts. This schoolgirl had to walk past several White schools before attending her segregated Black school, which led to the end of state-mandated segregation in northern public schools. The northern schooling experience for Black people was both Christian and explicitly racist. The northern Christians provided charitable education out of Christian duty but had assumed intellectual and moral inferiority (Foster, 1975). These racist assumptions consistently run throughout the educational experiences of Black people in both public and private schools (Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Herr, 1999; Joubert et al., 2009). These sentiments are steeped in the White psyche due to colonization (Kendi, 2016). Also, segregation was not a byproduct of law; instead, it was implemented because of racist ideas concerning people of African descent (Kendi, 2016; Van Woodard, 1954). Lastly, the Christian values of these White educators were interwoven with racist assumptions resulting in a racist form of Christianity (Jennings, 2011).

Willis (2020) conducted a socio-historical analysis of primary and secondary literary data from Black Christian leaders in antebellum Philadelphia. This analysis focused on the theological and sociological views that motivated them in the creation of Black Christian schools in antebellum Philadelphia. He found that much of the research undertaken on Black Christian schools focused on the schools' Black identities but did not address the Christian nature of these institutions. Willis explored how White and Black Christians' perspectives differed and how this shaped their ideological approaches to Black schooling. For instance, White Christians believed and promoted separate but equal in their congregations. White Christians and Black Christians were not to interact in

social settings as equals only under the auspice of White superiority. Thus, White Christians could teach Black students, but White and Black students were not educated in the same schools or allowed to worship in integrated settings (Willis 2020).

The White funded Christian Schools received less financial support and were designed to keep Black students in inferior social positions (Willis, 2020). The Black Christian schools under White leadership did not provide a curriculum beyond an 8th-grade education. Thus, they did not intend for Black students to rise beyond their level of subservience. However, the Black Christian schools provided a liberal arts curriculum that prioritized social justice and Black liberation (Willis, 2020). Many alumni became community leaders and educators because they prioritized social uplift (Silcox, 1977). While these types of schools all came under the banner of Christianity, the racial makeup of the school administration and their uncritiqued racial biases determined the quality and the kind of education that the Black students received.

Willis's findings differed from Ruchames's because Boston schools attempted to be charitable but assumed inferiority, whereas Willis found that these schools were designed to maintain the power structure. Bostonian Black schools had moral intentions with racist ideas, but Philadelphian Black schools had immoral intentions coupled with their racist beliefs. Christian schools use religious identity as their qualifier to distinguish their various types of academic institutions. However, race needs to receive more attention because, as Willis and Ruchames have demonstrated, race played a significant role in the kind of education that African Americans received in White administered schools.

Ruchames (1945) and Willis (2020) demonstrated that education was a significant priority for Black people. Also, both indicated that African American families during the antebellum era prioritized quality education. These findings undermine the assumptions of some, like Fordham and Ogbu (1986), who argued that low Black academic achievement is a byproduct of African American students being afraid of acting White in school. Black students still place a high priority on academic achievement and find ways to thrive even in the presence of Black people who stigmatize doing well in school (Datnow & Cooper, 1997). The literature thus far has found that learning environments for Black people in predominantly White schools have been racially hostile from slavery until the present time (Coleman, 2017; Foster, 1975; Willis, 2020).

Kammerer (2017) conducted a socio-historical analysis of secondary data concerning the Black Sabbath schools and White led missionary schools in antebellum Philadelphia. For the Pennsylvania abolitionist society, the White abolitionists felt frustrated because they created schools, but struggled to maintain a high level of attendance. Richard Allen, a minister and educator who became an integral part of the African American community in Philadelphia, introduced an educational approach that was better received than the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society's schooling approach. Black Christian education provided for Black students received greater support from the African American community than the education supplied by White Christian communities. The lack of community support for White schools in antebellum Philadelphia was rooted in the African American community's lack of belief in the quality of education that their children would receive due to the curricula and poorly

maintained facilities (Silcox, 1973a; Willis 2020). For instance, the Quakers founded Institute of Colored Youth which did not receive support from the African American community until they provided a liberal arts curriculum instead of agricultural training (James, 1958). While Sabbath Schools were a type of Christian education, research did not provide direct insight into formal Black Christian schools. Instead, Kammerer's work demonstrated that these Black Christian schools run by the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society, and provided a Christian education, were not well supported by the urban Black Philadelphians because of their perceived inferiority and failure to meet the Black community's educational demands. These Sabbath schools mirrored the educational approach of African indigenous cultures. Education was a community responsibility and, in many cases, was largely informal and preparatory for full inclusion into adulthood and society (Seroto, 2011).

Southern Black Schools After the Civil War

Butchart (1980) conducted revelatory research using primary source data concerning Freedmen's education during the Civil War through southern Reconstruction. Butchart (1980) bridged Northern antebellum educators and the missionaries who came south to teach the recently freed African Americans. His research explored the role of these northern Christian missionaries in providing an education for the recently released Black people in the South. Butchart (1980) revealed that the intentions of the northern White Christian missionaries were not as morally pure as one may suppose. For instance, the northern White Christian missionaries came south to maintain White supremacy and political dominance (Anderson, 1988; Butchart, 1980). The missionaries wanted to

provide a Christian education that would shape the political ideologies of the millions of voters who could now shape state and local politics (Butchart, 1980). In addition, these northern Christian missionaries wanted to evangelize the recently freed Blacks to save their souls and help them build up and strengthen their churches (Butchart, 1980). Thus, education was not the overarching agenda of the White Christian missionaries. Instead, the focus of these schools was to expand their churches and maintain White supremacy. Thus, White Christian schools served the purpose of White supremacist Christians who desired to maintain power. This proselytization served the same agenda of Northern schools for the manumitted Africans in their urban centers. The schools were designed to maintain White dominance and control. In comparison, Black schools served a different purpose.

Anderson (1988) explored a socio-historical analysis of primary source data concerning the education of Black people in the south immediately after the Civil War until the early 20th century. He offered just a few tidbits concerning the Christian educators who came to the South to educate Black people. Anderson (1988) added complexity to the teaching agendas of White people based on the organizations. For instance, the American Missionary Association and other conservative missionary societies provided curriculum materials for Black people who attempted to keep African American people subservient (Anderson, 1988). However, the northern philanthropists and the Freedmen's Bureau focused on providing an education that taught the students basic literacy and math. Anderson (1988) also highlighted that before White educators' arrival, Black people had set up schools and were active in their quest for basic literacy

and full inclusion into society and towards the inception of Sabbath Schools.

Unfortunately, Anderson did not go into detail concerning these Black Christian

educational spaces. Yet, one critical highlight from Anderson's text is that many Black

educators and schools wanted financial contributions without White control. There was a

desire to move towards self-sufficiency and believed that Black educators were best

equipped to educate Black children. Despite the chronological and geographical

differences between these two phenomena, there is significant overlap concerning what

happened in the antebellum northern cities and the rural South. In both environments,

schools were racially segregated, both school types were under White Christian

leadership, and both schools had heavy northeastern influences. Also, the research

suggests that Black people have placed a high priority on education. However, there has

been very little information concerning Black schools outside of a mere mention of their

existence.

Black Schooling After Reconstruction

In 1916, the Department of Education (DOE) conducted a national study

concerning private and higher education in Black schools. In this study, they examined

Black church schools under both Black and White denominational and congregational

administration. The DOE (1916) report had a clear bias against Black people controlling

African American church schools. For instance, the report was critical of schools in

which the denominational mission board gave money but exerted little influence. Instead,

the report often recommended that the White administered schools increased White

leadership because, in their estimation, the African Americans were unable to lead these

schools effectively. However, as it related to Baptist schools, the expectation was that these schools should provide an industrial school curriculum for African Americans as opposed to a liberal arts curriculum. This report is a political document caught up amid the W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington debate over the appropriate educational curriculum. Anderson (1988) discussed this debate extensively in which Washington argued that Black people should desire an industrial education that would teach them to deal with agriculture and work with their hands. In contrast, Du Bois and others contended that the Black community needed to have a liberal arts curriculum that would prepare them to work in higher levels of society focused on mental development utilizing the European classics (Anderson, 1988).

This DOE report also discussed the emerging tensions in mixed denominations between Black and White congregants because Black leaders wanted to run and administer church schools for Black children. While it does not detail the emerging issues, it is evident that there was racial tension. This report coincides with Anderson's (1988) finding that African Americans wanted to control their Black schools. This tension concerning Black control spilled into the 20th century and produced tensions and boycotts at many Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Fisher, 2003). The DOE report demonstrated that Black Christians did not want to be under the jurisdiction of White Christians because many felt that these White Christian administrators had curriculums that were designed to keep them in social subjugation (Fisher, 2003). While there were chronological and geographical differences, the same racist notions remained from the Christian abolitionist in the 19th century into the 21st century (Foster, 1975). The

literature suggests that the issue for Black people and schools has less to do with their concerns with being bullied and more to do with schools under White governance being racist academic institutions.

Unfortunately, this DOE report gave only a little information regarding the existence of the Black church schools. The report critiques these schools as disorganized and needing a central governing body to close the smaller schools. While the report tells little concerning the administration of these schools, it gives even fewer details concerning what happened in these schools. For example, the report did not compare graduation rates or the level of achievement; it provided an external perspective on the things happening in these schools. Also, the report pulled letters from Black individuals who suggested the schools needed better administration, governance, and fewer schools.

Segregated Schools Before School Desegregation

The education of Black people in America has primarily been an educational experience of racial isolation. Before *Brown v. Board of Education (*1954), Black students attended racially segregated schools before school desegregation efforts. The northern schools practiced legal segregation in the early 19th century before court interventions in Boston and Philadelphia, in which Black families fought against state-enforced school segregation (Ruchames, 1945; Silcox, 1973b). However, even after the courts' rulings in the North, de-facto segregation became the educational norm in America (Ruchames, 1945). Educational segregation provided unequal resourcing because Black students received outdated textbooks, school buildings in disrepair, and limited financial support (Irons, 2014). However, these disparities do not speak to the

character of these Black institutions, which had Black teachers and administrations (Siddle-Walker, 1996). Siddle-Walker (1996) conducted a historical analysis of a schooling community in Caswell County, NC, and found that it was a source of community pride while the school was segregated. Siddle-Walker (1996) looked beyond the damaging effects of Jim Crow, focused on the school's character, and countered the dominant narrative concerning the problems of school segregation. This research demonstrated that while the Caswell County Training School (CCTS) had to navigate racial prejudice with the school board, the teachers in the Black community provided a nurturing environment (Siddle-Walker, 1996). CCTS was a central hub of their community which resulted in parents volunteering their time, construction skills, and resources to assist in the education of their students. The study's findings also indicated that due to the Black teachers being dedicated and prioritizing the education of their Black students, they pushed their students and set high expectations. Siddle-Walker's findings regarding Black teacher expectations intersect with previous research in the literature review because the White teachers and schools exhibited lower moral and academic expectations for their Black students. These lower expectation findings were consistent regardless of the school type, public, independent, or religious (Butler et al., 2009; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; McCombs & Gay, 1988). Thus, it appears that these Black school teachers were opposite to many White teachers and had different results because of these critical differences.

Foster (1997) conducted interviews with 20 African American teachers attempting to encapsulate the perspectives of Black teachers about teaching. This study

gathered invaluable data concerning the education of Black students after the passing of

Brown v. Board of Education (1954). However, it also gave critical insights concerning

Black schools. The findings coincided with Siddle-Walker's (1996) findings; it spoke of

how teachers were an integral part of the communities and how principals were noted as

community leaders (Foster, 1997). Black teachers conducted home visits, attended church

with their pupils, and these segregated schools garnered greater community support.

These findings demonstrate that segregated schools were economically deprived spaces,

but these educational spaces provided racial affirmation, high expectations, and a positive

moral foundation (Foster, 1997). However, when schooling desegregation happened,

many students entered racially defaming spaces situated in more expensive buildings

(Foster, 1997). Many of the Black teachers who taught these young Black pupils were

fired or demoted; schools brought in White educational consultants to teach them how to

manage Black students, and posited racist ideas (Foster, 1997; Milner & Howard, 2004).

Instead of just receiving adequate academic materials, many Black students also received

racial hostility.

Milner and Howard (2004) interviewed six educational researchers who had

conducted research concerning *Brown v. Board of Education* and wanted to better

understand the impact of Black teachers on segregated schools and what happened to

those teachers in the aftermath of school desegregation. Milner and Howard (2004) found

that as a byproduct of the *Brown* decision, many Black teachers lost their jobs and some

of the decisions were determined by the teachers' complexion. That is to say, Black

teachers with lighter skin tones were employed in the racially integrated school. Milner

and Howard (2004) also found that high quality Black teachers were kept on staff, Black principals were demoted to assistant principals, and that Black community life was disrupted because the schools stopped being centerpieces of their communities. These findings suggest that the school was more than just a place where education transpired, but teachers were a part of the mainstream life of the community. Teachers knew the parents outside of the school environment and could have been neighbors or members of the same church. Thus, school integration destroyed critical elements of Black school and community life. The findings also suggest that due to the dual relationships between teachers and students, Black teachers were better able to integrate their home and community life into the pedagogical practices because they were a part of the same social world.

Black schools were unique and their pedagogical practices provided critical insights into duplicatable teaching approaches. Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1994) articulation of culturally relevant pedagogy builds off the pedagogical genius of these schools. Ladson-Billings (1994) conducted a study on eight highly effective teachers of Black students and looked for similarities between these teachers. Her findings suggested that what makes Black educators excellent is high expectations, bringing the students home culture into the classroom, living in or being a part of the community surrounding the school, creating a family atmosphere in the class, and focusing on learning in a community as opposed to promoting competition amongst the students. These characteristics are similar to the findings in Black segregated schools (Milner & Howard, 2004). Meanwhile, White teachers in predominantly White Christian schools hold low

moral and intellectual expectations, assume social deviance, and believe racist ideas about their students (Foster, 1975; Little & Tolbert, 2018; Thomas et al., 2020). Thus, Black education prior to desegregation humanized Black students and Predominantly White Christian schools dehumanize Black students.

Modern Black Christian Schools

Foster (1992) conducted a case study of a Black male student in a New York City public school who was underachieving, a disruptive influence in the classroom, and on the brink of expulsion. However, due to assistance from the Toussaint Institute Fund, the program placed this troubled student in a Black-run independent school (Foster, 1992). The results indicated that his behavioral problems ceased over time, and he was able to reach grade-level proficiency in reading. The findings suggest that this Black independent school provided a more robust system of support, surrogate parenting by teachers, and assistance for students with behavioral problems (Foster, 1992). In essence, the teachers were better able to manage their Black students because the schooling process was focused on learning and various elements of their lives. Black males in predominantly White schools often admit to feeling uncomfortable and out of place in these White environments and sense the teacher indifference (Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Herr, 1999). Black Schools under Black leadership differ from White-led schools because these schools provide greater nurture for Black students and provide more support.

Layman (1994) conducted a multi-site case study concerning three Black conservative Christian schools located in three separate regions in the United States. This was a pilot study that sought to understand the existence of these schools and what tied

these academic institutions together. Layman (1994) concluded that race was not a

central focus of these schools, but the common theme was Jesus Christ as Lord.

However, Layman (1994) discussed that issues of race were assumed as opposed to

intentional. While pro-Black messaging was not an essential portion of the curriculum,

racial affirmation was a part of the natural process. For instance, one of the schools was

established because the school's founder felt that the predominantly White Christian

school did not want Black students. Thus, the space was created to be Christian and

racially affirming so that his Black sons could be in a Christian environment that did not

hold their racial identity against them. These schools hosted Black History Month events

and discussed racial heroes throughout the year (Layman, 1994). Race mattered, and they

intended to provide Black congregants a quality education that the other Christian school

environments did not provide. Researchers have demonstrated that race matters in

predominantly White education spaces, and it resulted in a multitude of negative

racialized experiences (Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Herr, 1999). Although in predominantly

Black spaces, the educators indicated that race was not a central facet of the educational

experience, it was evident that it did not produce negative experiences for Black students.

Cunningham (1996) conducted a five-year ethnographic case study of an urban

Black Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Christian school in Connecticut. Cunningham

provided an in-depth analysis of the cultural influences on this urban SDA Christian

school with keen attention paid towards SDA separatism from their surrounding

community. The findings suggested that there was a complex interplay between three

cultures: Caribbean, European, and African American. For instance, most of the parents

were first generation Caribbean migrants who migrated to a Black congregation in a White-led denomination (Cunningham, 1996). Although the students and the church were Black, the curriculum was distributed through the denomination. However, the school intentionally celebrated the contributions of African Americans to society during Black history month and hung posters of African American heroes on the wall throughout the school year. Also, there appeared to be a disconnect between Black heroes of the past and social justice issues that were pertinent to the Black community at the time. For instance, the city was currently engulfed in a school bussing issue that allowed Black students to be bussed to predominantly White schools, but the church community was indifferent about the policy because it did not affect their children.

Cunningham's (1996) study provided an in-depth view of a BLCCS community and demonstrated that Black Christians and their churches are not a monolith (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). However, this study was unique because it gave a glimpse into what actually happens in BLCCS, whereas most studies provide a brief overview of these schools' existence. Also, Cunningham's (1996) findings overlap with Layman's (1994) study because both have demonstrated that BLCCS do not place an explicit emphasis on race because of their prioritization of Christ as the answer for their current problems. Although, there is not an explicit emphasis on race there is a racialized story that undergirds these schools' existence because these institutions being Black led is not a coincidence. The existence of Black religious institutions is a byproduct of their rejection in White Christian spaces (Hopper, 1998; Willis, 2020). Thus, it seems that if not explicit racism is at least an implicit component of these schools' existence.

Alexander-Snow (2011) conducted a phenomenological study on the academic and sociological experiences of four Black students who attended Piney Woods Academy, an All-Black Christian Boarding school in Mississippi. Alexander-Snow (2011) found that the four Black students that she studied from Piney Woods experienced high academic achievement, cultural esteem, and college preparation as they matriculated through school. At the same time, the study compared their experience at Piney Woods with White universities. It highlighted that the environment of Piney Woods demonstrated student care, and they felt as if they were valued members of the community. Considering the experiences of Black students in White schools with these students at Piney Woods, it demonstrated that these schools provide something that predominantly White schools lack for their Black students, which is affection. The affection that these Black students received had nothing to do with their athletic abilities or their persona. Instead, this affection had everything to do with their humanity.

Douglas et al. (2019) conducted a trio-autoethnographic study on their experiences traversing SDA Christian education. Freeman was the only one who matriculated through SDA school during his K-12 experience and he went between SDA BLCCS and a White-led predominantly Black CCS. Freeman highlighted that he felt affirmed and empowered in the BLCCS. On the other hand, while he attended the White-led school, he found the experience to be psychologically damaging because of its disdain for Black culture (Douglas et al., 2019). For instance, when asked once what kind of music did he think angels in heaven would sing and he said rap, his teacher got upset and told him God would not allow that type of music in heaven (Douglas et al., 2019).

However, during his high school experience in another SDA BLCCS, he disdained the school's internal resentment for certain elements of Black culture in the inability of students to have cornrows or dreadlocks (Douglas et al., 2019). Thus, BLCCS cannot be classified as afro-centric meaning that they love and celebrate everything about African history and society in part because of their prioritization of their Christian identity (Layman, 1994). BLCCS may have Eurocentric curriculums, yet it seems that Black students feel more welcomed and celebrated in these environments (Alexander-Snow, 2011 Cunningham, 1996; Douglas et al., 2019).

Much of what is known about Black education is dated and was conducted as an exercise in socio-historical research. Much of the data gathered was retrieved after the fact as opposed to being understood in real time. Beyond that, this research does not give the researchers much clarity concerning what happened in these schools; the information is more of a surface exploration of the space. Fortunately, these schools still exist, although academic research has overlooked their work and their success. The research community has a limited understanding of what these schools provide for Black males and the potential success stories that have been overlooked. However, from the limited insights that researchers have concerning BLCCS it is evident that these schools provide positive racial affirmation. Yet, it is unclear what messages Black males receive in these spaces. Furthermore, the research on these spaces is an adaptation of ethnographic studies, as opposed to being directly tied to the stories that these Black males tell. Thus, while these studies centralize Black voices it only does so within BLCCS spaces as opposed to within both environments.

Summary

The literature review began with a broad focus on the racial messages Black students received in schools but narrowed its focus to the racial messages received by Black males in Christian schools. This section revealed a gap in the literature that limited research has explored in the racial messages Black students received in CCS. Afterwards, the literature review transitioned into understanding the historical significance of race in Christian education, eventually grounding its focus in the contemporary research concerning race in Christian education research. However, the literature revealed that these discussions on race in Christian schools centralized the voices of White people and overlooked the voices of Black students and alumni. Furthermore, the research revealed that there was limited empirical inquiry into the existence of BLCCS. The final section of the literature review transitioned from discussing CCS and race to exploring the underexplored phenomenon of Black schooling under same raced administration. This revealed that much of the literature concerning Black schooling including BLCCS was done under a sociohistorical lens, but the limited knowledge that has been discovered provides critical insight. One of the critical components of these BLCCS is that these spaces provide racial affirmation for Black students. It is with this understanding that chapter 2 concludes and transitions to chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three reviews the research purpose and questions, provides an explanation of phenomenological research design, and explains its usage in this study. Also, this chapter expounds on the research procedures that were utilized in the study such as the recruitment strategy, data collection, analysis, and strategies used to ensure reliability. Furthermore, this study provides clarification regarding the researcher's subjectivity.

The purpose of this study was to center the voices of Black males who have attended both PWCCS and BLCCS. This study purposefully centered Black male voices because so often these individuals are spoken about but not allowed to speak for themselves (Howard, 2013). The research questions of this study focused on the racial messages Black males received as students in these CCS environments and how these messages shaped their understandings of self and their race. Furthermore, this study intends to understand the role Christian teachings played in the racial dynamics of the school. The data for this study was gathered through semi-structured interviews with the research participants. The stories and descriptions of the experiences of these Millennial and Generation Z Black males were utilized to capture their understanding of the racial messages derived from their experiences as Black male students in PWCCS and BLCCS.

Research Questions

The research questions for this phenomenological study were as follows:

1. What were the racial messages that Black males received while attending their CCS?

a. What were the racial messages that Black males received while attending their BLCCS?

b. What were the racial messages that the Black males received while attending their PWCCS?

