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I Was The Only One In The Building. Lived Experiences Of Black School Counselors Post-Brown V. Board Of Education In Predominantly White Schools

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"I WAS THE ONLY ONE IN THE BUILDING." LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BLACK SCHOOL COUNSELORS POST-*BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION* IN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and their integration into predominantly White public schools. A literature review was conducted which included the history of school counseling, *Brown v. Board of Education,* and its impact on the displacement of Black educators. The literature also explored the experiences of Black teachers and students post-*Brown* and current demographic data of school counselors. A qualitative study was conducted to capture the lived experiences of participants using multiple case studies and narrative life stories. Four Black school counselors served as participants and were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. Data were coded by themes using constant comparative method. Six themes emerged: racism, coping strategies, appearance, supports, everybody's counselor, and everywhere I go. Analysis of the responses exhibited racism in the forms of overt and covert experiences for school counselors and students and the need for Black school counselors to cope and help their minority students cope within predominantly White schools. The results demonstrate a need for diversity training in covert racism specific to microaggressions, tokenism, resident expert, devaluing and othering specific to when there is one or limited minority educators in the building. The results also demonstrated a need for ongoing diversity training at all levels of education. Training should be systematic and ongoing at the building and district levels, in addition to analysis and critique of current diversity initiatives in principal and superintendent preparation programs. Future research is needed to include the voices of other minoritized counselors including men.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Several researchers have studied Black students, Black teachers, Black principals/superintendents, the overarching designations of Black educators, and the unintended or unanticipated impacts of the Supreme Court decision of 1954 of *Brown v. Board of Education* (Fultz, 2004; Horsford, 2009; Hudson & Holmes, 1994; Oakley, Stowell, & Logan, 2009; Sequoya, 2013; Stephanopoulos, 2016; Tillman, 2004). However, there is a scarcity of research as it relates to the unique positionality of Black school counselor experiences or narratives both historically and currently in the literature. Currently, there are only two peer-reviewed research studies in print concerning Black school counselors by the same principal author. One is an autophenomenography of the researchers' own successes and challenges as an African American school counselor (Wines, 2013), and the other is related to Black school counselors in predominantly White culture school districts (Wines, Nelson, & Watts, 2015).

Wines et al. (2015) noted that the current research literature is lacking perceptions of Black counselors' lived experiences, although there is a vast amount of research of Blacks as client or students (Haizlip, 2012; Henfield, Owens, & Moore, 2008; Henfield, Owens, & Witherspoon, 2011; Henfield, Washington, & Byrd, 2014; Sue et al., 2008; Trahan & Lemberger, 2014). Wines et al. provided germinal research that is important to this study on the lived experiences of Black school counselors today. African American school counselors described thought patterns consistent with White privileged interactions with White colleague as

well as perceived feelings that they were constantly being evaluated and critiqued by colleagues (Wines et al., 2015). Results also revealed "feelings of being alone, that Whites were culturally insensitive, that African American counselors were assigned as cultural ambassadors, resident African Americans, or African American spokespersons" (Wines et al., 2015, p. 68). African American counselors also relayed mindsets of workplace resistance by White colleagues. This was seen as a hesitancy of co-workers to approach them, a perceived lack of comfort in consulting with a Black school counselor, and a devaluation of their opinions and viewpoints towards a given situation (Wines et al., 2015).

Another theme that emerged from Wines et al. (2015), study was that Black school counselors felt that their colleagues from the dominant culture needed to foster increased levels of multicultural sensitivity and awareness. The participants of the study "described this expectation of greater diversity; initial acceptance; multicultural awareness and development; supportive administration, faculty and students; willingness to educate on diversity; development of district policy; and being a role model to African American students" (Wines et al., 2015, p. 69).

Statement of the Problem

The uprooting of Black educators post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision was a devastating social injustice. According to Tillman (2004), the reduction in force of Black educators endangered the financial, social, and traditional components of the Black community, and consequently the academic, social, emotional, and career success of Black children. The impact of the *Brown* decision was well documented in the literature (Contreras & Valverde, 1994; Fultz, 2004; Horsford, 2009; Hudson & Holmes, 1994; Lash & Ratcliff, 2014; Oakley et al., 2009; Tillman, 2004). "The combination of . . . racism; closing Black schools; membership

in Black organizations; failure of the courts to uphold the mandates of *Brown;* exercising the right to vote; and increased reliance on standardized tests were used to deny Black educators employment" (Tillman, 2004, p. 298). I have often contemplated where the access was forged to grant me the liberty to walk the halls and have deep, joyful, and tearful conversations with students of all backgrounds. How could we as Black people go from colored only spaces and entrances and progress to my space where I sit—one Black female counselor in consultation and partnership with a White family of three? When and where did a Black school counselor re-enter into the White-dominated halls of an integrated school post-*Brown v. Board of Education*? Studying the lived experiences of Black school counselors might fill the void in providing rich narratives of Black school counselors' experiences in integrated schools.

Purpose of Addressing the Problem

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and their integration into predominantly White public schools. There is a paucity of information in the literature of Black school counselor lived experiences. There are no historical perspectives of Black school counselors' experiences post-*Brown*. In addition, within the historical recount of the development of school counseling, the *Brown v. Board decision*, which directly impacted the racial demographic of predominantly White schools, is absent. This study might provide an expanded account of how school counseling was shaped by this event in the lives of Black school counselors. This study may also illuminate an understanding of the collective similarities and differences of Black school counselors' lived experiences and how Black school counselors navigated predominantly White schools in regards to their interactions with students, parents, and colleagues post-*Brown*.

This research sought to contribute to the gap in knowledge in the current literature of a minoritized group of school counseling professionals.

Significance of the Study

This study will raise consciousness from a historical narrative perspective of Black school counselors' lived experiences of integration into predominantly White schools post-*Brown* decision era.

> The omission of Black leadership narratives, along with an adequate analysis of the contexts in which leadership has worked, limits our ability to develop ways to improve schools and communities for children who live in poverty and children of color. (Murtadha & Watts, 2005, p. 591)

The collective narratives might provide a path from the past for practicing Black school counselors to link the work we are doing today with the access that these historical figures in school counseling have paved on the behalf of minoritized counselors. This study is also significant as it might expand the accuracy of the history of school counseling by including *Brown v. Board of Education* as a significant societal event that changed the demographic of schools. This study might also motivate and inspire other Black educators to pursue this career as well as contribute to the literature on this topic of an underrepresented minoritized group in the profession.

Research Questions

The overarching research question was: What were the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown*? In addition, specific research questions were addressed:

- What were Black school counselors' experiences with students and families in predominantly White schools post-*Brown*?

- What were Black school counselors' experiences with other counselors, teachers, and administrators in predominantly White schools post-*Brown*?

Personal Statement

My oldest sister came home in fall 1989 and recounted her experiences of classes and the new high school. She also specifically stated that her guidance counselor was Black. I heard stories of this counselors support, guidance, love, and concern for both of my older sisters since I was last in my family to attend high school. I remember walking into high school six years later excited about starting my high school career and knowing that I would have the same support by this high school counselor.

The comfort and confidence in knowing that my school counselor was a Black female who knew and worked with my sisters created a familial link by extension towards me. There are several memories that I have of my high school counselor more than 20 years later. The memories that I am going to share shape my personal perspective that my Black female school counselor mattered to my overall development, both personally and professionally. During the spring of my sophomore year, my school counselor had pulled my transcript and wanted to share with me that she was going to switch my diploma track to the designation of Academic Honors. She felt the Honors track would provide me the most rigorous course of study and challenge me as a student. She relayed that I would need to take three to four additional courses, including world language an additional year and two more years of math instead of one. She also suggested that I take a physics course next year. I was absolutely opposed to this move. I told her that I did not want to move up diplomas. She inquired as to why I was hesitant. I told her that I would be the only Black student in those classes. She stated that she knew that and

basically had a look on her face of "your point is?" She went on to ask me how many of the teachers or principals were Black at our high school. The answer was maybe two at that time.

As I prepared for my senior year, I met with my counselor about possible college choices. I gave her a list of three schools that I had researched; one was a private in-state university and the other two were historically Black colleges/universities (HBCUs) in a neighboring state. My counselor discussed my reasoning and provided insight about all three of my choices. We discussed the reality of being the third in my family to attend college and that my parents were not going to be able to support my schooling financially and how financial aid could help. She walked through private school costs and possible funding opportunities, highlighting both academic and diversity scholarships. In regards to the two HBCUs, she had an intimate knowledge of both schools as she had gone to an HBCU for college. She asked me to return the following day so that she could follow up with me. My assumption upon my return was that she had contacted the schools or other information sources on my behalf and had a frank conversation about funding opportunities and accreditation because she had prepared additional college options for my review. She discussed alternative HBCU programs as well as two other in-state public institutions. In the end, I chose a university that represented her direct and discerning guidance as a Black school counselor to a student of color. In high school, I felt that my school counselor held me in a regard akin to kinship and keen personal responsibility in ensuring the success of my future as a Black female under her stewardship.

Beyond high school, I visited my school counselor at the end of my freshman year of college to share with her my experiences and get advice on pledging a predominantly Black greek letter organization. Unbeknownst to me, my school counselor was a member of that same sorority and eventually wrote a personal reference on my behalf for admission into the

organization during the spring semester of my sophomore year at the university. I recall during my final year as an undergraduate that I was contemplating my next steps. I researched three possible career paths, one of which was to be a school counselor. Again, I contacted my high school counselor and shared with her my thoughts and possible paths. I told her I was leaning towards being a school counselor. She was overjoyed. A few days later, she sent an email to follow up on our conversation. I keep this email as a reminder of the work that I have to do in reaching all students but especially Black and Brown girls and boys.

As a Black school counselor for the last 13 years, I have had my own experiences working in predominantly White schools 65 years post-*Brown v. Board of Education*. I have had numerous positive experiences and have felt welcomed and appreciated for the work that I do and the unique lens in which I approach my job. I have on several occasions been the one or one of the few Black educators in my school. The largest ratio where I was the only Black staff member was at a large suburban high school where there were over 2,500 students and 110+ staff members including five school counselors. I have lived many of the themes as revealed in Wines et al. (2015). I have had feelings of isolation and separation among my colleagues who I come to care for and respect when conversations range from who would cover lunch duty to deeper race relation topics. I have had conversations with Black, Hispanic, and other marginalized populations of students to continue to strive even if they are the only one who looks like them in the room. I have encountered blatant refusal of White families to work with me due to my being Black, and yes, "being Black" was the reason cited for their discomfort. I have also had a student question the reason I was hired since there was already another Black school counselor on staff. The student stated in class, "I thought the quota had been filled."

I have also had White administrators and colleagues appropriately refer and share in the resolution of topics of racial slurs to my office both on the side of the targeted student as well as the student using the racial insults even if they were not assigned to my caseload. Conversely, I have had colleagues ask if I could just deal with it.

I have experienced workplace resistance by my colleagues as well. I have had White teachers and administrators walk past my office and discuss topics related to students on my caseload or delegated duties to which I was responsible with my White colleague. Once I approached them about the oversight, they assured me they had other business to attend to with the other counselor and just asked for a quick consult. I have advocated for increased diversity of student representatives in leadership roles in the building with my administrative team who had not realized there were only White students represented. I have had countless Black and Brown girls and boys and their families state how relieved they were when they found out that I was employed at the school. I have also felt the weight of disappointment when one of these individuals state that they thought I was not there for them or I did not fulfil the expectation of being on their side when they needed it. The idea that I have to advocate for all children but feel the additional weight and responsibility to ensure that Black, Brown, and other marginalized students get equitable opportunities is overwhelming at times.

Summary

My experiences may be similar or divergent to Black school counselors' interactions with their predominantly White administration, colleagues, and families during the lifespan of their careers. Over the span of my career, the negative experiences that I contribute to my being a Black school counselor are significant but not excessive or dominant to my everyday life. I juxtapose that the aforementioned encounters from my own professional life may have been

acutely experienced post-*Brown* era by these Black school counseling forerunners within predominantly White schools. This study is needed to tell the story of these Black school counselors in their own voices through their unique lens as professionals in the field. The literature is bereft of a parallel study that focuses on the experiences of Black school counselors in predominantly White public schools. This study will be rich in historical significance and consequently build a solid link for today's professional school counselors who identify as Black to see themselves as contributing and self-defined members of this noble profession.

The next chapter will include a comprehensive review of the literature, specifically the history and present comprehensive model of school counseling, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the displacement of Black educators, and demographic data on school counselors in the United States. Literature is presented on Black teachers, Black administrators, and Black students' post-*Brown* experiences as parallels to Black school counselors' experiences during this era as well. Critique will be provided after each section to show the significant gaps in literature that this study will address. An overview of Black feminist thought (BFT) will be provided and the rationale as to its use as the conceptual framework for this study.

Definition of Terms

Black educators are teachers, counselors, and administrators who identify as Black or African American. For the purpose of this study, Black and African American are used interchangeably.

Black school counselors are licensed PreK-12 school counselors who are currently working as a counselor or retired from the school counseling profession who identify as Black or African American. Other terms that may be used interchangeably are vocational counselor, guidance counselor, and professional school counselor.

Brown or *Brown v. Board* is a landmark U. S. Supreme Court case in which the Supreme Court declared state laws establishing separate public schools for Black and White students to be unconstitutional.

Integrated schools in the U. S. are the result of the process of ending race-based segregation, also known as desegregation, within American public and private schools.

Post-Brown Era is the period of time after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) with the historic overturning of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* "separate but equal" clause beginning after 1955 until present day.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I gave a brief overview of the history of school counseling. I also reviewed demographic data of school counselors in the United States and include experiences of Black educators in public schools as parallel studies to the Black school counselor experience as there is a lack of research on this specific population. I also provided information on *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the unintended consequences, specifically the displacement of Black educators post-*Brown*. In conclusion, BFT will provide the lens through which this study will be viewed. The rationale for utilizing BFT as the theoretical framework for this proposal will be explained.

History of School Counseling

School counseling was birthed from the vocational guidance movement at the beginning of the 20th century (Savickas, 2009). Many studies contributed the beginnings of the vocational guidance movement to Frank Parsons (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Pope, 2009; Savickas, 2009). In 1909, Frank Parsons wrote *Choosing a Vocation* (Savickas, 2009). The change in the nation from an agricultural society to the rise of the industrial revolution created an opportunity for the schools to align themselves with the needs of the changing world (Pope, 2009). Another pioneer in the vocational guidance movement was Meyers Bloomfield. Savickas (2009) stated that Bloomfield modeled the need to help young people and their families think about their future choices as it related to career pathways.

As the vocational guidance movement began to spread across the nation, teachers took on the role of the vocational guidance counselor on a voluntary basis while still holding teaching duties (Savickas, 2009). Jesse Davis, a high school English teacher out of Michigan, saw the need to respond to the changing industrial society and was identified as the nation's first school counselor (Pope, 2009). Davis was instrumental in the beginnings of creating a systematic delivery of guidance in educational settings. In 1914, Davis wrote *Vocational and Moral Guidance* which became the road map for applying vocational guidance in schools. He was also central in the creation and leadership of the National Vocational Guidance Association which later became the National Career Development Association (NCDA). The NCDA was unsurpassed in its focus on the professional development of career counseling across the nation. Davis was hired in 1917 by the U.S. government to create a structure for counselors to address the future goal attainment of students (Pope, 2009). Davis' work in defining career development and career counseling was a direct path for vocational counselors.

In the 1930s, the definition of vocational guidance began to narrow in scope towards a career choice lens by equipping young people to be prepared for certain careers, to enter careers, and to be successful at maintaining those same careers (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). Guidance in schools also infused trends from the mental health movement during the 1940s with a push towards client-centered modalities as adapted by Carl Rogers (1942) in *Counseling and Psychotherapy*. Counseling in schools shifted away from vocational guidance temporarily to hone in on personal-social issues (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). In the 1950s, the counseling profession in schools entered a period of national accountability and organization with the founding of key professional organizations. The first organization to form was the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA). APGA is now called the American Counseling

Association (ACA) and houses and provides oversight to several divisions. The very first formed division was the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), and it was founded in 1953, just one year after APGA (ASCA, 2003). "ASCA provided the profession of school counseling with professional development strategies, research, resources, and advocacy promoting the profession's identity" (Lambie & Williamson, 2004, p. 125).

The successful launch of the Russian satellite Sputnik 1 in 1957 reignited guidance counseling in schools to return its focus towards vocational preparedness. In response to this international defeat, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 provided federal funding to schools for training and testing aptitudes and specifically charged guidance counselors with the tasks of assessing students with a propensity towards math and science. Further, counselors were tasked with inspiring their students to pursue post-secondary educational opportunities in these career fields (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). Schenck, Anctil, Smith, and Dahir (2012) cited two events in the 1960s related to two legislative acts as contributing to further the need for vocational programs in schools: Manpower Development Act of 1962 and the Vocational Educational Act (1965).

Additional legislation was amended, authored, and passed that supported school counseling in light of the civil rights movement, and a report was submitted by ASCA authored by Gilbert Wrenn (1962). The report identified a need to emphasize remedial services, stressed various modalities to meet the wide-ranging development needs of students, extended the search for gifted students to the elementary level, provided funds, and cemented elementary school counselors (Wrenn, 1962). In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) further delineated funds for guidance and counseling at the elementary level. The VEA Amendments of 1968 included funds to provide vocational guidance programs specific to

marginalized and minoritized youth including those with disabilities (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). In 1972, a new division was founded, called the Association of Non-White Concerns in Personnel and Guidance, which is now called the Association of Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD). AMCD endeavors to increase cultural, ethnic, and racial consciousness through literature and programs designed to promote and maintain personal development (ASCA, 2003).

Another significant event during this time was the publication of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) report, *A Nation at Risk*, which detailed a need for American schools to return to the basics of educating students and increasing the course selection of secondary schools. This report once again swung the profession to the individual needs of students and assigning non-educational duties to augment school counseling tasks. Responsibilities included support of students with issues of neglect or abuse, students in need of assistance due to physical or psychological limitations, and students with emotional and social difficulties, as well as included support of issues of school bullying and violence intervention and prevention (Herr, 2002). Dialogue in the late 1990s between counselor educators, professional school counselors, building and district level administrators, and school counselors in the field proved to be a catalyst to define clearly the role of school counselors while focusing on the advocacy of students (ASCA, 2005). To address this lack of role consistency in the profession, the ASCA championed the creation of National Standards and a National Model (Campbell & Dahir, 1997; ASCA, 2005).

American School Counseling Association National Model®

"In 1990, ASCA's governing board made the first step towards unification by unanimously voting to call the profession 'school counseling' and the program 'school

counseling program" (ASCA, 2005, p. 9). In response to Goals 2000: The Educate America Act, the ASCA Governing Board dedicated its focus to the creation of national standards for school counseling programs. The purpose of this endeavor was to influence practicing school counselors and counselor educators to create essential goals for students, clarify the role of the school counselor in the context of an educational environment, and highlight the impact of school counselors on student achievement (Dahir, 2001).

ASCA began the process of developing a set of national standards for school counseling by initially administering a survey to 2,000 school counselors nationwide. *Sharing the Vision: The National Standards for School Counseling Programs* was published in 1997 (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). Upon the establishment of the national standards, ASCA focused its efforts on designing a national comprehensive school counseling program. The National Model for School Counseling Programs outlined the role of the school counselors' clearly (ASCA, 2003). The *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* propelled the professional organization forward. Foundation, delivery system, management system and accountability are the four key elements of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005).

The ASCA National Model focused on student success and was crafted to be data-driven. ASCA believed information from assessments was needed to support student successes. The model was written to switch "school counselor emphasis from service centered for some students to program-centered for all students" (ASCA, 2005, p. 9). Dixon, Tucker, and Clark (2010) stated, "This new model of school counseling establishes high standards for all students and allows school counselors to advocate for educational equity and access for students across the achievement continuum" (p. 108).