2. How did the racial messaging shape their understanding of race and their self as Black males?

3. How did the Black males perceive Christian teachings to be a part of the racial dynamics in these CCS?

The assumption for the first question was that the racial messages that they received as students was determined by the racial make-up of the school. For instance, Black students in BLCCS experienced greater racial affirmation, but the positive racial messages were implicit. Additionally, Black students in PWCCS received racial messages of Black cultural inferiority, Black social deviance, and Black intellectual inferiority. The assumption for question two was that the positive racial messages caused Black men to have a stronger belief in themselves, and a nuanced outlook on their race by focusing more on the characteristics of the individual. On the other hand, negative racial messaging did not negatively affect their self-image but caused them to develop a deep distain for White people. Finally, for question three, it was assumed that the BLCCS Christian teachings undergirded their views for racial justice and their interracial social relationships. However, in PWCCS, Christian teachings were not a part of their interracial social interactions and undergirded their political views.

Research Design

Interpretive Phenomenology

This study utilized the interpretive phenomenology research design to ground the research. Interpretive Phenomenology was derived from traditional phenomenology which attempts to understand the essence of human experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Husserl & Biernel, 1973). However, interpretive phenomenology moves beyond just understanding the essence of human experience and focuses on the interactions and understanding of an individual with a phenomenon. Interpretive phenomenology incorporates three theoretical approaches: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that places a heavy emphasis on understanding the essence of an experience (Husserl Biernel, 1973). Secondly, Interpretive phenomenology is informed by hermeneutics (Smith et al. 2009). In essence, hermeneutics is more than just an exercise of grasping the phenomenon, but it requires the researcher to explore the meaning of a phenomenon and its interaction with the individuals that are a part of this study (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, in interpretive phenomenology it requires the research to understand the event or process and the individual that is interacting with this phenomenon. Finally, interpretive phenomenology incorporates idiography which focuses on the particular as opposed to focusing on the general application (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, interpretive phenomenology attempts to understand the individual's interaction and understanding of this phenomenon. Beyond just capturing the racial messages that Black students received, this study wanted to understand what Black students understood about the meaning of race in these spaces,

how this shaped their understanding of their race and self, and how religion shaped with the racial dynamics.

The study utilized interpretive phenomenology to capture the lived experiences of the Black males who matriculated through both BLCCS and PWCCS. In particular, the study focused on the research participants' understandings of the racial messages that they received as they matriculated through both BLCCS and PWCCS. In order to collect these Black males experiences it required a nuanced understanding of these Black males and the context of the times in which they lived. For instance, the perspectives of Black males who experienced this phenomenon during the OJ Simpson trial was vastly different from the Black males who experienced this phenomenon during the Obama presidential administration. Furthermore, the types of communities that these individuals lived in, or the churches they attended shaped how they understood and interreacted with the phenomenon of being a Black male while attending these two types of CCS schools. Hence, this study did not collect data to simply understand the research participants' perspectives, but to understand the essence of these experiences and extrapolate an ascribe meaning to this phenomenon (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Although this study allowed the Millennial and Generation Z Black males to talk about their racialized experiences as they traversed both PWCCS and BLCCS, it also provided the researcher a better understanding of how Black students understood the meaning of race in CCS environments (Moran, 2000)

One reason that interpretive phenomenology was utilized for this study was because Christian schools are not required to report data like the public-school sector.

Furthermore, the best approach to collecting the data was through phenomenological

interviews because it provided a guided conversation with liberty to gather greater detail

if necessary. This step ensured that the data would be rich and descriptive (Patton, 2002).

This approach was indispensable to helping the researcher understand how Black

students understood meaning of race for Black students in CCS environments.

Population

Porter (1999) considered it to be imperative for a researcher to define and

understand their eligible and accessible research population. Furthermore, Porter (1999)

said, "it is important that participants share certain demographic characteristics, which

represent inclusion criteria for the sample" (p. 796) Thus, the target population of this

study consisted of Black males born between (1981-2003) who attended both PWCCS

and BLCCS for at least one academic year each from sixth grade and beyond. Porter

(1999) later discussed the importance of having an eligible population to be accessible to

the researcher. Thus, the research participants must meet a certain criterion and be

available to the researcher. Due to Zoom and an extensive network, over 200 Black males

who match the previously stated population criteria in this demographic are considered

immediately accessible for this study.

Participant Selection Criteria and Recruitment

For this study, the target population was selected through the utilization of

criterion sampling technique which delimits the demographics of the research

participants. Phenomenological research requires that the research participants all have

experienced the same phenomenon, in this study that requires the participants to have a

shared sociological identity, to have been born and raised during a shared chronological period, and to have attended both of these types of CCS (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Porter, 1999). In this instance the study required the individuals to be Black males born between 1981-2003 and to have attended both a BLCCS and a PWCCS. In essence, the individuals who shared these experiences met the criterion for participation in this study and were selected to participate (Moustakas, 1994). The accessible population, from which this study drew consisted of Millennial (1981-1996) and adult Gen-Z (1997-2003) Black males who attended both K-12 and a PWCCS for one year each to get the most out of the research participants, it required these students to have been able to have been a part of the school community for at least a year. This study's sample was derived from individuals who met these criteria.

It was imperative that the selection criteria for the research participants be clearly stated as Black and male because this study intentionally centers Black male voices. Other studies have looked at racism in these spaces but can delve into a focus on Whiteness. As Dumas and Ross (2016) highlighted, the Black experience is unique just as all racial minority experiences are unique. So, it must be clearly stated that this is not a study on racism, but on the ways that Black males experience race in CCS. Nor does this study solely focus on the CCS context because each individual experiences this differently based on their race and gender. Thus, the research participants must be both Black and male.

Secondly, Millennial and Generation Z were imperative social markers because these individuals had the civil right during their entire K-12 academic journey to be

enrolled in any CCS. Beyond that, these generations adolescent years were at the height

of the post-racial society argument (Bonilla-Silva, 2021), which means that their teachers

often decreased the significance of race and emphasized their similarities and cloaked

their disdain for Black culture in morality as opposed to cultural difference (Blosser,

2019; Douglas et al., 2019). Generation X and Boomers matriculated in an era of overt

racism and limited social policy concerning issues of race (Rock, 2018). For instance,

many Boomers were born in a time in which Jim Crow was the law of the land in the

south United States of America (USA), and de facto racial segregation was the modus

operandum in the northern USA (Tyson, 2017). Thus, there is not a great need to better

understand these experiences amongst Boomers or Generation X. However, Millennials

and Generation Z Black males were raised in a time where, at the very least, society

attempted to squelch the significance of race because these were young people who grew

up during a time of greater racial equality.

Thirdly, this study required Black males to have attended both PWCCS and

BLCCS for at least one year. This criterion was selected because limited exposure would

mean that these research participants may have a limited frame of reference for their

experiences. However, the longer a student has been in the environment it would allow

them to have greater recall of their experiences. Thus, the minimum of one year was

selected so that students could have a greater recall of their racialized experiences in

these schools. Also, this study does not categorize the grade ranges between middle or

high school because many BLCCS are K-8 schools. Many Black students do not attend

these PWCCS until after they have graduated from the eighth grade and there are no more BLCCS options available to the families.

Fourthly, this study chose the criterion of the research participants from both PWCCS and BLCCS because of existing research that analyzes both schools individually but none that do so comparatively. The racialized experiences of these Black men when they attended these two types of institutions is invaluable because we mainly have research in the PWCCS domain. Through their experiences in both environments, it allowed Black males to speak about these spaces more thoroughly because they saw the contrasts and it provided greater clarity in both environments. If an individual is only in one kind of environment, they cannot see the benefits and problems in their environment and certain critical things are under scrutinized.

Fifthly, this study chose research participants from the accessible population. This population of qualifying adult Millennial and Gen-Z were gathered through three recruitment strategies social media flyers, social network recruiting, and snowball sampling. There is a plethora of PWCCS options, but many BLCCS can be difficult to discover. Thus, the study identified BLCCS and contact these institutions via phone calls and emails in an attempt to find out if any of their alumni qualify to be participants in this study as opposed to going through PWCCS to connect with their Black alumni. Additionally, the study attempted to identify alumni groups via *Facebook* and utilized a social media flyer to identify potential candidates. In addition to these alumni groups on social media, the researcher also made social media posts through Black Christian Facebook groups as well as reach out to Black Christian Instagram pages that promote

Black Christian digital content. Also, the researcher disseminated recruitment flyers on one Christian College's social media alumni page, and a Black Christian social media group page that has over 10,000 followers.

Beyond that, as an alumnus of two BLCCS, utilizing social network recruiting allowed the researcher to have ample research participants. As an insider, it allowed the researcher to have access to many Black males who attended both PWCCS and BLCCS. Also, the study participants had a greater level of comfort and were more inclined to share more openly and honestly due to the pre-existing relationships.

One might suggest that the study should focus on individuals in either middle or high school to further clarify the sample. The decision to choose sixth grade and above was because it would be difficult to find individuals who transferred between the two institutions. Since many BLCCS are K-8 institutions, a good number of parents do not move them into PWCCS until there are no more educational options. Thus, to maintain high accessibility the study looks at students in sixth grade and above.

Finally, the study anticipated that this group of Black males may be difficult to identify. Thus, snowball sampling was utilized to identify other research participants. Snowball sampling enlists the research participant in the recruiting process by asking them if they know anyone else who would qualify for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This three-tiered approach of recruiting participants was beneficial for this study. Social media recruitment and snowball sampling allowed the study to grant the researcher access to individuals outside of their social network and allowed for a more robust

sample (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). The social networking approach guaranteed that the researcher accessed the sample.

Data Collection & Analysis

Data Collection

Before I began the data collection process, my first step was to gain approval through the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's (UNCC) Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB at UNCC reviewed my research proposal and confirmed that my study information was in alignment with National policies and approved practices for human subject research. Furthermore, the IRB at UNCC insured that all necessary precautions were in place to maintain the confidentiality of research participants.

Before I began the study, I had individuals complete out confidential surveys on *Google Forms*. After the surveys were completed, I chose 15 individuals that fit the criterion for selection. The essential criterion was that the participants had to be Black American, born between 1981-2003, and attended both a BLCCS and a PWCCS in sixth grade or beyond.

After the research participants were selected, the research participants received a consent form to their email via *DocuSign*. The consent form detailed the purpose of the study and informed the participants of the potential risks associated with recalling previous traumatic events. However, the research participants were informed that if at any point they felt uncomfortable and wanted to withdraw from the study or refuse to answer a certain question, they would be free to do so at any time. The consent form also made the research participant aware that the interview process would consist of three

separate meetings. The first and second meetings lasted between 60-90 mins each as data was collected via interviews. After the data was collected, transcribed, and coded, there was a third meeting to conduct a member check in to confirm that what I found within the data was consistent with their experiences.

Once the consent form was received the research participants chose a date and time to engage in the interview via a doodle poll. After the date and time was selected, the individual received an e-mail that encouraged the research participant to purposefully take time prior to the interview to review their old year books or talk with former classmates. This step was taken as a means to bring back to memory experiences they may have forgotten so that they would have had a chance to prepare for the interview.

For this study, data was collected by conducting two phenomenological interviews. The goal of these interviews was to capture valid descriptors of the participants' experiences, and to understand the experiential structures (Zahavi & Gallagher, 2008; Hoffding & Martiny, 2016). The phenomenological interview is not just the gathering of data from an individual, but the interviewee plays a direct role in the "knowledge generation process" during the interview (Hoffding & Martny, 2016, p. 541). Since as the interviewer, I have an agenda during the interview, I am not just receiving information but as I reflect on the answers it may require me to pivot focus to further explicate knowledge from the participant. Varela and Shear (1999) suggested that the interview process is similar to that of a coach and required me to be fully engaged in observing the interviewee's body language and paying close attention to their phraseology. Due to COVID-19, I conducted the interviews via *Zoom* which allowed me

to facilitate the entire interviewee process without being in the physical presence of the interviewee. The interview exclusively used open ended questions to allow research participants to reflect before they responded. The interviews were conducted utilizing the phenomenological interview approach which resulted with an open-ended questioning approach.

Prior to the interview process I had the participants review former yearbooks and encouraged them to reach out to former classmates. Also, I sent the protocol to participants so that they could prepare for the interview. This step allowed for a richer interview process because they were comfortable at the onset of the interview.

Data Analysis

After both interviews were conducted with participants and the data was transcribed verbatim. Following the transcription process, I read and re-read the transcripts three times. These re-readings were conducted slowly and carefully allowing for times of reflection. During the re-reading process I took notes of recurring key words and highlighted significant stories that explained the significance of race (Smith et al., 2009).. Furthermore, I took linguistic notes focusing where they may have laughed, paused, raised their voices, or spoke more quietly (Smith et al., 2009). This allowed me to see beyond the mere words and take note of the ways these moments effected the participants. Finally, I took special note of the ways the participants conceptualized these experiences and communicated the meaning of race and Blackness in these environments.

After the initial note taking period, I took time to reflect on these encounters, their significance, and potential impact on me. I decompressed my feelings and reflections and

then I began to identify the emergent themes like anti-Black sentiments, or silence around race, and began to cluster the common phrases, concepts, and descriptors under separate thematic umbrellas (Smith et al., 2009). These conceptual umbrellas were overarching terms that spoke to their understanding of their phenomenon. In line with IPA scholars these terms synthesized my reflection with their terminology (Smith et al., 2009). After these themes were developed, they were clustered together to utilize term mapping to see how the terms possibly fit together under a larger conceptual umbrella. The way I did term mapping was by looking for abstract concepts that naturally fit together. Thus, I first clustered the experiences in the PWCCS and in BLCCS separately. Then I compared these clusters across experience. For instance, I looked at the ways race and Blackness were approached in both spaces. I developed these comparative notes into their own themes and clusters. After this I repeated this step with the next transcript. This encapsulated this step.

Finally, I compared the clustered themes across the 14 transcripts, and I found the most prominent and consistent themes. By prominence, I mean these themes were the most consistent across cases. Afterwards, I interpreted the data utilizing Black Critical Theory particularly looking at the ways Black liberatory fantasy was manifested in the BLCCS and in the Black fictive kinships of the Black social groups in PWCCS. Furthermore, I examined the ways race and Christian teachings intersected in these students by critiquing the ways religious dogma undergirded these intersections. Afterwards the research participants and I had a final meeting in which we discussed the

findings of the study and did a members check to ensure that the findings were consistent with their experiences.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research demonstrated the dependability of the interpretation of the data (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). I ensured trustworthiness using member checks. After my initial meeting and transcription of the data, I had a follow-up member check meeting during to ensure that I understood the responses accurately. I also wrote a subjectivity statement so that the readers would understand my biases and shared my hypotheses to ensure that I was not manipulating the findings. I took all these measures to ensure the reliability of my research findings.

In order to ensure trustworthiness and rigor in this study, I considered my perspectives and biases around PWCCS and BLCCS. Also, I recognized that my K-12 experiences as a Black man in PWCCS and BLCCS were not universal. For instance, there were Black males who had positive encounters with their teachers in both PWCCS and BLCCS. Although I have considered myself an insider, I recognized that it would be imperative for me to look at these institutions with a neutral perspective and remain open to seeing new experiences. I recognize that my experiences in BLCCS were region specific. For instance, some of my peers attended affluent BLCCS whereas I attended an underfunded institution. Beyond that, I explored my biases and my experiences by writing out my racial history story. While I believe it is ultimately impossible to remove oneself from the study, it was imperative that I consider my upbringing and how those formational experiences developed my worldview.

Subjectivity Statement

It is impossible to completely bracket off one's experiences and previous life (Smith et al., 2009). In an attempt to limit my personal background from biasing the study's findings, I engaged in critical reflection upon who I am and how my upbringing and existence as a Black Seventh-day Adventist pastor has shaped my existence and my ways of knowing (Hatch, 2002). I descended from a line of Black Seventh-day Adventist pastors who were all educated below the Mason-Dixon line in the deep South. All except my great grandfather attended denominational schools during their K-12 and higher education journeys. Denominational employment was their pathway that led them out of the American south, into the North, and across the United States of America. These travels allowed them to preach, build churches, and collaborate to establish Seventh-day Adventist hospitals and plant schools. As a byproduct of being some of the early African American adopters of the Seventh-day Adventist message, it granted them and their descendants social, cultural, and financial capital. They have produced medical doctors, dentists, lawyers, media personalities, and more pastors through their lineage.

As a Black Seventh-day Adventist pastor descending from a line of denominational pastors. I have inherited an innumerable social and cultural wealth. Still, this wealth has not exempted my ancestors or me from White Christian rage. This wealth did not exempt my fraternal great grandfather from being nearly lynched at 19 years old, or my teenage fraternal grandfather from running into the hills because he saw the Klan burning crosses on the lawn, or my father from having a shotgun rammed into his back and his legs beaten by Flint police officers (Reynolds, 1984). Nor did this wealth exempt

me from experiencing educational violence while an elementary-aged student at a PWCCS. One such experience embedded in my mind is when my 2nd-grade teacher kept me in the back of the class, although my eyesight had recently worsened, and I was awaiting the shipment of my glasses. At this point, I realized that we were not all brothers and sisters in Christ, and if we were, this relationship existed in hierarchical terms.

I can remember transferring from my Black congregation's kindergarten and pre-school into this new PWCCS. One of my earliest memories of my new White Christian school, when I entered first grade, was one of shock because my White classmates demonstrated so little respect for authority. They had not come from my old school where the cooks, older Black women of the congregation, had no problem grabbing the wooden spoon and teaching you about respect if you had a hard time honoring your teachers and elders. My six-year-old mind came to realize that these schools were both Christian, but they were vastly different. I did not know that this new school had accepted me on a probationary basis because I did not perform well on their pre-admission assessment. It was my experiences between these two worlds that informed my awareness of these environments. This study differs from previous studies on Christian schools because it attempts to disentangle Christian education from the social layers that appear to be synonymous with Christian schooling through centering the voices of Black males.

Christian education advocates and scholars have positioned Christian schools as the ideal form of education because it promotes morality, strong curriculums, and religiosity (Jeynes, 2002; Knight, 2016). Thus, for some, my experiences in PWCC can be depicted as an anomaly because their values and experiences seem incompatible.

However, there are other stories of racial trauma for Black boys in PWCCS, and I contend that these experiences are under-reported, unanalyzed, and not theorized (Kendi, 2016; Little, & Tolbert, 2018; Thomas et al., 2020). While I would contend that racism is normative in PWCCS because this is in line with the *Critical Race Theory* (CRT), I do not believe that one can critically analyze Christian education by simply looking at PWCCS. Instead, a researcher must explore Conservative Christian Schools (CCS) with varying racial constituencies and leaderships. This point is critical to all forms of analysis because my Christian education schooling experiences were conducted in predominantly White institutions or under Black leadership. These schools were sociologically different, even though these schools both shared a very similar theologically conservative orientation. One of the critical differences that shaped the experiences was the racial make-up of the teachers, the school board, and the administration, all of whom were of African descent. There is currently little to no research exploring PWCCS, but there is even less research on Black-led conservative Christian schools (BLCCS). This study seeks to examine the experiences of Black males that have traversed both institutions.

Risk Benefits and Ethical Consideration

This study benefitted society because it challenges religious schools to be more culturally inclusive for various racial minorities. Findings could be used to suggest policy changes to better support Black male students in experiencing a more socially affirming experience in conservative Christian P-12 schools. Research participants benefitted from their involvement in this study because they had an opportunity to reflect on their prior experiences with racism and develop resilience based on reflection. From a risk

perspective, Black males may experience discomfort reflecting on their negative experiences during their academic journey. However, to mitigate emotional distress, I made sure that my research participants did not have to answer any questions that may have made them feel comfortable, and assured them they were free to leave the study at any time without consequence. Also, due to the current global pandemic related to Covid-19, I met with my research participants via Zoom as opposed to meeting in person.

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed account of the research design, data collection, and analysis implemented in this study. First and foremost, the study explained the phenomenological research philosophy and the purpose for implementing phenomenology in this study. The purpose of using phenomenology was rooted in centering the voices of Black males in the co-construction of knowledge. Thus, this study utilized semi-structured interviews to capture the data from these Black males. Furthermore, to ensure that these men's voices were heard the study conducted member checks to ensure that their voices were understood in this phenomenon. Through information collected in these firsthand accounts it allowed the data to bring the researcher closer to the essence of the phenomenon.

For analytical purposes this study employed Moustakas's eight step analytical approach to phenomenological research. This allowed me as the researcher to thoroughly understand the data that was in front of me, to take notes and ask questions of the data, to code and cluster the data, and to interpret the data. After this process of analysis was completed the essence of the meaning was deduced.

The final section of the study considered the reliability of the research. Reliability was ensured in the study by utilizing a member check, reflecting on my experiences, and writing a subjectivity statement. Doing this research allowed me to make sense of the phenomenon but it also allowed me to be responsible in my analysis.

The next chapter allows the research participants to speak by centering their voices on this phenomenon. It explores the racial messaging of Black males who attended both PWCCS and BLCCS. In doing so, these Black males will contribute to the co-construction of knowledge concerning thus underexplored phenomenon. Furthermore, this research provides insights into creating socially and spiritually affirming spaces for Black boys to learn and thrive.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Chapter 4 analyzes the results from the semi-structured interviews conducted

during this study. The interviews focused on the racial messages that Black males who

attended both PWCCS and BLCCS while they attended these academic institutions. This

interpretive phenomenological study captured how they made sense of the different racial

messages they received while attending these CCS. The study made sense of the complex

phenomenon of the significance of race in Christian schools. This chapter presents the

findings of the study, and the data that was derived from it attempted to answer the

following questions:

1. What were the racial messages that Black males received while attending their

   CCS?

   a. What were the racial messages that Black males received while attending

      their BLCCS?

   b. What were the racial messages that the Black males received while

      attending their PWCCS?

2. How did the racial messaging shape their understanding of race and their self as

   Black males?

3. How did the Black males perceive Christian teachings to be a part of the racial

   dynamics in these CCS?

   After the interviews were conducted, the data were then transcribed and analyzed.

In all, 14 Black males participated in this study and were interviewed. Through

interpretive analysis, 108 codes were formed, and then these codes were grouped into

four themes. Chapter 4 unpacks the findings from the study and examines the racial

messages that these 14 Black males received in their CCS experiences. These Black

males came from diverse regions, socio-economic statuses, and two generations.

However, the one factor that they all share is that they all attended both a BLCCS and a

PWCCS.

Participant Profiles

This section of Chapter 4 gives individual descriptions of the research

participants. These descriptions are indispensable to the study because it gives context to

the participants whose reflections on these experiences undergird the data. The

participants in this study all grew up in Christian families, but they were raised in an

array of metropolitan areas. Some of the research participants lived in urban areas,

whereas others grew up in suburban communities. Their homes, neighborhoods, faith

communities, and social era shaped their interpretations of these experiences. The 14

participants in this study have similarities and differences, but the one common

denominator is that they attended PWCCS and BLCCS.