Transforming School Counseling Initiative

In 1996, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit organization, The Education Trust, with financial support from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, launched a five-year, national initiative for transforming school counseling. As a result of this alliance, it was discovered that there was only a slight congruence with the education and training received by pre-service school counselors and the daily activities and services that school counselors actually provided to students (The Education Trust, 2007). This was the beginning of the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI). The 2003 TSCI aimed to reduce variances between pre-service counselor education programs and the reality of day-to-day functions of practicing school counselors (Baker, 2000). TSCI was also designed to ensure the commitment of school counselors to increase the academic achievement of all students, with an emphasis on minoritized and under-privileged students (Baker, 2000; Martin, 2002). TSCI stressed the importance of strengthening the school counselors ability to synthesize knowledge and analyze data in order to decrease the achievement disparities between underserved at-risk students (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008).

After reviewing literature on the history and evolution of school counseling, it is clear that as the profession developed from the vocational guidance movement to today's professional school counselors, there was a clear need to focus on meeting the needs of marginalized and minoritized youth in educational settings. In the beginning, the movement was focused on vocational guidance and was skewed significantly to support White American males. Due to segregation laws in the South and defacto segregation in the North, jobs were very limited for minoritized people, Blacks in particular. The fathers and leaders of the guidance movement in schools were White and predominantly male. Smith stated, "Frank Parsons , one of the founders

of the guidance movement, who was paradoxically concerned with matching people with their appropriate job, favored European immigrants, over native born Blacks, in allocating his services" (as cited in Jackson, 1977, p. 232). Additionally, most literature on vocational guidance was written by White males for White males and the theoretical frameworks of psychotherapy were developed by White men. Therefore, interventions are steeped in White male modalities and not reflective of minoritized professionals.

In 1954, the original journal committed singularly to the school counseling profession, *The School Counselor*, was published by ASCA (Bauman et al., 2003). As the profession of school counseling has been shaped by major societal influences, it is noteworthy to insert that during this time period several cases were being tried in the U. S. Supreme Court on desegregating public schools which culminated in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to integrate public schools and other government entities (Milner & Howard, 2004). However, this was not noted in the literature related to the history of school counseling although it directly pertained to students in schools and thus counselors. In the same year as the groundbreaking *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), it is inconceivable to note that there is not a single mention of the state of America during the history of school counseling during the 1950s or 1960s within the professional periodical. The national event that gets the most attention as the catalyst to the reallocation of resources in school counseling is the successful launch of Sputnik which was without question significant. However, Sputnik did not change the demographic of students and educators in buildings.

Thus, what will be the experiences of Black school counselors in utilizing interventions in predominantly White schools and possibly working with White students and families for the first time? There is not a mention of desegregation or the historic cases impacting schools from

the lens of a school counselor. In fact, less than 2% of published research in journals related to the field of guidance counseling in the 1950s had diversity related content (Bauman et al., 2003). In addition to this, a group of counselors in 1969 urged the national organization, APGA, to consider a division focused on non-White concerns (McFadden & Lipscomb, 1985). The initial decision was to allow a formation of a caucus for non-White concerns which would operate as a consulting group; however, the caucus would not have a vote or be recognized as an official division. After several years and persistent requests, the Association of Non-White Concerns in Personnel and Guidance became an official voting division within APGA (McFadden & Lipscomb, 1985). These instances of disqualification of Blacks in vocational guidance programs, disregard of a significant legislative mandate to desegregate schools and the dissatisfaction of those interested in addressing the needs of Black and other non-Whites, substantiate the need for a study focused on the lived experiences of Black school counselors.

***Brown v. Board of Education Topeka* (1954)**

The 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court case, which ruled in favor of "separate but equal" facilities for Blacks and Whites, was the premise by which schools and most public entities used to separate people (Hoffer, 2012). *Plessy v. Ferguson* was related to disparities in transportation practices when the Plaintiff, Homer Plessy who was identified as mixed race of Black and White, purchased a first-class ticket and boarded the Whites-only area of a train in Louisiana in 1892. Plessy was asked to move; however, he refused. Plessy's case was moved up to the U.S. Supreme Court. The court decided to uphold the State on Louisiana's 1890 "Separate Car Act" which segregated and separated sections of trains based on race with an understanding that the train cars were to be equitable in quality (Hoffer, 2012). The actualization of this ruling was never achieved as Blacks continued to receive sub-standard facilities and accommodations.

The proliferation of "separate but equal" permeated every societal area, notably in schools (Milner & Howard, 2004).

Linda Brown was a third grader in Topeka, Kansas, in 1951, who was walking over a mile to her Black, segregated school when a White elementary school was within two blocks of her home (Milner & Howard, 2004). Linda Browns' parents reached out to the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to raise concerns and seek their guidance. During this time, the NAACP's team of lawyers, led by Thurgood Marshall, had won numerous cases involving the admission of Black graduate students into White-only programs (Bell, 2004). The NAACP encouraged the Brown family along with several other families to enroll their children in the nearby White elementary school. All of the families were disallowed to enroll which consequently led to the filing of a lawsuit against the School Board of Topeka, Kansas (Milner & Howard, 2004). This particular case, which became the overarching name for this landmark decision, was one of six separate segregation cases filed in four different states which was consolidated and argued before the Supreme Court consecutively by the NAACP Legal Defense Team (Bell, 2004). The pointed arguments in the *Brown* and other segregation cases highlighted the damaging impact received by Black students' emotional and mental morale when comparing their overtly substandard Black-only schools in contrast to the higher quality of their White counterparts' buildings and resources. The litigators insinuated that the inner inferiority dialogue of Black children upon seeing the stark contrast as created by the "separate but equal" doctrine was binding and protracted (Milner & Howard, 2004).

After reviewing the literature, I find myself asking the same question as Milner and Howard (2004), "But was the *Brown* decision really a victory for Black students, for Black teachers, for Black families and communities, as well as for Blacks in general?" (p. 286) During

this study, the question of the positive or negative impacts of the decision made through *Brown* from the unique perspective of Black school counselors will provide additional descriptive analysis to compare to the literature of a classroom teacher or an administrative standpoint. What will be the perceptions and personal stories of Black school counselors in Black schools or integrated schools in the years following the *Brown* decision? My study will seek to contribute to the gap in knowledge and address pointed questions related to the literature reviewed in this chapter.

Displacement of Black Educators Post-*Brown* Decision

Oakley et al. (2009) studied the impact of integration by focusing on court rulings which had a direct influence on the Black teaching force in metropolitan areas in 17 states over a period of time. In addition, Oakley et al. looked at the variance in Metropolitan areas that were under mandated desegregation policies thus creating larger decreases in Black teachers and those not ordered by the courts to imposed desegregation. Lastly, they examined whether regional differences existed. The displacement of Black educators post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision was shattering to Black educators as it mandated the desegregation of Black pupils but did not provide any direction, job security, or protection for Black teachers and principals (Karpinski, 2006; Tillman, 2004). Fairclough (2004) stated that in the dismantling of the legal tenants of White supremacy, *Brown* advanced and created new paths for Blacks. Ironically in sectors other than education, *Brown* worked to lift the restrictions of career opportunities and advancements for Blacks by integrating areas previously closed, allowing Blacks the freedom to choose various occupations other than teaching (Lash & Ratcliff, 2014).

"But desegregation also abolished, or at least radically transformed, an anchor of the southern Black community. It exacted costs-institutional, economic, and psychological of which

Black teachers paid more than their fair share" (Fairclough, 2004, p. 47). Thompson (1951), the editor and founder of the *Journal of Negro Education*, predicted in his editorial comments the possibility of delay for Black teacher integration. He predicted that Black Americans must face the prospect that the path to eliminate segregation might have negative consequences for Black educators (Thompson, 1951). Following *Brown*, 38,000 Black teachers and administrators in southern states lost their jobs (Fultz, 2004; Tillman, 2004).

> For a period of approximately two decades, from the mid-1950s through the mid-1970s, African American school staff at all levels-teachers, principals, coaches, counselors, band directors, even cafeteria workers-were fired, demoted, harassed, and bullied as White communities throughout the South reacted first to the prospect and then to the reality of court-ordered desegregation. (Fultz, 2004, pp. 13-14)

As schools moved forward with desegregation, the expectation was the transfer of Black students into the White schools and the closure or reallocation of Black schools (Oakley et al., 2009). Post-*Brown* decision processes were created to ensure that students were not attending separate schools based on their race, leading to the unintended and often times intentional justification of the laying off of Black teachers as schools desegregated (Oakley et al., 2009). Various tactics were used by school corporations to fire, dismiss, or demote Black teachers (Fultz, 2004).

One of the earliest tactics in the displacement of Black educators was to eliminate the connection of those educators affiliated with the NAACP (Fultz, 2004). Fultz (2004) reported that Southern White politicians identified a link between Black educators and the NAACP. Calculated attacks increased and intensified on Black educators who were members of the NAACP. Fultz cited several state Boards of Education who specifically targeted and demanded

membership lists of the NAACP. Georgia's Board of Education was one of the first to directly target Black educators in the NAACP. The Georgia Board of Education in July and August of 1955 unanimously adopted a resolution to revoke forever the license of any teacher who "supports, encourages, condones, or agrees to teach mixed classes . . . further any teacher who was a member of the NAACP, any allied organization, or any subversive organization could have their license revoked" (Fultz, 2004, p. 16).

Another tactic was the increasing use of the National Teacher Examination (NTE) to hinder new Black educators from entering the field or current practicing Black educators to be dismissed (Oakley et al. 2009). In fact, prior to the 1950s, educators did not have a certification test beyond their required two-year degrees that they had to pass successfully (Stennis-Williams, 1996). In addition, there were innumerable ways in which the demotion of Black educators would occur, including "downgrading Black high school and junior high school teachers to the elementary level; downgrading veteran teachers to 'floating' teacher positions . . . [and], teacher aide positions, support staff jobs such as librarians, or even hall monitors, which did not involve classroom responsibilities" (Fultz, 2004, p. 26). In contrast to the southern states, *de jure* desegregation, which was defined legally in *Plessy v. Ferguson* and strictly adhered to under the laws of Jim Crow, the segregation of schools in the northern states was a direct result of *de facto* segregation which was based on housing patterns which largely excluded Blacks from certain neighborhoods and thus schools (Fultz, 2004).

The literature revealed that many Black educators encountered aggressions and microaggressions in their experiences after the desegregation decision of *Brown v. Board* . What will be the barriers and entry points into schools that these school counseling forerunners succeeded in forging undeterred? This study will seek to answer this question and expand upon

the neglected history of Blacks in school counseling. Black school counselors sharing their own integration stories rather as students' themselves or in the early years of their profession will provide new insight into this era post-*Brown* as well as how it shaped their role as a school counselor throughout their career.

Black School Educators and Black Students Post-*Brown* Experiences

Results from the 2015-2016 National Teacher and Principal Survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics under the direction of the U.S. Department of Education indicated that "there were an estimated 3,827,100 teachers in public schools . . . About 80 percent of teachers were White, 9 percent were Hispanic, 7 percent were Black, and 2 percent were Asian . . . 77 percent were female and 23 percent were male" (Taie & Goldring, 2017, p. 3). "In addition to a lack of Black teachers in general, there is a particular lack of Black male teachers as Black males represent only one percent of America's teaching force" (Naman, 2009, p. 33).

Post-*Brown*, the anticipated hope was that Black students attending integrated schools would benefit from the access to better resources such as textbooks, technology, and facilities (Siddle-Walker, 2009). Naman (2009) examined research as it related to various reasons for the racial achievement gap. Results cited in Naman stated that the possible cause could be the dearth of Black educators in American classrooms and schools. Naman (2009) positioned that there are successful White teachers who meet the needs of their Black students, but "in some cases a lack of cultural synchronization between Black students and White teachers could result in lower expectations and test scores, lower behavior ratings, and higher rates of assignment to special education and behavior management classes" (p. 26). Naman classified dual factors that could explain Black school educators' impact on Black students. Active factors point to differences in

actions taken by Black teachers in their appropriation of time, quality exchanges with students, use of illustrations, use of instructional materials and methods, and design of classroom handouts and resources (Naman, 2009). Passive factors include philosophies that assert that Black teachers serve as educational success role models. Black teachers can serve as role models, parental figures, and advocates; they can build relationships with minority students that help the affective needs of students in belonging and connectedness in the school (King, 1993).

Also, Black students may feel a perceived comfort with Black adults in their classroom, Black educators may hold Black students to a different level of academic excellence and expectation, and Black students reportedly do not feel stereotyped by Black teachers (Naman, 2009).

> Specifically, teachers who skillfully use warm demander and culturally responsive pedagogies and have a strong sense of racial identity can create a new classroom culture. This culture supports African American students who actively respond to the warm demander teachers' high expectations by embracing a culture of achievement. (Ware, 2006, pp. 453-454)

Griffin and Tackie (2016) stated that the same qualities that were perceived by Black teachers as positive were the same ones they felt created a barrier to their professional growth. Themes that emerged in their research represented a cross section of the U.S. Black teaching force were that Black teachers felt pigeonholed to connect with all Black students, felt they were enforcing versus educating, felt a need to prove their worth, felt obligated to support the whole students, and felt devalued or othered.

Black teachers felt a lack of value in their building and feelings of being underappreciated and pigeonholed by peers, parents, and building leadership (Griffin & Tackie,

2016). Black teachers perceive that they can import empathy differently in regard to their student's family pressures outside of school comparatively to their White caring co-workers. Black educators who have an understanding of hardships as it relates to students of color have compassion for their students in the midst of maintaining a level of high expectation (Griffin & Tackie, 2016). Black educators often feel like they are outsiders only being consulted when the presenting problem has to do with race, ethnicity, or some diversity construct. Conversely, Black educators may feel they are the "token" in their educational settings. Tokenism refers to the assumption that a person of color is in their position not on the basis of merit but to fulfill a diversity quota (Bryant et al., 2005).

After reviewing the literature, Black educators have unique and personal experiences that have shaped them within the cultural context of our society. These unique experiences at times create a commonality of the Black experiences that could help Black students identify and achieve at higher levels when they are paired with or have access to Black educators. Black teachers and administrators also reported feelings of isolation, devaluation, and tokenism as a few negative themes considered common during their time in educational settings.

Demographic Data of School Counselors in the United States

The *2011 National School Counselor Survey: Counseling at the Crossroads* was the largest national survey, consisting of 5,308 middle and high school counseling professionals (National Office for School Counselor Advocacy [NOSCA], 2011). The most glaring reality of school counselors is the significant gender difference. "More than three-quarters (77 percent) of counselors are women" (NOSCA, 2011, p. 45). School counselors are also represented across various racial groups.

Three out of four counselors identify as 'White,' which includes people of

> Portuguese, Brazilian, Persian, and Middle Eastern descent. Ten percent of counselors identify as Hispanic or Latino (including Spanish and other Spanish origin). And 8 percent of all counselors identify as Black or African American. (NOSCA, 2011, pp. 45-46)

In regards to age, school counselors have a range of distribution between the ages of 30 and 65 (NOSCA, 2011). "The education, training and certification processes required to become a school counselor, results in very few (6 percent) counselors being under age 30. At the older end . . . we see very few counselors who are age 65 and older" (NOSCA, 2011, p. 45).

The literature reviewed in this section reveals the trend in the United States for school counselors to be White and female. Accompanied by the historically White, male-dominated foundation and theoretical formulations of school counseling history, the need for lived experiences of all minoritized and marginalized groups are needed to accurately conceptualize all-encompassing views of the school counseling profession. As I am delimiting the study to Black school counselors, the importance in finding perspectives reflective of both male and female Black counselors will be imperative.

Black School Counselors

ASCA (2004) addressed multiculturalism by noting that cultural competency was demonstrated by school counselors' knowledge of how their own cultural identity impacted the counseling process. Evans, Zambrano, Moyer, and Duffey (2011) stated that it is imperative that school counselors convey multicultural advocacy as a natural byproduct of who they are as leaders within the profession. According to the National School Counselor and Administrator Survey (NSCAS), Black school counselors may perceive a greater responsibility to prioritize equity for marginalized groups in their buildings:

> Nearly 9 in 10 (88%) school counselors say that making sure that students from low income, disadvantaged and immigrant backgrounds get the extra attention and support they need to achieve success equal to other students is extremely important. Counselors who are minority themselves (96% of African American counselors . . . are even more likely to place greater import on equity. (Hart Research Associates, 2012, p. 6)

The NSCAS was a nation-wide survey of administrators and professional school counselors conducted by Hart Research Associates in partnership with the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, National Office for School Counselor Advocacy, and Civic Enterprises with financial support from the Kresge Foundation. More than 3,300 middle level and high school level educators, including counselors and administrators from all 50 states, participated in the survey and focus groups. The survey resulted in a convergence of beliefs by both counselors and administrators on the roles and functions of school counselors (Hart Research Associates, 2012).

Wines et al. (2015) studied Black school counselors lived experiences in White-Culture school districts and provided germinal qualitative data and emergent themes from a qualitative phenomenology humanistic approach. Ten participants were purposefully selected after recruitment and determination that they met the criteria for inclusiveness in the study (Wines et al., 2015). Criterion used were identification as a Black male or female, practicing or retired professional school counselor, minimum of one year working in the field, and experience within a predominantly White-culture school corporation in the Texas (Wines et al., 2015). Of the 10 participants, nine were women and one was a man. The results of this study yielded six themes using a humanistic perspective. According to Wines et al. (2015), "The study revealed six essential essence statements and were derived from phenomenological themes and subthemes:

(a) privileged and hegemonic mind-set, (b) pervasive evaluation, (c) cultural encapsulation, (d) workplace resistance, (e) self-help preservation, and (f) acceptance of African Americans" (p. 67).

After the review of current literature, it is important to note that the 2012 national survey revealed 96% of Black school counselors as a minoritized group themselves see an additional need to insist on equitable processes for their students (Hart Research Associates, 2012). Therefore, I believe it is essential to study the historical narratives of Black school counselors to derive from their experiences propensities towards advocacy for all students. In addition, the absence of Black narratives in school counseling history provides no affirmation for current practicing Black school counselors to discern their present experiences as novel or historically reflective of the lived experiences of Black school counselors in predominantly White schools. This study will seek to discover if possible connections can be forged to link Black counselors from the past to current professional school counselors.

Theoretical Framework

BFT represents a level of pedagogy; the more dedicated knowledge garnered by authorities who are parts of a group and who articulate the group's positionality (Collins, 1989). BFT delineates the underestimated knowledge of African American women. It also emboldens all Black women to create novel definitions of themselves that authenticate a Black women's viewpoint (Collins, 1989). Collins (1990) argued that the conditions of race, class, and gender oppression can vary dramatically and yet generate some uniformity in the epistemologies of minoritized groups. Thus, the significance of an Afrocentric feminist epistemology will help to enrich our understanding of how Black school counselors create knowledge of their experiences.

As stated in Ritzer (2005), Collins instituted the phrase matrix of domination. The matrix of domination focuses on the overlapping pre-existing concept of privilege that is in operation in social contexts and molds how people live their lives (Ritzer, 2005, p. 484). The premise of the matrix of domination illustrates the interlocking forms of privilege and subordination at work in conjunction with one another as it relates to one's social class, economic class, race, ethnicity, gender, or orientation (Ritzer, 2005). "The complexity of social identity in relation to privilege makes it likely that people will belong to both privileged and subordinate categories at the same time" (Ritzer, 2005, p. 484).