Michael

Michael, 33, was raised by a middle-class family in a large northeastern urban

city with a racist reputation. For instance, Michael said of his home city, "there were

certain neighborhoods you just knew you were not supposed to go to, so I never really

engaged with white people until high school." He grew up in a Black church that also

housed his K-8 BLCCS. Although Michael grew up in a diverse city, he remained in a

Black enclave during much of his adolescence. Michael spent 13 years in CCS, 11 years

in BLCCS, and two years in a PWCCS. Michael attended a Black Christian boarding school for the last two years of high school. As a marketing professional, he works for an educational non-profit in Philadelphia, PA.

Terry

Terry, 37, was born in a northeastern state to a working-class family. As an adolescent, he lived between a few small cities in the same region. He was raised in a Christian family and attended a Black church. The area where he was raised had a notorious reputation for criminal activity, but his CCS were different from where he was raised. His connection with his PWCCS was through his grandmother, who "was an elder" at the school's sponsoring church. Terry attended CCS for 12 years, including Pre-K. He spent five years in a PWCCS and seven years in BLCCS. Currently, Terry is a college professor in Idaho.

James

James, 33, was born in a large city in the southeast to a middle-class family. He was raised in a Black Christian household and attended Christian schools for 11 years. The PWCCS he attended was not sponsored by his local congregation, even though it was a denominational school. James attended public school for his first two years until his grandmother's intervention admonishing his parents to enroll him in a Christian school. James spent nine years in a PWCCS. However, during his final two years of high school, he attended a BLCCS. He currently serves as a senior pastor in Virginia.

Rick

Rick, 37, was born in a small northeastern metropolis. He was raised in an upper-middle-class Black Christian family and attended a Black church. Rick's first four years of education were spent in homeschool. Afterward, he spent nine years in CCS, six of those years in a PWCCS, and the remaining three years in a BLCCS. Rick was raised in the suburbs, whereas his other Black classmates commuted into the school from the city. Rick currently works as an IT contractor providing cyber security.

Troy

Troy, 39, was born in a small, northeastern city like Rick. He was raised in an upper-middle-class Black family. Troy attended CCS for nine years; five of those years were spent in BLCCS, four years in a PWCCS. Troy also spent three years in home school. While considering his youth, he vividly remembers the crack epidemic from the 80s to the early 90s and how he felt this shaped the perceptions of his White classmates concerning Black students. Troy currently works as a financial advisor for an investment firm.

Russell

Russell, 29, was born in the southeast as the son of a Black pastor. He lived in various states in the south and the Midwest. He attended CCS for ten years, four of those years were spent in BLCCS., and the other six were spent in PWCCS. Also, Russell spent four years doing homeschooling. Russell's diverse CCS educational experiences allowed him to see the broad array of differences between CCS. Russell currently works as a pastor in Louisiana.

Kareem

Kareem, 32, was born in a large metropolitan city on the west coast and was raised in a large metropolitan city in the Midwest. His mother and stepfather raised Kareem in a working-class Black family. He spent six years in CCS, three years in PWCCS, and three years in a BLCCS. Prior to spending time in CCS, he attended public schools. Currently, Kareem works in Oklahoma as a diversity equity and inclusion specialist.

LeSean

LeSean, 27, was raised in a large city in the Northeast to a middle-class Black pastoral family. He grew up in Black and White churches. In middle school, LeSean moved to a large southeastern city. He spent ten years in CCS, six years in BLCCS, and four years in PWCCS. In high school, LeSean was expelled from his PWCCS and attended public school throughout for the rest of his high school experience. LeSean still lives in the same southeastern city and finishing his college degree.

Kyrie

Kyrie, 21, was raised in a large southern city to a middle-class Black pastoral family. He spent four years in a CCS, two in a PWCCS, and two in a BLCCS. The first nine years of his academic journey he spent being homeschooled, and in middle school, he would do some coursework at a BLCCS that his father's congregation sponsored. Currently, Kyrie is finishing his degree at an HBCU and intends to be a pastor when he finishes his degree.

Cameron

Cameron, 26, was raised in a large southeastern city to a middle-class Black family. He spent nine years in CCS, five years in a BLCCS, and four years in PWCCS. Cameron was also intermittently in home school during his K-12 academic journey. He grew up in a conservative Black family, which made his upbringing different from many of his classmates. Cameron is currently in seminary, intending to become a pastor.

Richard

Richard, 33, was raised in a southeastern metropolis city to a middle-class Black pastoral family. Richard spent 12 years in CCS, eight years in BLCCS, and four years in a PWCCS. In addition, Richard spent one academic year in public school. Richard was a star athlete in high school and led his team to a state championship. Richard is currently a Black pastor in Florida.

Deuce

Deuce, 31, was raised in a large southeastern city to a middle-class Black Christian family. He spent eight years in CCS, three years in a BLCCS, and five years in PWCCS. Deuce attended racially diverse public schools for his other five years in school. Currently, Deuce works as a mortgage banker in Georgia.

King

King, 22, was raised in a mid-Atlantic sizeable metropolitan area to a Black middle-class pastoral family. He spent 13 years in CCS, ten years in PWCCS, and three years in a BLCCS. King is a former college athlete and is currently pursuing his college degree, intending to be a pastor when he graduates.

Zach

Zach, 31, was born and raised in a large midwestern city to a middle-class Black pastoral family. He spent five years in CCS, one year in a BLCCS, and four years in PWCCS. Zach's CCS experience took place between the north and the south. He also intermittently attended public school during high school. Currently, Zach works as a Black pastor in North Carolina.

Table 1

Participants CCS Demographics

	Age	Years in BLCCS	Years in PWCCS	Region of the country for BLCCS	Region of the country for PWCCS	Generation
Michael	33	11	2	Northeast	Northeast	Millennial
Terry	37	7	5	Northeast	Northeast	Millennial
James	33	2	9	Southeast	Northeast	Millennial
Rick	37	3	6	Northeast	Northeast	Millennial
Troy	39	5	4	Northeast	Northeast	Millennial
Russell	29	4	6	Southeast	Southeast/Midwest	Millennial
Kareem	32	3	3	Northeast	Midwest	Millennial
LeSean	27	6	4	Northeast	Southeast	Millennial
Kyrie	21	2	2	Northeast	South	Z
Cameron	26	5	4	Southeast	South	Millennial
Richard	33	8	4	South	South	Millennial
Deuce	31	3	5	Southeast	Southeast	Millennial
King	22	3	10	Northeast	Mid-Atlantic	Z
Zach	31	1	4	South	South/Midwest	Millennial

CCS: Context in participants voices

Thus far in this dissertation, researchers have defined the CCS, but the research participants in this study must define these schools. In this study, CCS are not simply defined by theological beliefs, but their racial makeup also defines them. This section contextualizes CCS along racial lines by the Black males that traversed these institutions. This section is not intended to serve as a wholesale description of these institutions. Instead, it is intended to clarify the dominant interpretations of the research participants who were educated in these environments. This section discusses BLCCS institutions and then expound on the PWCCS institutions from the Black males' perspectives who experienced it.

BLCCS

BLCCS normed the environment around the learning needs and desires of Black people. For instance, Zach described the environment as a place where students were "seeing images of Black folk, and you are seeing your heroes on the wall for teachers." In addition, the walls were lined with imagery of Black leaders and contributors. This environment suggests that Black people were not positioned as outsiders in school but as if they belonged in this space. Richard recalled that the education was a lot more hands-on and less abstract:

> The instruction was more interactive and more relevant in terms of the teaching methods, a lot more Montessori. We would go outside and learn. I remember going to the gym for instance, and they would teach us math in the gym as opposed to in the classroom.

The approach to learning was less about lectures and test-taking and more tangible and concrete. This educational approach took into consideration their learning styles beyond considering learning styles. Black educators also gave a social history mixing in the lived experiences of the instructors. The lessons did not just teach the content, but they made sure to engage the students. Troy remembered:

> Get more Black perspective, and not just Black. Because it's not just like what the history tells you. It's also like the cultural part, the oral history that you're not going to get in a white environment. Like you may have a teacher who was a Black panther, or maybe not, but he grew up in that time period. He knew what the community was like, in that time period. Of course, you're going to make the proudest Black man or proudest Black women a history teacher.

James recalled receiving lessons on structural racism from his history teacher:

> It was from her that I first learned and recall hearing and learning the word entrenched. She would talk about the entrenched racism in American history. She would talk about the entrenched white superiority mindset that undergirds a lot of what we see in American life, we're talking about in the 2000s.

This same teacher would remind her students, "Young Black boys, young Black girls, America does not care about you." These lessons were shared from a place of love and mutual dignity. For instance, Russell remembered a teacher at his BLCCS and said, "she used her class as a nucleus of building up the Black woman and the Black man." In these BLCCS, Black care was normative in this environment. Michael recalled his teachers in

his BLCCS having concern for them and other Black students and expressing this concern:

> I can remember, teachers or educators just like talking about certain things. And being like, "You all be careful." Right? Or like, I can remember one of my-- It wasn't my classmate, but he was a year ahead of me. Gosh, like shot in the back when I was in elementary school and died. So it was like a big thing that kind of-- It wasn't necessarily a racial like white versus Black, but racial in the sense of Black experience of poverty, neighborhoods, violence and remembering the teachers say things like, "You, keep your head on a swivel, this is why education is important, get your butt out of here, do the walk the straight and narrow."

Discipline in BLCCS was also handled in a way that many felt was designed to teach a lesson. For example, Rick recalled the response from his teacher when he got in trouble for cheating in school.

> The discipline was definitely more personal. The teacher took and brought me to a room and talked to me for two hours about the importance of not cheating. I cheat now, then I'll cheat on my wife and she called my mom, and talked to her for two hours. My mom called me crying, versus just like, oh, and then at the John Allen Chau Christian school it was just like, it didn't really care, like you're in trouble ok. Here's your punishment.

Even if one finds the teacher's idea that if he cheated on a test, he would cheat on his wife to be a stretch, the teacher was concerned about Rick. She cared about how he would turn out in life in the long run. Rick compared the disciplinary approaches between the two

schools. Rick concluded that the PWCCS handled discipline just by looking at the rule. However, in the BLCCS, this educator was concerned about the long-term ramifications of his actions. These BLCCS did not just focus on the social but also shaped their religious instruction. Rick said, "We talked about Jesus being Black and Adam and Eve being Black." Rick's experience was not an isolated incident because Michael spoke of Jesus identity being depicted as Black:

> This was the school where the pictures of Christ were Black. So it wasn't like, everywhere else Jesus was, White? But in that school, Jesus had like a fro and some pictures he just had like, I mean same garb with the sash across, but it was a brother.

Michael and Rick bring up the identity of Jesus because so often, Jesus has been depicted as White. However, in these institutions, Jesus is depicted as a Black man, which demonstrated a point that Jesus looked like them and that they could be like Jesus. Not only was Jesus and other Bible characters depicted as Black, but the worship experience catered towards the traditional Black experience.

BLCCS were designed to educate and serve Black students amid a hostile world. The environment attempted to them in a way that they could learn and empower them to reach their highest potential. They intentionally made them aware of the racist history of America and, out of concern, educated them so that they could go beyond. This education was not strictly social, but it was also religious. They intentionally depicted biblical figures to look like them and shared the heroes who came before them.

PWCCS

In their words, Black students felt as if they were treated as less than and made to feel like outsiders in PWCCS. Troy recalled a unique situation in which students showed the way they felt about Black people indirectly:

So, we had people, white people from urban areas, white people from the country and me to growing up on farms. And this term whigger was really just getting thrown around the school nonstop. The funny thing is, it was said by a white person it would be a Black person, it was just like, white people criticizing each other by calling each other whiggers. It was just funny to watch as a Black student, because this is the most absurd thing and it was weird because it was obviously the word is made to rhyme with the other word. But we had no dog in this fight. Like you guys would fight with each other all you want. You're not impressing us, or we just don't care. Okay, this kid like this one kid sagging his pants or whatever. He likes to play basketball and he likes to talk to Black girls and call them whigger and he's all mad.

In this scenario, the White students demonstrate how they feel about Black people by calling White students who act "Black." The fact that students used a socially pejorative term to criticize their same-race peers demonstrates that being Black is to be lesser than White in their minds. Although these terms were used against White people, they sent an inappropriate message to Black students in this environment. Furthermore, interactions like this set the tone for the racial climate in these spaces. Richard recalled the educational approach not being as accommodating as the BLCCS environment.

> I thought there was a difference in the approach at this school when compared to
> going to the other predominantly Black school in that the teachers were less hands
> on, it was a lot more just cerebral in that, you know, less tactile stuff, more, just
> sit down, read, do your test, do your work book assignments, things of that nature,
> but less Montessori, if that makes any sense.

In this environment, the teaching seemed a lot more hands-off they expected students to grasp concepts. Michael had a similar sentiment with his math teacher. He recalled his math teacher's pedagogical approach being, "if you get it, you get it; if you don't, you don't." Michael also experienced a similar sentiment with another teacher:

> And then I had other teachers like one of my science teachers, she was cool, but
> also boomer age gap, can't really connect and so there was a point where we also
> drifted because it was like, you get it or you don't.

This experience exists in stark contrast to the teachers in BLCCS from the teachers in PWCCS. Rick considered the instructional strategies of the teachers in BLCCS:

> Definitely more geared towards making sure everyone understands versus I taught
> it and it's up to you to retain it. They definitely cared about you succeeding as a
> class versus teaching the subject.

Rick believed that the teachers expressed more concern for them grasping the academic concepts in BLCCS. As opposed to his experience in PWCCS. The research participants did not feel that the administrators in their PWCCS environment even considered their backgrounds outside of the educational approach. Richard reflected on his experiences

with discipline between the two environments and concluded that there was a critical difference between the two schools.

> I felt like the teachers at Frederick Douglas Christian School and at Sojourner Truth Christian School were more lenient or more gracious than the teachers at Samuel T. Armstrong Christian Academy. I don't recall ever getting in-school suspension or being sent to the principal's office Frederick Douglas Christian School and Sojourner Truth Christian School. However, both those happened at Samuel T. Armstrong Christian Academy for what I thought were pointless and unnecessary infractions, whether it had to do with my uniform shirt not being tucked in or something of that nature, my hair not being a certain way. But at Frederick Douglas Christian School and Sojourner Truth Christian School, I definitely felt like there was more grace.

Richard felt as if the PWCCS was punitive for minor infractions. Much like Rick, Richard felt that it was about the rule when they disciplined Black students and not the person. They did not even consider the weight of the infraction. Ultimately the PWCCS environment focused more on controlling the bodies of Black students than actually dealing with the issues at hand:

> I remember having to go to ISS In-School Suspension because my shirt was untucked because we had to wear uniforms. And yet there were others who had their shirt untucked and they didn't have to go there to ISS.

Richard realized that he stood out in the PWCCS environment, and the rules were not applied unilaterally. Instead, White students could have the same indiscretions as Black

students but receive a less significant punishment or no punishment at all. This was not just the experience of Richard, but LeSean took note of the same issue as well:

> If you did something, it's a wrap. They bringing down the hammer. Especially if you're an African American. I know that because I was involved in an incident like that and I pleaded my case, a couple other people that were there pleading my case, and it still went a whole different way.

Teachers and administrators focused their discipline on Black students but ignored the infractions of White students. Russell felt as if the environment catered towards White students and did not consider the desires or experiences of Black students. This sentiment was manifested in Russell's recollection of the school's worship experiences:

> I don't ever remember feeling as though they considered our background as Black people. And you, kind of, just morphed into what they wanted you to become in those programs and so forth. There's one particular example where we had, you know, a special event and it was extremely geared towards their background.

Russell suggested that the PWCCS modus operandum was unintentionally catered towards White people due to a lack of diversity in their leadership. Kareem noticed that "people wanted things to be the way they were accustomed to it" furthermore," if you brought a different diverse perspective, it was not always well-received." Thus, the environment normalized Whiteness, and if divergent thoughts were introduced, these thoughts typically were not accepted.

The environments of PWCCS and BLCCS are vastly different from one another. These differences are cultural and manifest in pedagogy, curriculum, teacher instruction,

school discipline, and corporate worship. It was essential to make sense of the environment from the perspective of the Black students before this study dealt with the main findings. As this section concludes, keep these differences in mind because this adds clarity to the findings because the environment and the social climate of these institutions are loaded with racial messages, some of which the research participants caught some, they may never fully grasp.

Themes

Four themes emerged within the study. These themes are layered, supported by rich data, and comparatively unpacked. Asante (1980) espoused that research on Black people has often been done in a way that they are viewed as objects instead of being viewed as subjects. Furthermore, Black people and their communities have often been positioned through the lens of White people and compared to White norms (Fredrickson, 1971). For instance, to counter this common occurrence, this section begins by discussing the racial messages these Black males received in the BLCCS and counter them with comparable messages they received in PWCCS.

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes

	Theme 1: Black Attributive Messages
BLCCS	Black is Excellent
PWCCS	Black is a Racial Trope
	Theme 2: Black Agency
BLCCS	Free to be Black
PWCCS	Free to be Black with Boundaries
	Theme 3: Black Perspectives
BLCCS	Black is Diverse
PWCCS	Exceptional Negro
BLCCS	Black Pride
PWCCS	Black Inferiority
	Theme 4: Racialized Religion
BLCCS	Real Religion
PWCCS	Convenient Religion

The first theme that emerged from the data in response to Research Question 1: "What were the racial messages that the Black males received while attending their CCS?" was Black attributive messages. The findings revealed that a dominant character message in BLCCS was that Black is excellent. However, in the PWCCS, the dominant Black character messages were that Black is monolithic. The differing racial environments produced contrasting messages concerning the attributes of Black people.

The second theme for Research Question 1 is a racial message regarding Black agency. In the BLCCS, the racial message regarding agency was free to be Black. The PWCCS's racial message regarding agency was free to be Black with boundaries. The black agency operated differently in the two environments.

The third theme that emerged from the data in response to Research Question 2, "How did the racial messaging shape their understanding of race and themselves as Black males?" was Black perspectives. The findings revealed that the dominant expression message in BLCCS is that Black is diverse. In PWCCS, when there was a diverse expression of Blackness, they were seen as exceptional negroes. Within the BLCCS and PWCCS dichotomy, there were contrasts to their messages.

The fourth theme that emerged from the data in response to Research Question 3, How did the Black males perceive Christian teachings to be a part of the racial dynamics in these CCS?", was Racialized Religious. Culture. The religion and the religious emphasis of the two institutions differed along racial lines. In the BLCCS, Black males felt that the schools placed a heavy emphasis on religion so much that it undergirded the

anti-racist ethic of the environment. In the PWCCS, Black males felt that religion was insignificant for daily living except to moralize Eurocentric norms.

Theme 1: Black Attributes

The racial messages concerning the attributes of Black people consider how the Black males perceived their teachers and classmates thought about them and Black people in general. These messages were received in both implicit and explicit communications and social interactions that they could recall. In the BLCCS, the overwhelming message that they received was that Black is excellent. However, this excellence was perceived as intellectually excellent, professionally excellent, and gifted in many ways. Unfortunately, Black excellence was not always holistic because this expectation was also seen in the educators' promotion of Black respectability politics.

BLCCS: Black is Excellent

BLCCS: Black Intellectual Excellence. In the BLCCS, these Black male students were met with the expectation of Black intellectual excellence. This was manifested amongst Black students because their teachers were not satisfied with them just doing good. They were challenged to go beyond their comfort zone in learning

> The administration was always emphasizing excellence is no accident and really
> pushed us to be more than we thought we could be. That was probably the first
> time where I had teachers that were telling me on a regular basis that they wanted
> more, that I could be more, and I never really got that.

As Kareem entered this environment, he subtly compared it to his past educational experiences. He came into this BLCCS from a PWCCS, and this was the first time that he

had teachers pushing him harder. This communicated a clear and consistent message that the teachers assumed Black excellence. This message was powerful for individuals who may have been labeled as low academic performers, but this message was also consistent with high-performing underachievers. During his interview, Troy spoke of these expectations:

> I did have experiences where I could tell that the teachers at Carter G. Woodson Academy were pushing me harder than they were other students. I didn't so much feel that way at Capital Christian School. At Capital Christian School I felt like I was being just treated in line with all the other students.

Troy, a high achieving Black male, felt as if his teachers at his BLCCS were pushing him harder than the teachers at his PWCCS. This resonates because, at his BLCCS, he sensed a deeper investment in his success. Furthermore, even amid a same-race environment, his excellence stood out even more. The Black intellectual excellence message was not satisfied with good performance. However, there was also a desire for Black kids to meet the standard of excellence that they could achieve. Troy, and Kareem, both communicated this idea that their teachers pushed them harder and to a higher standard. Michael furthered this sentiment by highlighting that not only did the teacher push him harder, but the classmates around him also upheld a standard of Black excellence. Beyond that, Michael also began to believe the message of Black intellectual excellence, and he began to self-identify as such.

BLCCS: Interwoven in the Curriculum. Black intellectual excellence was manifested in the pedagogical approaches and part of the curriculum. James recalled that

his history teacher exposed him to so much more than the "run-of-the-mill history of race." James recalled one of the core lessons.:

> She saying still, she would talk to us about the robust history of African American and Black excellence that was being whitewashed and buried and she would introduce us to inventors and innovators and entrepreneurs that preceded chattel slavery, and succeeded chattel slavery.

The history curriculum of this BLCCS was intended to demonstrate the importance of Black contributors. The history lessons served a dual purpose of demonstrating Black contributions and removing the naivety around Black people promulgated in other schools. Thus, teachers in the BLCCS did not just emphasize the students' excellence but emphasized that Black students came from excellent people. Russell had a teacher that exposed her classes to the contributions of Black people from a literary perspective. Russell remembered his teacher's curricular emphasis:

> Surprisingly in our English Lit and there's a particular teacher, she's passed away now, but she drilled it into us when it came to Black writers and Black speakers and certain poems from you know. Of course, I remember us reading Maya Angelou all the time.

Russell and James both recall how the curriculum exposed them to Black history. This explicit emphasis on Black contribution and excellence left an impression on their minds. These contributions were shared to convey the message of Black intellectual excellence. Michael recognized that his experience in his high school BLCCS was significant

because it was located on the underground railroad. He recalled the significance of the

location:

> They always talked about the legacy there, starting in this particular year, where it
>
> was located. It was a stop on the underground railroad, these are like heavy
>
> things, very big. So, you got this on your shoulders and you also got people who
>
> are helping you lift it up too.

For Michael, going to school on a symbol of Black liberation was transformative and

reinforced the expectation of high achievement. The location compounded by the legacy

of the BLCCS that he attended placed the expectation of excellence on his shoulders. The

environment and the educators reinforced a message of Black intellectual excellence.