Collins (1990) defined as a core theme of BFT that all Black women have a legacy of struggle. Further, Collins (1990) stated that "in spite of differences created by historical era, age, social class, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, the legacy of struggle against racism and sexism is a common thread binding African –American women" (p. 22). Black women also experience marginality within the context of a unique outsider within perspective. As domestic workers pre- and post- slavery, Black women were privileged to see the inner workings of White affluent homes and care for the men, women, and children of these households (Collins, 1990). Collins (1990) stated, "Rather than rejecting our marginality, Black women intellectuals can use our outsider-within stance as a position of strength in building effective coalitions and stimulate dialogue" (p. 36). Black school counselors also operate from an outsider-insider stance in schools; therefore, their lens in recording this history will be strong.

Controlling images is another core theme of BFT, which positions the oppressive depictions of Black women as natural (Collins, 1990). Controlling images stereotype Black women as the welfare queen (Dow, 2014), devoted mammy, the angry Sapphire and the sensual Jezebel (Harris-Perry, 2011). The assertions behind these images are to defeminize, sexually

exploit, and, economically oppress Black women socially, economically, and politically. In *Sister Citizen*, the author facilitated focus groups with 43 generationally, geographically, and economically diverse African American women in the United States and asked them to discuss facts and myths held by others about Black women (Harris-Perry, 2011). From the discussion, emerged the same controlling images as asserted by Collins' BFT. BFT also holds as a theme the term self-definition. "Black women's lives are a series of negotiations that aim to reconcile the contradictions separating our own internally defined images of self as African American women with our objectification as the Other" (Collins, 1990, p. 94). As Black women define themselves, they raise consciousness of an Afrocentric feminist epistemology that rejects stereotypes placed on Black women themselves and others (Collins, 1990).

Conceptualizing this study through BFT will provide a self-defined consciousness as told by Black school counselors. Black school counselors will be able to articulate their rich historical experiences positioned by their unique intersectionality of race, gender, and class. Will these school counselors recite epilogues of feeling likened to the asexual Mammy or domestic worker caring for the White children and families of the school? Will the experiences tout of colleagues anticipating the angry Sapphire thus deeming them unapproachable? Will the unique outsider-within lens of the school counselor working along White administrators and colleagues provide a glimpse of the historical time period from a view of the unassuming and non-personhood of the Black school counselor "mammie"? Armed with a better understanding of these experiences, the voices of Black school counselors can be heard and recognized as integral to the implementation of effective policies and programs that better reflect inclusion and, in turn, increase Black representation, retention, and success in the school counseling profession.

Summary

The current findings from this review of the literature divulge a significant amount of literature on school counseling in defining and clarifying the roles of school counselors through the adoption of a national model. However, the literature exposed in its foundation and subsequent evolution from the vocational guidance movement to guidance counselor and current day school counselors the White-dominated culture of the profession. The literature also revealed the emergence of a Black perspective through the formulation of grass roots efforts, e.g., the formulation of the Association of Non-White concerns in Personnel and Guidance. Further, literature was presented on *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the unintended impact of *Brown* on Black students, Black educators, and Black communities. Various tactics used to displace Black teachers and principals post-*Brown* were also addressed. Black educator experiences were discussed as they provided parallels to inform pedagogy in the study of the lived experiences of Black school counselors. The literature review also exposed a lack of existing literature on Black school counselors' lived experiences post-*Brown* and this study hopes to contribute to the knowledge gap for the profession.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and their integration into predominantly White public schools. This chapter begins by discussing qualitative research and the appropriateness of its use in this study. Specifically, a review of case study and narrative inquiry through the use of life story methodology will be discussed. Next, I will explain how participants will be selected. Lastly, I will discuss how data will be transcribed and analyzed using constant comparative method. Triangulation will be utilized to ensure reliability and validity of the data.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, also called qualitative inquiry, strives to comprehend and explain human and group behavior as it is lived first-hand by participants in a specific setting. It is research focused on the person and unapologetically embraces and recognizes the subjective idiosyncrasies and biased slant of the participants and the human researcher (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2010). According to Ary et al. (2010), it is paramount in qualitative inquiry to recognize and observe biases and how they could impact the compilation of data and the analysis. Qualitative researchers consider that it is inconceivable to create meaningful interpretations of human behaviors without factoring in the frequent exchange and interchange of the researchers' and the participants' own beliefs and morals. Recurrent contact between the

researcher and the participants is recognized as necessary for insuring high validity of qualitative research. Qualitative studies characteristically use non-arbitrary or purposive sampling techniques in the selection of participants based on particular criteria (Ary et al., 2010). Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people or particular sets of people interpret their experience, how they contextualize their worlds, and what sense they ascribe to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

The first characteristic of qualitative inquiry is that there is a keen interest for contextual evidence and meaning related to a particular phenomenon. It posits that human interactions and resulting actions are interrelated to their social environment, historical time frame, political affiliation and awareness, and cultural influences (Ary et al., 2010). Another characteristic is that a significant portion of qualitative research takes place in the original setting of the participant. The natural setting of the participant is considered authentic in contrast to quantitative research which may attempt to alter or control the environment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition, the human inquirer is the primary instrument for assembling and interpreting the data. By nature of qualitative research in studying human perceptions, behaviors, and interactions, the tool used to observe and translate those variables must be malleable and have the ability to adjust to constant changes. Subsequently, qualitative research relies on the participants' words, artifacts, observed behaviors, audiovisual aids, and tools as data. Therefore, there is an emphasis on the wording and analysis of data to be richly descriptive (Ary et al., 2010).

Qualitative research is also known as an emergent design, although parameters of the methodology will be set initially in conducting the research. Due to the flexibility and malleability needed for the researcher and the significant time spent with participants, there is a

constant need to adjust as the study progresses and new truths not previous known are revealed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research draws upon revealing the significance of a phenomenon. Data collection and data analysis take place concurrently and immediately upon the initial interview. The researcher begins to draw inferences and possible themes based on the observed and interview data. Conclusions, comparisons, and theories are formulated as the research progresses with the same or multiple participants in a process called inductive data analysis (Ary et al., 2010). "The ultimate goal of this kind of inquiry is to portray the complex pattern of what is being studied in sufficient depth and detail so that someone who has not experienced it can understand it" (Ary et al., 2010, p. 421).

Research Design

Narrative life story and case studies were the specific qualitative methodologies used to examine the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown*. Narrative research has a rich and eclectic history amongst several disciplines which include literature, history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and cultural fields (Casey, 1995). As a technique utilized in research, the data from narrative inquiry is received through the telling of stories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Life story is a form of narrative inquiry (Etherington, 2009) and is best suited for this study in order to preserve the rich narratives of the Black school counselors through the retelling of their stories based on their personal significance and meaning making. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, "First-person accounts of experience form the narrative text of this research approach" (p. 232). Etherington (2009) stated that life story approaches allows the participant to reflect on complex intricacies of their lives layered with historical significance, cultural influences, and ways in which their past stories have shaped and transformed them. As the story takes shape, information is being organized and interpreted by the storyteller and the

listener cohesively to reflect the participant's own perceptions of the past, hopes for the present, and dreams for their future (Etherington, 2009).

> Life stories also have meanings beyond the local and personal context; they resonate with others and outlast their telling or reading: they sometimes have profound consequences. They change us in ways we may not always anticipate and because they can move us emotionally, change public and political attitude and opinions, and sometime influence future actions. (Etherington, 2009, p. 226)

In addition, a multiple case study approach was utilized. Case study is a methodology appropriate to scenarios in which it is inconceivable to distinguish the participant's context from the phenomenon's criterion (Yin, 2014). Case studies also occur within a bounded context or system. Therefore, it was best suited for my study as I delimited my study to Black school counselors' post-*Brown* era experiences.

Research Questions

The overarching research question was: What were the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown*? In addition, specific research questions were addressed:

- What were Black school counselors' experiences with students and families in predominantly White schools post-*Brown*?
- What were Black school counselors' experiences with other counselors, teachers, and administrators in predominantly White schools post-*Brown*?

Participant Selection

Participants were found through purposeful sampling by identifying those who began working in education during the years of 1960-1980 to ensure the historical time frame was representative of their post-*Brown* era experiences. Creswell (2013) stated, "The idea behind

qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites (or documents or visual material) that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question" (p. 239). Additionally, participants must have significant experience working in predominantly White schools. I attended professional local, state, and national conferences targeting school counselors to begin network sampling. Specifically, network sampling was used to identify gatekeepers to assist in locating and gathering contact information needed for perspective participants. Also, social media was utilized to seek assistance in identifying potential participants within Professional School Counselor of Color groups and other like entities.

Letters and flyers were created in paper and electronic form to assist in recruiting participants to the study. Letters and flyers were used at conferences and for uploading to electronic listservs and social media platforms. Snowballing was used to locate additional participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Snowballing is a technique in which identified potential participants that has knowledge and access to other potential participants that meet the criteria for the study help to recruit and connect them with the study. Once a potential participant was found and contacted and an agreement was reached on his or her voluntary participation, a brief introductory interview was completed to gather demographic data and to ensure adherence to historical timeframe and race criterion were met.

Data Collection

Four Black school counselors served as participants and were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. A brief introductory interview was conducted via phone or face to face in order to build rapport and complete additional demographic data in regards to years of experience in the field, levels where participant has worked as a school counselor, and locations where participants have counseled. Additionally, the semi-structured interview was scheduled

between the researcher and participant. The brief interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The semi-structured interviews were approximately 2 hours in length and were recorded with an audio device. Three interviews were face to face at a private, mutually agreed upon location to ensure comfort and confidentiality of the participant. One interview was via FaceTime, in a setting selected by participant. Researcher reflections were created after each interview through a recording device as well as written observations of interviews was placed in a journal. Questions were grounded in empirical evidence as drawn from the review of the literature. Ultimately, the personal and professional background of the researcher served to enrich this study of Black school counselors and assisted in establishing rapport with the participants. As a researcher and a doctoral student, I remained cognizant of staying present with my participants to increase the depth and richness of every individual interview through the use of reflection of feeling and meaning-making questions to ensure it was clearly the voice of my participants.

Validity and reliability were addressed by utilizing respondent validation, triangulation, and reflexivity. Respondent validation relied on the knowledge and recollection of the participants in ensuring truth in reporting in the data. Additional follow up with participants was conducted to ensure that validity was reached through triangulation of the data. Triangulation compares data, researcher observations, and theoretical frameworks in order to determine where convergence or divergence may occur (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Transcriptions, field notes, and researcher observations were reviewed by the participants to ensure that the interpretations were accurately reported by the researcher. Reflexivity took place during the data collection and analysis through a journal where researcher's reflections, observations, and feeling in regards to the research process were recorded.

Data Analysis

After the interviews were transcribed, the data was coded and organized by themes. Data was analyzed after each semi-structured interview to explore the "implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what was represented in it" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 195). Data was coded and analyzed by themes using the constant comparative method. "This method involved comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data was grouped together on similar dimensions and will be given a name" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 32). While the interviews took place, observer comments and field notes were collected regarding participant responses. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that "all qualitative data analysis is inductive and comparative in the service of developing common themes, patterns or categories that cut across the data" (p. 297).

Summary

Through collecting narrative stories of Black school counselors regarding their lived experiences in a post-*Brown* era, the research might provide additional historical pedagogy relevant to Black counselors in integrated schools. Not only was the specific lens unique to school counselors' positionality in K-12 settings discussed in each case, but the intersectionality of race, class, and gender was also explored within a historical context. It was the hope of this study to bring the lived stories of Black school counselors to the forefront.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and their integration into predominantly White public schools. Life story methodology was used to gather rich, descriptive data of the participants lived experiences. Etherington (2009) stated that the life story approach allows the participants to reflect on complex intricacies of their lives layered with historical significance, cultural influences, and ways in which their past stories have shaped and transformed them. This chapter begins with a brief overview of all participants, followed by detailed accounts of each participant's family background, segregation experiences, K-12 education, life after *Brown v. Board* experiences, college, early career, transition to counseling, and retirement.

Participant Profiles

Participants consisted of four school counselors. All of the participants identified as having served in the role of a teacher and school counselor beginning in 1960-1980. The participants also identify as Black or African American and have retired from the profession. Network sampling was used by identifying key gatekeepers in professional school counseling that were able to obtain and share contact information. Purposeful sampling was use to ensure that each participant met the criteria for participation in my study. Four counselors agreed to participant in this study.

Each counselor makes up her own unique case in this multiple case-study design. The four (N = 4) participants are described in Table 1. The number of participants was in alignment with the goals of my study and allowed for varied experiences to be obtained. The average age of participants was 76.25. All of the participants began their career in education as classroom teachers as was required for licensing prior to becoming a school counselor. The average years that the participants were employed in a school setting was 34.5. The average time spent in the role of a school counselor was 20 years. Demographic data were obtained on each participant through a semi-structure protocol using life story approach. The profiles are arranged using the following sub-headings to provide a succinct overview of participants' lives: Family Background, Segregation, K-12 Education, Life after *Brown v. Board*, College, Early Career, Transition to Counseling, and Retirement. All names used for participants, schools, and locations are pseudonyms to ensure adherence to confidentiality.

Table 1

Participants

Participant Name N = 4	Age	Years in Education	Number of Years in Education	Years as School Counselor	Number of Years as Counselor
Lilly Fairbanks	82	1958-1963 1965-1995	34	1977-1995	17
Mary Raney	77	1974-1985 1988-2010	36	1989-2010	20
Emily Florence	71	1971-2007	37	1988-2007	19
Shirley Appleton	75	1980-2011	31	1987-2011	24
Averages	76.25		34.5		20

Lilly Fairbanks

"If you have an opportunity that day to make a difference in a Black student's life, then you better do it," stated Lilly Fairbanks.

Lilly was an 82 year-old former school counselor and teacher. She was fair-skinned. She was petite and short in stature. She walked with a steady gate. She had a short-natural fade with blond, gray curls upon her crown. She was dressed in an apple green long peasant skirt with pink floral accents. She had matching shoes, purse and a sparkly pink phone. She was well adorned with jewelry and had a smile that reached into you with wisdom and a secret knowing of the joys and obstacles of life.

Family Background

Lilly afforded her strength and fierceness from her family and upbringing. She stated that she lived in a tin-roof house, the likes of which pinged when the rain fell. She lived with her father and mother. She had one brother. She said that they were inseparable. She discussed with reverence that it was instilled in them that their name Tillman was what they had. She stated, "You don't say my name is Lilly. You say my name is Lilly Tillman because slaves didn't have a last name unless you were given one by the slave owner." Lilly's grandmother worked for the Mayor of the city. "My grandmother, my mother's mother, was the daughter of a slave master and a slave. She was a beautiful woman. She could have passed for White." Lilly's parents worked as domestics in the home of the mayor as houseboy and maid in their youth. She stated that they would come home and share information about being in the home of Whites. She recalled,

> And they learned all the things that it took to be sophisticated. They listened and learned how the business people talk to each other from the inside. So, every time they came

> home, we got some little lessons on how to pour tea from a teapot, or how to hold a cup, or how to shake hands, or how to sit. My brother learned when to call a doctor a doctor instead of Doc or whatever, how to look in the eye, those kinds of things.

Segregation

Lilly grew up in a time of segregation as separated by the racial divisions in her neighborhood. She relayed that there were very distinct boundaries of Black and White areas and even knew what streets to cross based on those color lines. "Blacks lived in an area. The only people in your area that were not Black were the grocery stores. And they were mostly Syrian grocery stores." She recalled there was a street where the professional Blacks people lived with beautiful houses. She stated that to her they were rich, educators, and well respected and known in the community. She went on to say, "Black people moved where there were jobs. Could you get on the bus and go downtown to get things? Yes, but there were streets you didn't even cross because that wasn't . . . I mean, that was segregation."

K-12 Education

Lilly attended a segregated elementary school which was staffed by all Black teachers, staff, and administrators. Smiling, she stated, "I did know that when I went to school my teachers loved us. They loved my brother and me." She shared a story about her third grade teacher to illustrate:

> My third grade teacher took us on a field trip. We caught a bus. We had to stand outside for so long waiting on the next bus. In order for White people to not think that we were unruly, we had to always take a pencil and a piece of paper with us. We stood at that corner where the Inn was, and around the top of it the numbers were in Roman numerals. We had to write what each Roman numeral meant. We were the quietest, intelligent little

> Black girls who ever stood on that corner. We caught a bus to a local university, and she would say, "This is a place you could go to school but you have to be smart." And we would look at the flowers, and they would explain the flowers to us and the beauty of nature. I mean, we had flowers in our yard, but we didn't have anything like that garden. Anyway, again, education gets you here.

She shared that while in school, there was a process where the teachers picked who they thought would achieve. She stated, "And the one thing you knew that was according to where you sat in the room." She relayed that if you were in the front that you were going to make it and that you worked hard to get and stay up front, and if you were in the back, good luck," stated Lilly. By second grade, Lilly was told that she should never go lower than number one. She spent the rest of her elementary and formative years excelling in school. "Elementary school for me was the basis for me of who I wanted to be. They were my role models," recalled Lilly.

She went to an integrated school beginning in ninth grade, as the all-Black school only went up to eighth grade. She stated that she encountered cultural shock since her interactions with White adults and children had been extremely limited. Lilly recalled,

> I remember the first day I got there. And I was supposed to take Latin because my parents both took Latin, and they were both excellent at studying the language. I was taking math because every Tillman is a mathematician. When I got there, they looked at me, and they looked at my paper, and they said, "No, you're from [Martin Luther King]. You do not have a background for this." At the end of the semester, the counselor, and you want to talk about why I am a counselor, looked at me and said, "You are so lazy. You won't amount to anything. You have all of these A's and you could have been taking Algebra. You could have taken Latin." And I'm sitting there thinking, I mean,

remember the day now, you can't say to this White woman, "The reason that I'm not is you." I took it. I took that from her.

College

Just like the men and women she emulated in her formative years, Lilly went to a [State College] to become a teacher in her hometown and shared that she attended a predominantly White institution. She shared that when *Brown vs Board* happened, she was in college. Lilly stated, "You have to remember that [State College] was still pretty racist in '54. I mean, they didn't talk about Black stuff." She shared that her classes were largely made up of White students. She stated, "I mean you know why. White kids were in the class, and there may have been one of us. And everybody who was in control was in control."

Life after *Brown v. Board of Education*

Upon discussing the impact of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Lilly relayed that things would slowly change with the work and advocacy of a very active chapter of the NAACP in her city. She stated, "Things changed here in [Inner Town], but, I mean, you never had to sit in the back of the bus here. Now, when I was little, we sat in the balcony in the theaters." Relating to school, she recalled that prior to *Brown v. Board,* "We were integrated into their life. I'm trying to think all along there was no different way before my time." After careful thought, Lilly confirmed that *Brown v. Board* must have been why the Black schools all began to close. Lilly stated, "We never had a Black middle school or high school in the [Inner Town] but always had a Black grade school." Additional changes, due to *Brown*, were the placement of teachers from the Black schools. She stated, "I was the only Black teacher at [Mining] and I was the only Black teacher at every school after [Martin Luther King]. They did not put two of us in the same school. They made sure we were all scattered."

Early Career

Lilly's teaching career began in 1958 and spanned 15 years. During her experiences as a classroom teacher, she began her work in an all-Black school for students in the first through eighth grade. Lilly stated, "When I got my teacher's license [in 1958], there were jobs open. At that time, there was hesitancy on how the families would respond to a Black educator in the classroom." As time would have it, she went on to say, "I say this tongue and cheek, but a person died in the segregated school. And I often think what life would have been like if they hadn't died because I already had a contract somewhere else to go there and teach, but I didn't want to do that. But I would have."

Lilly relayed that the Black school only went up to Grade 8 and then students were merged into the predominantly White high schools. Lilly stated that this was the practice well before the historic *Brown v. Board of Education*. Lilly shared there was one teacher and one classroom for each grade level. All of the teachers were Black and she served as a teacher in her first school for five years (1958-1963). Lilly took some time away from teaching to begin a family and returned to teaching to a vastly different setting as a result of the *Brown v. Board* decision being slowly enacted in her community, resulting in the closure of the all-Black elementary school where she began her career. She stated that all of the teachers and staff were dispersed into the predominantly White schools in the area. She was confident that everyone was placed somewhere or they chose to move to a new city with better pay and found a job. When she returned to work, she was placed at an all-White school. She was the only Black teacher. She shared,

> Some of the fear things were when they sent me to all-Caucasian schools, and all the teachers and the kids all looked at me like I was something from out of space. I

> remember walking down the hall and this kid came running out of the classroom and said, "Julia's here! Julia's here!" Now, Julia was the character on TV that played on one of the first Black TV shows and she was a nurse. And Diahann Carroll played her. And I was like, "Ooh, I look like Diahann Carroll."

She taught there for two years. Her next assignment she taught for eight years, and it was still predominantly White, with the Black student population being about 5-6%, according to her estimation. She spent her last few years teaching in a small school. She stated, "They were all poor, but this was the poorest of the poor."

Transition to Counseling

With encouragement from her district superintendent, Mrs. Fairbanks decided to pursue her school counseling licensure. "So, anyway, the superintendent at that time said, "You need to be a school counselor." I said, "Why?" He said, "You can inspire more people since you don't want to go for your principal license", stated Mrs. Fairbanks. Mrs. Fairbanks found the course work for the licensure to be common sense, as she credited her prior experiences being one of the older students in the class. She stated, "It became a time for me to educate the professors about what was going on. And I take that as a plus because my professors were very good to me." She recounted with amusement an incident with one of her professors.

> When I was finishing up, I had this professor and I kept getting these A's and these B's. And this professor gave me a "B" in this class. I went to him and I said, "You know, there was a time when I came to [State College] and we all made C's because we were colored. You saw her name and no matter how bright we were, all of us who were colored got C's. And then we became Black so we could make a 'B.' And then today, we are called African American". I said, "African American start with an A, and I made

> an A get with the program. You can't give me B's now. You've got to give me the A's that I earned." And it wasn't until the summer that I was walking across campus and he was walking towards me. And he said, "I changed your damn grade." And I said, "Well, hell, it's about time you know I'm no longer Colored or Black. I'm African American." I don't know that that made a difference with the rest of the students ever, but I know that he heard me.

Upon completion of a school counseling program, Lilly began her 17-year career as a school counselor in 1977, and she remained at the same school until she retired. The school was a large high school with approximately 2,000 students. She stated that she was the first and only Black counselor at [Small Town] High for her entire career. The counseling department was made of up of all business teachers. She recounted that her relationship with the other four counselors improved over time, but "as far as they were concerned, I didn't know anything." Initially, her duties were similar to the other counselors with scheduling, transcripts, grades, and meeting with students individually for personal issues. Shortly after beginning, her duties shifted. Mrs. Fairbanks shared,

> The principal was totally impressed with me. He saw how the kids were magnetized to be around me, I mean all the kids. To him I was a true counselor because something connected me with kids, so in his eyes I was (doing motion to indicate high). So, the principal had a meeting and he said, "I want the counselors to have separate duties. I want Mrs. Fairbanks to be the counselor that the kids come to work through problems, and I want you to do her paperwork." And I didn't care. It didn't bother me that I didn't have the same duties. Because I loved kids and I could help kids.

She shared that her duties stayed consistent during her career. However, she did notice a shift in the profession away from the personal side of counseling and more toward programming, testing and paperwork. "I quit at 58, so I didn't get social security or anything. It changed to a point that I didn't want to be a part of it."

Retirement

Since retiring from school counseling, she has continued to work in the educational sectors at both the higher education and K-12 district level. She has worked on district-level and university-level diversity initiatives. "I think when I started in [Inner Town], basically we didn't have the [Black] doctors and lawyers, the CEOs of bankers, and all that. Again, it comes back to how do you teach someone to dream?" She concluded by saying,

> I think you have miles to go before you sleep, and that to me means, I mean I do, too. I have miles to go before I sleep. So, what, you know, I finished my job. So, I see that was my life. I see that for every young person, and I hope I get to talk with them and let them know that they are unique in all they are.

Mary Raney

"One thing that I think [is] there has to be somebody in place who will specifically be concerned about the issues, really from every group, but minorities in particular. It's like, I think you better understand folk who look like you, folk who come from your same background," stated Mary Raney.

Mary was a 77-year-old former school counselor and teacher. She asked me to meet with her in her church where she serves in a leadership role in the ministry. Mary arrived and was using a cane as we walked down to the spacious executive conference room she had reserved for our meeting. She explained that she recently had surgery and her doctor encouraged her to move

more and get out the house. She was fair-skinned with a short, buzzed, natural cut with blondish gray curls atop her crown. She was wearing a long peasant purple skirt with a matching blouse and was carrying a large purse that I took from her as she directed us to our space.

Family Background

Mary moved to [Middle Town] when she was four. She recalled that her older siblings lived with another family member but that they had to live with an aunt and uncle because they could not find a house. "My mother and father and my baby brother and I actually lived in a chicken coop on the back of their property. I called it a chicken coop because it was in the back and chickens were running around," relayed Mary. Her dad was a pastor and had his own church. She recalled, "He built and pastored 17 churches, and he pastored over 44 years in [Middle Town]." She shared that while she was in elementary school her mom did not work but that she later went to school to become a nurse. She stated that her mom began working once her younger brother went to middle school. Mary recalled that Black history was important to her upbringing.

> My parents taught us Black history, and we had a thick, big book, a red book, with Black history in it. It was about all of these people that you don't even hear about. All of these people were in there, and my dad would always tell us that we were smart, and he would tell us stuff like that you know, like you can do this.

Segregation

Mary also grew up in a time of segregation. She shared, "Where we lived, there was no mixing. If you lived on this side, then you were White. And if you lived on this side, you were Black. Then there was one area called [Far Town], and that was where poor White people lived." She stated that both of her parents were from the South. When they moved up North, she

recalled her parents thoughts on the differences. She stated, "The biggest difference was when you were in the South, you knew where people stood, so there was no question. You know your place. You know how far you could go and be safe." In contrast, "When we came to [Middle Town], it was like you find out accidentally when something happened or something happened to you," explained Mary.

> So, in first grade, first semester, I went to [Blue Elementary]. It's no longer here. I just remember my brother saying something about differences in schools and that must have been the Black school because they weren't allowed to take books home. At some schools, they would give me the book, and you have to pay book rent. And they will give you the books, and you could take them home. But some schools, the Black schools, didn't have books that they could take home. The books were old.

K-12 Education

Mary loved school. She relayed it was a mixed school because it was a neighborhood school. Where you lived dictated where you went to school regardless of race. They did not have busing. She shared they had an hour for lunch, so you went home, you ate lunch, and then you went back to school. They didn't have lunch programs. Education and respect were expected in her home. She shared that her father would tell her that the teacher was in charge and her job was to learn. She shared that confidence was instilled in her, and she believed that she could be successful. She stated her father would say, "You've got to get yours, so you can't go in there acting like you know more than the teacher. You can't go in there cutting up and being a fool. You're going in there to listen and to learn."

Every teacher that Mary had in [Middle Town] schools from kindergarten to 12th grade were White. She stated that she had never seen a Black teacher in [Middle Town]. She shared

that she never knew what it was like to have a teacher, principal, or an administrator of color. She shared several key experiences throughout her schooling. One was of a teacher in second grade, "Ms. Green. I loved her and I never ever forgot her. She was an excellent teacher. She treated all of the kids just like they were her kids, and she wanted them to learn." In a later grade, she struggled, and when her parents came for open house, they learned that she had been having problems. She shared,

> And so they came to school that one time and they found out . . . and my daddy was really soft spoken. The only time he ever raised his voice was when he was preaching because he was a pastor. He was very soft-spoken and kind, and my mother was a screamer. My dad was embarrassed. I had embarrassed my dad, and he said, "You are a [Jackson]. You cannot act like everyone else." You know, that means something, and nowadays your name doesn't mean anything. I felt like I had a reputation to uphold, a good reputation, and I did not want my dad to be coming anywhere and feeling like I had been out here playing a fool in front of White folks.

Life after *Brown v. Board*

During that time, the NAACP was very active and strong in Mary's community. She shared that the NAACP was trying to get more opportunities open for minorities. Later, during her early career experiences, she shared how she was directly involved in integrating a major employer in her area with the support of the NAACP. She recounted that her family watched and talked about things going on in the news and in the newspapers. Mary shared that the schools were always basically neighborhood schools, so there were not issues of integration or desegregation. She relayed that the issue was more so with special programs because often times, it was hard to get minority students in the programs. She stated, "It's like they had trouble

seeing where the minority students were gifted and talented. If a student can cut up the whole class until the last 15 minutes and then get their work done, that oughta tell me something."

College

Mary shared when she graduated from [Middle Town High] that she went to [Business College]. At the time, she did not want to go to her local [State College]. Her parents said they could send her out of the state. She stated that she began working at the hospital cleaning toilets. She recalled, "It was the first day of school [at the college], and I see all these kids going to school. And, I mean, I cried. I mean, all these kids were going in the class. And what was I doing? [I was] cleaning toilets on Saturday and Sunday not going to school." Her family stated that they could send her to [Business College]. She recalled that when she finished her courses, the [Business College] did not have a placement for her. She stated, "There were two minorities in the program, one was from a nearby town and me." She stated that at the time there was one placement for minorities, and the guy told her that they would have to send her to [Nearby City]. She refused to leave her hometown.

Early Career

Mary shared that she was the first minoritized telephone long distance operator in her city at AT&T. This was during the Civil Rights Movement in the early 1960s, she shared. She shared that shortly after graduating from Business School that she received a call from representatives of the NAACP who asked her to take an employment placement test. If she passed, she would have the job. She stated that the NAACP representatives stated, "It was very difficult, and no one can pass the test. No minorities can pass. But your name came up, and I want you to go and take the test." The company had stated, "No one can pass the test. No one wants to be operators, and all minorities wanted to do was clean." Mary stated that she took the

test and passed. AT &T had to hire her or the NAACP had threatened to boycott the telephone company. She worked there for five years.

After Mary left the telephone company, she married and completed a teacher preparation program at the local university in [Middle Town]. In 1974, she began as a teacher in a parochial school, located in [Upper Midwest State] and remained there for three years. She was at that school for three years. Once that school closed, Mary was hired within the same school system to an inner-city school, which consisted of seven schools. She worked there for an additional nine years. She stated that it was a Kindergarten through eighth grade school located within the Black community, and since it was during the time of neighborhood schools, the students were all Black or bi-racial; however, the priests were White and the principal was a Black nun. The staff was a mix of both Black and White. She stated that she taught various grades, from third through eighth grade. At one point, she was even the music teacher for the school; however, the last years she was there, she had a sixth-grade homeroom and taught language arts to sixth through eighth grade in the afternoon. She admitted, "I think those were the years that I enjoyed the most, and the last year I was there, that's how I got into counseling."

Transition to Counseling

Smiling, Mary recalled,

> I had always wanted to do that, to be in counseling. So, all these years later, I got an opportunity to actually get started. And so I went to a local university, and I took the classes that I needed to take there. My school allowed me to have an office or room where I met with students. I did testing of students. I met with them. I met with their parents. I did it in school with them. And I did it, and I loved it.

At the end of that year, the school was restructuring, and Mary decided to return to her hometown to help her father with her ailing mother. Upon her return to her hometown, she discovered that the course work that she had begun in her prior city would not lead her to a school counseling career but rather a school psychologist career. She decided to enroll in a school counseling master's degree program at the Teacher's College. She graduated in 1987.

At the completion of the program, she again applied to her local school system and could not get a job. At the Teacher's College job fair for education majors, she was recruited by a man from a neighboring city's school corporation. She worked within that school corporation as a career/vocational counselor for two years. She was then offered a position within her hometown school corporation at the same high school she attended. The high school was one of two in her city. It was predominantly White and housed approximately 1, 200 students.

She shared, "I started out doing a lot of counseling, meeting with students, and getting to know students. I was a counselor that went into classrooms a lot. I did presentations. I always went into the classroom during Black History Month." She stated that after several years, there was a lot of turnover in the position of the department chair. She stated that the principal said, "You're going to be department chair." Mrs. Raney refused initially and wanted someone else to have the position but the principal insisted. Mrs. Raney stated that she was determined to be herself and to be the type of department chair that she would have wanted. Passionately, she shared, "I would stay after and make sure everyone had information. I had department meetings when we were supposed to. I helped the secretaries out. Everyone worked with me very well."

Retirement

She worked there for 20 years and retired in 2010. She also continued to work as a substitute teacher for three years after her retirement. She reflected on her legacy as a school counselor:

> They say old counselors never die. They just exist. But everywhere I go, to restaurants, to stores, I always run into someone who was one of my students at [Middle Town High]. So, it's nice to be able to go places and see kids that you counseled with and that you have helped and to see them being successful. And I've had some of those kids at [Middle Town High]. I've had their kids in elementary school. And even at [Middle Town High], I had some kids I knew their grandparents, and I had their parents and their grandparents, and I said it was time to go.

Emily Florence

"You know there were kids I could touch that no one else could," shared Emily Florence.

I arrived at the home of Mrs. Emily Florence. She embraced me with a huge hug and welcomed me into her home where she has lived for 46 years. She presented me with a lovely spread of fresh fruit and escorted me to her sunroom. While walking to the sunroom, I noticed the famous Ellis Wilson painting "The Funeral" prominently displayed. The sunroom was filled with large plants and the room was furnished with palm-tree patterned wicker furniture. There was a coffee table with afro-centric magazines and books. It was a dreary day, so the sunroom was not as bright but was enclosed on three sides with near to the floor to ceiling windows. Mrs. Florence was fair-skinned and had a short-wavy salt and pepper fade. She was comfortably attired with a red-sleeveless top and black and white capris and sandals.

Family Background

Mrs. Florence grew up in a "little bitty small town in Midwest State." She was the oldest of five children. Her father only had an eighth grade education. "He waited tables at the big hotels in Midwest State. He was a bartender." She reminisced that during Midwest State Derby weeks, he would go with a group of men from the community and he would be a server to the higher-ups—the Whites. She shared, "At the event parties and all of the big time halabaloo that White folks had in my community, my father was one of those people they would call. He was like the butler. You saw the movie—The Butler. He knew the White glove deal, you know." She stated that her mother did not attend college more than a year but that she went to a [Midwest State] HBCU, and wanted to be a social worker but started her family instead. She shared that when she was coming up in the Black community, anybody could tell her what to do. She shared that her parents played a lot of tennis and that her brother was able to attend college on a tennis scholarship.

Segregation and K-12 Education

She described her community as all Black. She shared that her high school, church, and all of her role models where Black. She recalled that her high school was the last Black high school to shut down in her community before integration. Education was important to her and her family. She shared, "I was number three in my class, now the graduating class was only 65 people. It was an all-Black high school." She described her teachers as being "sharp as tacks, smart, and from all-Black schools, just like me." She stated that she did not have a counselor, but that "everyone was your counselor."

> Everybody was your role model. You kind of picked out and align yourself with people that you like, and mine was [Mrs. Horne]. [Mrs. Horne] was my English teacher in high school. I wanted to just be just like her. She was one of those people we looked up to.

> And I love conjugating verbs because that's what she would teach us. I was a majorette. She was the majorette sponsor. She was what we called the cat's meow. She just did it all. And I just loved her for it. If I want to reflect back to a counselor, she would have been the counselor. She would have invented that role. She was the cat's meow as far as being my mentor, my mother, big sister.

Life after *Brown v. Board*

Mrs. Florence shared that her high school was the last one to desegregate post-*Brown* in 1965. She shared, "I remember it because it didn't have anything to do with me because I wasn't going into education. (Laughter) I was not going to be a teacher (laughter)." She stated that the educators were displaced and the kids were forced to go. She stated that all of her siblings under her were impacted and had to go to the White schools. "They didn't have anywhere else to go. You had to go. They shut down all of the Black schools." She shared that her sister's class was the first class to go, and her sister was a senior at the time. She recalled that her sister transferred into the White school as a senior. So, she was only there for that one year. "And they had to make it work you know. So, they tried to move them along like cattle or whatever. And some of them made it and some of them didn't," said Mrs. Florence.

College

Emily shared that she did not go to school to be a teacher or counselor. She went to college with the intention of being a social worker. She remembered that her mother had wanted to be a social worker, and in her mind she wanted to be like her mother and make her proud since she was unable to finish. Emily attended a [Midwest State] HBCU as well, and she recalled ironically that for the first time she had a White educator at an all-Black university. She graduated in 1969 with a degree in sociology and a minor in English.

Early Career

Mrs. Florence's first job was in an all-White junior high school in [Midwestern State]. She was the only Black person there and performed duties of a school social worker. She was there for two years. She moved to a new district and became a home-school worker at the high school, which was similar to the social worker role by doing home calls and meeting with students. She relayed that she was doing social work and counseling with all of the kids even though at the time she was not licensed in either field. She was also in that district for two years.

She moved to [Northern Midwest City], and she sent her application to a neighboring city's school corporation. She was hired and issued a temporary license while she went to State University to become a licensed teacher. She became the program coordinator of an alternative education program at the junior high level in [Public City] Community School Corporation teaching English and social studies in the morning and social skills in the afternoon. She did that for two years. After the program funding ran out, she was placed in a local junior high to support students in their learning disability classroom. She stated, "I didn't think I was a teacher because that's what I thought. I never wanted to be a teacher. I never want to be a teacher. I wanted to be a social worker, okay."

She went on to share that she was eventually given her own classroom and she taught English just like her mentor [Mrs. Horne]. Smiling, she noted, "Okay, so again I had to just make it up, but guess what I taught, and conjugating of the verb. It was full circle (doing a circular hand motion)." She stated, "I called on the angels and remembered [Mrs. Horne]." She shared, "I taught literature different from how everyone else was doing, okay. My spelling you see, my spelling, I made it exciting, you see. We went to the board and I had them diagram sentences, you see." She taught English for nine years.

Transition to Counseling

While getting her teacher's license, her goal was to earn her master's in social work as well, but the program went under due to low enrollment. She decided to pursue her school counseling license at a small university with the strong support of her Student Services Director who hired her initially. She completed the program and had to teach for at least five years in order to become certified as a school counselor.

After leaving her position as an English teacher, she was sent to another junior high to begin counseling. She stated that she was there for one year and then was called to come to [Public City High]. She stated, "So, when I went to [Public City High] again, I was shooting blanks. But like I said, I felt what I was doing was right." She stated that her duties consisted of scheduling, paperwork, before and after-school programs, and when there was time she was able to do the "knee to knee" with students and families and get "transition supports in for new students to help them feel comfortable."

She shared that after only five years, all of her hard work paid off because she was named head of the department. She was also instrumental in piloting programs geared towards the TSCI in the state. She was chosen as a representative from the district to sit on the statewide committee. She was at [Public City High] for 11 years. She spent her last seven years at the [Career Center]. She stated, "I could bring my strengths as a guidance counselor because I knew curriculum, transcripts, and combined it with my new knowledge at the career center. And I felt like I helped to create my own job."

Retirement

Having been retired for over 12 years, she shared that she has been asked to consult with her local school district as well as [Public City] Community Schools. She relayed that she was

shocked to know that the program she piloted at [Public City] was being used in the neighboring district to this day. She stated that she has put all of her licenses on hold since she holds lifetime status. She laughed and shared, "All of my licenses are on vacation. If I ever decided to go back to work or go in to do some counseling or whatever, all they would have to do is pull me up. Before I retired, I was in good standing."

Shirley Appleton

"Young people are dying every day. Young people are living with drug abuse. Be concerned about the challenges or whatever youth have today," stated Shirley Appleton.