Thus, even without speaking, the environment communicated the expectation for

excellence for Black students. Michael Russell and James all spoke to the significance of

seeing Black contributions and the promotion of the standard of excellence being

significant to their experiences and this consistent message of Black intellectual

excellence.

BLCCS: The Negro Motorist Green Book. Black students were not just

educated about Black intellectual excellence. Black teachers gave these students what I

have termed The Excellent Negro's Motorist Green Book. This code is derived from the

Green Book that served as a safety guide for Black people traveling. This guide informed

them of safe hotels, restaurants, and service stations. BLCCS teachers and administrators

would give their students lessons on achieving and living and representing excellence in a

White supremacist society. Troy recalled teachers giving him lectures on the ways to achieve excellence in a world dominated by White supremacy:

> Race was just discussed just like it always is, I think when you're amongst Black people. I don't think there's a Black person born in America who has never had some parent, relative, older Black person, sit them down and give them the lecture. You're not like that. You can't get away with what they can get away with. You have to be better; you have to behave better; you have to have a higher standard or else…. So, I would say that it was just spoken about like that, it was just like this is who you are, this is where you're going, you should be proud of who you are, you shouldn't have any shame, you shouldn't let anybody let make you feel less than. You got to go out there and kill.

Teachers fully aware of his capability would challenge him to see beyond the current environment and show them why they needed to be better in the future. The focus on the educators was on the need for these Black students to realize that they live in a society that does not judge them fairly. Troy said, "they can get away with it" he is speaking about White people. Thus, the school was also giving a race lesson so that he and other students could recognize that society did not give them the liberty to perform less because that could have dire consequences. The teachers challenged these students and loved them simultaneously. They wanted to make sure that these students realized that the issue was not their behavior, but the real issue was the racially oppressive society in which they lived. Kareem further elucidates on these overt messages that the Black teachers were giving the Black students on being Black:

I can remember teachers saying hey, you can act like this now because you're at

an all-Black school but in public society, you're not allowed to act like this and

you need to straighten up because this won't be accepted in the real world and

that's how race was discussed.

The teachers were hard on the students because they knew the road ahead for their pupils.

The teachers were not just trying to challenge them to do well on their assignments, but

they also wanted them to do well in life after school. The teachers' roadmap was such that

they believed that the students could achieve. Black teachers were sharing the

information regarding Black people's experiences. They were attempting to help the

students understand what life would be like outside the confines of this safe environment.

Terry also recalled an experience of his BLCCS taking him to an event to see a Black

intellectual and the teacher leaning over to give him a lesson:

So, pushing that critical thinking in that way, one of the things that sticks out and

I often share is that I went to Princeton in middle school and while at Princeton,

for this field trip, I didn't know at the time that it was Cornel West was speaking

and doing a lecture. So, they wanted to expose us to that. And I think in a joking

manner he said, "I'm not as, as smart as some of the other people in the room."

And she leaned over to me meaning my principal and said, never do that. Never in

front of white people diminish your intellectual capacity and intelligence, right?

Terry's teacher gave him a subtle lesson on Black excellence and suggested that Black

people should never diminish themselves in front of White people. While she never

shares her rationale behind it, she provided a powerful lesson in that Black excellence

should never be diminished, especially not in the presence of White people. Since she

does not share her rationale, there can be many reasons for her sharing this information

which is too vast to conclude. Yet, what can be deduced is that she was showing teaching

Terry a lesson on Black excellence.

BLCCS: Black is Gifted. Black students are not just intellectually excellent and

expected to demonstrate that Black is excellent, but Black is gifted. This Black gifting is

manifest in music, leadership, and oratorical performance. Richard recalled the messages

that his teachers gave to them about their gifting in BLCCS:

> I remember race being discussed. It was more empowering in terms of just being
>
> Black.

> We were told and taught that we were special, that we had giftings, we were

important.

Richard was empowered by his teachers and made to see the excellence in him. The

teachers gave consistent messaging that they were excellent and unique, and in response

to this, the Black students responded. James recalled the power of the musical

performance in his BLCCS:

> Just seeing the gifting man, whether it was on the court or in the choir loft, it was
>
> something different…. I was first exposed to [the choir], as a live marketing
>
> opportunity, not that it was a commercial, they just saying at an event, in fact, was
>
> Evangelism 2004 [Broadcast Event] and I was just like, "Whoa, that's unlike any
>
> choir I've ever been a part of, in my church, or at my school, definitely at my

school." And I was like, "I want that I need to have that. I've never seen anything

like that before."

From James' perspective, the musical gifting of the choir was so palpable that he had to

be a part of it. The musical performance of the choir was excellent. Terry discussed the

excellence of the conductor, and James referenced the excellence of the group. When

they considered the excellence of the music, that automatically threw it against the

backdrop of their prior experiences. In their comparison to other experiences, they came

to see that the music was excellent. For James, throwing this against the backdrop of his

prior experiences made him want to be a part of that community. Furthermore, the

diverse manifestations of excellence were important because genius was defined in

various ways. Kyrie spoke of how teachers in his BLCCS pushed him into leadership

because they saw the gift in him.

I was Religious Vice (Student Government), I was a Music Coordinator (Student

Government), I was a worship leader. I was helping with different things in

worship not necessarily because I wanted to, but because teacher's saw potential

in me.

In this BLCCS, teachers pushed Black students towards leadership almost in a prophetic

sense. Kyrie spoke of teachers seeing these gifts in them before he saw them. In this

environment, Black students were pushed into excellence in leadership. In the case of

Kyrie, this is significant because one of his teachers told him, "You're supposed to be a

pastor." Teachers recognized the excellence in the students and empowered them to grow

and utilize their gifts. Black educators saw the excellence in their students beyond the

classroom, and they empowered the students to develop their gifts to reach their excellence.

BLCCS: The Darker Side of Black Excellence. Heretofore, Black excellence has been a positive code. It has revealed the high expectations that teachers have set for the students, the powerful lessons that the teachers gave, and just the unique gifting of the students. However, Black excellence has a dark side when taken to extremes. For instance, Kareem reflected on a hurtful incident with a teacher denigrating skilled labor.

> You felt like this elitist [view] and that if you're following God and you're living in excellence, then you'll be successful and that seemed to push through particular teachers. I felt some way about that because it looked down on other professions. I came from a blue-collar family and in my reports and projects, I would lean on those things that I've been exposed to. Sometimes that wasn't good enough because God is calling us to excellence. Particularly, my stepfather was a tree trimmer and I remember doing a geometry project that had to do with angles and I used his profession as an example of how triangles can be used. How he uses triangles to cut trees and to move trees and do different things and I remember getting a low score on that. And the premise was like, "Oh, God wants more from you. You should have picked a better profession."

Kareem took issue with Black excellence being depicted through middle-class values because it disregarded the excellence of his step-father. Thus, Black excellence, when taken to the extremes, can be harmful and disregard other intelligences and exclude

portions of the Black community. Troy reflected on another element of Black excellence taken to the extremes, mainly as it related to the institution's image.

> There are also a lot of rumors of cover ups because the reputation of the school was obviously very important. So, you can't have certain things happening. Like if it's at all possible to just avoid certain things getting out, and maybe we'll do something about it.

It is crucial to consider that Troy is communicating something he never witnessed. It speaks to a perception around his BLCCS that Black people must maintain a certain image. Beyond that, it communicates a message that the institutional reputation is more important than the safety and well-being of a few kids. This message is dangerous because it demonstrated a sense that it is essential to preserve a pristine image as opposed to dealing with the issues that were a part of the institution.

A second issue that emerged is the existence of BLCCS is that while these schools have done a tremendous job positioning Black students as excellent. Also, as capable and telling an accurate story of the history of America and the trouble the harm that White people have caused, it never created a space for Black liberatory fantasy. Instead, the message seemed to consistently push the individuals towards success but did not challenge the system.

PWCCS: Black is a Trope

Black People are Poor

In the PWCCS, Black students were seen as racial tropes. The racial messages they received demonstrated that they were expected to be of a low socio-economic status

(SES), deviant, or intellectually incapable of learning specific concepts. Yet, from an excellent lens, these individuals were perceived to be great athletes. These experiences happened in predominantly White schools where the White students lived in monoracial environments and had limited interactions with Black students. Rick reflected on his experiences in the environment and found that students had loaded assumptions about him and his family.

> They definitely viewed me as a mission project. We're helping this guy out. He's here on scholarship. I remember that everyone always asked me if I lived in my apartment.

Rick believed his classmates viewed him as a mission project because his classmates would ask him if he lived in apartments. Rick was someone who grew up in the suburbs, but his classmates assumed that he was from the apartments and raised in the inner city because he was Black. Beyond that, Rick did not ride the school bus from the city. He rode the school bus that picked him up from the suburbs. However, his classmates still assumed that he came from the city, which indicated that he was from a low SES background. Richard spoke on the reproduction of politically conservative ideologies amongst his peers.

> These Republican families were clearly producing some Republican children who shared a lot of the racist perspectives that were pervading during that time. One of which I can remember them talking about, the food stamps and those type of programs that helped those who were in need. It was being talked about in such a

negative way, and of course those are people who I can relate to because they

look like me so I always had issues with those type of conversations.

Richard and Rick perceived that the school environments would talk about Black people

in coded ways. For example, in how they approached Rick, asking him if he lived in an

apartment, they were insinuating that because he was Black, he must be economically

disadvantaged. Likewise, in discussions on politics, the students often spoke

disparagingly about people on government assistance. Richard felt as if his classmates

were speaking about Black people within these conversations. Furthermore, Richard

perceived those ideologies were permeating from his classmates' parents. Neither of these

instances is race or Blackness specifically named, but they perceive these conversations

to be coded conversations about race, and loaded in these conversations are the

assumptions of Blackness equating to economic poverty.

Black People are Social Deviants

Economic poverty and Blackness were synonymous in the eyes of the White

students, but people also assumed that Black students were social deviants. Rick

remembered the first day of class with one of his White teachers:

> The first day of school, I had assigned a desk in the corner away from everybody
>
> else so I wouldn't influence anybody. It was me, a Filipino student and another
>
> African American and she separated all of us, just off the break. Just a
>
> preconceived notion of who I was.

As a student in this environment, his White female teacher assigned him a seat in the

corner because she was concerned that he might disrupt the class. Although he was a

good student when he walked into the class, his teacher and two other racial minorities

were targeted and perceived as troublemakers. This event did not happen on the first day

in the school, and he had a history of being a high-performing student with limited

discipline issues. His teacher never considered her approach to him in light of his

background and instead treated him in accordance with her expectations. A prevailing

racial message at LeSean's PWCCS was that Black male students were prone to get in

trouble. Thus, one could even see instances where there was the assumption of guilt even

if it was provable that they were innocent.

> Me and my brother coming down court. Went for a simple layup, we're in
>
> practice. This is not like a super scrimmage. We're just going through drills and
>
> he's on defense and he throws and elbow to my side and I got up. Hurt really bad
>
> and I stepped toward him. I said a few words to him but he pushed me and when
>
> he pushed me out, I retaliated. They broke it up pretty quickly. They said it was
>
> an accident that he did that. Mind you, there are multiple people saying that this
>
> was not an accident. He purposely went out of his way to do so. Multiple people.
>
> It's not just me. I have witnesses and he [the dean] ignored all that. He said that I
>
> was the initiator. I was the cause that the dude wouldn't act like that unless he was
>
> provoked and I got expelled from the school right after that.

LeSean was expelled from school after a fight, although multiple witnesses confirmed

that this event was purposeful. However, the assumption of guilt led to his immediate

dismissal from school. Meanwhile, the White student that was a part of the incident was

never penalized and did not receive a suspension. It sent a clear message that Black male

students are trouble and White students are innocent even when proven guilty. Kyrie

recalled how this message of Black social deviance emerged in conversations with White

classmates concerning Trayvon Martin:

> It's like, yeah, we don't know what he was doing. So, it was perplexing. It's like, I
>
> don't even know how to toy with this. Like, what do you mean? Like, if you're
>
> doing something you deserve to be killed? And it's like you couldn't even dive
>
> into that.

His White Christian classmates stated that we could not fully know what happened when

Trayvon Martin was killed because he could have been guilty of something. However,

that same sentiment was not be applied to George Zimmerman. There was a sentiment

that Trayvon Martin was guilty of something and that George Zimmerman was probably

justified in the killing of the unarmed Black teenage boy in Florida.

Black is Stupid

Black males were also perceived to be intellectually incapable of learning certain

concepts. Troy speaks of Black male classmates being left behind and deemed to have

learning disabilities:

> When I was in the sixth grade and going into seventh grade there were two other
>
> Black boys in my class through my sixth-grade class. Then, so going into seventh
>
> grade, they were both basically left behind. And thinking back to it, I wasn't like
>
> sitting there looking at all their grades and everything. But how is it that these two
>
> guys are held back? Or they might put them up into certain classes, but then held
>
> them back in other subjects. But I know, all the white kids aren't doing so well

that they couldn't fit into that same category. And they were told they had learning

disabilities and stuff like that. And I'm like, "Okay, well, I'm with you all the

time." Like, I don't know if you all are the best students in the school, but it just

seemed weird that we had a whole class and the only two who were left behind

were the two other Black boys.

Troy does not know the intimate details of his Black classmates' grades, but in his

assessment of his fellow White classmates, he does not think these guys are more capable

than these Black boys. Furthermore, the school diagnosed these two Black boys as having

learning disabilities. However, from Troy's estimation, they were on the same academic

level as White students struggling in school. Black students had to perform excellently or

risk being labeled as special needs students. Michael recalled a parent-teacher conference

with his math teacher:

I distinctly remember being in a parent teacher conference and the teacher telling

my mom, like, "Michael's just not good at math." Like they had written me off

completely.

Michael's teacher had deemed him as not being a capable math student. The teacher did

not express concern over his performance, and at that point, he had a "D" in the class.

This experience is a stark contrast to Michael's math teacher in his BLCCS. That teacher

challenged him and set high standards for his Black students. Michael even came into the

BLCCS and took honors math courses immediately after leaving PWCCS. Russell

recalled his White teachers being indifferent about his learning. He said, "it was kind of

just get through the lesson, and if you don't get it, you just don't get it ."Thus, in these

PWCCS, Black students learning was not a priority because, from Rick's perspective, whether they learned concepts did not matter. Kyrie recalled his PWCCS only attempting to educate Black students if they perceived you to be exceptional.

> So, like, if you were one of the top ACT scorers, you were valued, but if you were regular… Actually, there were two math classes. There was one class like you would go to like the main math, and another one that was taught by a coach, and we noticed it was only minorities.

These two math classes were more than just a choice from individual teachers; it appeared to be an institutionally endorsed decision. Furthermore, Kyrie explained that there was no test to determine who was placed in which class. It was just the assumption that Black students were not good at math if a student came from the local BLCCS. The participants in this study revealed that these institutions delivered a message that assumed that Black students were not intelligent through their institutional practices, and teachers communicated low academic expectations in a matter of fact manner.

Elite Athletes

In the PWCCS, Black males were perceived as low SES, deviant, or intellectually challenged. However, they were expected to be exceptional athletes. Russell recalled starting school at a PWCCS:

> When I first got there, it was all about sports. Like, oh, Bet, we got this tall Black guy. Everything was geared towards sports, it was geared towards, you know, I mattered when it was time to bounce a basketball or play football.

Russell found that his primary value to the institution was his ability to play sports. He further stated that "he was not expected to be smart" but a "great athlete." Kareem had a similar experience in his PWCCS. He said there were "just assumptions and stereotypes as far as I'm a good athlete because I'm Black." Kareem even spoke about a decision that his math teacher made to help him play on the team in middle school:

> When I was in the eighth grade, I always historically had been a poor math student and I don't know what you're taking an eighth grade pre-algebra or something like that but I was struggling and I would always be borderline between like a 77 and an 82 in the class. My parents had the rule that I couldn't participate in any extracurricular activities, sports, choir drama unless I had an 80 or above in all my classes and I remember this verbatim, but my, my math teacher, she told me that my mother was ridiculous and that I just wasn't good at math and I got A's and B's in all my other classes and in the system, I think it was called RenWeb. She would raise my grades with 80% any Friday that it was lower than 80% so that I could play basketball during the basketball season.

Kareem's math teacher was more concerned about him playing basketball than holding him to the high standards that his mother was setting for him as a learner. His teacher accepted that he was not good at math and bent the rules to play basketball instead of empowering him as a learner. Kareem never became a division one athlete and had no athletic scholarships to further his education. Also, the teacher did not just limit his academic potential, but she also criticized the mother for demanding excellence from her son.

As one considers the messages about Black attributes in these CCS, it is evident that these messages were derived from differing perspectives. The BLCCS had a transformative Black education approach that decentralized White perspectives and attempted to tell an honest history of America. Furthermore, the BLCCS included the contributions of Black scholars' thinkers and inventors to destigmatize the perceptions of Black students being intellectually inferior. Carter G. Woodson first advocated this educational approach. Finally, BLCCS had an intentional racial message concerning the attributes of Black people. This intentional racial message in a space where there was only one race proved beneficial and empowering for the Black male students.

The PWCCS environment promoted several racial tropes concerning Black students. For instance, the idea that Black people are great athletes, intellectually inferior, or deviants is rooted in slavery (Fredrickson, 1971). These ideas were promoted to justify the enslavement and the social subjugation of Black people in America (Kendi, 2016). Furthermore, the White schools' racial messages were more implicit. Notice the action was not rooted in the curriculum or the intentional actions of teachers per se but the biases and assumptions of White people in these environments. It is evident thus far in the comparative analysis between these two spaces that race matters. Also, the racial makeup of the environment shapes the curriculum and the experiences of the Black students.

Theme 2: Black Agency

The theme, Black Agency, highlights the level of freedom Black students felt as they matriculated through school. DuBois (1903) discussed this concept of double

consciousness in which Black people constantly look at themselves through the eyes of White people, and they are constantly re-evaluating their actions. In essence, Black people are physically free, but not psychologically free. In this study, Black males in the BLCCS felt psychologically free and unencumbered by the perspectives of White people. King spoke of the freedom to be:

> You might talk louder, or you might laugh and be more outgoing and just, I don't even know what words to use, but yeah, just also like the foods, you don't want to say you eat. A lot of times you're growing up, you think watermelons, and all these stereotypes. No, that's the thing like barbecue. Like we trying to go have a barbecue. That's not something that you just don't want to talk about because you don't want to be made fun of. It's like, you're able to talk about those things and wear those things and sing those songs and things like that because everybody else is accepting those, and everyone else is doing those things.

King spoke about the psychological distress he had experienced prior to coming into the BLCCS. He was intentionally mindful of what he said, ate, or attended events because he did not want to confirm the stereotypes. King did not feel free to say he liked watermelons or fried chicken because of the racial connotations. Also, it highlights that Black people feel the need to play a role when they are around White people. This role causes them to be inauthentic in White spaces to not draw undue attention to themselves. However, these same Black males in the PWCCS felt the burden of being Black in these spaces. In these PWCCS, Black students felt the weight of their Blackness. Michael spoke about the burden of being Black in these PWCCS:

And it just felt like, even like the simplest of mistakes were that much more

magnified by the Black guy like being late. Right like, bus ran late, I'm not late

for no reason, I'm actually traveling an hour to get out to the suburbs to go to

school, or I'm on a bus, a train for like 45 minutes to an hour.

Michael highlighted that by being late, he felt as if he was misrepresenting his race and

needed to disprove any myths about Black people. Kareem struggle with his role and

identity in his PWCCS:

I struggled probably intermittently with depression and there are key moments in

my academic career. Where I was always the life of the party and always trying to

please people. I do remember one time in the ninth grade, that a friend of mine

said, Kareem, you couldn't not talk for five minutes if you wanted to. It was at

that moment that I realized that my circle looked at me more as entertainment

than maybe real valuable relationship.

Kareem felt the need to perform for his White classmates and teachers. He did not feel

comfortable being himself in this place. Instead, he felt challenged to demonstrate his

worth to them, and he was not free to be. He felt the burden of being Black in that

environment.

BLCCS: Free to Be

In BLCCS, this freedom manifested in their movement around campus, pursuing

romantic relationships, even in their noise decibel levels. These environments proved to

be safe spaces for Black students. This subsection presents the myriad of ways in which

these Black students expressed their freedom.

Free Around the School Black students in BLCCS felt more comfortable in these environments. Michael remembered how free it was to be in a BLCCS as opposed to being in a White environment. Kareem spoke about what he felt when he first arrived at his BLCCS:

> The feeling that I felt when I got to the campus was one, I'd never been around so many young Black people all at the same time and I was nervous coming into the admin building, registering for school, and it was hot and everybody was-- I remember everyone was loud, like, just laughing and joking and hugging and I really hadn't seen that type of affection towards one another and but definitely was nervous just because I didn't know anyone was in a new environment and I've never been around so many Black people my age.

Kareem had never seen this type of affection between people before, and the students were louder than what he was used to experiencing. He also indicated that he had not been around so many Black people before. However, the high concertation of Black people in this environment in the absence of White people demonstrated a level of freedom that he had never seen before amongst Black people. He spoke about how loud it was significant because no one was there telling people to be quiet. It appeared that this decibel was typical for this Black community, especially when they come together unpoliced by White people. Michael remembered the atmosphere at the basketball games that were a stark contrast to the games in his PWCCS.

> The singing at the Carter G. Woodson Christian Academy games, "My goodness."
> Like, I can't imagine being an opponent coming into that. That must have been
> intense. Then the team like-- We had a pretty good team. Like, you're coming in,
> you got to deal with the hoopers on the court, that's one thing. But then you got an
> animated audience that's also singing. And it sounds good so it was definitely
> different.

Michael discussed the environment in the gymnasium in which Black students were
singing, laughing, and playing. The gymnasium was a space where Black styles rhythms
and melodies were on full display without reservation. The environment of the
gymnasium allowed for students to express themselves as fans. In these games, the Black
experience was on full display that the players were playing the game on the court. The
fans are engaging in singing and playful banter with the opposing team. They are free to
be comfortable without having their behaviors policed for being too loud or too brash.
The students felt free to have fun in their unique Black manner.

Free in Worship. However, this freedom was not just expressed in the
gymnasium but also on full display with campus ministries. Terry discussed how the
freedom spilled into the campus' spiritual life:

> I started this little group called prayer warriors, and stuff like that. But you were
> able to do these creative things in a space where even if you messed up, there was
> a loving group of people that were there to support you.