Shirley Appleton wore a comfortable purple shirt with the word Faith spelled out in rhinestones and Black pants. She had a short afro and a Black headband. She had a dark complexion. She was wearing purple nail polish to match her shirt. She wore large dangly earrings. Throughout our conversation, she often held her head thoughtfully while speaking or wrung her hands. She was on vacation in Texas and was in a private suite while we connected via FaceTime due to scheduling difficulties. The room was very large with vaulted and tray ceilings. She had been traveling extensively, she remarked since being retired. She shared that she had just put some green beans on to cook. Shirley was a retired school counselor with 24 years of experience.

Family Background

Shirley Appleton grew up in a small town in [Southern State]. Mrs. Appleton shared that her grandfather did not have an education but had three of his four children attend college. Shirley was the only child to her parents. Her father was a carpenter. She shared that he was most likely self-taught and was very talented in woodwork. Her mother was an educator and taught first or second grade her entire career. She stated, "Education was important to her

family. I think she gave that to me as the way to better yourself always, as for the next generation, you know, to do more." She shared that her mom was known in the community.

Segregation

Shirley Appleton reiterated that she grew up in a "really small town in the South" and that she was confronted with segregation. She stated, "My memory of going downtown and seeing a White and a colored water fountain. If you wanted to try something on, sometimes, you know, the clerks sometimes looked at you strange." She stated that her community was Black and that her schools were all Black. Shirley stated that the schools on her side of town were Black and that "you knew where not to be." She clarified, "You know, I don't remember anybody sitting you down and having 'the talk,' but it was something that was ingrained in you. And you have good sensors about danger."

K-12 Education

Shirley attended an all-Black Catholic parochial school until the eighth grade. She shared when it was time to enroll in the all-Black high schools that several of the girls were pregnant, so her mother refused to have her attend the school. She was given the opportunity to go to a boarding school for high school on the East Coast. She stated, "Well, they took me up there. My momma took me up there and left me. And they saw that we got home for the holidays. And I came home every summer." The boarding school was all female and was run by the same mission parish as her home town. She stated that the school was "desegregated," but the dormitory roommate assignments were segregated by race. She stated there were three other Black girls in her graduation class, and one of them was also from her hometown. She graduated at the age of 16.

Life after *Brown v. Board*

When asked about her experience or knowledge of *Brown v. Board*, she stated that she was in grade school when it happened. She stated that due to her being in a private setting, the law did not impact her schooling during the time she was attending; however, her mother was impacted. She stated that her mother had the foresight to get her master's degree and would take the family to New York every summer three years in a row and stay with her sister so that she could complete required courses. She recalled, "My momma was involved."

> I really didn't appreciate this until she died in 2013. But she had written a whole bunch of things, and when I was going through her papers, I saw them. She was in a segregated school of course, and so the year that they desegregated the schools they had bunches of meetings, you know, for the parents, community, and for the teachers. Then, they selected teachers. This guy, he was White. He was the principal. He was a White guy, and he had a daughter who was entering the first grade. And he chose two masters-level prepared Black teachers to teach in first grade at his school. And at night she could drive from home to school pretty quick, you know. She could go through the rural area. You know, anyway, I heard her talking about it, but it didn't really hit me until she died. But that was probably pretty traumatic for her.

College

Ms. Appleton shared that she finished high school early and that, due to her age, she could not enroll in a nursing program. She stated that her mother had applied to three HBCUs for her and that she chose to attend [Eastern HBCU]. She graduated with a degree in nursing. Laughing, she shared, "When my mama left me, she said, 'I will be back in four years, I don't care if no one else graduates in this class. You best do it! So, yes mam!"' She felt during her

sophomore year that nursing was not for her, but she persisted as required by her mother. She shared that her mother had wanted to be a nurse and had told her not to go into education.

Early Career

Shirley began her nursing career in a hospital setting. She stated that she truly did not like the work or the demanding hours. She worked there for a year and then she moved into the public health sector. She stated that she was "visiting people at their homes, like when people had babies and needed guidance. You know, babies who failed to thrive or who had bunches of pregnancy." She shared that there was an initiative to do an adolescent clinic, and when they opened it, she worked there. She enjoyed the work with the teenagers. During this time she was married, and her husband was going to get an MBA. Passionately, she stated, "He would never put his foot in an institution of higher education and mine ain't right beside it." She stated that she enrolled in the school counseling program since she liked the idea of working and guiding teenagers. She spent 10 years in the nursing profession and then transitioned to teaching.

Transition to Counseling

As mentioned previously, there was a requirement of teaching for five years prior to becoming licensed as a school counselor. The local school district was looking for instructors in their Health Occupations program, and Shirley applied and was offered the position. At the end of the first year, she began work on her teacher certification so that she would be licensed and fulfill the requirements for teaching and school counseling. She taught in the program for seven years.

The local school corporation was starting an alternative education program, and they needed a counselor. Ms. Appleton successfully applied and began work in the counseling profession. Shirley recalled that the alternative program had both a small student body and

faculty. "So, I really did enjoy that. You could absolutely talk to kids. You know, they would come in, and they would come in for a morning hug. And they came back during the day when things upset them," Ms. Appleton shared. She stated that the program moved into the large urban school at the end of the first year, and she began to work closely with the guidance department within the high school. At the end of the second year, the guidance department chair made her aware of an opening on staff. She was offered the position. She shared, "I was kind of seeing so many things that were not being done. One was exposing students of color to HBCUs." She also was consistent in arranging for qualified students to attend the Black College Fair as well as was a strong advocate for getting all students connected with eligible scholarships. By the end of her third year, she moved into the position of department chair. She remained Chair of the department for 17 years, and then she became a District Coordinator.

She was the District Coordinator her last two years and found working with adults to be more challenging than working with the students. She shared, "We counselors had become so involved in the testing program that we spent so much time deciding who should take the test. Knowing the kids and meeting with them really takes a back seat." Mrs. Appleton worked alongside another coordinator to standardized school counseling practices district-wide and provided best practices, backed by research, of successful strategies for implementation. Shirley shared great disappointment at the end of her career that the work that was done on the district level to standardize and strengthen school counselor efficacy was not implemented after she retired.

Retirement

Since retiring, she has co-taught some school counseling preparation courses at a local university as well as traveled extensively. She enjoys seeing her former students and the success they have garnered in life at all levels.

> I don't mean that people have to be doctors and nurses or whatever. That's always nice to hear. But this one guy, I wouldn't have given a Chinese quarter that he was gonna make it. (Laughter) I ran into him one year over Christmas at the Dollar General. His name was [Carl]. And I said, "[Carl], what are you doing?" He said, "Ms. Appleton, I'm married. I have three kids and I have a job." And, you know, he's a success story. He has a job. He has a wife. He has children. So, anyway, those kinds of things just make you smile.

She shared that she travels extensively and loves being retired. She was not currently working but kept in contact with local schools and former colleagues.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and their integration into predominantly White public schools. This chapter will provide a detailed overview of each of these themes and their sub-themes. The themes were *racism*, detailing the personal, societal and intuitional racism experienced and how these counselors combated these through advocacy; *coping strategies*, detailing the specific strategies used in working in predominantly White schools, including appearance, specifically detailing how appearance assisted in forging access into predominantly White schools; *supports*, detailing the various relationships that allowed access, guidance, and ongoing support for these counselors; *everybody's counselor*, detailing the interactions with students and families; *everywhere I go*, detailing the impact of their legacy in their schools and communities even today in retirement.

Racism

Participants experienced racism throughout their life and careers. Personal racism was experienced by participants in both overt and covert ways with supervisors, colleagues, and students. Participants also experienced microaggressions and tokenism and were viewed and used as resident Black experts in predominantly White schools. Societal racism was experience by participants through their experiences recounting the hesitancy of predominantly White schools to hire Black educators as a whole or hire multiple Black educators' in the same

building. The participant shared about being the only Black staff or even the only Black person in the building. Institutional racism was also discussed by participants. Participants discussed ways in which they challenged and supported policies to reduce institutional racism and promote equity in their school corporations.

Overt Personal Racism

Participants encountered individual racism through the many microaggressions they experienced in the work place. Lilly Fairbanks recalled vividly an experience with personal overt racism by a superior.

She stated,

> At [Mining], the principal was very racist. She had no idea about me or anything. She just got this teacher. [Mining] was a brand new school. The principal came to my door by the water fountain and said, "I don't have anything against you. I've got a lot of niggers who are my friend." And I said, "What?" And she said, "I told you I have a lot of niggers who are my friends, and I don't know why you think I have something against you." And I said, "You know what? Don't worry about it. Go back across the hall."

She shared that after the incident occurred along with a series of event that she requested to be transferred to another school. That request was granted. She reflected on the incident:

> Life makes you look at things differently because of your experiences. And those experiences, and that little school, in that short amount of time, taught me that there was something in me that wasn't afraid to fight, that wasn't afraid to accept everyone as they are.

Mary Raney confronted and educated students on a racial slur used to insult her. She shared that she would go down once a week and ate with kids in the lunchroom. One day, a White male

student wanted her to arm wrestle with him. She refused and he continued to ask. She stated that she told him that it was not appropriate and to continue to eat his lunch. She recalled,

> This kid says, "You know what? I don't care because I don't want to arm wrestle with a nigger anyway." And I said, "That's good because I don't either. Do you know what a nigger was?" and so I gave him a short lesson on what nigger means and what it was. And so they went and told the teacher.

She shared that she wanted to use the opportunity to educate the boy and for him not to get into trouble. She stated, "I didn't want him in trouble because this little boy had only said what he overheard other people say." However, the site supervisor learned of the incident and sent the student to the principal office. Mary shared,

> She wanted to talk to me about it. She was so upset, and I said, "I wasn't upset. First of all, I'm not a nigger and wasn't upset. I told him that I don't want to arm wrestle with a nigger either." So, I had to give her a lesson on what a nigger was, and I said, "That's not me." So, it was a lot of little things like that.

Mary also shared how a family refused to work with her on account of her skin color. She shared that the assistant principal came to her and he was embarrassed because he had to tell her about a families prejudice. She recalled,

> Because they were assigned to me and he had to tell me. They had to move him. And he said, "You didn't do anything," and there was nothing that I had done wrong. And I asked, "Was there a problem?" I mean the parents hadn't talked to me or met me. They saw me and they knew I was Black. And he said, "No, that's the only reason. There's nothing that you've done and there's no problem." But there were little things like that

> that happened every now and again that help me to know that we're not out of the woods yet.

Covert Personal Racism

Early within their counseling careers, three of the participants recounted various incidents of covert racism with their colleagues or guidance department chairs. Shirley Appleton shared that shortly after she became department chair, her colleagues responded in confusion about communication that she copied and pasted from the previous chair. She explained,

> Well, the first year Mr. Smith was gone, he left me a notebook. It had everything that we did from the first of the school year until the end. And he gave me the notebook and I thought until I know how I want to do it differently, I'll do it like he did it. So, sometimes at first, I would send out emails or messages about things, and he left me photocopies, and I would take his name off and have my name typed in. You know, White folks couldn't understand what those memos were saying, but they could when he sent it last year.

She went on to share that there was a level of distrust of her professional capabilities. She stated,

> Anyway, hmph. I mean, they were just questioning everything it felt like those first few months. I would say . . . one of the counselors, we were talking, and I said, "You know the kid's seventh semester GPA was the final GPA." And he was barely new in counseling, and he said, "Oh, really? Is that really true?" And I said, "It has to be because the students are graduating by time the eighth semester GPA was calculated." "Are you sure?" By that time, the scheduling vice principal opened the door and stands there. He looked at him and said, "[Paul], is it true that the seventh . . ." And I looked at

> him and said, “You had to ask a White man, didn't you? You know you just had to.” I wasn't being nasty to people, but you know they did not realize what they did.

Mary Raney described her first meeting with the Department Chair at her new job. She shared,

> And she turned around and she had the most horrible look on her face, and she said, “Let's get one thing straight right now.” And I said, “Yaaaas?” and she said, “Don't you ever go over my head for anything. If you have questions about something, you come to me. Is that understood?” And I was like, “Well, if I have questions about anything at any time to ask you.” And she was like, “Yes, that's right. You don't go over there.”

Lilly Fairbanks spoke about the way the Director of Counseling spoke down to her. She shared,

> The chief counselor talked to me like I was a kid. She would say, “I know you don't know about this, but we’ll help you with it.” The one thing I learned was how to be quiet. As far as I was concerned, if they didn't want to teach me, I didn't want to do it. And in this counselor’s eyes I was down here (doing low hand motion). And this guy asked me, “Does it bother me the way that she talks down to you? Because it angers me.” I said, “Uh, uh, because every time she talks about something that had to do with business, I’m like, well it takes it off my plate, and I can do something else.”

In addition, Mrs. Fairbanks experienced character defamation as colleagues questioned how she was able to get the position at the high school. She angrily recalled,

> Some of the men were trying to say that I had an affair with the principal or the vice principal . . . and my mouth never stopped talking, and I would go up to them and say that my husband will come up here and kick your ass, and I didn’t have to say no more. Go ahead and keep talking about me. (Laughter)

Tokenism. Another sub-theme that the data revealed about societal racism was tokenism. Tokenism refers to the assumption that a person of color was in their position not on the basis of merit but to fulfill a diversity quota (Bryant et al., 2005). Emily Florence spoke on tokenism as it related to another Black social worker in the district and did not attribute this to herself. However, she did agree that she was selected due to being Black for a specialized state-wide initiative for her district due to her race. She justified the contrasting statement by stating that she worked hard for everything she did and earned the position. Emily recalled,

> And then there was another lady there. She was the Black . . . I'm going to call her the token. [Glenn Isom], she was going back to school to get her masters in social work. So she was the social worker for [Public City] Community Schools. She was Black. She made all the home calls. Then there was another Black lady who was the para [professional]. And she would make home calls, but she did not have a degree. And I felt the vibes from her that I was a threat because I had the degree. I had the look that [Public City] wanted, and she was going to be pushed out.

Further, she described her own positionality within the district as not the token. However, her statement contradicted this belief. She shared,

> Anyway, so they put together a team. And guess who was on the team. The two of them [and] me—of all the counselors—and I was the only Black counselor, so they had to have me. So, I was the third person, and I was the only Black counselor in [Public City] at this point.

After being asked if she felt like a token in a lot of situations, Emily Florence replied,

> Never, never. I worked hard for everything I got. I know others who may say it. Others may have thought that, but I worked hard and I was dedicated. I figured that everything I

> got I worked for it. Other people got stuff that I didn't. I mean, when my time came, it came.

Resident expert. Participants stated that they would get students who were Black even if they were not in the assigned grade for the classroom. They would be asked to consult and intervene on behalf of Black students by their White colleagues, being used to vet professional correspondence for the entire district to ensure political correctness and feelings of being used unfairly outside of their teaching/counseling duties. Lilly Fairbanks shared,

> Every time I had a kid coming to the school who was African American, I had them in my [fifth grade] classroom, whether they were third, fourth, fifth, or sixth grade. I would have them . . . And I went home, and I said, "Go and beat Mr. Paul." And my husband said, "Why am I going to go beat him up?" And I said, "Because he gave me another kid." And he didn't understand why I had 30 kids and everybody else had 15 kids. It was a very small school. I have all of these kids from second grade all the way down . . . I even had a first grader come in, and I was like, "Go back down there, I'm not teaching you." (Laughter).

Lilly also experienced being pulled from her classroom to address Black issues. She stated,

> So, anyway, before anything was sent out from the school corporation, I had to make sure that it was politically correct. So, any teacher who had anything to send out, I was supposed to look it over. But there were several things they wanted me to do that I wasn't qualified to do. But I was the Black person in the school corporation that wasn't afraid to speak up about anything. And I'm not sure as I look back if they did this to keep me from speaking out or if they did because they thought it was the right thing.

Lilly passionately shared her frustration with these incidents. She shared,

> I would meet with the superintendent, and he would act like he wanted to know what's going on, but he didn't. He just felt like he needed to do it. And finally we got a new superintendent, and I said, "Hey, you keep pulling me out of my classroom, and I feel this was very unfair to my students. And I'm not going to keep doing this."

Emily Florence pre-empted the designation of being the resident expert by stating early in her career that "everybody's kid was my kid. You know that. And I would tell people, 'I'm not here to be the Black counselor. I'm not here to put out the Black fires."' Mary Raney stated that she was often called on by her colleagues to support Black students. She shared,

> There were a number of times where teachers would actually come to me and give me a little background on the student that they had in class and say, "I know this was not your student, but will you talk with them or would you meet with them? It's a good kid," or whatever the situation was. I would always say yes. Usually in that case it would be a minority student, but there were times, other times, they would have me talk with other students.

Societal Racism

Various statements by participants highlighted the significance of being the only Black adult working in a predominantly White school. Participants shared incidents of how there was a limit of one Black educator when they began their education careers and throughout. They also shared they had limited contact with minority students. In addition, Black students tended to gravitate to them whether the student was assigned to them or not. Participants all shared how lonely it felt at times being the only Black educator in the building.

Being the only Black educator. Three of the four participants experienced being the only Black educator in the building or within the counseling department. Lilly Fairbanks shared

when she returned after having her daughter in 1963 that her previous Black elementary school had closed. She recalled,

> Well, I was the only Black teacher at [Mining] Elementary, and I was the only Black teacher at every school after [Martin Luther King] School . . . They did not put two of us in the same school when they placed us. They made sure we were all scattered out there.

Mary Raney shared the same sentiments some 25 years later in 1988. She stated, "There was a limit of one [Black educator]." Lilly Fairbanks continued to experience the isolation of being the only one throughout her counseling career as well. She stated,

> So, in my first year, I was the first and only Black counselor at that high school in my entire career. There were two men at the other public high school during my career. They went on to other places after a few years. They got much more money. It was pretty lonely.

Emily Florence detailed her own experience. She recalled,

> In the new district, I was in high school. And in [Rural State], I was in a junior high school. And I'm doing social work and I'm doing counseling. I'm doing it with all kids, all the kids, but the Black kids tend to gravitate to you because you're the only person in the building.

This gravitational phenomenon was experienced by Lilly Fairbanks and Mary Raney with the students and families in their communities as well. Mary Raney recalled,

> When parents in the community found out I was there, they had started requesting that their kids be transferred to me. Matter of fact, we had a family that moved from [Chrome] to [West] when they found out I was going to be at [Middle Town High]. They moved so their son could have me as his counselor.

Lilly Fairbanks shared that students from the high school across town would get a pass to come to her school to meet with her. She shared, "The Black students from South would get passes to come to North. They would call me and say I need to come over and talk to you. And they would come over to North to talk to me." Emily Florence and Lilly Fairbanks discussed the increased consciousness of working harder and being the best as a natural compulsion of being the only Black counselor in the building. Emily Florence stated,

> I was doing it. I'm not one, you know . . . I share the responsibility, but it also has to be done right. And I want my people to work as hard as I work. And there were some counselors that did not work as hard as I. So, what I was doing was . . . I would pick up slack. So, my job really started a quarter of 7 every day and I was there until 7 o'clock at night. That was me. I was the only one. And I had to do well. And people had to know that I was working hard, too.

Lilly Fairbanks spoke about this compulsion to work harder. She shared,

> There's no way you can be like some of them where you are going to go. There's nowhere in your life you can . . . it's not you. On the other hand, you're like, "Why am I working so hard? Why am I seeing 50 kids and they're seeing two kids?" Because that's you, that's you.

She further explained,

> So, when they send us all out. I think two things happen to us as a group of teachers though. To be a great teacher, and honest to goodness I only know two African American teachers that I would not have given the license to. But we were great teachers. We were not lazy. I mean we really taught. And when they separated us, it

became a “do I work harder to be great?” or “do I do like them and be in trouble because I can't do like them?”

Institutional Racism

Institutional racism was experienced by participants in a variety of ways which included the participants combating policies and systemic inequities through the hiring process, district diversity initiatives, advocacy at Board meetings, and raising awareness of the lack of minority representation as well as letters to raise the consciousness of those in power of the perception of institutional racism. Lilly Fairbanks relayed,

> When I got my teacher’s license, there were jobs open. I was blatantly told that there was a young lady who I am very dear friends with but was of Japanese/Hawaiian descent. They wanted to see if they accepted her, and if they accepted her first, and then they would accept me for a teaching job.