Terry created and led in campus ministries, but he was willing to do so because he was
not afraid to make mistakes. He knew he had a robust support system and was not judged

harshly for his mistakes but encouraged and empowered. King discussed the spiritual

atmosphere at the campus church where Black students were free to engage in worship:

> And I feel like it was accepted for sure at Carter G. Woodson Christian Academy
>
> and not frowned upon, you know. Like they let us play instruments, and all that
>
> stuff during worships and have jam sessions after and raise our hands and jump.
>
> And the first time at the Campus church, I'm hearing people, you know, yell amen
>
> and stuff like that.

King spoke of the freedom to engage in worship authentically. Shouting and jumping

were acceptable, and students felt unencumbered by the perspectives of White people

laughing or critiquing Black students. The sacred worship environment for Black students

was something that Black students in White environments did not feel comfortable fully

engaging in because the space did not feel open to allowing expression. Thus, the Black

students felt most comfortable expressing themselves in worship when others like them

surrounded them.

Free to Date. Black students in this environment felt free to date or pursue an

intimate relationship with whomever they desired, and they also experienced being

pursued by Black girls. Rick reflected on his mindset when he first arrived at school:

> I was a kid in a candy store, I guess because before it was non-existent. Now, it's
>
> just like there's a lot of women that are interested in me now so I was very happy.
>
> Probably really happy, rationally too much stuff but yes, it was an improvement.
>
> It was an upgrade.

Rick discussed the level of excitement that he experienced in having Black girls that he was interested in dating and the reality that they were interested in him. Dating was no longer a taboo thing but could be fully embraced. In the White environment, dating was problematic, but in this environment, dating was welcomed. Russell discussed the dating scene at his BLCCS:

> In the Black school, it was just beautiful. I mean, I enjoyed getting to know the girls. You know, when you got to know the girls, you got to know their families', it was so weird to be around people where the dad and the mom was just like, hey, come and have dinner with us, you know.

Russell spoke of the depth of the intimacy in the Black environment because he did not just meet their daughters but also met the families. The families would invite him over for dinner, and there was no shame or hiding. James also discussed the dating shift that occurred when he came from the PWCCS into the BLCCS:

> First of all, let me just say this. Rather than coming from a PWI, I was in heaven. I said, "Lord have mercy. Jesus, I didn't know." Whoa, it was overwhelming. In the best of the ways, I said, "My goodness mom." Because I think you're going to be attracted to whatever your options are, whatever you're exposed to. It's just sociology. But man, you also just what you don't know, you don't know, like, skin tones.

James highlighted not just the plethora of dating options, but he also saw the diverse beauties. James also found beauty in the diversity of Black women. He was awe-struck, and for him, Black was beautiful. Instead of Black males desiring White women, the

Black boys in this environment were enamored with the beauty of their Black female classmates. Furthermore, they felt unencumbered about whom they would date because there were no social restrictions regarding race. Lastly, in this environment, Black femininity became the standard of beauty as opposed to being disregarded.

Free to Make Lemonade. Free to make lemonade acknowledges the bitter experiences that life gives people, but the ways people cope with making the situation more palatable. The environment created in BLCCS was often one that made life's hardships more bearable. One of these Black students did in this environment was to turn national trauma into comedy amongst themselves. Troy remembered a traumatic event that happened in New York and how they coped:

> I remember like when I first got to school or first year, there was that case of that dude in New York that think he was Haitian and the cops had grabbed him up. I don't remember what he did but they like sodomized him with a pool stick like broken off in his intestine or something. So, this guy was all jacked up, he survived. But it was a story. Because they sued the cops and the cops all got off all of that the whole thing. I think he ended up getting a big settlement from the city but I'm sure something else happened but like just off top my head that's like something that I remember. And it was just like, that's just the way it goes. But it was more like what happens in New York because everybody there was boarding school a lot of people from different places. It was almost like a joke like, "Oh man that's what they do in New York." And it was treated like a joke.

By no means is the incident funny, but the Black students in an all-Black environment just watched what was perceived to be a denial of justice. They were powerless to change the case or the verdict. Instead of crying and lamenting, they turned a problematic truth into a joke. This was not just an isolated incident; Kyrie remembered the response at his BLCCS after the 2016 election:

> I remember when Trump was elected. We're making jokes about it. We're like, we know the jokes. We know the things he said, the things he's done. We know that none of us can vote. Like, we're not as up in arms as some people will be. But we knew it was negative.

From an outsider's perspective, this may seem problematic, but Black boys who recognize that they were powerless to make an impact on the decision coped with it by laughing about it. This response is different because they are allowed to make jokes publicly about it, and this was their attempt to cope with the realities of being Black in America. In a White environment, they did not feel the freedom to laugh to keep from crying. However, in this cocoon of Blackness, they felt safe and free to cope publicly and collectively.

PWCCS: Black Codes

Black codes were created during slavery to squelch slave rebellions. This subtheme was employed to convey the limitations on the freedom of the research participants in PWCCS. The Black codes subtheme acknowledges that Black students had freedom of movement and freedom to speak, but there were still rules that limited

their freedom. These Black codes were informally enforced but effectively communicated to the Black students.

Black Boys Are Not Allowed to Date White Girls. One clear message that was communicated was that Black boys were not allowed to participate in the dating of White girls. James remembered that Black males were limited in their dating options, but White males were allowed to date across the racial spectrum.:

> From a relational standpoint, as time went on, and you got more into the time of life where girls like boys, boys like girls, and you began to see that it wasn't always as embraced for the races to mix and match. I guess on one hand, a part of me began to think that if you're white guy, you can date any of the girls. But if you're a Black guy, you may date any of the girls, but it didn't seem to be as much of a guaranteed option, that it wouldn't come with as much scrutiny if you were white. And I think vice versa, maybe. Well, no, that'd be the hierarchy. Then next, if you were a Black girl, you could be dated by any of the guys who were interested in you. But if you're a white girl, you knew, I guess that you may or may not be in a space to entertain the interests of every other guy. So, you begin to see those things.

James found that the issue in the school was not interracial dating. The message conveyed was that Black boys are not allowed to date White girls. Meanwhile, White boys were allowed to date whomever they liked. A clear racial message denigrated Black males and was determined to keep them from racially intermixing with White girls. Black males were free but limited in their dating options. In other PWCCS, the message was

loud and clear Black males and White girls should not mix romantically. This was not just a practice, but there were instances where religion teachers also promoted this message. Troy spoke of a religion teacher who gave a similar message as the student gave in Rick's recount:

> He was a religion teacher. So, he was telling us that basically, miscegenation was a sin, which is like interracial relationships, having children with marrying and having children with people with different races. And his reasoning was like, "God made us different and if He wanted us all to be together, He would have made us the same.

Troy found that a religion teacher promoted this idea and used the Bible to justify his position. Black males in this PWCCS were made to believe that sexually desiring someone of the other race, especially a White girl, was sinning. This message was more than just a message. This message was also moralized by scripture. Parents of White girls also communicated this message. Kareem recalled a hurtful dating experience with a White girl:

> You going through middle school and high school and everybody's getting girlfriends and dates stuff, the banquets and whatnot and so, I remember one time asking one of my classmates to a banquet and she initially said yes, but then when she came back the next day, it was like, Oh, my parents don't want me to date and so that sticks out in my mind because I'd seen that person go on banquet dates years prior

Kareem found that the White girls were not allowed Black boys because their parents denied it. This does not mean that White girls were uninterested in Black boys, but that this practice was deemed unacceptable and resisted by both external and internal actors. Black boys mixing with White girls was frowned upon by religion teachers and parents.

Do it the White Way. One of those codes was that Black students could not date White women. Another rule was you do it the White way. Doing it the White way was deemed as properly doing this action. Terry spoke about the ways that the teachers approached him as a Black male student in the classroom: Black kids in the classroom:

> One of the other things was, in particular being Black male that sticks out was, I remember sitting at the table because we're in a multi grade school, but this person happened to be a in my grade. And they said, "Why can't you be more like Ebony? So why don't you be more like ebony, ebony is quiet and listens, and that kind of things. And you're always talking or you're always-- So in my young adolescent mind, I was saying, "Why aren't I enough? Right? Why is it that?" They wouldn't accept me for who I was, as someone who's talkative and things like that.

Teachers did not appreciate Terry in the classroom. They expected him to behave in a specific manner, and they wanted to control him instead of celebrating what he brought in the classroom as a learner. They wanted him to learn by White standards and be still as opposed to seeing that he was a willing learner. Kareem was corrected when he attempted to bring a Black contribution into the learning environment:

As I continued to grow confidence in some of my solos, I'd try to add a little more ad lib or run and I remember one of my classmates after a concert saying, "Oh, Kareem you sound really great before you start trying to sound Black." That stuck out to me and it didn't come from the teachers or from parents, that was from a student.

The choir had no issue with Kareem being in the choir or starring with solos. However, there was a genuine desire to make sure that Kareem sang it in a way that they deemed appropriate. Kareem's CHOIR wanted him to sing it the White way for lack of a better term. Furthermore, when new music was introduced, the students would attempt to make it in a way that was appropriate for their standards and stripped the Black cultural elements from the song. It was rejected when Kareem brought his cultural preferences and musical style into the environment. The recurring message kept coming forward through jokes and snide comments that Kareem was not here to change the school, but the school was here to change him.

Don't Complain About Your Issues Publicly. In the BLCCS, Black students engage in lemonade making publicly. The undercover lemonade subtheme indicates that Black students turned bitter experiences or events into more palatable in self-created Black spaces. Undercover lemonade making was not prevalent because many students could not remember high-profile racialized incidents. However, Michael unpacked how he and his Black friends created lemonade. The lemonade creation happened outside the school and on the train ride between home and school. Michael recalled what he and his fellow Black students that rode in from the city did to cope with the bitterness:

I mean, people would joke and talk about how we had to turn it on and turn it off. We talked about race all the time, coming all the way out there to the suburbs and literally seeing as you're going down the train line.

Although Michael's PWCCS environment attempted a colorblind approach, the Black kids discussed race amongst themselves. Furthermore, they discussed how the codeswitched to survive the environment. They managed the stress of the environment by making jokes with one another. As they joked, they process their trauma. He later added::

So, we joked all the time about some of the interactions. Like back then, it was like, giving somebody dap and a teacher maybe trying to attempt to cross that threshold or dapping up a teacher just off the strength of them being white and seeing how they respond to those stupid high school stuff like that but culturally relevant to us but not to them as much.

Instead of using critical conversations, protests, or overt resistance, these young Black boys coped with the pressure of the environment through the use of subversive comedy. They would interact with their White teachers in ways that they would not understand. Thus, this comedic space also became an empowering space. It allowed them to recognize that they had secret knowledge in their private space that allowed them to interact with their teachers in ways that positioned them as outsiders. The Black kids in this group formed a community that resisted the pressures of the PWCCS. In this group, they bonded, and they communicated. In this space of social oppression, it caused them to form bonds to help them overcome the pressures of the environment. These young

Black men created a space to make lemonade so that the bitterness of the environment would not destroy them.

Theme 3: Black Perspective

The theme Black perspective looks at the various manifestations of Blackness. In the previous section, Blackness was perceived through racial tropes. That is to say, people saw Black and had certain stereotypical assumptions about Black people that they viewed as normative. For instance, people in these PWCCS assumed that Black kids misbehaved, were low SES, or were even expected to be athletes. However, the Black perspective looks at how students were perceived by themselves and others when their behavior, attitudes, or responses did not align with certain expectations. This phenomenon differed in both environments. For instance, in BLCCS, people concluded that Blackness is diverse, but in PWCCS, people concluded that the individual was an exceptional Negro.

BLCCS: Blackness is diverse

Black Diaspora. Blackness is diverse manifested amongst the participants because they saw various expressions of Black people in these All-Black environments. For instance, Michael noted that not all Black students came from the same culture.:

> It was a multicultural school in the sense that it was like, not just Black like American Black, but also Caribbean Black and African Black. So, it was a diaspora in that regard, of different aspects of Black culture and so celebrated, whether it was like Black History Month. Celebrating African American history on one-week, Jamaican history on another week.

While the school was all-Black, it provided a multicultural feel because students saw the various manifestations of Black cultures. Then, Michael highlighted that Black History Month was not just a celebration of the Black experience in America, but it came from diverse expressions of Blackness. James' experience built on this phenomenon by highlighting Black diversity manifests in the different kinds of styles predicated on the region of the world and country that they were located in

> So, race mattered in the sense that I'm seeing students and teachers who look like me. And not only look like me, I'm being exposed to the diversity that is behind the visual. Yes, we are brown and various shades of brown and Black. The rhythms that are being demonstrated there indicate that color is just one aspect of being Black. I knew what Black was like coming from Beach City but I learned more about Black from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Baltimore, Maryland New York California Texas Georgia Bermuda and I can go on and on. That was like, "Whoa, this Black is beautiful." It's broad and diverse, and Trinidad and Jamaica, and Africa, right?

When James spoke about rhythms, he meant the ways that Black people walk, talk, and think. The Black kids were just so different from one another, but while it was different James found it to be enthralling and beautiful. Although he was in a new environment and saw how different people were from one another. James is allowed to redefine Blackness as he encounters a whole new environment absent of Blackness.

Black Social Classes. In the minds of certain people, Blackness is defined in a monolithic manner in which Black people are situated as economically deprived.

However, Black people exist across the socioeconomic strata. Michael also spoke of his Black Christian Highschool experience at his Black boarding school.

> And now young kids from across the US with different cultures that they're also bringing. It changed that dynamics of what Blackness was because I got exposed to folks outside of Metro city, I got exposed to parents who weren't electricians, [but] were doctors and making some money.

Michael speaks of the diversity of Blackness in two ways. First, he highlighted those Black expressions from across the country were different. Thus, Michael acknowledged that Black people are not monolithically definable, but they put their unique spin on that culture and make it their own regardless of the region. Second, he demonstrated that he moved into a different social stratum of Black people. In Metro City, he was surrounded by a lower strata urban Black Christian community, but now he entered a space in which he was intermingling with the Black bourgeoisie. Russell found a similar phenomenon in his BLCCS high school, which was situated in a large urban southeastern metropolis community:

> So it was similar in a sense to the northern school [PWCCS] because a lot of the high level, Black individuals acted like that, you know, like they were better than the other Black people because their parents were lawyers and doctors and was sitting on boards in this big old massive city compared to some of the other ones who, you know, this was their last shot, they were only here because they got kicked out the last two schools, you know, and they already given up on

themselves and was waiting to get kicked out this school. So, it was very similar

to the northern school to be honest.

Despite these institutions sharing the diversity of Blackness, there were instances in

Russell's experience that demonstrated a class hierarchy within the institution because of

their parents' backgrounds. Despite this contrasting approach to diversity, Russell still

asserted that "In the Black experience, it is probably a better Black experience across the

board." Although there was a social hierarchy at play in this institution, Black people still

had it better because, in the PWCCS, classism was compounded by racism. BLCCS are

not a utopian society in which hierarchy does not exist, but it is a space in which students

do not feel as if their Blackness is being held against them.

    Black Affinities. Contrary to what some believe, Black people do not all love the

same things. They do not all eat the same kinds of food. Black people are diverse. LeSean

also spoke about this diversity of affinities in his BLCCS experience as he remembered

walking through the cafeteria:

> I was meeting with the sports people. Sports people or the band people or the
>
> rappers. I was meeting with them, guys. The females, I wasn't really sitting with
>
> them. Yes. Couldn't really sit with them. So, the people that mainly like, talk
>
> about God all the time, like those people, I didn't really sit with them. Not because
>
> they didn't want you to sit with them…They had their own circle. The
>
> troublemakers they had their own circle. They all got together no matter what was
>
> going on.

Black kids in White environments typically sit amongst their fellow Black kids in the

cafeteria because that is where they feel the most comfortable (Tatum, 2017). LeSean did

not consider his Blackness in a diverse monoracial environment as he entered the

cafeteria. Instead, he chose his seating location based on shared affinities between the

students. Kyrie spoke on how being exposed to the diversity of Blackness allowed him to

see Black people through the lens of whom they are instead of seeing in a monolithic

fashion. His reflection on the Black diversity highlighted that the environment of his

BLCCS revealed that "Black people are people and not just a caricature." Kyrie realized

that Black people are a diverse group and not easily definable by pre-set characteristics.

These Black students were able to see each other and their uniqueness and appreciate it.

This encounter helped to disrupt any myths about Blackness.

Black Unity in Diversity. In Michael's final reflection of the diversity of Blackness in

high school he added an additional layer:

> I was about to say people from south, it'd be from the West, people from northeast
>
> like you but like New York. Which was different. Yes, it was. You got to
>
> experience it all and appreciate it all. And it was actually all welcome.

Even though there was a diversity of Blackness in this environment, everyone was

accepted regardless of their cultural background. Blackness was diverse in this

environment, but they shared the common bond of being Black within this diversity.

Although he was in a new environment and saw how different people were from one

another, he never mentioned that these differences moved to the point of exclusion. King

highlighted a similar reflection:

Everyone comes from different places. Everyone comes from different states,

everyone grows up in different communities, right? And so you have some that

are more conservative. Even the way we talk and the way we might address

things, some of them are more upfront. Like if you do something wrong, you

bump in the hallway, they going to be like, what's up with you? Like they going

to be in your face. You can tell where everyone grew up. If someone was to say,

oh yeah I don't know, just the way you move. And then you were to tell me you

were from Detroit. I'll be like, yeah. I mean, I'm not going to say I knew you were

just from Detroit, but I know the area that you were in because that's what it

implements. That's what those areas are kind of about. And I feel like it's good.

It's good. Those aren't bad things. Sometimes we think of like diversity of like,

some people might think, oh, I'm whitewash, I'm quiet. Or I don't listen to that

type of music, or I don't dress this way, but no, that's not up like that. That isn't

showing that you're less of being, you know what I'm saying, Black. Now there

are some that don't accept that they're Black, or they don't want to accept the

history and the culture and all that stuff. That's the whole different story. But

when you bring your own taste or your own feel from where you've grown up and

could be your own family history and stuff like that, it's amazing to see, and that's

what makes just being in my opinion, African American, just so amazing.

Because it's like, you see it all, you see it all, and that's so dope.

King gave an analysis of the diversity at the Black Christian boarding academy that he

attended. He spoke about diversity and exposure to different kinds of Black styles and

cultures. However, King moved against attempting to characterize Black people differently. Instead, he focused on Black people being undefinable and celebrating the diversity in the environment amongst his peers. Furthermore, King highlighted that despite their differences, they were all still seeing each other as one.

BLCCS: Black Pride

The subtheme Black pride manifested in Black students feeling a sense of pride in themselves and their Blackness. The Black males felt an extreme sense of racial pride while attending BLCCS. Deuce remembered the boost to his racial pride:

> I felt like, man, I'm Black and proud and I'm going to make it one way or the other. That's where I started developing my racial pride and self-esteem.

This environment afforded Deuce the confidence to survive no matter the odds he might face. Russell remembered feeling pride like Deuce as a student at his BLCCS:

> I gained confidence at Overflow Christian Academy, especially my second year, I was through the roof my second year. I viewed Black people differently because I was being exposed to Black excellence, you know, Black people working for the government, Black people, you know. Then being invited to certain houses for parties and, and the houses being big and like wow, like, like this is happening in my community.

Against the backdrop of his experiences, Russell gained confidence because he had examples of Black excellence, and he was learning about the contributions of Black people in society. This encounter empowered him and countered the prevailing Black stereotypes

he had seen or known before. Rick's self-reflection as a student in his BLCCS discussed how proud he was of himself and Black people in general, but it also highlighted his future.

> I would probably say my self-worth was at an all time high. You Couldn't tell me or the Black community anything. I just felt empowered to do anything and we've had a group of people that were right there with you to support you and you had every capability. You just had the equal ability to do anything you set your mind to.

Rick's reflection revealed that he felt that he and the Black community could accomplish anything that they had put their mind towards accomplishing. The rationale behind this perspective was due to the level of support that he found in that environment from his teachers and peers. Rick did not just have a high view of Black people's past, but also a high view of what the future had for him and his peers. Rick's reflection differs from Russell's because he acknowledges his pride and that his pride affected the way he visualized the future. Michael's reflection on his pride at the Carter G. Woodson Academy allowed him to see what was attainable, and he said, "it changed my dreams." Kyrie also remembered a transformation in his view of himself as a Black person at Carter G. Woodson Academy:

> I think I've viewed myself the best I've ever viewed myself. Well, maybe not the best. I think it's continued to get better. But like, not the cliché, but like, everything is possible. Like talking about how we genuinely believed that one day we're going to be president like we had a classmate, who genuinely believed was going to be president. There were situations where we would talk about the future and talk

about, "Oh yeah, when I'm President, you're going to be my bodyguard, and I'm going to call this person who cooks well, so you know, they're going to cater. It's like we're building an imaginary community with us having the most prestigious positions in the United States. Not even thinking twice that that's weird. We're talking about oh, yeah, when someone saw who's never even picked up a mic in their life has 1000s of Grammys, I'm going to get you to do the national anthem for the inauguration.

Kyrie added a layer to the conversation because his reflection highlighted how they engaged in joint fantasies of how they would rule the world one day. Through these connections, they would empower and create opportunities for one another. This Black pride had an effect in which they imagined these possibilities without the concern for the obstacles that society or racism would put in their way. These Black boys created an imaginary world where they would be in power partly because there were no White people in their BLCCS to put a damper on their dreams. King discussed the confidence that he and his Black male peers walked around the world with at their BLCCS.

By the time you are a senior and people are talking about the Carter G. Woodson Academy confidence, some people called it conceit or arrogance. I just don't know where it comes from. I just think being a part of that environment, you have a greater self-understanding, and of yourself and of your peers.

King highlighted that the confidence was not just noticeable by them, but when others came around it, they took note of it. King attributed this confidence to a greater understanding of

self and his peers. This greater self-confidence is no doubt attributable to the curriculum and the empowerment of the teachers in this environment for the Black students.

Black Male Confidence. The confidence that these young men gained was a byproduct of hearing great things about themselves and receiving love and direction from Black male teachers. Kareem was appreciative of having Black males pour into him and to be an example for him:

> Before I came with a Carter G. Woodson Academy and honestly, I didn't have a lot of Black male role models. I never had a Black male teacher. My whole academic career until Carter G. Woodson Academy I often would feel out of place and after a year of going to Carter G. Woodson Academy, I remember coming back my second year and I had a lot of pride. I knew that I was going to be successful and I looked at myself as a leader, and I think that having Black male teachers, even though I did not like all of them, I think was super valuable for me and growing up in a home where my dad wasn't often around. It was just really good particularly to have Black role models charging me to be better, from the deans in the dormitory to the pastor at the church and to the faculty in the classroom.