Mary Raney shared the same sentiments on the hesitancy within the district to hire Black educators. She stated,

> Everything had to be done and documented and proven over and over again before taking a chance on things. The fear was somehow . . . how would parents react? Would parents approve? There was always a fear of what the parents would do.

Lilly Fairbanks and Mary Raney used their voice at school board meetings to address issues impacting minorities in the corporation. Lilly passionately shared,

> Yeah. I was a teacher then. So, I think [Dr. Dawson] or someone from the school board said, “Let's work on a plan” and all of this. The plan was to be voted on and this woman from West of [Town] said something stupid, and I don’t remember what it was. All I remember, I was seeing those four young girls and the older Black teachers were in the

> room, too. And I stood up and I did this (fists in the air) and they stood up and they did this (fist in the air), too. And these Black teachers who were young and some of them were older than me were saying, "Sit down (whispered through gritted teeth). Sit down." And I said, "Oh no, oh no" and [Dr. Dawson] was looking at me. And he just smiled and he knew me. He knew Lilly Fairbanks. I said, "May I speak?" and he said the floor is Lilly Fairbanks. And I turned and I looked at them said, "Don't y'all sit down." (gritted teeth whisper). And I said it's either now or never. So, you can play this game and put it off or do whatever you want to do but remember, and I looked at this woman and said, "It was now or never." And I went back and I sat down. And they voted to adopt this.

She further explained,

> It was a curriculum that would say there was no reason why you couldn't talk about African Americans. If you were talking about anything, you can bring up African Americans. Bring it in at any point, but you talk about the fearlessness. What are you going to do? What are you going to do when I tell you the truth? If I'm bull crapping and I'm telling a lie, then you can do a lot of things. But if I'm telling the truth, what are you going to do?

Mary also stood up to the lack of minority representation on a committee ironically formed to address issues of diversity. She stated,

> [Mr. Edwards] was the person who was forming the committee. I didn't know who formed the committee. I didn't know at the time. It had something to do with minorities. When I saw the list of people who had been chosen for this committee, to my knowledge, there were no minorities on there. It was supposed to be a counselor with experience, and the counselor was the newest counselor in our office. I was like, "If you are forming this

> committing and for whatever it's for, why are there no minorities on this committee, and why was the newest counselor chosen?" The one that would have the least experience as a counselor, and I mean I looked at this, and I went to school board meetings all the time. So, when they have the two times for public comment where you can have input and get up and speak, I would go. So, I got up to speak, and I questioned the makeup of the committee and how you can have this committee to deal with minorities or issues of diversity or inclusion. I was like, "Where is the minority representation?"

Mrs. Raney practiced this same advocacy when she saw within her school building the lack of representation of minority students for scholarship nominations and other programing. Mary recalled,

> But when I felt like some of the minority students were not receiving fair treatment or not, I was like, "Why was it that on things we have to nominate kids for, why aren't any minorities students being nominated? I'm going to tell you [about] [Mr. Roo]. I mean, I love [Mr. Roo], but he couldn't see but one student and he was an athlete, an all-around athlete. He was a good student, too, but every time that we had something we have to nominate students for, well, you know, nominated minority student for, because if it didn't say minority, they didn't think of minorities even being eligible. He would come up to us and was like I've got someone, and it was the same student every time. I was like, "[Mr. Roo], give me somebody else." And he would say, "I can't think of anybody." And I said," I know you have more because my daughter goes here, and I know she's eligible." He said, "What? I didn't even think about her. I just figured since you're her mom that you would take care of her." And I said, "No, you are her counselor. You need to do your job and, you know, take care of her."

Shirley Appleton also shared about writing to city officials over a concern that was clearly inequitable treatment of a Black student. She passionately shared,

> You know, one year we had a National Merit Finalist, a White boy, real smart. He majored in physics when he left. He came back and taught there. And we had a National Achievement Finalist. And so the Mayor's Office sent out one of his deputies out to commend the National Merit Finalist. Guuuurrrrl, I was spitting nails. I mean spitting nails. I thought OK Shirley, if you don't stand for something, you stand for nothing. I told the public relations person that I was annoyed, and if she would stop by my office, I would tell her why. And the principal truly knew why I was annoyed. So, I said, "You know, being annoyed was not enough," so I wrote the superintendent. And I still have a copy of it, the e-mail. And I suggested that I'm sure that neither the District nor the city wanted to give the impression of institutional racism. I explained that the College Board supported both programs. However, the National Achievement program was specifically for Black students, and that the Mayor's office sent somebody out to acknowledge the White student and ignored a Black student. It was something that I could not tolerate. And I said, "Well, what did it say to the other students?" because National Honor Society students were a part of the program, and I said, "What does that say to them, you know?" So anyway, so the superintendent, he called me. He said that he didn't know about all of that. He didn't know about the differences etcetera and he usually didn't interfere but that he put in a call to the Mayor's office. So, then the Mayor's office got busy and called us. They told us to bring the National Achievement Scholar down to the Mayor's outer office and they were going to invite his family. They said that we could bring as many kids as we wanted to from [Titan]. So, anyway, the boy's guardian was his sister who was a

> dentist and her husband was an engineer. I just loved it. I just loved it (laughter), so we couldn't start until she got there. She was trying to find a parking spot, but she was like, "I'm here but I can't find a parking spot," and it was clear that we were not starting until Doctor so-and-so whatever her name was arrived. (Laughter). You know, that stuff just happened.

Mary Raney encountered issues of inequity in how Black students were disciplined in contrast to their White peers. She shared,

> You know how teachers write up referrals? The teacher gets upset. Sometimes, it's understandable. And some stuff I don't understand because that's a teacher no matter what. You're supposed to be professional, so there's no reason that a teacher should be cursing students, and I know they do. But there was one time there were two students, two boys; one was Black, one was White, same class, same teacher, exact same referral. The only thing different was the student's name. How I know this because both students were mine—they were assigned to me. The assistant principal meets with the students and then they write up a statement, and that goes home to the parents. I mean, everything was the same, except the student. So, why would your response not be the same? But what he wrote on the minority student's referral was something like, "This kid caused a total disruption in the classroom and so was suspended blah blah blah, "but he did not write that on the other student's referral. It was something like, "Misbehaving in the classroom." I'm like, "Whoa, wait a minute." So, I went to the assistant principal, and he says, "Well they were cutting up and the teacher . . . and the teacher was frustrated with them." And I said, "I understand that. I read the referral. It was your response that I do not understand. Why? This was what you need to know. You're going to hand this

> to this Black kid and it's going to say that he totally disrupted the class and the teacher was not allowed to teach, and you're sending this home to a Black mother who was sending her kids to school every day to learn and she don't play. So, what do you think was going to happen when this kid gets home and hands his mother this thing saying that he was in school totally disruptive as compared to what you wrote and what this mother will receive? This says what it was. And this other mother was going to receive a write up with . . . you know boys will be boys. He's acting up a little bit." He was like, "Oh, oh, I never really thought about that before," and he said, "Okay." And I just feel like they don't see. This person doesn't look like me. This person doesn't look like any of my neighbors or any of my friends, and he definitely doesn't look like any of my family. So, what went through my mind are all the stereotypes and stuff I have heard about how Black kids are as compared to this kid who he can say, "Oh, I have a son and he reminds me of my son. And he likes to play around. So, you gotta cut that out. You have to let the teacher teach."

Coping Strategies

Participants employed various coping strategies to combat the personal, environmental, and institutional racism. The data revealed the propensity of code switching by the Black school counselors in their predominantly White schools. Code switching is defined as a conscious or unconscious interchange of language deemed acceptable in majority culture as opposed to Black dominated settings. Participants also contrasted with their interactions with colleagues, with one admitting she was guarded in relationship with her White colleagues, while one participant shared she embraced a team mentality.

Code Switching

Lilly Fairbanks shared an early experience in her career when one of her friends recognized her code switching. Lilly stated,

> So, basically if you're in the Black community and talk to people every now and then, you want to talk to someone, and you want to say, "Gurrrrrrrrrrl, I can't do this not one more time," and sometimes I get tired of talking to these White teachers. I want to talk to a Black person. Because you know when you're an only one—I don't care how good of a friend you are. They're your friends—but if you see another [Black friend, then] you do something entirely different. I didn't recognize that until one time there were some Caucasian friends in my home and the phone rang. And I talked on my phone for just a little bit. And one of them said, "That was a Black person on the phone, wasn't it?" And at first I was hot and I was like, "Uh, unn, what? You can see through the phone?" And I said, "Why do you ask?" And she said, "Because you talk differently." And then I had to just smile because I don't hear myself talk.

Mary Raney shared that she learned about how to talk in predominantly White spaces in her childhood by her father as a means of survival. She stated,

> One of the advantages we had of growing up, up here we had the advantage of knowing how to talk with White people. It was not how you talked at home. It was not how you spoke to people at church or in the community. It was a whole different language, basically. So, we were taught how to use their language and how to deal with them so that we came out intact.

Mary further shared how she took this ability with her to navigate predominantly White schools successfully and how it gave her an advantage. She relayed,

> I told one of the administrators one day that I have an advantage over you simply because I had to learn how to live in your world AND to live in mine. You didn't have to learn how to live in my world. You didn't have to learn how to speak my language, but I had to learn yours. So, that gives me an advantage . . . I don't think they realize what a treasure they have, but when they get a good Black counselor in there. Because that's like having two . . . It's like you're being bilingual. (Laughter) . They don't have it, because their thing was everyone has to come to my side of the fence and have to deal with me, the way that I do because if you don't come over here the way I deal with that, I don't hear you. I don't understand you.

Emily Florence explained her methods for working with predominantly White colleagues. She shared,

> There are times that you wanna say things and you take a risk and you say it. But will you take that risk to say it? But you need to say it in a way that they are the winner. It's benefiting them, not necessarily you, but they are going to benefit. They are gonna be the winner at the outcome. You've got a show them the benefits for them and for their families.

Shirley Appleton echoed,

> You know you can be so out front so that [you are] what people consider radical, [so] that people don't listen to you. You have to learn to hit the point in a way that people will listen to you.

Intentional Disconnection from Colleagues vs. Team Mentality

Lilly Fairbanks shared that while interacting with colleagues in predominantly White schools, she maintained an intentional distance. She stated that this was in part due to the advice shared with her from previous Black teachers and as a measure of protection. She shared,

> I think the hardest thing to do was to separate yourself from the group. I learned a long time ago from Black teachers that you don't tell anything you don't want repeated. Or you don't want to say anything you don't want to hear another time or it's going to be all different. I intentionally did not connect. I intentionally did not do that.

She further explained,

> When I first got married, my husband and I went to one of the [White] teacher's house, and this teacher, she said, "I didn't know you could cook." I said, "What you mean cook?" She said, "Really cook good." I said, "Who told you that?" She said, "Your husband, we were talking, and he said that Lilly really cooks good." I wanted to say, "No, she don't." Well, one of the Black teachers said, "Well, if he's out there saying that, "don't you ever"—and I thought this was the most insignificant when she said this—"If someone says are you a cook, you say, 'for my family."' She said, "Because if this person thinks you are all this and all of that, [they will want you to be that for them, too.]" And I have never forgotten that.

She went on to explain how this reflected negatively on her professional evaluation. She shared,

> I was criticized because I didn't go to their houses and any of their after school dinners and things . . . [Ms. Newby] wrote me up and said I wasn't outgoing and friendly. But I'm not inviting you to my house and I don't need to come to your house. I don't need that. I have a family. When I leave the high school, I'm going to go home to my husband and my family. I learned very early I could do a good job and not be a part of the faculty.

In contrast to this method of coping in predominantly White schools, Emily Florence found collegial rapport and respect essential to a team mentality as well as success and status. She shared,

> You have to look beyond. But I'm telling you there were teachers that I could go to who I would say, "Hey, we have to get this kid out of here, and you have to help me." I started to use the word "team." I mean, we should have been a team to start, but it's a small word, but we had to start using it. We had to make sure that we were on the same team for these kids. There were certain teachers I could go to. There were these personalities that would not go well with that personality, so knowing how to match all of that up for teachers and students to be successful.

She went on to share how the year of building a team with staff also served her well with her White families. She recalled,

> Now, let me just tell you what the payoff was for me. And I mean it wasn't a real payoff. You've heard of Junior League? Well, what the Junior League decided to do nationally was that they needed to start integrating and bringing in Black members. Well, guess what the [Public City] ladies did? They supported, nominated, and nurtured me. I worked my way all the way up to vice president. I took on anything they wanted a person to do. They asked me, and I took it on. And I was working in [Public City]. I had their kids. It was my [Public City] White parents who put me out there, and I was their representative. Now, I wanna think they had a good heart in it. Because I thought they were good parents. They were parents who had money. They were getting the job done. Their kids were getting to school every day. They were graduating. They were listening to us. We were a team. I mean little 'ole me from [Midwest State].

Appearance

Appearance emerged as a theme while participants were sharing experiences about their K-12 and even college experiences. Both Lilly Fairbanks and Emily Florence referenced the level of respect given to those in her community who were educators and associated the status of being well-dressed and respected in connection with the other. Lilly recalled,

> Many of those people came to church. And to us they were like the richest people in the world. We didn't know rich White folks, but we knew some rich Black folks. They probably weren't rich, but they were school teachers. They had the cars and the big hats and all the things, you know?

Lilly further relayed the expectation of being perfect when going out in front of White society. She shared that while in Girls Scouts her sponsor would take the girls to a local women's college. She shared, "I mean, your socks had to be White. Your uniform had to be just right. Your hair had to be just right. She was a stickler." Lilly carried this same expectation in her career. She stated,

> First of all, I was a very well-dressed person. I wore high heels every day, EVERYDAY, all over that whole building. So, they couldn't say anything about anything they could see physically about me not fitting in.

Shirley Appleton discussed the differences of having Black instructors who encouraged the expectation of presenting oneself at all times in comparison to the White nuns and teachers she had in the private school setting. She stated,

> I felt like the instructors in the school of nursing at HBCU #1 were interested in us as whole human beings. And I'm gonna give you an example. We lived in this dorm for the semester that we did the affiliation. And, so, you know after hours and stuff we were

> horsing around in the dorm, and I had a really, really raggedy bathrobe on. And [Mrs. Sellers] called me to her suite and told me that [Mrs. Johnson] would be very upset to know that I had a bathrobe on. (Laughter). But I was like, "She wouldn't even care." But anyways, it was like how you present yourself all the time, but they were good like that.

Emily Florence discussed her belief that her skin tone was a factor in forging access for her to be hired in the school district. She commented,

> First of all, I never wanted or thought I was different because of my skin tone. But when I was growing up and in the times that I was growing up, your skin tone was important. I mean, you're much younger than me, so I don't know how much it's important now.

She went on to explain,

> I come to [Public City]. First of all, I moved from [Midwestern State] to the [Midwest]. So, I sent the letter to [Public City], got here, and called and went over for the interview. And this was what happened to me in [Public City]. It was unbelievable. So, I went to [Public City]. Again, skin tone, long hair, I just didn't look the part. So, his name was [Mr. Mannon]. [Mr. Mannon], he was the head of Student Services for [Public City] Community Schools. He had told me that he had interviewed a person before me and he described the person. And he said I mean, it was just how the conversation was going. Evidently, I looked the part of what they wanted for a social worker, okay. He says to me, and to this day I don't understand why, he says this to me, "The girl before you had cornrows." Think about that. Her hair was in cornrows. I mean this was early. This was in '73. We began to braid our hair and it was going all over everywhere. But he let

> me know that the girl that interviewed before me didn't have the look, and that I had the look.

Supports

All of the participants shared how they gained access to predominantly White schools at key points in their careers through White male administrators. The four participants also shared how their relationships with their male administrators moved beyond access but developed into ongoing support and guidance. Participants also discussed strategies they employed to ensure Black and other minority students were prepared with adequate support while they were also coping with the predominantly White school's environment.

White Male Administrator Support

Lilly Fairbanks shared that her superintendent "turned out to be a very good friend, and he promised me that if I continued to help him this year, he would work on using me in a different way other than a teacher." Lilly stated, "So, anyway, the superintendent at that time said, 'You need to be a school counselor.'" Mrs. Fairbanks shared that once she did become a counselor that she built a great relationship with her building principal. She shared,

> I felt because he believed in me that I didn't have to worry about my position or about anything. I couldn't be blamed for stuff that I didn't even know about or that would affect my effectiveness with kids.

Mary Raney shared about how she was granted access and support at one of her first counseling positions. She stated,

> At that time, he said he needed a counselor, so please don't accept a position anywhere without talking to me. I don't care what they offer; you let me know. He literally called me every single week. This man finally called and said, "Okay, it's just like I thought.

> We have a vacancy. Would you please come and apply? We're going to hire you, and I want you to come in for an interview with me and the principal." I thought, "Oh, my gosh." I mean I was literally shaking when I went in there. It was scary. I felt so unqualified. How am I going to counsel anyone on vocation when I didn't even know anything about the vocations? It's like the career center. And so I went in and I met with the principal, [Mr. Tell], and he said, "Don't worry. I will teach you everything you need to know."

Mary Raney went on to share,

> And so I said yes. One day my principal at the vocational school came in, and he was so upset. He had gotten a call from [Middle Town High] telling him that they were offering me this job and had to let him know because they had to get me out of my contract. He came in and I felt so bad. Because I loved that man. He was the best principal that I have ever had and he literally got on his knees and begged me not to go.

She continued to find support from male administrators as she transitioned to her hometown school. She recalled,

> The associate principal and I loved him. So, he came out, and he was nice. And he was telling me what I should do. And he said, "Let me take you around, and let me introduce you to people. And I will take you over and show you." But he's the one that was introducing me to everyone in there. He took me over and he had told me that they had combined the departments. But when he had taken me over to the guidance department, and he took me to the department chairs office to introduce me to her, and he introduced me to all the counselors as I was going in. When he got ready to leave, he said, "Mary

> if you ever need anything, let me know. If you have any questions, feel free, just come on over to my office." And I said, "Okay, thank you." And he left.

Mary Raney shared that he continued to support her throughout her tenure there. She shared,

> I don't know. Maybe they were in her minutes or her agenda to talk about student transfers and all of that kind of thing. But I know she did not take it to the administration because I went to [Mr. Hilton] about it and he said, "The only way that can happen was if it was according to numbers." He said that if you have so many people that you couldn't have more students. He said that she cannot stop you from working with students. He said, "They don't even have to be one of your students per se but if a student wants to come to you for help, they can come to you. She cannot stop that."

Shirley Appleton previously discussed how she was informed about an opening within the high school by the guidance director at the time. She shared that he personally asked her if she would like to come to the department. She relayed that three years later, upon his retirement, he continued to guide her. She shared,

> So, anyway, [Mr. Smith] retired. And the principal encouraged me to apply. And I pretty much had decided that I was not going to do it. I talked to [Mr. Smith] about it and I don't think he was been discouraging, but he said, "Shirley, it's a lot of work. I don't think you want to do it." At that time, [Titan] had about 3,000 students in their population. We got new students all the time. And I think what he was saying was you are constantly evaluating transcripts.

Emily Florence shared earlier, concerning the theme of appearance, how the District personnel hired her due to her looks. She went on to share that he continued to guide her throughout her career. She shared,

> So, this man who hired me, he took me, I mean took me to the University, and I sat down with a representative over there. They started to look at and take apart my degree from [Nearby State] and decided what I needed to take to become licensed and professional.

She continued,

> My boss, who was still guiding me through my student teaching, and I was still taking all of these classes at the university, what he did was say, "Next, you're going into the classroom and you're going to teach." And what I did was taught 7th grade English at the junior high.

Further she stated,

> Well, the again picking and choosing my course. I've only filled that one job application at [Public City] Community School (Laughter), and they have placed me where they thought they needed me. Well, this was how I felt. Well, no one has told me this. This was just how it looked to me. And I don't think anyone has taken a look at it, but I feel it.

When asked why she thinks they placed her where they wanted her in the corporation, Emily Florence replied, "Because I had the look and I was the person that they wanted."

Mrs. Florence summed her thoughts up about this support by stating,

> I'm telling you, you talk about these White angels that help guide me. Keep in mind, I did one application, only one, for [Public City] Community Schools, for all the different jobs that I had. These angels are moving me in different directions, and I feel like they are the right direction.

Other Black Educators

Lilly Fairbanks stated that she also received support from other Black educators in the district or in the building. Lilly shared that for several years at the opening of school the

Black teachers would have their own luncheon. She stated that many of them were friends outside of their careers and so they used the opportunity to get together. She stated, "It was pretty lonely." She went on to share about her experience in the building at [Small Town] High School once she became a counselor. She shared,

> When I first started, [Don Turner] had come, so there were five of us at the end. And we did what people do. We helped each other mentally. [Edward] was in math; Shirley was in business; [Don] was in art; [Lisa] was in Latin, so we weren't even close to each other. But the thing was at noon, we ate together. [Edward] and I were outspoken. They don't fire Black teachers because they need you. They don't fire Black teachers and Black counselors. They need you. I don't mean you can run around saying or doing crazy stuff. So, what it did, we have to come together to re-energize that thing. We are who we are. And we're not going to change because we're in another place. But we're not going to take anything because we have each other.

Emily Florence also shared about the limited Black educators and connections with them. She stated,

> Yes, yes. And again she was the only Black business teacher. You know. I can't remember us having a Black English teacher at [Public City] High. I don't think we had one. [Mr. Cal] came in later as the math teacher. So, [Public City] High, being one of the two major high schools in the community, had limited Blacks there and especially for me when I was there.

Colleague Support

With the majority if not all of their colleagues being White, Black school counselors shared about the relationships they had with other counselors and teachers. Lilly Fairbanks shared,

> My best friends in education as far as being loyal and being supportive happened to be three people that I met at [Mining] School. The minute the principal said to me, "Do not . . . Do not get involved with these three teachers" and named them, I thought I must have to get involved with them because they must be the outsiders. So, I went on the playground and I asked who Shelly White was. They pointed her out and she taught the accelerated courses there. I went to her and I introduced myself and said, "I'm Lilly Fairbanks," and I told her I was told not to meet you but I'm meeting you. And we became the best of friends. And the principal did not care for us, but she had her reasons for not caring for us individually but collectively, humph.

Emily Florence stated that she had never separated her relationships in color because all she had were White colleagues. She stated,

> I've never had another person to talk to, and I never gathered. And we talked about it because when we talked about it . . . You deal with it all over the place and you don't segregate it. So, what this was and how you've come about it . . . but I'm telling you there have been some White folks. They have taken care of me, and that's just how it was because that was all there was.

Emily went on to share how her connections with her colleagues offered her access to positions in the high school and in leadership. She recalled,

> Anyway, my friend [Carol] becomes head of the guidance department. She and Al get in this group down in Large City. And the group was getting ready to develop, and we were

> doing the reshaping of the way we're doing high school counseling. The team from [Public City] was from [Public City High], since that was where [Carol] was. [Eldon] was the professor at the University teaching the counseling and guidance program. So, me and [Carol] come out of the same program. Remember I'm at [West] and [Carol] gets the job at [Public City High] as head of the guidance department. And she tells me when I get there I'm coming to get you. I'm coming for you.

Family Supports (Nepotism)

Lilly Fairbanks, Mary Raney and Emily Florence also shared experiences on how their familial connections allowed them access into positions at predominantly White schools as well as ongoing support due to their families' position or status in the community. Lilly shared,

> It didn't hurt that my husband was well known athletically. He had the respect of a lot of people who were high up. He was an insurance agent and had some of these people insurance. It never hurts to have those outside people around you, and [Edward] was my cousin. And that didn't hurt. It helped.

Mary Raney recalled how she finally was given an opportunity to interview at her [Public City High] school after years of no response. She shared,

> So, my original reason for coming was to help my dad. And my mom was really in bad shape, and we knew she wasn't going to be here long. So, that summer, my brother came home for something . . . [James Jackson]. He had been a football player at [Middle Town High] and the local university. He went to the local university on a football scholarship and everybody knew about [James Jackson]. And he said, "Did you apply in [Middle Town]?" And I said, "Yes, I didn't even get an interview. I turned in my application." And he said, "Okay, really? Okay." Yes, my brother had called one of the people, and he

> said, “What is going on in [Middle Town]? I know you've had job openings. My sister grew up in [Middle Town] just like I did. She went to [Middle Town] schools, graduated from [Middle Town High], went to the local university, graduated, couldn't get a job as a teacher, came back to the local university, graduated, and still can't get a job. I mean what's the problem?” And they were like, “Oh, James, who is your sister? (Laughter). And he told her, because of our last names, but I have been married, and he told them. And they said, “Oh, we didn't know.” And he said, “Well, that's my sister. She needs a job in [Middle Town].”

Mary recalled with laughter as she said shortly after that she got a call from both high schools in her home town. She stated,

> So, I mean, had I known that, I probably would have thrown his name out before. But I realized there were so many people in the [Middle Town] school system that were husband and wife or mother/daughter/son or this kind of thing. I really realized that finally a lot of it was who you were connected to.

Strategies to Support Black Students and Families

Despite the fact that the Black school counselors encountered various layers of racism themselves, they all created strategies, spaces, and supports to ensure Black students were coping in predominantly White schools. They also supported Black families in their community and experienced both support and push back from them.

Black students. The participants shared specific experiences with Black students. They shared feelings of being assigned to work with Black students and the need to advocate for representation of minority students. Lilly Fairbanks agreed that she counseled and supported all student but felt an obligation to Black students. She stated,

> And I think everyone knew I was going to be for Black kid. In fact, one of the Caucasian girls said, "I thought you were only the counselor for the Black girls." Hmm, I said, "Why? Did I not talk to you like I talked to them or give you the time?" She said, "No, but the Black girls always said, 'Let's go check with Mrs. Fairbanks. Let's go talk to Mrs. Fairbanks or go see Mrs. Fairbanks.'" And I said, "But I saw you, too, didn't I?" And she said, "Yeah, I just wanted you to know that was what I thought." "But you know that's okay, that's okay. I know that was her perception, but I never mistreated her or didn't give her what she needed from me but because kids talk and that was what you hear.

Passionately, Lilly Fairbanks continued,

> I felt personally that I owed Blacks because of the path that I had trod. If it hadn't been for Black teachers getting me started, and it may have been different if I had gone to integrated schools and I hadn't seen very many Blacks. My community was Black, and without that . . . guidance. So, I will always in my heart feel that I have an obligation.

Emily Florence stated that she was given the reigns to design her program. She stated that she took care of the Black kids. She reported,

> The principal, who was African American, at my school in [Midwestern State], he just kind of gave me the reigns to go and do it because I was the new person in town. I was the one who took care of the Black kids. I didn't consider it a babysitting job. I enjoyed every bit of being with these kids. So, it was just me making up my own thing. I was there for all of the kids.

Mrs. Fairbanks elaborated on the different levels of support that she gave to Black students which equaled equity for all students. She stated,

> When there was a White student and a Black student and they are both equal. I know that this Black student has a parent in jail and was helping take care of three kids, and she should be a 4.0 student, but she can't because of her circumstances. Then I'm going to get this baby where she needs to be. Now, I'm going to go back and get this other student there, but they are going to have a wait for a minute. They don't need as much. So, yeah, I've got to be here for the Black kids. And if that was wrong, then that was just another thing where I am wrong. We have too many things against us that we do not have control of.

Shirley Appleton provided another example of differences when working with students. She shared,

> Sometimes the Black kids, I just had them sit down in front of me and do it if I didn't think I would get cooperation from the parent. Well, if you got to be a senior, and I never saw your parent before, then I knew. I would say, "Now this is due today. You set right here and do it. I'll get you excused from the rest of your classes." So, usually I got pretty good response from White families if I call them and tell them I gave them a scholarship application.

Mary Raney detailed a specific incident with a Black gifted student. She stated,

> There was as student, [TJ]. I mean that he was a kid and he's moving back and forth. Mom goes to [Urban City], moves them back. With [TJ], he was in honors, but because he was from [Urban City], his counselor wouldn't put him in there. They were telling them that it was going to be too hard and so finally he came and told me. I said, "Why isn't he in honors classes? Here's his transcript." And his counselor was like, "He's from [Urban City] and I didn't think his classes would work for us. And they weren't

> comparable. And I think he needs to prove to us." And I said, "No, we need to follow this transcript. If they come to us with honors classes, that's what we need to honor this transcript." And so I told him, "Look, you're in these classes. You need to tell your mama you need to stay here in [Middle Town] and you need to stay here and stay in them." And so it worked out for him. He turned out to be one of the first [Distinction Scholars]. But now, who's going to do that? Who's going to do that for those kids? So, I don't know. I hope there is someone, but there might not be someone to advocate.

Emily Florence also recounted several specific Black students who she supported, whether they were in her assigned student group or not. She shared,

> I had a couple of kids who were not my kids alphabetically, but I was responsible for the 1,600 kids at [Public City High] anyway. There was a kid. He was a male and Black who came to [Public City High] at the honors level but would have screwed around and messed up and would be out of the honors program. But my job would be . . . you know I would do this with kids who weren't my kid. You know like, [Tasha] who wanted to be out of Algebra. She was out of that math class and her counselor let her out. I took her and I marched her right back to that math class and told that teacher she was not coming out. I knew she wanted to go to college. But the counselor, her counselor, was going to allow that to happen and they did that.

Emily Florence stated that she did not cut her Black students any short cuts. She shared,

> It was the Black kids that wanted me to give them, they wanted me to make it easy for them. And I refused to do it. And I was called a bitch, and when I confronted the little girl she said, "I said Mitch." But those kids, I think I know they liked me because they

> knew I was fair because I stayed on them all the time. I wouldn't let them get away with it.

Black student groups. Three of the participants shared that they supported and sponsored Black student groups during their career. Lilly Fairbanks shared,

> We had an organization. It was called [NAME]. It was for Black males. Well, you had a mentor for every one of those males. And at that time, I was connected with the prison and I got everyone from the Warden on down who was Black. They had a kid that they mentored. And they took them to ball games. They went to the theater. They went to picnics. They talked about life. They were their supporters, and if they got mad at their coach, their mentor came and talked with them and for them.

Emily Florence detailed how she made connections with Black students by forming a group with those who were reaching out for support. She said:

> So, they were like coming to me. I want a piece. I want a piece of me. So, what I ended up doing, I would form a group. It was a high school group. That was in the late 60s; no, that was in the 70s. The Black kids wanted a group. And you want it, you know, "Black power" (With fist in air). It was right around that time. And look at me. You know I wasn't even in the Black Power movement myself.

Mary Raney also discussed her support of Black groups at her high school. She stated,

> I would take a bus with Black males to this conference. I remember the first year they did it at a University and these boys weren't really interested but they were who the conference was for and they needed help. So, I loaded them up, and we took them down there. No one else wanted to do it.

Mary Raney and Emily Florence also discussed strategies of how they supported students who were not on their case load. They relayed how to circumvent rules and protocols. Mary stated,

> So, after [I was told I was not the minority counselor], I had had such a high caseload that I just told students to tell their parents don't try to switch them to me. But if your counselor . . . you know, if you don't get the counselor you need or you don't get your questions answers or you just need help, then put in a request to see me, and I will send for you. But don't ask to be transferred to me because . . . so that was a little work around.

Emily Florence stated,

> [A Black female student] was homecoming queen. She was an athlete. And she was not one of my kids alphabetically. But I'm telling you she was one of my kids. She came to me. And this was what I would say to them, "You still have to be with Mr. So and So but you can come by and stop here. Stop here first, and I'll give you a heads up so that when you go to your counselor you know what you're talking about and you can have a conversation." I would prepare them. I would just wanna do things to help kids and to bring them out. There were kids that I would just want to bring them home. But again, this was another kid that was in another counselor's alphabet, but I knew that that counselor wasn't working for that kid.

Mrs. Raney also shared experience of how she had to ensure adequate representation of Black and other minority students in consideration of programs and scholarships. She shared,

> But when I felt like some of the minority students were not receiving fair treatment, I was like, "Why is it that on things we have to nominate kids for, why aren't any minorities students being nominated? I mean, I love [Mr. Roo], but he couldn't see but one student

> and he was an athlete, an all-around athlete. He was a good student, too, but every time that we had something, we have to nominate students for, well, you know, nominate a minority student for, because if it didn't say minority, they didn't think of minorities even being eligible.

She further noted,

> Because when we had stuff going on, I always will call attention to the fact that there's no minority representation. And I would say, "What about this kid? This kid is eligible." So, when we had things going on, if there weren't any minority names down, then I want to make sure that you are aware that you missed some people. But that does not happen now. There's no one else. You get what you can. So, we have had some students who have been top leaders, and you just cannot allow them to be apart. They wouldn't allow themselves to be overlooked. They knew how to use their ability and their personality. So, they had watched things long enough and they knew how to maneuver their way. But it's those kids that are at risk and those kids that are at the greatest need, and they need to be pushed. They're the ones who so often are overlooked. They just don't see them. I think when they look at them, they see something else. They see a threat. So, these kids are just kind of left to fend for themselves. And I think every school, if you don't have a, not one, minority, need[s] to have a person of color in that school.

She concluded by sharing:

> I tell you. I was at [Middle Town High] for 20 years, and the whole 20 years I mean, I felt it was one thing after another where it mattered. One thing that I think [is] there has to be somebody in place who will specifically be concerned about the issues, really from

> every group, but minorities in particular. It's like I think you better understand folk who look like you, folk who come from your same background.

Shirley Appleton shared about how she wanted to expose students, especially Black students, to HBCU options. She stated,

> So, anyways, the books started coming in. I start talking to the kids about it. At that time, we had a Black female principal, and she asked me one day, "What are you going to do with all of these posters and stuff with HBCUs? What are you going to do if a White parent comes in and asks you why do you have this up?" And I had an answer, and I told her that I think that I would tell them that kids should be exposed to all of their options, and this was one that has been ignored in my opinion. So, I'm making the information available to them.

Black families. Lilly Fairbanks discusses her role and positionality in the Black community and how this impacted her work with families. She discussed,

> You have to remember that this was a small town. Everybody knows everybody. I would say 90% of the kids I had, their family knew me. I think I had only one Black mother who disrespected me when I was trying to help her child. The Black families, I became their hope. I became that person who said that their kid could go wherever they want to go because they have that ability and you can make it happen. And here was how we make it happen. I probably spent more time with Black families from both [Small Town High] and [Large Town High] during and outside of school with financial aid and what to do.

Emily Florence described some difficulty at times in supporting Black families. She stated that in comparison to how she started, there seemed to be a reversal during her career that Black families did not want her supporting their students. She shared,

> Because Black folks, we know our kids don't work hard. We know it. You know we got these parents, and I was around when you had that switcharoo, because Black parents, they would give you the OK to beat them up if you wanted to beat them up or paddle them. They would say, "Mrs. Florence, do whatever you have to do with this kid." And I've had that, but then I had a switcharoo. And it became the Black families who thought I was the problem because I was trying to get some accountability for their kid and to push their kids. But now I get into these dialogs and there's a group of kids that we didn't reach. So, there are bad parents and they have the bad kids.

Everybody's Counselor

Everybody's counselor was a theme that was shared with all participants. The counselors discussed the importance of building trust through authenticity and how they were tested by the families of their students. The participants also shared how they created a safe haven for Black and minority students. Additionally, all counselors expressed that overall they truly had a burden for all students which crossed color lines.

Building Trust

The participants described situations where they felt tested by the families of their students to ensure that they were real. Real is defined as being a person that can identify with that particular family or the willingness to come to their level and meet the challenge. Emily Florence detailed an experience where she felt she was being tested. She shared,

> So, the story was this lady offered me a cup of coffee. And I felt compelled that I had to do the coffee bit. And I said yes. She went over to the sink, and she ran the hot water in a cup and put the instant coffee in there and brought it and set it on the table. And what did I do? I did exactly what she thought I wouldn't do. I sat there and I nursed that cup of coffee. And I sat there and drank the cup of coffee with this hot water with this coffee. To me, it was unbelievable. And you know, I tell this story because it was a test to see if I was a real person. You see this was a White family. And if I would drink the coffee, if I would be a part of the family. I felt that I was being tested a lot by White people, just little games.

Emily Florence went on to share how essential authenticity was to building trust to bridge the outer differences such as race. She stated,

> So, I have been everywhere I think, I was tested all over in [Public City] and [Midwest City] by White parents [and] by Black parents just to see if I was real. Because I was fair-complexed. I have long hair and I drove my husband's Cadillac. It was like they wanted to make sure that I was saying the right things. And I think the more I said it and the more I produced that people knew that I was real, okay. Even though I wasn't looking like them and I wasn't talking like them people, knew I was real.

At other points in her career, Mrs. Florence stated that it happened no matter the race. She stated,

> Again, [it was another] coffee story. The mother wanted me to sit down and talk with them and drink coffee. And I'm not a coffee drinker. And I had to live through that, and I'm feeling the test again. You got to do what you've got to do if you want to help these

> people and you want these people to feel like you want to help them, that you will be for real, okay.

Lilly Fairbanks shared,

> In the first few years, you don't know what a counselor will do or what it will be like. Once it was established that I was for real, then it started. And it gets embarrassing sometimes because I'm sitting in my office and I got a call from the principal and he asked me to come into his office. There's a mother and her two daughters. And I speak to them. I know them, but I don't know them. I know them because their father was high in the school [corporation]. And this mother and this principal says, "[Ms. Anderson] wants you to be their kids' counselor." The point was that you were asking how families interacted with me or how I interacted with them. If they didn't like me or didn't trust me, I never knew it.

Mary Raney also noted the importance of authenticity to build trust. She stated, "So, I will say be real but not be afraid to show kids and parents that you really care."

Safety

Safety was an important concept, as it addressed the perceived and real feelings of safety experienced from the Black counselors' points of view of their positionality with their Black students. The participants described times where it was an indirect feeling of providing safety or security for Black students, while at other times needing to provide a direct physical stance to keep their students safe in the building. Emily Florence discussed previously how she formed a support group for Black students. She shared, "So, what I did was I formed a little group because I became safe." Lilly Fairbanks also described this desire to provide safety for her Black students. She shared,

> But the day an African American came to the school and she was just beautiful. She was this little brown girl. And I looked at her, and she looked at me. And she didn't know what to do, but she went in my class. And she was scared to death, and I went over to her and I told her, "As long as I have breath, you are safe. You come to my room. You can find me. You do something. Because don't be afraid because I know the racism that's going on." And to this day, she comes back every so often, every two to three years, and she looks me up and she'll say, "I'm safe." And I think that I have never had to feel that unsafe. I could read it on her face.

Mary Raney detailed experiences where she actually had to keep Black students safe. She shared,

> So, I mean there were times when I knew Black males were targeted. And they would say if you told someone that they would say, "Oh no, that's not true." But I have literally seen security walk down the hall harassing Black males. I had one who was not my student but I had gotten a call one day and it was like, "Mrs. Raney, I would like for you to . . ." It was a worker from Child Services. She said, "I would like you to keep an eye out for this particular student." People would come to my office, and they would say, "Hey, come out here. They've got your boy." And I have literally seen with my own eyes and heard them say . . . the security would say, and they would go down talking to his ear, saying things like, "Why don't you do something?" and just trying to get him. And I would just come out and get on the other side of him, and I would tell him, "Come with me. Just come with me." And he would say he was afraid and I would say, "No, you just come with me," and I told the security guard, "I've got this." And I would take him into my office and I would talk to him . . . They knew he had an anger problem and so they

> were trying to make him react so they would have some reason to do something. And so I would hear a security guard say, "I will take you down right here," And I mean it was stuff like that. They harassed this kid so much, and finally this kid just dropped out. So, one day he came to my office and said, "They don't want me here. Every time I come, I get suspended. Every time I get suspended, I get behind. Then, when I get here I get sent to in-school suspension because I don't have my work." And it was just difficult.