Kareem spoke about the importance that Black male teachers played in developing their Black pride. Thus, it was not just the environment that empowered him, but the presence of Black male leadership poured into him and empowered him. This experience was significant for Kareem because of the inconsistencies of his biological father. In addition, the presence of Black male role models in BLCCS positively shaped the perspectives of

Black male students like Kareem. Terry also was appreciative of the Black male teachers and the care that they demonstrated towards him:

It was special in the sense that we have Black male teachers. So I had at least two-to three at one point. So you have three Black male teachers. And I'm trying to remember-- Wait a minute. I think because we only had like five teachers. So we may have had more Black male teachers than female teachers. So you had that masculine energy, right? I probably made the principal go crazy and say, "Okay, I'm retiring. I retired." But yes, I think it was special. I think there was a level of care. There was discipline in a different way. But we were celebrated. We were celebrated and things were things from a Black perspective.

These Black male teachers instilled confidence in Terry because they celebrated him. This memory is significant because he felt his other teachers wanted him to change and behave a certain way. However, in this environment, Black teachers celebrated his uniqueness and taught them about masculinity and manhood in a way that they did not feel their White teachers or female teachers could do to the same extent.

Black Spiritual Confidence. These individuals did not just gain confidence because they were Black, but spiritual principles enforced it. It would be one thing to provide affirmation on a social or humanistic level. However, this affirmation that they were receiving was rooted in spiritual messaging. Richard took special note of the positive spiritual affirmations in his reflection in the environment.

I felt important. I felt talented. I think a lot of my gifts were affirmed in those two schools, Frederick Douglas Christian Academy and Sojourner Truth Christian

Academy so that by the time I got to Samuel T. Armstrong Missionary Academy, whether my gifts were affirmed or not, I think I knew I was gifted in certain areas because I had that formal education there.

Richard highlighted that his teachers saw his gifts in the environment and affirmed him. Since Richard has the affirmation necessary, it immunized him to the hostile PWCCS environment. The recognition and affirmation created a great sense of pride and encouragement. James spoke about a similar experience.

The language that was used, like I said to be called precious, and men, women, geniuses, these kinds of things, which I guess you can come to take for granted at that stage in life looking back. You just shudder to think if they were absent. These things were planted as seeds. They approached us as learners who were learning with a cause a calling, and a purpose in mind.

These positive affirmations shaped the Black males understanding of themselves. However, James added some additional lingo at the end of his statement that they were learning with a calling, and a purpose in mind. In a spiritual sense their purpose and their work held deeper significance than just doing something or learning a subject, but the students like James believed that God had something for them to do. This belief countered the negative stereotypes, and the obstacles that laid ahead because in their minds if God is for them who can stand against their sacred work that is ahead for them to do.

Black males in BLCCS reported feeling a greater sense of Black pride and belief in themselves as well as their futures. This self-reporting was due largely to the environment and the community of support that surrounded them in BLCCS. These BLCCS

environments provided affirmation that immunized them against the hostility of the PWCCS environments. This confidence resulted in certain students imagining everything being attainable for them in the future. Furthermore, spirituality became a basis for their optimism. They had a belief the work that was in front of them was a part of their calling. Overall, Black males in this study indicated that they had self-confidence and Black pride.

PWCCS: Exceptional Negroes

Black diversity in PWCCS made the Black males feel as if the school environment treated them as exceptional negroes. Instead of their differences serving as a disruption to the dominant narrative, Black students received different treatment because they received different treatment from their classmates and peers. Rick recalled, "They usually thought of me differently than them just because of my grades, but they did not think much of my other classmates." Rick's reflection highlighted that because he was a high-performing student, he did not receive the same treatment as the other Black kids. He also took note of the negative way that the regular Black kids were treated. Kareem had a similar experience as Rick. Since he did not behave like other Black people that White classmates had been exposed to through media portrayals or personal interactions.

> I was one of the only minority students that was there because they were associated with the church. A lot of the minority students were there because they had poor academic experiences at other schools and I seemed to be the exception. People treated me well but I did notice that they didn't treat the other Black students as well as they treated me. but my mother was a disciplinarian so my

clothes were worn a certain way. I spoke a certain way and the comment was like,

Oh, you're not like the other Black students.

Kareem was made out to be an exceptional negro because he dressed differently and did

not use the urban vernacular. As a result, they told him that he was different from regular

Black people. This experience did not make Kareem feel more welcome in the

environment; instead, it gave him an identity crisis. He recalled feeling as if he "wasn't

really Black" but "not really white" this gave him a sense as if he was lost. Turning

Kareem into an exceptional negro created an inner turmoil in him. Treating him well did

not change the racial messages; instead, it created internal racial conflict. Troy spoke of

receiving different treatment from his Black classmates as well:

Now, for some context, I would be considered a good student. So, I would say

some of the things that my other Black classmates who were being bussed in from

the city, some things they experienced.

Troy received different treatment because he did not come from an urban background and

experienced high academic performance. Nevertheless, in treating Troy differently, the

school distinguished Troy from his other Black classmates. The institution created a

hostile environment for him with his fellow Black classmates through him being

highlighted. Troy, like Kareem, did not receive the same treatment as other Black

students because he acted differently. However, something different emerged as a

byproduct of Troy's high achievement tension emerged between him and his Black

classmates:

> I had situations with the Black students at this particular school, where there were some who said, I wanted to be white, right? Or because I did good in school, they were like, you want to be white, they'll call me white. It was girls, mainly, but it was just that stupid stuff.

By Troy doing well in school, even to the point that he was in advanced classes, it caused a division between him and a certain number of his Black classmates. Due to him receiving different treatment and becoming accepted by the mainstream White culture resulted in him experiencing rejection from certain Black students. This division resulted in him also having inner turmoil:

> So, I gravitated toward the less confrontational white kids at that point in time because I just didn't want to be made fun of. White students didn't find any reason to make fun of you, but it was just like, my parents didn't splurge on clothes, they didn't spend a lot on sneakers, I didn't always have new sneakers, sometimes my sneakers might be talking. Of course, that's a reason to be made fun of. And it wasn't the white kids who made fun of me. It was just other Black kids. Then it was like, "Okay, well, you talk this way you get these grades, teachers like you. And they're always bragging on you. This is how we are going to treat you." It wasn't like the majority of the Black kids but it was there was a vocal influential couple.

As a Black student, he was teased by his fellow Black students because he did not wear the same clothes, and he did not speak using the local urban colloquialisms. Furthermore, the acknowledgment and the acceptance by the White majority made him a target for

vitriol. Thus, this rejection made him seek solace with the White students who did not

tease him and challenge his Blackness. This phenomenon is reminiscent of the tension on

the plantation between house negroes and field slaves during chattel slavery. Kyrie also

feels an inner turmoil in himself because he does not feel entirely Black because he does

not fit into the Black stereotypes:

> There definitely wasn't much even like acceptance but I think the ideas that you're
>
> one of the good ones definitely fit. Because like, like I don't know what it's like to
>
> grow up in the hood. So, it was like, am I even valid? Like can I speak on the
>
> situations? Can I speak on the issues? I think definitely the ideas of like, oh no yeah
>
> you talk well. Oh yeah, you don't cuss, you don't do all this stuff. It almost made
>
> you feel like oh yeah, like that's not my issue any more. Like, they pulled me out
>
> of it.

Kyrie felt that he was an exceptional Negro because he behaved in a certain manner and

spoke in a certain kind of way. However, he felt disconnected from his Blackness and

became an outsider in his mind. The narrow definitions of Blackness promulgated by the

White majority resulted in Kyrie and Kareem feeling like outsiders and lacking clarity

concerning their racial identity. Furthermore, Troy was placed at odds with the Black

community and did not feel as if he was a part of the Black collective because certain Black

students attempted to ostracize him.

PWCCS: Black Inferiority

While there is clarity concerning the Black pride in the BLCCS environment, this

section unpacks the self-worth of Black males in PWCCS environments. A number of the

Black male participants reported feeling a sense of inferiority as students in PWCCS. For instance, Kyrie stated bluntly concerning his Black, "I don't think there was much pride." Michael shared a disparaging view on his self-worth, "I viewed myself as just nothing, really, no anti-view or no like pro view. It was like just kind of here, flailing about." These individuals' views aligned with Russell:

> I view myself as lesser then. I lacked confidence. I always wondered why my life wasn't like theirs. The only time I felt validated was when I bounced the basketball to football.

Russell viewed himself as lesser than but added a layer to this painful self-view. Russell believed his value was found in his ability to perform athletically. This self-evaluation was derived from the fact that from his perspective, the institution that he was a part of only celebrated or acknowledged him for what he could do athletically. This experience is a stark contrast to the BLCCS environment, which had Black history and excellence on display on the walls and attempted to reform the stereotypical messages about Black people. Michael shared a unique perspective about the PWCCS environment:

> I don't think Black students were necessarily made purposely with intention to feel inferior, but there was that space of like the white kids who remind you like this high school was like suburbs. So, like no touch or familiarity with the urban space and so it was like those kids undefiled by urban civilization and then like, you know, the Blacks or the kids who came from the more urban spaces and backgrounds.

In essence, Michael suggested that the environment was not familiar to them as Black kids coming from the inner city. Furthermore, it is evident that the institution implicitly

promoted Eurocentric norms and values that made the environment seem to denigrate Blackness and urban spaces. The lack of intentionality from the PWCCS leadership created a sense of isolation and allowed for the re-enforcement of negative racial views for Black students. Also, the people that the institution venerated were more than likely White and did not consider or discuss the contributions of Black people. As Michael highlighted, this was not an intentional action but an unintended consequence. The absence of an intentional racial message does not mean that a racial message is not being conveyed.

Theme 4: Racialized Religious Culture

An unexpected finding emerged in questions that centered around religion. For the most part, Black students sensed that BLCCS took religion very seriously, but PWCCS saw it as a means to an end. That is to say, PWCCS leaders only took religion as seriously as they needed it at the moment to justify White norms.

BLCCS: Real Religion

In the BLLCS environment, Black students felt that religion was a serious matter. The students believed that religion had more depth than in the PWCCS environments and that religion was essential. Terry recalled God becoming more tangible to him during his BLCCS experience:

> Yes, I think that the Bible became real. So I would say that I met Jesus at Carter
> G. Woodson Christian Academy. So, I think that's a really, really important space.
> Just in my own personal development and my own feeling of, my need for Christ.

Terry was not the only one who spoke of having a religious experience. Kareem spoke of

the depth of his relationship with God in that environment:

> At Carter G. Woodson Christian Academy was the first time that I really felt like I
>
> walked and talked with God. It was just something about the emphasis and the
>
> culture and the environment that still to this day, those three years I felt as though
>
> I was closer to God and I think that was from the intentional emphasis and it was
>
> a boarding school so it's like you have morning worship and evening worship and
>
> you're doing your personal devotion and every class is started with prayer and it
>
> was a real emphasis that you're not here alone and God is present in all that you
>
> do.

Kareem acknowledged his relationship with God, but he attributed this relationship with

God as a byproduct of the religious intentionality of the environment. Kyrie spoke about

how tangible, and down to earth the religious teaching was when he was at his BLCCS:

> No, it's like this person is going to jail. Because this person got shot. This person
>
> is dealing with a real issue. How does God play into this? And like even in their
>
> portrayal of the arts, there was a lot realer. It wasn't just children's church. It was
>
> like, this is real issues that we're learning from and able to dive into, and able to
>
> have discussions about we were one game, we played in worships a lot, it was
>
> Black, white grey, where they put up an issue and you say Black is good. White is
>
> bad. Gray is I don't know. And then issues about race.

Kyrie discussed the realness of the topics, but it also demonstrated that from the Black

perspective, God could be seen in everything, not just an abstract topic. In these schools,

God was presented in very tangible, practical ways. Thus, in their theological application, they saw God at work in their daily experiences.

The religious ethic of the environment undergirded their perspectives on race and justice. In the teachers' minds God was involved and leading during the Civil Rights Movement. Michael recalled the Civil Rights movement as being a spiritual movement in the perspectives of his teachers in his BLCCS:

So yes, the teachings of Christianity were big part of that training for our community, praying for each other. And whenever just thinking about the Civil Rights Movement, right? Black History Month, and how Martin Luther King Jr. we shall overcome. And those were very spiritual, while social and civil rights, but it was also very spiritual movement as well. And we didn't miss that. Some Negro spirituals and things like that, it was all a part of that experience. So, it was celebration of Blackness but also a celebration of the Black church, Christianity and what it means to just Black culture in general.

For Michael, in these BLCCS environments, God was involved in everything and as a present helper. In BLCCS, God was made out to be tangible and real. Thus, God and his teachings were sowed into the fabric of the school. So much so that James felt that the Bible was used to promote an anti-racist message:

After intentionally, it was relationally communicated. In that, like I said, I feel like we were instilled with this thought in this value set, that you are not less than, that you can and are expected to be excellent, that your value start first with you being a son and daughter of God, and that God didn't make a mistake when he

made you Black. We're going to show you by way of history, and by way of

relationship, that you can take that to the bank, and I'm forever grateful for that.

Religion provided a message that empowered the Black male student's racial identity.

Through religious teachings, Black people were identified as possessing the image of

God. Kyrie was reminded that the religious experience was not just anti-racist, but it also

expected them to do something for the less fortunate:

> And we know that from Jesus that sacrifice is the biggest form of love. So, what
>
> does that look like when you have privilege and you're giving it to other people,
>
> not just for white people, we're using it as okay, you're popular? How are you
>
> giving to the unpopular people? You have this platform, how are you helping the
>
> people who aren't known that this gift is there? How are you actually giving those
>
> people so we're, as I said before, they made Jesus' practical. It wasn't just Oh, I
>
> know, some Bible verses that I'm just going to, I'm going to graduate and forget
>
> how this applies to me.

The Bible and religion courses were used to teach social power and privilege.

Furthermore, the teaching challenged students like Kyrie to be change agents. Teachers in

BLCCS weaponized religion so that these people could recognize their spiritual identities

but also challenge them to do justice for others. In the BLCCS, Black people were given

a real religion and not just lessons. Religion was integral to their whole experience, and it

allowed students to have an encounter with God.

PWCSS: Convenient Religion

In Rick's recollection of the PWCCS religion courses, he stated, "No one wanted to teach religion, so they just kept switching teachers." Russell expressed a similar sentiment, "I don't remember much of the focus of Jesus and so forth in my white schools. I remember we had Bible class, that was it." LeSean recollected on religion in that PWCCS:

> I'm going to be honest, they only taught Bible in classes. That was it. There wasn't too much Bible talk outside of class. Obviously, they would pray for food. That's it. There was no dorm worship sessions. That was it. Sometimes they were conjoined, the girls and guys to do prayer and stuff like that but most of the time, it was in a classroom.

LeSean felt as if the religion in the school was compartmentalized to the religion class. Outside of that, there was little discussion about the Bible faith and Christianity. LeSean reduced the religious message in the school to being kind:

> Be nice everyone. Really? No, seriously, like, that's what it was. It was, be nice to everyone and that was the main thing like we must treat each other alike and then they would have the Bible stories, the Job story or Joash and stuff like that they would have those type of stories.

In essence, the message shared in the environment was reduced to being a kind person. Michael added, "I think they use religion as a basis of inter-relation with everyone, like kindness and maybe more like fruits of the spirit." James reflected on his religious

experience, and the most impactful person for him during religion was an African man from Botswana:

> Then I would say, outside of those things, the person who introduced the Bible to us with greater weight, and legitimacy and matter of factness, not to take away from anybody else, but just he stands out was a brother from Botswana. And he came, I want to say, my eighth-grade year, and that might have been it…. I couldn't stand him because I felt like he was doing the most like he came in, and he was like, you all are going to learn the 20 fundamental beliefs. We're going to read Daniel and Revelation, we're going to read Scripture, the assignments we would have to do were, what I felt like were just excessive.

James compared his religion teacher to his prior religious experiences at that school because he took them to the Bible with a level of seriousness that other teachers had not done previously. He was not used to the Bible being used in such a serious manner in his prior PWCCS experience. Richard reflected on his religious education experience at his PWCCS:

> So, Samuel T. Armstrong Missionary Academy had a Bible teacher, had chapel every day, Bible class every day, but I can recall just in our Bible class watching random movies. It had nothing to do with God or anything else and kind of just playing games and our teacher being a lot more relaxed, and that was in high school. I felt like we dove deeper in middle school in the Black context when it came to religion, Christianity, what the Bible had to say about obedience to God's

word and loving all mankind. I felt like those conversations were deeper at the

middle school level than they were at the high school level.

Richard compared his religious experience to his time in middle school, and he found that

they took the Bible more seriously in the Black environment than in the White one. From

Black students' perspectives, religion was not a serious matter for White people in

PWCCS. Especially when these Black males compared it to their religious experiences in

BLCCS.

From the perspectives of the students' religion came into play when Eurocentric

norms were being enforced. Troy felt as if, "They upheld Christian, white Anglo Saxon

Protestant, ideals. That was about it, we had every grade or every year you had a religion

class." Michael recalled that his religious experience did not feel very sincere or serious:

I feel like they used their teachings, how they express their teachings of the Bible,

et cetera to kind of maintain a sense of control and established community rules

and agreements versus some sort of like exploration and teaching to kind of

cultivate individuals' relationships with God. And I think because of that, it

became very run on the mill and so I really do believe most of that I probably

tuned out. I don't even remember but it never felt like they were trying to really

cultivate anything.

Michael felt as if the community rules and standards were used to maintain control and

promote community rules. In short, these religious teachings were tools to moralize

White values and standards. Russell believed that religion was taught in a manner to

uphold White cultural values:

So, I think it was taught in a perspective where just quite frank, you bowed down to us, you bowed down to our culture, you succumb to this culture, you submit to this culture. This is how Jesus was. It was very prominently presented in that way that what you see in us is what this Christian journey looks like. This is the epitome of getting to Heaven is by doing things in these ways. What you do outside of school, in most cases are not right. You know, that's how I felt.

Russell also highlighted how these religious messages were used to demonize the Black worship styles. Thus, religion in PWCCS was used to weaponize Kyrie even felt as if their use of religion was used to avoid uncomfortable conversations about race. He recalled the response after Trayvon Martin died:

I remember when Trayvon Martin was shot, the discussions, you know, they're never going to say it's about race. But you know, that's what it's about. But you try to bring up we're not supposed to kill people. And it's like, well, you don't know what he was doing. You don't know. So, you try to use the Bible. And it's like, there's a wall up if it doesn't fit their agenda

From Kyrie's perspective, the Bible was used only to support their agenda and dismissed critical conversations about race. At the same time, they felt as the Black school took the Bible seriously and as a means to critique themselves and the surrounding society. In PWCCS, Black students perceived that religion was taken less seriously than BLCCS. Black students perceived that it was only used to enforce White values but not an integral part of the school.

Research Questions Answered

This dissertation was guided by three research questions. This study answered these three research questions thoroughly and thought fully. Research Question 1 was broken down into two sub questions. Research question 1a, "What were the racial messages that the Black males received while attending their BLCCS?" was answered in the following way. Black males in BLCCS were given a message that Black is excellent intellectually, and from an ability standpoint. This message was reinforced through the curriculum, and teachers ensured that they achieved their excellence by providing a road map into the future. Furthermore, Black students perceived that in this environment Black people were free to be loud, worship, date, mourn through comedy, and to be themselves.

Research Question 1b, "What were the racial messages that the Black males received while attending their PWCCS?" was answered through this study. The message contrasted the one given in the BLCCS. The racial message was that Black is a racial trope. This message was seen more specifically in the sense that Black people were seen by their teachers as economically, deviant, and intellectually inferior. The only thing that Blacks people were expected to be great at was athletics. Also, these Black students perceived that they were free with restrictions. Black boys were not allowed to date White girls, enact blackness, or complain about their issues.Thus, the racial messages that these Black boys received differed based on the racial make-up of the school and its leadership.

After answering this question, the study answered Research Question 2, "How did the racial messaging shape their understanding of race and self as Black males?" Black

males perceived themselves and their community. Black males in BLCCS saw Black people as being diverse ethnically, Socio-economically, in their affinities. Although Black students were diverse, they were still unified and accepted. Furthermore, Black students in BLCCS demonstrated more racial pride so they had a high view of themselves and their race some of this confidence was rooted in spirituality.

These findings differed significantly in their PWCCS environments. Black males in PWCCS viewed themselves as exceptional negroes. If they differed from the stereotype that signified that they were the exception to the stereotype. Through them being made out to be an exception this created interpersonal and psychological issues. For instance, Black males that felt as if they were the exception struggled with their racial identity and if they had a strong racial identity, they had interpersonal conflict with other Black males who labelled them as acting White. Black students in PWCCS also developed conceptions of themselves as being inferior and they viewed themselves as less than other people groups.

The third and final research question was, "How were Christian teachings a part of the racial dynamics in these CCS?". This question much like the other research questions differed based on the racial context of the environment. Black males in BLCCS felt as if the religion was real to their teachers and that it undergirded their schools' racial ethic. So much so that they felt as if the schools' religion promoted anti-racism. Whereas in the PWCCS the students felt as the religion was not taken as seriously. The Black males felt as if the teachers used religion to normalize Eurocentric norms.

Conclusions

The findings from this study revealed the implicit and explicit racial messages conveyed by CCS to Black males. Although these Black males went to CCS, the racial messages between BLCCS and PWCCS differed considerably. Race matters in CCS even if an institution fails to place a high priority on it. Under the first theme, Black attributive messages, which answered Research Question 1, Black males perceived that Black was excellent in BLCCS and that Black people were viewed through the lenses of racial tropes in PWCCS. Black excellence was seen through the expectation of Black intelligence giftedness and the social navigational lessons shared between teachers and students. In PWCCS, Black students were expected to be economically disadvantaged, intellectually inferior, deviant, or superior athletes. In this study BLCCS provided a plethora of positive messages, but even though there were many positive messages. Yet, some of these positive messages when taken to the extreme presented certain issues. In the case of Kareem, he found that Black excellence was narrowly defined by Eurocentric middle class values and prioritized socially desirable career types and denigrated blue-collar careers. Also, although these Black students escaped the White gaze evidently the Black teachers never let them forget the White perspective (DuBois, 1903). One could argue that these BLCCS taught these Black males to exist within a White supremacy environment over and against Black liberation.

The second theme, which also answered Research Question 1, was Black agency. Within BLCCS, Black agency was seen through the perceptions of Black freedom because Black students felt free to do as they desired in these environments. However,

within PWCCS, Black students felt physically free, but they had social limitations within that environment. For instance, Black students did not have the freedom to date whomever they desired in PWCCS. The third theme that emerged answered Research Question 2. This theme that emerged was Black perspectives. Between the two environments, the same phenomenon emerged, but it played itself out differently within the two environments. Black perspectives in BLCCS were seen through Black diversity in which Black students took note of the differences between Black people. Diverse Black expressions within PWCCS manifested differently than they did in BLCCS. It differed because Black students were seen as exceptional Negroes.

The fourth and final theme that emerged was a racialized religious culture. This theme emerged in response to Research Question 3. Racialized religious culture manifested in two ways serious religion or convenient religion. BLCCS had a serious religious element that undergirded the anti-racist ethos of the institution. At the same time, PWCCS were found to take religion less seriously and weaponize it when trying to moralize European perspectives.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This final chapter provides a summarization of the findings from this study from the BlackCrit lens. Also, this chapter discusses the findings of this study in light of the previous literature. This comparison of the findings with the literature highlights its alignment and contrasts with previous research, and it expounds on how this study advances the research. First this chapter provides a brief review of purpose of the study conducted by reviewing chapters 1-4. This section is followed by how this research compares with the previous pertinent literature and furthers the knowledge around this phenomenon. After this research, this chapter provides recommendations for key stakeholders based on the implications of the findings. Finally, this chapter concludes with future research opportunities, and then concludes with a final summary.

The purpose of this study was to center the voices of Black males who attended both PWCCS and BLCCS. Chapter 1 discussed the necessity of this study because there is limited research about their experiences in PWCCS. Furthermore, Chapter 1 allowed expounded on the rationale behind the usage of BlackCrit as the framework which expanded beyond CRT and provided a detailed description of this framework. More often than not when race is considered in these environments it centers White voices, and there is limited empirical data regarding the existence of BLCCS. In the absence of the research scholars like Jeynes (2002) have pontificated that religious schools have greater racial harmony than public schools. These speculative positions flourish in the absence of research despite the overwhelming research that demonstrates that race matters in various sectors of American society (James, 2019; Kendi, 2016; Perry & Whitehead, 2019).

Thus, this study purposefully centered Black male voices to highlight their experiences and interpretations to contest these post-racial messages. This dearth of research provided the basis of this present study because it attempted to address these research gaps. In response to these gaps the Chapter 1 set out the questions to understand the racial messages that Black males received as they attended CCS:

1. What were the racial messages that the Black males received while attending their CCS?

    a. What were the racial messages that the Black males received while attending their BLCCS?

    b. What were the racial messages that the Black males received while attending their PWCCS?

2. How did the racial messaging shape their understanding of race and their self as Black males?

3. How did the Black males perceive Christian teachings to be a part of the racial dynamics in these CCS?

These questions were developed to guide the study and give a greater understanding of the racial messages that Black males received while they attended these institutions.

Chapter 2 explored the literature and attempted synthesize the three strands of literature Black males in schools, WAC's historical and contemporary racism against Black people, and Black Christian schools. Black males have existed at odds with the American educational experiences (Butler et al, 2009; James, 2019). From a WAC perspective Black people are to blame for their issues in the country (Perry & Whitehead,

2019). These views ignore the historical and ongoing prejudices against Black people perpetuated by the White Christian community and their schools (Emerson et al., 2009; McCombs & Gay, 1988; Nevin & Bills, 1976; Thomas et al., 2020). Despite the evidence of racism in Christian schools, one cannot describe all CCS as being racist because not all Christian schools have the same racial makeup. Much of the research has explored PWCCS, this research approach has unintentionally normed CCS as White institutions. However, outside of the scope of these PWCCS environments there exists BLCCS. Unfortunately, there is little to no research concerning these institutions or contemporary Black led educational institutions in general outside of historical research into segregated schools. Layman (1994) conducted this research on three BLCCS, but found that there was little difference between these institutions and PWCCS. Cunningham (1996) conducted and ethnographic study on a northeastern BLCCS and found that these institutions provided a focus on Black contributions in society, but did not engage in current social justice issues. Finally, Douglas et al. (2019) explored the existence of these institutions by conducting three autoethnographic studies exploring their experiences in PWCCS and BLCCS. The scope of their research was limited in BLCCS, but found that even in these institutions there were traces of internalized racism because the curriculum was not Afrocentric.

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the methodology for the study. In short, the chapter unpacked the IPA research approach. IPA is a derivative of hermeneutic phenomenology which analyzes the interpretation of a phenomenon to get to the essence of it. After addressing IPA, Chapter 3 detailed the target population of Black males born

between 1981-2003 who attended both PWCCS and BLCCS. Next it gave a detailed step-by-step approach to how the research was conducted. The research participants were recruited based on their alignment with the study participant profiles and through social media flyers, convenient sampling, social network recruiting, and snowball sampling. Chapter 3 also gave detailed information regarding data collection and analysis. The data was collected after IRB approval was secured and research participants signed the consent form. Interviews were conducted via Zoom through semi structured interviews. The data was analyzed through the thorough reading and re-reading of the data. During the initial reading notes were taken, codes were developed, themes emerged and were clustered into one.

Finally, Chapter 4 presented the findings from this study. All in all, four major themes emerged through the data analysis. Those themes were Black attributive messages, Black agency, Black perspective, and Racialized Religion. Of these four themes in the chapter, three themes had two subthemes, and one theme had four subthemes. which developed because each environment had contrasting themes. The Black attributive message in the BLCSS is Black is excellent, but in the PWCCS the message was Black is a racial trope. The Black agency in BLCCS was that the research participants were free to be Black. In the PWCCS the racial message concerning Black agency was that Black students were free with boundaries. The messages regard Black perspectives was that Black is diverse, and Black pride. However, in the PWCCS diversity of Blackness was seen as the exceptional Negro. Also, Black students in

PWCCS felt a sense of Black inferiority. Finally, In BLCCS racialized religion was real religion, but in the PWCCS the message was convenient religion.

Comparison to Literature

The findings from this study offer greater clarity to the experiences of Black males in schools. Furthermore, this study gives additional clarity to the racialized messages that schools provide to Black males. A significant portion of the findings align with previous literature. However, these findings further the field of research regarding significance of race in Black male schooling. This section discusses each theme, its implications, and how they fit within the broader literature.

The Racial Messages of CCS

The first research question addressed the racial messages that Black males received as they attended CCS. Ultimately, the research distinguished the findings between the two school environments because they contrasted one another. While these two environments clearly provided overlap in content areas and similar views over certain concepts the racial messaging in these environments are decidedly different.

BLCCS: Attributive Messages

The first major theme was Black attributive messages and it addresses Research Question 1. In BLCCS the message was that Black is excellent, and within the PWCCS the message was that Black is a racial trope. The racial message of Black being excellent aligns with the findings of Siddle-Walker (1996) concerning segregated Black public schools being spaces of high academic expectations. Many of the Black male students

spoke of encountering teachers that pushed them hard. These teachers did not just push high performers, but they also pushed high achieving students to reach their best.

Another point of alignment is that these environments provided racial affirmation that promoted high expectations. Foster (1997) spoke of the racial affirmation that the school provided. Instead of these Black students in segregated schools felt as if their racial identity was a deficit these students felt as if they were capable of achieving great things. In this study several students spoke of the teachers providing racial affirmation through their historical curriculum. The participants spoke of the teachers highlighting Black contributions to the world so that students did not being to believe the deficit narratives that were being promoted in the greater society.

Alexander-Snow (2011) also discussed the fact that these schools provided the expectation that these students can do greater. Alexander-Snow (2011) focused on a Black boarding school which took these Black students and provided programing that focused on these students achieving greater academic achievement. Implicit within this environment was a belief in the academic potential of these Black students. They did not hold their urban or global backgrounds against the student instead in this environment they provided a college preparatory education.

However, within this research disagreed with the previous Department of Education report (1916) which positioned these institutions as disorganized, underfunded, and hurting their Black students' academic potential. This dated report was rooted in racial prejudice. Some participants referenced the lack of resources in the BLCCS, but none of them focused on this element of the school. Instead, most student highlighted the

investment that they received from the teachers and social education that they received that was useful in helping them navigate predominantly White spaces. This experience was beneficial for Black students because it allowed them to understand the rules of excellence beyond just being intelligent it showed them the ways to achieve despite the racist society that surrounded them.

This study also highlighted that Black excellence also has a dark side that ventures into respectability politics. A couple participants acknowledged that certain teachers prioritized certain forms of excellence and desired students to possess middle class and upper middle-class values.   While the students acknowledge a social justice ideology at work in the intuition evidently subtle forms of White supremacy still existed these institutions. While these schools existed in the absence of White people the White perspective was still at work in their mind. One might even argue the intense focus on achievement and excellence to disprove the White myths about Blackness demonstrated that they had still succumb to the pressure of disproving these manufactured lies. This finding contrasts with Willis (2020) findings concerning BLCCS during the antebellum period that fostered an emphasis towards social justice. Thus, Black student were not educated to do well individually in these antebellum BLCCS instead they were educated on communal achievement. Many of these students had a desire for social activism to fight for the rights of Black people. Instead, these contemporary BLCCS prioritized the individual over the Black collective. Black students were taught about racism and how to thrive in the face of it as opposed to having a social justice orientation towards contemporary issues.

Here is where the research extended beyond the literature of Black excellence within school. Black was excellent beyond just the intellectual sense, but Black excellence and genius was seen in the ways that Black people performed and led. As it relates to education there is often a focus on the academic excellence, and on Black excellence in terms of their ability to perform (Kendi, 2016). However, within the participants who spoke of the Black excellence in music and leadership the emphasis was not only on their ability to perform, but it was also an acknowledgment of their ability to direct music. Thus, excellence was more significant than academic performance, but it was the acknowledgment of another form of genius. So often Black excellence is defined by professional success, academic achievement, or athletic superiority. Yet, Black excellence for these Black males was seen in Black cultural styles and their capacity to perform. However, this performance was celebrated based on the genius and the preparation. As opposed to it being interpreted through inherited peculiarities that made them inherently superior of different. The fact that leadership was taught demonstrates it was a reproducible intelligence something that can be learned even if it's not inherited.

So much of the literature has focused on Black academic achievement that it neglects to look at Black students in their fullness. For instance, Ford and Moore (2013), Noguera (2003), and Bonner et al. (2009) focused on Black representation in gifted and talented courses and their academic achievement. Yet, this study moves the needle concerning Black students and achievement because it acknowledged the broader scope of genius amongst Black people in music and leadership and still highlights the message of Black excellence in a myriad of ways.

PWCCS: Attributive Messages

Black students in PWCCS received a racial message concerning Black attributes in line with racial tropes. Black people were not expected to be excellent instead Black students were expected to be low SES, intellectually inferior, deviants, and great athletes. Black males in White schools have received a myriad of racial messages all of which aligned with these messages in some manner. Thomas et al. (2020) and Blosser (2019) found that the Black students received racial messages that signaled to the students they their teachers and peers held low academic expectations for them and viewed them as athletes. Black students in this present study were valued in their institutions as athletes and so their value was not in the classroom but in their ability to perform. They spoke of the excitement of their arrival because they expected them to be good at sports without even seeing them play. Also, the students poke of separate classes for lower achieving students that were filled with Black students with no test to justify their class placement. Thomas et al. (2020) spoke of encounters with students in which they were expected to not to know answers. Thus, these Christian environments promoted deficit perspectives concerning Black students. These mindsets were manifested in the expectations and comments that surrounded these Black males in this environment.

Black students in PWCCS also experienced the expectation of social deviance in these schools. Many of the students had incidents where teachers demonstrated that they assumed that these Black males were either lying when they were in trouble or prone to be disruptive in the classroom setting. This fits within the broad literature because researchers and society have positioned Black boys as being prone to get in trouble.

Butler et al. (2009) brought to light that White female teachers criminalize the behaviors of Black boys in the classroom. Furthermore, Henfield (2011) talked about Black boys being stereotyped as gangbangers or rappers or being instantly seen as aggressive and violent by their teachers or peers. Thus, when Black students came into the classroom in these PWCCS they were met with these same deficit expectations and they were positioned as troublemakers. These experiences were not unique to these PWCCS instead this finding has been consistent throughout the literature.

Beyond being seen as intellectually inferior deviant or as superior athletes, Black students were seen as low SES. This finding is an implicit message within the literature and the schooling experience of the Black students. For instance, researchers often times position Black people and students as being urban or at-risk (Howard, 2013; Noguera, 2003). However, Black people exist all across the social and economic strata. Thus, this racial message of Black people being low SES is baked within the literature rather than being an explicit message that clearly emanates throughout the literature. William Wilson (spoke about the differences amongst urban Black people and upper-class Black people. Wilson (2010) spoke about urban Black people with such a deficit lens that they were position as less than human because they were uneducated, and not civilized enough to interact with "normal" people. Thus, in truth the people in these PWCCS assumed that the students that they were dealing with were these deficiently defined urban Black youth.

These findings contrast with W.H. Jeynes (2002) findings which suggested that Christian schools provided greater racial harmony than public schools. As this study

demonstrated Black students in these PWCCS experienced similar racial experiences and received racial messages as Black students in public schools. One might even argue that Black students experienced worst incidence in these PWCCS as opposed to their experiences in public schools. For instance, the racist ideologies were given moral and salvific value as opposed to being rooted in a person. In the case of interracial dating teachers based there positions in the Bible and in church dogma. This meant, that no only was this a school issue but it was also a church issue. These approaches can potentially shape the students understanding of self and "God". Evidently, WAC does not reduce the level of racism in these environments but one could argue that it amplifies the layers of it.

Ipsa-Landa and Conwell (2015) found that Blacks students who left these urban environments and attended predominantly White schools developpe deficit views of their Black public schools. However, Black students in these PWCCS environment did not develop deficit views about their Black institutions. Once again, Black students did not focus on their schools' lack of resources instead they focused on investment that they received from their teachers. They also reshaped their views around their expectations for themselves they began to believe in their academic potential. Black students who came from Black into White environments missed their Black school environment because they felt more comfortable in that environment rather than the PWCCS.

BLCCS: Black Agency

The second theme, Black agency, also addresses Research Question 1. Many of the research participants spoke about the freedom of the environment. This freedom manifested in the sense that these students were unencumbered by White people and their

perspectives. Research participants spoke about how they moved and functioned more freely in this environment. A few students even mentioned experiencing shock when they first entered a certain all Black school environment because they had never seen Black people act so expressively. Currently, the broader literature does not discuss this phenomenon in detail. However, Layman (1994) discussed the fact that the BLCCS schools that he interviewed with did not have an explicit focus on race. As a matter of fact, he mentioned that these schools appeared to become irritated when he asked about a racial focus. He later added that the racial focus was implicit in the people that they highlighted and in the Black History celebrations.

However, the lack of data concerning this finding also highlights the lack of diversity within the literature concerning the Black schooling experience. Much of the research has found that Black people enjoyed their experiences in these schools' words like family and community are key in the educational experiences of Black schools from segregation (Armwood, 2018; Siddle-Walker, 1996). These findings were in response to the dominant perspective that positioned segregated schools as underfunded, low-quality facilities, and impoverished (Siddle-Walker, 1996). Many qualitative inquiries into Black schooling focus on schools that existed 50+ years ago. Which transpired at a time in which Jim Crow laws were in place and segregation was the modus operandum of the day. These people who speak about these institutions may have never attended predominantly White schools. This study furthered the literature because these Black students were Millennials and Gen-Z and existed in a society in which they have been born into a desegrated world. Furthermore, many of the research participants came from

White schools into Black schools. Thus, they had a vastly different perspective when they entered these All-Black schools. In essence, these BLCCS were foreign to them. Hence, this concept of Black freedom is significant.

Black freedom was seen in the sense that Black students felt as if they were free to be themselves. Black students in this environment felt the freedom to be loud, enjoy foods like fried chicken or watermelons because in this environment there was no stereotype threat (Inzlicht & Schmader, 2012). They knew that there was no one in that space that would characterize them as a racial trope. In this environment, the research participants felt as if they saw Blackness on full display from the singing to the laughter, and people expressing affection. Furthermore, Black students did not experience racial battle fatigue (Smith et al., 2016). Students did not feel overwhelmed by the environment they were free to be.

Black males in BLCCS also expressed joy and freedom to engage in dating girls without restrictions. Due to everyone in the environment being monoracial, Black students did not have to worry about the microaggressions that happen in the case of interracial dating (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Kreager, 2008). The removal of these barriers to dating allowed for Black students to date Black females without reservation. Furthermore, Black girls were free to express their desire for Black boys. It is evident that in many domains of public life Black adolescents reserve their actions, but the BLCCS environment allowed Black people a space to be free to date.

The research participants also expressed freedom to express emotion in worship without reservation in these Black schools. This finding is unique because most research

that analyzes worship looks at churches. CCS environments are unique because they conflate Church elements like corporate worship and classrooms into one building. Research participants in this study expressed the freedom to be expressive in worship. Krause and Hayward (2013) found that individuals who express their emotions in worship feel as if they are a part of a cohesive congregation. Alexander-Snow (2011) also had a consistent finding because students expressed growing closer to one another through emotional worship experiences. Black students' freedom to be expressive in worship demonstrated that they felt a part of the community. Black students belonged in these environments, and they expressed it in their worship expression.

Finally, this study identified that Black students felt free to engage in comedy around Black tragedy. Carter-Andrews (2007) discussed the ways that Black people coped with being in a White environment. However, the use of laughter and comedy has been utilized as a means to cope with trauma, and Black comedians like Christ Rock have been social critics while using laughter to help Black people cope with their pain (Outley et al., 2020). A couple research participants felt the freedom to engage in laughter in the face of Black pain as a means of coping during difficult racial incidents. Black students did not feel the liberty in other environment to engage in social critique and corporate coping in White environments.

PWCCS: Black Agency

In PWCCS, Black students felt physically free but with limitations. Black students did not feel the freedom to date White girls and encountered resistance, they felt pushed to do things in a Eurocentric manner, and they did not feel free to talk about

Black issues publicly. As it relates to Black students' resistance to talk about Black issues

publicly this is consistent with the broader literature. Carter-Andrews (2007), Datnow

and Cooper (1997) and Tatum (2017) discussed black students forming counter spaces in

which they could enact Blackness and decompress the pressures of being Black in a

PWCCS. One Black student discussed such a counter-space in his PWCCS. He discussed

the train ride from his urban school to school. In this space they would discuss the micro-

aggressions of the environment and the friendship formed.

The broader literature discussed Black students feeling hyper visible in in

predominantly White spaces (Carter-Andrews et al, 2019; Thomas et al., 2020).

Hypervisibility is a phenomenon where Black people standout in the eyes of their

surrounding community (Simpson & Lewis, 2005). This hypervisibility does not mean

that they have voice or power it just means that they stand out. This hypervisibility was

manifested in the way that students expressed their lack of comfort in the environment

because they felt as if people would say something about them. Even, when they spoke of

the freedom of the BLCCS it was often done in comparison with their experiences in a

PWCCS. Thus, these students in PWCCS felt as if they were hyper visible to their

teachers and administrators because they were Black.

These findings differed from the existing literature in the sense that they did not

feel free to date whomever they wanted in the PWCCS because the White teachers and

parents resisted it. The broader research demonstrated that this resistance to interracial

dating was a byproduct of student peer groups (Krager, 2008). However, this research

demonstrates that although the school environment accepted them as student they were

against interracial dating. This was not something that was enforced by a policy, but by subtle microaggressions that demonstrated their resistance towards these relationships. These microaggressions happened through private conversations between Black students and White teachers or date request being accepted and then rejected after they spoke with their parents.

This study furthered the literature because Black counter spaces were seen as a coping space and a place to enact Blackness (Carter-Andrews, 2007; Tatum, 2017). However, this study found that these spaces were also a space that empowered subtle resistance. For instance, Black students would go from this space, and they would interact with their teachers in Black cultural expressions to see how they would respond because they were outsiders. In essence, they would momentarily make their teachers feel like the outsider essentially flipping their roles. Thus, the spaces enable the Black students to enact Black culture as means of momentarily regaining control.

A Black Self Understanding

The racial messages that these Black males received undoubtedly shaped their self-understanding and their perception of Black people. These Black males responded differently in their school environments. These differences are not as decidedly different as the findings for Research Question 1. In part because even if Black students did not receive as much racial affirmation in the PWCCS they could receive it from their parents and community. The theme that encapsulated these experiences was Black perspectives.

BLCCS- Black Perspective

The third major theme was Black perspective and it addresses Research Question 2. In BLCCS the Black perspective created was that Black is diverse, and it produced a greater sense of Black pride. This strong racial pride is consistent with the broader literature. Alexander-Snow (2011) discussed how students experienced a greater sense of cultural and self-esteem as a byproduct of being in an all-Black environment that affirmed their racial identity, the students in this school reported having a high self-esteem. Furthermore, these findings of greater racial and cultural esteem are consistent with Black students who attended HBCU experience (Williams et al., 2021).

As Black students came into the monoracial environment they came to the realization that Black people were a multiethnic group. Black people were no longer seen as a monolith, but there was greater understanding of the diversity that exist within the Black community. This finding is a byproduct of the fact that independent schools contrast from neighborhood schools in the sense that Black students come into this environment through diverse neighborhoods. In neighborhood schools, students come from the same neighborhoods and are more likely to be of the same SES so they are less likely to come into a school with Black students with such diverse backgrounds. Thus, the students reporting of diversity is critical because this furthers the current understanding of the field regarding Black schooling. Research participants reported recognizing a broad array of diversities from SES to ethnic identities.

One participant reported a unique phenomenon in light of the literature as they recalled having diverse affinities within the school. He discussed going through the

cafeteria and recalling the various social groupings of students with diverse affinities. This participant appeared to experience a of racelessness and just identify as a person who socialized with others solely based on mutual interests never considering race. Herr (1999) discussed a Black female student expressing a sense of racelessness as a coping strategy in a predominantly White independent school environment. Alexander-Snow (2011) had a student express this concept that in her BLCCS environment that she was just a person because everyone was Black. However, this Black male went into a cafeteria and did not consider race as a social construct. This finding furthers the literature because it speaks to Black people having a schooling space in which they do not consider their race they are just a person.

The black pride finding also furthers the literature because their racial pride is rooted in Christian spirituality. This concept that they are made in the image of God is important because it points their minds back to the biblical creation narrative. For Black students their pride was reinforced by the message of the school that taught them that they were made in the image of God. King and Swartz (2015) contested that the source of Black racial pride needs to be rooted in teaching black students about their history. While this is still a viable educational approach the Black students here placed a value in their growing understanding of their theological beliefs addressing their social context and understanding.

PWCCS- Black Perspectives

The Black perspectives in the PWCCS manifested differently than it did in BLCCS. For instance, Black people in this environment looked at diversity differently.

Instead of seeing Blackness as diverse divergent expressions of Blackness were seen as exceptions to the rule. In this study three black students expressed deficit views regarding themselves as Black people. However, the vast majority expressed affirming views about themselves while espousing no view about Black people or a deficit view about the Black people. This assortment of self-esteems is consistent with the literature regarding racial pride. Cross (1978) found that despite growing up in racially hostile environment that Black youth had a strong racial identity because their parents provide positive affirming views of themselves. Yet, Herr (1999) had an assortment of perspectives within her study on Black kids in independent schools. The boys in her study did not allow the environment to shape their self-understanding but instead they collaborated to address the negative racial messages. However, within Herr's study a Black female student felt the weight of her race and even began to embrace a raceless view this effected er racial pride as if she was failing her race in that environment. DeCuir-Gunby (2012) found that the research participants in her study did not allow the racist environment to share their racial identity instead they resisted their deficit views by embracing the positive racial affirmation of their faith communities, and parents. Thus, many of these students' racial identities were shaped by their environment outside of school. Whereas some of these students took these negative environments to heart.

Black males in PWCCS that did not fit into the stereotypes perceived themselves to be the exception to the rule of Black people. Also, they found that their White teachers treated them differently from their Black classmates because they were either high performing, dressed differently, or spoke in a way that others deemed White. In their

perceiving themselves to be different than the rest of the Black students they also revealed certain deficit perspectives concerning Black people which made them view themselves as distinct from the typically Black people.

Troy viewed himself as an exceptional negro and expressed that he was rejected by a number of inner-city Black kids because he was good at school. These inner-city kids expressed an idea that they were rejecting him because he was acting White. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) articulated this phenomenon but expressed it in a deficit perspective as a means to suggest the reason for Black underachievement. However, Datnow and Coooper (1997), pushed against this deficit perspective and found that this labeling of acting White did not pre-dispose Black kids to failure. Instead, they talked about how Black kids moved pursued excellence through fictive kinships. Furthermore, Carter-Andrews (2007) found these fictive kinships were also beneficial for these students' self-survival. Troy got to the point that he did not feel like dealing with the rejection and ostracization from the inner-city Black kids. In response he unwillingly started to socialize more with the White students to avoid the conflict. He wanted to be accepted by the Black community but some of the inner-city Black kids rejected him. This does not mean that Troy rejected all Black relationships because he still made friends, but now he started to socialize between both groups.

The exceptional negro phenomenon furthers the literature around racial identity as well because Kareem expressed a sense of ambiguity within his racial identity. He expressed a sense of being lost between two racial identities because he was born African American, but he went to school and was embraced by the White community. In his head

he knew he was not White, but he did not feel all the way Black. This created inner

turmoil in him as he sought to establish his racial identity. Furthermore, he discussed

having bouts of depressions because while he enjoyed it in this White environment, he

recognized through the subtle micro-aggressions that he did not belong amongst these

White students. He realized that his value to his White friends was through him

performing for them.

Black Male Perception of Christian Teaching in Racial Dynamics

The Black male student research participants perception of the role of Christian

teaching in the racial dynamics of the CCS addresses Research Question 3. The theme

that emerged was the Racialized Religious Culture. In both environments Black students

found that religion undergirded the racial ethos of the environment. Once again, this

manifested differently based on whether it was a BLCCS or a PWCCS. Additionally,

research participants added an additional layer to this question. Black students did not

feel as if Christianity was a serious matter in CCS. Their rationale behind it was that the

schools appeared to be very compartmentalized. For instance, LeSean did not see religion

at work outside of the Bible class. Rick conveyed that from his recollection none of the

teachers wanted to teach religion. Whereas in the BLCCS environment, Black students

saw religion dispersed throughout the entire curriculum. Furthermore, Richard discussed

the greater depth of bible-based teaching that he received at his BLCCS as opposed to at

his PWCCS.

BLCCS- Racialized Religious Culture

These findings do not fit in with the background literature because past research has not considered the role or the influence of race in CCS. All of the findings in this section should only serve to further the field of research in education. Layman (1994) found that the religious orientation of the 3 BLCCS that he explored did not have a particular racial emphasis, and that the doctrinal messages were in line with normative evangelical doctrines. From a official position these institutions do no depart from their denominational principles. However, from a practical standpoint the Biblical messages that were taught did not mirror the messaging in the PWCCS even if these institutions were from the same denomination. Thus, at a surface level one would not find doctrinal differences, but from a practical perspective these institutions implemented religion vastly differently.

Many of the Black students highlighted that the religious courses, and the Christian teaching that educators provided was undergirded by the Biblical content but also interwoven with the Black lived experience. For instance, Kyrie recalled teachers using the Bible to discuss things like privilege and social power. Other participants recalled how the teachers would teach them with passionate expression about the doctrines of the church. Richard added that he felt like any one of his teachers could open the Bible and teach it to them. All the participants felt as if the Bible was used to teach against racism. All of this is uncharted territory in terms of research around the role of religion in education. Many of the students' reflections about their religious environment

at their BLCCS was the religious messages were tangible and derived from Black peoples lived experiences.

PWCCS- Racialized Religious Culture

These findings fit in with historical literature about missionary schools. Butchart (1980) discussed how many of the Christian schools that Christian missionary societies brought down south were designed to shape the political views of the recently emancipate Black students. In essence, the schools that were created were designed to maintain the social subjugation of Black people. Furthermore, religion was utilized to normalize White values so that Black students could assimilate to Whiteness. Many White Christian pastors like Cotton Mather espoused Christianity for the slaves to redeem their souls and to make them behave White (Kendi, 2016; Mather, 1706). Many research participants felt as if these schools treated them like missionary cases in need of redemption. Furthermore, these students noted that the only time religion really came up was when they were correcting them and attempting to make them act in a Eurocentric manner.

This finding both aligns and furthers the field of research because the Black students felt that the school administrators and teachers used religion conveniently to reinforce White cultural values. Rose (1988) found that the schooling religious environment both endorsed patriarchy and female subservience. Thus, the religious ethos of the environment positioned males as leaders and critiqued women for moving too far ahead of their husbands. Church leaders shamed the mothers of the students for emasculating their husbands. The White culture of these PWCCS was something that was normalized and reinforced by scripture when Black people enacted inappropriate forms

of Whiteness. Furthermore, Black kids who dressed in ways deemed appropriate, like not

where bagging pants, they were accepted by their teachers more readily. So, this finding

aligns with broader literature but simultaneously furthers the literature because it

demonstrates that this same phenomenon manifest to critique urban Blackness.

A finding that furthered the research was a belief amongst the Black students that

they felt that the did not perceive the religion in the school to be a serious matter.

Furthermore, Black students felt as if the PWCCS teachers only focused on the necessity

of being kind to people around you. Black students felt as if this was very abstract and

not presented in tangible ways. For instance, this kindness was not grounded in

discussion of race or as a critique to racism it just emphasized the necessity of students to

be nice. This provides a great deal of context for the education of Black students. They

want a religious education that has tangible application and speaks to their lived

experiences. In essence, Black students want a culturally relevant religious education. For

them religion should serve to critique society and the world around them. Religion should

teach against real life matters such as racism.

<center>**Recommendations for Key Stakeholders**</center>

The findings of this study indicate that there is a need for Christian educational

reform. Unfortunately, there is no silver bullet solution to address the situation because

the issues at play in these institutions are not symptomatic, but they are systematic. For

instance, racial bias cannot be solved through a three-hour professional development.

Furthermore, the essential changes will undoubtedly face resistance from parents who

oppose discussing issues of race and prefer a colorblind approach to life (DiAngelo,

2021). However, these are initiatives that one must engage in to create a more equitable education.

Head of PWCCS: Set a Vision for Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging

Since the murder of George Floyd and #WhileBlack social media campaigns PWCCS are increasingly engaging in the racial equity work by employing Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Directors (McNeel, 2020). This study demonstrated that when Black students walk into the PWCCS environment they come in loaded with assumptions and stories of the schools' racist history. Thus, PWCCS has to be intentional about create a safe and welcoming space. CCS spaces must be intentional about providing an education that challenges the myths of race, and the ill-informed history of Black people. If the curriculum of the institution does not reflect an affirming truth about Black people then the curriculum is insufficient. Unfortunately, hiring a person to address the school social climate issues is only a step in the right direction not the final solution. It is impossible for one person to undo the racial damage that has been done to all the racial groups by the racial messages that have socialized teachers, students, families, and administrators. It is incumbent on the head of school to be the DEI directors advocate to the board and to the parents. Beyond being the advocate, the head of school must subtly but forcefully lay a strategic plan to create a more diverse environment that is both culturally affirming and racially diverse.

First, there must be a DEI team so they must have at least a director and an associate director. Then there must be a diversity team amongst the teachers who provide coaching for educators, and who seek after diverse representation in course material

(Rose, 1988). Due to the dearth of school administrators of color there must also be an intentional plan to recruit racially diverse teachers and administrators (Zockoll, 2019). To recruit faculty of color it will require school administrators to develop strategic relationships with non-white congregations throughout their community and recruit committed educators from these congregations. These partnerships will develop opportunities to develop talent pipelines and recruit quality teachers that can create a more inclusive social environment.

Outside of just recruiting faculty of color there must be an intentional plan to recruit Christian teachers who have a commitment to DEI. Not all people of color care to create an inclusive environment so recruiting teachers with a passion to create a welcoming environment for students of color is crucial (Ladson-Billings, 1994). These teachers should be hired regardless of race because the transformation cannot be seen as a Black teacher agenda it must be seen as a school wide mission.

In independent Christian schools' parents wield a considerable amount of influence more so than in public schools because they are funding the school the tuition dollars (Rose, 1988). The head of school must anticipate resistance from parents of the school. In preparation for resistance the head of school must engage parents in non-threatening conversations about DEI issues that they recognize in the schools. Recruit the parent to participate in these trainings and workshops that are undergirded by Christian principles. Furthermore, the head of school must create a parent task force that will think strategically about how to best implement these principles in the school. This method should insure parental buy-in on the front end.

Finally, the head of school must strategize with the curriculum specialist of the school to critically analyze the school's curriculum to ensure that it utilizes culturally sensitive course materials (Scarmanga & Reiss, 2018). It is counterproductive to have a DEI coordinator but utilize a culturally insensitive curriculum that will provide lessons that contrast creating an inclusive school culture. Thus, the schools must utilize a culturally sensitive curriculum, or contract out with someone to create a culturally sensitive Christian curriculum. Through the creation and utilization of these materials, it will ensure that the content that is created will have Christian principles and culturally inclusive material. Furthermore, through the production of the list it will provide teachers and administrator invaluable resources.

Christian Higher Education Schools of Education

Once again it is impossible for one person to address DEI issues or for one institution to engage in this work to adequately address the issues. Christian teacher preparation programs must prepare teachers to teach diverse students, by raising their cultural awareness through a multicultural education framework. On a systematic level if teachers are being prepared to engage in this work in Christian schools it will allow for greater synergy between Christian schools with a vision for DEI and the teachers that are coming out of schools prepared to teach.

These teacher preparation programs must do more than place diversity courses in their course offerings (King & Butler, 2015). These institutions must make this a core part of their courses as opposed to being provided a few multicultural education courses. This is an essential step because people will attempt to avoid courses that they know will

challenge their assumptions on race and culture (King & Butler, 2015; Tatum, 1992; 2017). Thus, if this becomes a core component of the educational program students that attend the institution will recognize that these are unavoidable conversations in this Christian teacher preparation program. As future teachers engage in these courses it will help to broaden their perspectives on life and the students that they teach. These courses should also equip students to be culturally relevant pedagogues because in so doing these teachers would not just learn about the concept, but hopefully develop a mastery over the pedagogical approach.

These Christian teacher preparation programs must focus on disrupting the common narratives about racial minorities, and people who are low SES. Teachers in these programs must be prepared to teach for social justice (Critchfield, 2018). Instead of just teaching students reading strategies, and pedagogical approaches future teachers must be taught to understand the world of their future pupils. Furthermore, these future educators must learn to better understand the world that they live in. Thus, the teacher preparation courses must provide a multicultural education focus.

One way that these Christian higher education programs can prepare their students to educate and socially engage with Black boys is by developing relationship with Black Christian schools and the churches that sponsor these institutions. Through future teachers having more exposure to Black boys in the classroom and in Black congregations' students could develop more than a theoretical knowledge of Black students but also a practical knowledge of these students. Even if they work in a PWCCS

the experience would better help them see the difference between the two environments and how to engage Black boys in their classrooms.

Christian School Teachers

Black males desire religious content to be interspersed throughout the curriculum. They want to feel confident in talking with their teachers about life issues through a spiritual lens. The participants respected the teachers who were able to speak with a level of Christian spirituality. They do not mind if you challenge them with things that they believe come from the Bible. When they go into any course, they appreciate seeing spiritual principals tied into the course content.

When Black males talk about racial trauma, they want these conversations to be congruent with the things that they see in the Bible. Black males lose respect for their teachers when they selectively apply the Bible to justify an argument. For them spirituality can be seen in everything. It should not just be seen in just religion class, when they get in trouble, they want their teachers to use the Bible or Spiritual principals in addressing their misdeeds. They want discipline to be handled in a redemptive manner. So, the goal should not be to punish them for the things that they did wrong. They want the teacher to focus on seeing their humanity and then instruct them in the way that they should move forward. They also desire to be understood when they get caught doing something wrong as opposed to the teacher assuming what their intention behind their action.

Black boys want teachers that will challenge them academically and push them to do better. They want a teacher that is disappointed when they underperform. These Black

males in this study flourished with when given high expectations. Thus, as a teacher you must challenge them to reach a higher standard even when they are doing well. Troy was a student that was high achieving but his teachers at the BLCCS were no satisfied with high achieving because they saw more potential in him.

Finally Christian school teachers must have difficult conversations about racialized incidences through the lens of scripture. Black boys do not want to hear things such as live peaceably among all men or submit to all earthly authority. They want the Bible lessons to soothe their pain and reassure them that God is with them. They want the Bible combined with practical tips about how to interact with police officers, navigate the issues in their families, and in their communities. They also want the principles of the Bible to applied unilaterally not with prejudice. For instance, do not discuss the issues of abortion or poverty from a political lens discuss it from a moral lens. These Black boys do not want the Bible to be simply taught to them they want to know how to use the Bible to think and critique society, social systems, and daily living.

Limitation of the Study and Future Research Possibilities

The focus of this study was to understand how Black males made sense of the racial messages that they received as they matriculated through CCS. The hope of this research was to center the voices of Black males in CCS, add a layer of complexity to the CCS literature through analyzing BLCCS, and to create better educational experiences for Black students. Currently, there is a dearth in the literature that explores the existence of BLCCS. This study explored the existence of these institutions and found that they provide positive and racially affirming racial messages for Black males. However, there

is little else known about these institutions. For instance, there is limited research on the pedagogical philosophies or the theological underpinnings of the Black teachers in these Conservative Christian schools that drive their instructional practices. While the current study brought to light a lot of rich new data these were just the messages interpreted from the perspectives of Black male alumnus. There is a need for an ethnographic case study of an existing BLCCS because there are so many memories that are lost over time that an ethnographer could capture as they entered this environment. Finally, BLCCS should be studied in isolation because during the recruitment process it was difficult to capture Black students who went to both school types.

As it relates to research in PWCCS it is important to study the racialized experiences of Black females in these environments. During the study, many Black males informed me that Black girls had it much harder than they did in those environments. The girls typically come into these environments and are more vocal about their concerns and less valued by the institution because they do not raise the notoriety of the school through athletics. Beyond this, Black males in these institutions had various experiences with discipline that could be critically analyzed. Furthermore, there can be more work done around interracial dating as well.

Personal Effect of the Study

As a Black boy who attended CCS during my educational journey these findings were both encouraging and maddening. For instance, as I saw the potential that BLCCS provided it re-affirmed my educational journey. Yet, in seeing the overt negative racial messaging in PWCCS it reminded me of the critical work that must still continue. There

is a level of unlearning that must transpire in these educational spaces to produce change. Furthermore, I am disheartened as I see the tremendous resistance towards true equity and re-imagining for education considering the latest push in America against the ideological boogeyman CRT. In response to these feelings, I am committing to make a difference by investing more research into these critical areas and raising awareness through media, publication, and Christian educator trainings. As a father of four Black boys, I hope that my work will create a safer educational environment for them and their progeny so that they can experience a Christian education that more closely mirrors the teachings of Jesus as defined in the Bible.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the racial messages that Black males received as they matriculated through CCS. This study was analyzed using three research questions. The findings from this study contributed to critical solutions for heads of PWCCS, Christian teacher preparation programs, and Christian school teachers. These solutions that this chapter developed were not simple, but they were derived from the findings. The solutions were critical for the survival and education of Black boys in CCS. Through this study it is evident that race matters in CCS it was something that received consideration in both environments. Unfortunately, in PWCCS it was a strike against Black boys. However, in BLCCS, it was a consideration that motivated these educators to push these Black males. The following conclusions can be drawn from the study's findings:

1. Black boys enter into schools with a pre-existing knowledge of the history of the CCS. Thus, these schools must create an inclusive environment in preparation for them to come. PWCCS that lack a DEI plan are ill-prepared to handle or educate a Black boy who comes into their school. These schools need a comprehensive plan to address these issues.

2. Christian Teacher Education programs must equip future teachers to educate Black boys. For these institutions to achieve this they must provide an education that disrupts the myths about Black boys and prepares them to educate these young men. This can be accomplished through theoretical and tangible knowledge developed through fostered relationships with BLCCS and their sponsoring congregations.

3. Black boys need teachers who they see as spiritual, honest, and challenging. They do not respond to teachers who do not expect much of them. Thus, they need teachers who are spiritual loving, but tough.

These conclusions were drawn from the reflections of the research participants who were Black males who attended both PWCCS and BLCCS. These reflections were captured through semi-structured interviews and contributed to a better understanding of the racial messages that they received while attending PWCCS. Finally, BlackCrit was the theory that framed this study and allowed Black male voices to be centered concerning the significance of race in CCS.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1A	1. To what extent did race matter to you in your PWCCS? 2. Describe your social interactions with your female classmates at your PWCCS? 3. Tell me about a time racial topics were discussed in your PWCCS? Experiences 4. How were Christian teachings a part of the entire curriculum? 5. Describe how Christian teachings either rebuked or enabled racist behaviors. 6. Explain the mood in school after a national racialized incident happened when you were at your PWCCS? (i.e. OJ verdict, Obama election, Unarmed Black killing) 7. In what ways did Christianity come up in discussions on racial politics? 8. How did you feel your teachers approached you and your fellow Black classmates as a learner in the classroom? 9. Tell me about Black History Month Celebrations at your PWCCS? 10. In what ways was the Bible used to teach about morality? 11. Tell me about a time in which you got in trouble in school at your PWCCS?
1B	1. To what extent did race matter to you in your BLCCS? 2. Describe your social interactions with your female classmates at your BLCCS? 3. Tell me about a time racial topics were discussed in your BLCCS? 4. How were Christian teaching a part of the entire curriculum? 5. Describe how Christian teachings either rebuked or enabled racist behaviors 6. Explain the mood in school after a national racialized incident happened in your BLCCS? (i.e. OJ verdict, Obama election, Unarmed Black killing) 7. In what ways did Christianity come up in discussions on racial politics? 8. How did you feel your teachers approached you and your fellow Black classmates as a learner in the classroom? 9. Tell me about Black History Month Celebrations at your BLCCS? 10. In what ways was the Bible used to teach about morality? 11. Tell me about a time in which you got in trouble in school at your BLCCS?

2	1. While you were a student at your PWCCS describe how you viewed yourself?
	2. While you were a student at your BLCCS describe how you viewed yourself?
	3. Tell me about a time in which the Bible or a Christian teaching was used to justify or demonize a certain cultural practice?
	4. Describe a time in which the Bible or a Christian teaching was used to justify or demonize a certain cultural practice?
3	1. What were the noticeable differences between the predominately Black and White schools' social environments?
	2. How did your relationships differ with your teachers and peers in PWCCS in comparison to your BLCCS?

Warm up Questions

    1. Tell me a little bit about yourself as well as your academic background.

    2. Tell me about your most memorable experiences in your Christian K-12 schools.

Race in Predominately White Christian Schools

    3. To what extent did race matter to you in your PWCCS?

    4. Describe your social interactions with your female classmates at your PWCCS? Descriptors

    5. Tell me about a time racial topics were discussed in your PWCCS? Experiences

    6. How were Christian teachings a part of the entire curriculum?

7. Describe how Christian teachings either rebuked or enabled racist behaviors Descriptors

8. Explain the mood in school after a national racialized incident happened when you were at your PWCCS? (i.e. OJ verdict, Obama election, Unarmed Black killing)

9. In what ways did Christianity come up in discussions on racial politics?

10. How did you feel your teachers approached you and your fellow Black classmates as a learner in the classroom? Descriptors

11. Tell me about Black History Month Celebrations at your PWCCS? Experiences

12. In what ways was the Bible used to teach about morality? Descriptor

13. Tell me about a time in which the Bible or a Christian teaching was used to justify or demonize a certain cultural practice? Descriptor

14. Tell me about a time in which you got in trouble in school at your PWCCS? Experiences

15. While you were a student at your PWCCS, describe how you viewed yourself? Descriptor

Race in Black Led Conservative Christian Schools

16. To what extent did race matter to you in your BLCCS?

17. Describe your social interactions with your female classmates at your BLCCS?

18. Tell me about a time racial topics were discussed in your BLCCS?

19. How were Christian teachings a part of the entire curriculum?

20. Describe how Christian teachings either rebuked or enabled racist behaviors

21. Explain the mood in school after a national racialized incident happened in your BLCCS? (i.e. OJ verdict, Obama election, Unarmed Black killing)

22. In what ways did Christianity come up in discussions on racial politics?

23. How did you feel your teachers approached you and your fellow Black classmates as a learner in the classroom?

24. Tell me about Black History Month Celebrations at your BLCCS?

25. In what ways was the Bible used to teach about morality?

26. Describe a time in which the Bible or a Christian teaching was used to justify or demonize a certain cultural practice?

27. Tell me about a time in which you got into trouble in school at your BLCCS?

28. While you were a student at your BLCCS describe how you viewed yourself?

Predominately Black Christian School

29. What were the noticeable differences between the predominately Black and White schools' social environments?

30. How did your relationships differ with your teachers and peers in PWCCS in comparison to your BLCCS?

Race & Religion in CCS

Wrap-up

1. Is there anything that you wished that I would have asked that I did not?

2. Are there any of your peers that you would recommend I interview?

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FLYER