Burden for All

The participants discussed their joy in working with students. They spoke of their body of work which may have begun supporting Black students, but their impact was felt by all students. They shared stories of students from all backgrounds coming back and sharing how much they felt supported. Emily Florence reflected,

> I've got kids who lived on The Boulevard. You know what I'm saying there? Well, those kids are now presidents of their parents' companies. My son was the head of the commercial lending department at a local bank in [Public City] . So, he meets with these guys and he's lending them money for their companies and at the same time they're saying, "Your mother was my counselor. Your mother was my teacher." Now, that's the White kids. And so again, that's how I know that it worked. Whatever I did, it worked.

She later stated,

> And I'm telling you, it has come full circle for me. Because I've had kid . . . I've had White kids. I've had Mexican kids. I've had them all. Smart . . . the ones that didn't do well. I've had them all to come back.

Lilly Fairbanks also shared similar sentiments. She stated,

> I see that for every young person. I hope I get to talk with them and let them know that they are unique in all they are. And this was for all kids. You can't say, "I'm only gonna talk to Mexicans today, alone. I'm gonna talk to Hispanics, that I am only talking to Puerto Ricans today." But know when you go every morning into that building, forget the adults. You be there for those kids. You see every kid as a kid and not a young adult.

Mrs. Fairbanks went on to describe her point through the following experience:

> We are at graduation. It was 1995 and there's a young lady getting ready to walk across the stage and her heel breaks. And I said, "Stop," and I took my shoes off and I gave her my shoes, and she walked across the stage. The newspaper took the picture and she was White. It used to be the Black kids who all came to me, and then it got to where everybody came to me.

Shirley Appleton shared about students as well. She stated,

> I went to my niece's graduation and the first person I saw was this girl that graduated from [Titan] and I thought, "Ohh gosh, please don't tell me you have a child graduating from high school today." They kinda remember you better than you remember them. They can pick you out.

Mary Raney shared how she also took on the role of providing supportive services to all students when other counselors or staff were not stepping up. She shared,

> So, I did that every year until we started to get complaints and the White boys would say, "Why was it just for Black boys? We need help too." I was like, "You sure do." I'm thinking there are so many other counselors here. "Why don't they step up and get involved." I mean, you don't want to help me with what I'm doing, but they see that these guys also need help that you feel that I should just take them in. So, finally I did.

Everywhere I Go

The last theme that emerged was the overall impact of all of the participants throughout their community. They discussed how their interactions with former students extended beyond their years as a practicing school counselor. Participants also discussed the importance of community involvement and connections. Lastly, the participants ended their interviews with personal reflections of disappointments and successes they carry with them until this day. Mary Raney reflected,

> They say old counselors never die. They just exist. But everywhere I go, to restaurants, to stores, I always run into someone who was one of my students at [Middle Town High] or I did subbing for about three years after, everywhere I go. My grandkids think I know everybody in town. So, when we go places where they see us and if it's a younger looking person they would say, "Grandma, was that one of your students?" So, it's nice to be able to go places and see kids that you counseled with and that you have helped. And to see them being successful. And I've had some of those kids at [Middle Town]. I've had their kids in elementary school. And even at [Middle Town High], I had some kids I knew their grandparents and I had their parents and their grandparents.

She continued later by stating,

> When I see in the newspaper names of students that I've had and you remember the kid, and I've read about so many of them that have gotten into trouble. And on the other hand, I get reports about students who are doing really well. It's good to be able to get the good report and to know that you've had an impact, a positive impact on someone's life. And it makes you feel good when they remember that you did.

Lilly Fairbanks also shared,

> All of the kids are grown 40, 50-year-old people, 60 probably, come to me and say, "Mrs. Fairbanks, I know you don't remember me." And the reason why I'm telling you this story was because a lady at [Bill's] dinner the other night, when it was all over, one of the servers came up to me. Her hair was grey. And she came up to me and said, "Mrs. Fairbanks, you don't remember me, but you were my counselor." And I said, "Tell me your last name and tell me your name," and she said her last name. I said, "I remember. You lived in the country. You had a sister." She said, "You remember!" And I said, "You know what I do because of what we talked about."

Shirley Appleton also shared,

> There's a boy that I ran into that I got him an internship . . . when I was in the health occupations program. It was at the hospital in the dietary program. I don't know if he's still there now but he came for some program that we had at [Titan], probably it's been 10 years ago now. And he said, "Ms. Appleton, I still work for the hospital."

She later shared,

> One time I had a friend who passed, and I was the administrator of her estate. And when I was going through her things, I found a gun. I called the sheriff's department to find out what I should do with it. They told me I should bring it downtown and turn it in . . . I got there and they were bringing guys by, you know in those orange suits (laughter), and someone says, "Hey, Ms. Appleton, how you doing?" (Laughter). I thought, "Lord have mercy, okay."

Emily Florence stated,

> So, [the] reward was personal. And it was the fact that that was mine. That was my kids. And I called them babies. I mean my folks, they know y'all were my kids. I speak about them all the time and how they come back and call me.

Community Involvement

Mrs. Raney, Florence, and Appleton all shared about the importance of being a part of the community. Mary Raney and Emily Florence both shared about their commitment to getting to know the students outside of the school and how that supported their role in predominantly White schools. Mrs. Appleton shared that although her work was mainly within a large city, she believed in the need to connect in the community when possible. She shared, "Yes, and we're talking outside of the metropolitan areas. You know, that's really when you have an opportunity to be a part of the community. You know, like my mother. People knew her and she knew the people." Mary Raney recalled,

> One thing I would say [is] get to know your community. Be an active part of it outside the school. As much as possible, let them get to know you and see you and be a part of everyday life. Because doing that, it's giving you a little peephole into where they are, how they think, and their level of understanding. And then how they see you as a person, that they should recognize you as being a part of the community. That they feel like you know what's going on. Don't be too busy.

Emily Florence relayed that she was intentional about being a part of the school and local community. She stated that she was a coach and sponsor for several student groups over the years. She shared,

> We had to jump through all of these hoops. Now, this was what tells the story. And again, this was me being quiet and on the back burner. So, they give us this application,

> and someone comes up with the program. We had to list all of these community activities that we belonged in and that we had done. Guess who had the whole two pages full of projects that had been done in [Public City]? I knew what I had been doing as an [Public City] Community Schools employee. So, when she solicited for me to come, she knew I was a good catch. She knew I was a good worker. She knew I was in the right places. And she knew about this [Public City] group that had supported me for Junior League and a whole bunch of other things.

Wish I Did More

Sentiments shared by Lilly Fairbanks and Shirley Appleton were a desire to have done more. They shared stories reflecting on how they would have done things differently or pushed certain students more. Although disappointed in some outcomes of their students, they felt certain that they did their best work in the end. Lilly Fairbanks reflected,

> My greatest disappointment in my counseling career was when I know a student could have done more in their life and I did not have the skills or knowledge to make that happen. I know that's like playing God, but as I look back, I feel that. And I say that because there's probably four or five others who are on the streets here or somewhere, who if I had been a little more aggressive even with their parents, that they may be in a better life situation than they are right now. I feel like I could have done more. I feel that I didn't do enough. But now at my age, I know I did all that I was supposed to do.

Shirley Appleton shared,

> You know, I always enjoyed seeing kids [graduate]. I felt like something I should have started, but I never did, that when we were doing registration we should have screens rolling the commencement from the previous year. You know, that's what we want for

you. And I think we should have done a better job of highlighting where kids went when they left us.

Summary

This chapter discussed the themes that emerged during the four participant interviews. Each of the Black school counselors provided rich data on their lived experiences in predominantly White schools. In this study, there were six major themes that emerged as central to the focus of the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown*. The first theme was racism, which was a large theme that was sub-divided into personal, societal, and institutional racism. In addition, sub-themes of tokenism and resident expert emerged under personal racism. The second major theme was coping strategies that the Black school counselors utilized in combatting the racism encountered. The third theme of appearance revealed how the participants' early experiences in Black communities nurtured a need to be perfect in predominantly White settings along with the access forged due to a lighter skin tone.

The fourth theme provided an overview of supports received by the participants from male administrators, other Black educators, and colleagues as well as the support they provided to Black students in predominantly White settings. The fifth theme, everybody's counselor, revealed the need for authenticity to build rapport and trust with families as well as providing a safe haven for Black students. Additionally, this theme discussed the ability of the participants to connect with all students in their schools. Finally, the sixth theme, everywhere I go, reflected on the legacy of the school counselor into retirement, their connection to the community, and the desire to have done more.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and their integration into predominantly White public schools. This chapter will give an analysis and interpretation of the six themes that emerged from the study. The themes of racism, coping strategies, appearance, supports, everybody's counselor, and everywhere I go are supported by the literature and reinforced by interview data. The implications of each of these topics will be analyzed in the following sections.

Racism

The four participants in this study provided rich lived experiences of Black school counselors from a historical lens through the sharing of their life stories. All four participants grew up in all-Black schools, neighborhoods, and communities. Fultz (2004) described this as a condition of *de facto* segregation that was based on housing patterns which largely excluded Blacks from certain neighborhoods and thus schools. Their parents were well-respected in the community as educators, domestics, carpenters, preachers, and a plant foreman. All four participants were given insights from their parents on strategies and tips that prepared them to transition from their all-Black communities to predominantly White schools *post-Brown*.

Lilly Fairbanks and Emily Florence in particular were given knowledge and expertise as was typical of parents who served as domestic workers post slavery. Collins (1990) discussed

the privileged ability of the Black domestic to see from the inside the inner workings of the White elite. Lilly Fairbanks discussed twice the lens with which she viewed the racism that she encountered, all of which was grounded in the background of her grandmother who was the daughter of the slave master. She stated, "I have been given the genes, knowledge, and the skills from the hurt and the pain that I watched with my own parents and grandparents." Lesane-Brown (2006) noted, "Racial socialization was the specific verbal and nonverbal messages transmitted to younger generations for the development of values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs regarding interactions and personal and group identity" (p. 400). Lesane-Brown also asserted that Black parents are key to the education of their children on the societal and psychological ramifications of race.

Brown v. Board occurred when most of the participants were out of high school. They shared their personal experience with the impact of *Brown* as experienced by themselves or other family members. For example, Emily Florence shared that her class was the last to graduate from the all-Black high school. She stated that her sister had to integrate her senior year as she was just one year behind her. The mother of Shirley Appleton had keen foresight to obtain a master's degree, so she was one of two Black teachers retained and brought into the predominantly White school when the schools were desegregated. Mary Raney relayed how she was used in the work of her local NAACP in integrating a major telephone company in her city.

All participants were teachers prior to beginning the work of a school counselor as per state licensure requirements in the years of 1960-1980. The participants discussed how one by one, each of the Black schools were closed in their communities. As the participants began their teaching careers, they experienced racism on the account of being the only Black person in the building. In fact, Lilly Fairbanks and Mary Raney both stressed that there was a limit of one

Black educator in the early years of their careers. This may have been a direct result of desegregation which moved Black students into predominantly White schools, as there were limitations on Black teachers and staff. Tillman (2004) supported this claim, as *Brown* mandated the desegregation of Black pupils; however, it did not outline a plan or provide assurance of placement for Black teachers and principals.

Emily Florence and Lilly Fairbanks discussed the increased consciousness of working harder and being the best as a natural compulsion of being the only Black counselor in the building, which was consistent with previous literature on Black teachers post-*Brown*. Experiences described in the literature are the same as those experienced by Black school counselors. Themes that have been shared and discovered through research on Black teachers are that they perceive a need to prove their value (Griffin & Tackie, 2016). Specifically, experiences of microaggressions were described by each of the participants. These microaggressions occurred with colleagues talking down to them, because they were perceived as lacking knowledge or required skills. This is also supported in prior literature by Griffin and Tackie (2016) who cited a theme of feeling devalued and othered.

Conversely, Black educators may feel they are the "token" in their educational settings. However, Emily Florence did not feel that she was a token in her corporation, as she defined tokenism referring to the assumption that a person of color was in their position not on the basis of merit but to fulfill a diversity quota (Bryant et al., 2005). She did describe at times that she was selected to work with the Black students or represent the corporation because of her race. However, she felt strongly that every opportunity she was given was due to her work ethic of excellence.

As stated previously by Wines et al. (2015), the Black school counselors also shared feeling of being assigned as "cultural ambassadors, resident African Americans, or African American spokespersons" (p. 68). In alignment with Wines et al., the majority of the participants in this study also described situations where they were being used in a variety of ways, including consulting and intervening on behalf of Black students by their White colleagues outside of their assigned caseload as was the case of Mrs. Fairbanks, Raney, and Florence. Additionally, Mrs. Fairbanks was being used to vet professional correspondence for the entire district and other duties not aligned with her teaching duties. Both Mrs. Fairbanks and Florence had to take a stand to keep from continuing to be pigeonholed as the resident expert. Bryant et al. (2005) found that often Black teachers felt like they were only being consulted when the presenting problem had to do with race or ethnicity.

Institutional racism was experienced by participants in a variety of ways. Participants spoke about their experiences applying and not getting positions within their local school districts. Lilly Fairbanks and Mary Raney shared specific incidents where the school district was hesitant to hire a Black educator but instead put another minority in to see how their staff and families would react. This was considered a trial of sorts before they would hire a Black educator. The participants in this study also shared experiences of combating policies and systemic inequities through advocacy at Board meetings and other acts to raise awareness of the lack of minority representation.

Coping Strategies

The need for effective coping strategies was discussed by all participants. Due to the various encounters of racism, participants were able to use these coping methods to navigate predominantly White schools successfully. Communication was a key coping strategy to

circumvent racism experienced by the participants. During the interviews, participants would easily transition between proper annunciation of speech patterns more consistent with business language when discussing the scenarios with White colleagues and vernacular more consistent with inner-Black community language (e.g. Girl, yes! Honey, yes!). Code switching was defined as a conscious or unconscious interchange of language deemed acceptable in majority culture as opposed to Black-dominated settings. The shift in language appeared unconscious and supports the propensity of code switching by the Black school counselors in their predominantly White schools. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) described this shift, "They modify their speech. They shift in one direction at work each morning, then in another at home each night . . . They try to cover up their intelligence with one group . . . and do everything possible to prove it to another" (p. 62).

The data revealed a divergence in how two participants chose to interact with their predominantly White colleagues. Hall, Everett, and Hamilton-Mason (2012) discussed the stressors associated with maintaining professional relationships with colleagues along with a tendency for Black women to isolate themselves in predominantly White schools. As mentioned in the results, Mrs. Fairbanks preferred and practiced an intentional guardedness with her colleagues. She explained that it was so that nothing she said could ever be used against her or twisted into something she did not intend. She shared,

> If it was someone else sitting there, I would be so guarded, guarded not because I'm afraid to be hurt, but so you can't use my weakness by giving you my real thoughts, especially as a colleague and you come back at me. I don't know anyone, and that was terrible to say that if a colleague comes back and says, "Lilly remember you . . . his happened to you, and do you remember this happened to you?"

Emily Florence discussed her reliance on her White colleagues for support, interactions, and community. She stated,

> I mean, the fact that you want to tell a story about Black counselors, because we're really in a basket all by ourselves. I'm glad that you're taking the job. Pass it on, you know, because I've never separated it in color. You know, I've always been the only Black counselor in every building I've been in. I've never had another person to talk to and I never gathered. We never talked about it because when we talked about it, it's all over the place. You deal with it all over the place, and you don't segregate it. So, what this is and how you've come about it . . . but I'm telling you there have been some White folks. They have taken care of me, and that's just how it was because that was all there was.

Mrs. Florence stated that she did not separate things in color. She also stated that she never felt she was the Black counselor and always maintained that position with her colleagues. She genuinely felt there was not a need to separate herself by her race with her students or colleagues. She embraced a team mentality. However, in analyzing her life story, this raises the issue of double consciousness. Goings, Alexander, Davis, and Walters (2018) explained "double consciousness as how a Black person can have multiple competing and contradictory identities that make it difficult or nearly impossible to have a collective and integrated identity" (p. 35). Mrs. Florence's' statements of color-blindness or of not being the Black counselor are in contrast to the many narratives of directly supporting Black students, being the sponsor of Black groups, and intercepting and overturning decisions not in the best interest of Black students.

Appearance

Appearance emerged as a theme while participants were sharing experiences throughout their life story. Both Lilly Fairbanks and Emily Florence referenced the level of respect given to

those in the community who were educators and associated the status of being well-dressed and respected in connection with the other. The participants discussed the expectation that you have to always be put together. In fact, Mrs. Fairbanks stated that it was ingrained in her by her third-grade teacher to be perfect in appearance, "especially in front of White folks."

The concept of skin tone emerged strongly with one participant, Emily Florence, although three of the four participants were equally fair-skinned. Mrs. Florence referenced her lighter skin tone on several occasions during the interview while Mrs. Fairbanks referenced her grandmother's skin tone once. She stated,

> My grandmother, my mother's mother, was the daughter of a slave master and a slave. She was a beautiful woman. She could have passed for White. She never did. She worked for the mayor of our city. And it didn't dawn on me until maybe 10 years ago that the reason they loved her was probably because she could pass for one of them.

Emily Florence believed she was granted access to employment due to her skin tone. She mentioned having the look that was wanted by the corporation. She also talked about how she was tested for having fair skin and long hair. For the Black families in particular, literature supported this proving that could happen within one's own ethnicity. "The task of proving oneself to be a legitimate authentic member of an ethnic community was a significant burden for the light-skinned in Latino, African American and Asian American communities" (Hunter, 2008, p. 70).

Supports

White male administrators emerged as strong supporters who enabled access for all of the school counselors at various points in their careers. This was in keeping with the White male dominated hierarchy of schools in the mid-20th century and even today. Kafka (2009) described

the historical positionality of the principalship, which "became an increasingly prestigious position distinct from that of teaching as the role became increasingly defined as White and male" (p. 326). The role of White men in leadership at higher levels of central office administration was in keeping with this historical trajectory. Therefore, this was not a new concept.

Notably, all of the Black school counselors discussed their relationships with these male administrators with deep-seated admiration and adoration. The four participants shared how their relationships with their male administrators who hired them or encouraged their employment toward counseling developed into ongoing support and guidance throughout their careers. Only one participant, Emily Florence, mentioned a female colleague in a position of authority in a positive connotation. Emily attributed her move into the high school to a prior relationship with a cohort member who became the Director of the Guidance Department. The other three participants encountered more resistance, hostility, and questioning by female authority figures.

Participants also discussed strategies they used to support Black and other minority students to be prepared to navigate the predominantly White school environment successfully. Emily Florence discussed how she would be "especially hard on her Black students" in order to push them. This was also supported in the literature by Ware (2006): "Acting as warm demanders, Black educators held high expectations for all students and used connections with student to establish structured classroom discipline" (p. 427). Shirley Appleton noted that at times, she would just "sit her Black students down to complete required work" if she knew they were not getting the support at home.

Mary Raney also discussed her advantage in understanding her students and in essence being two counselors in one since she was able to speak the language of the Black students as well as that of the majority White culture in her school. Literature stated that due to an inter-group knowledge, Black teachers perceive that they can use empathy differently in regard to their students' family pressures outside of school comparatively to their White caring co-workers (Griffin & Tackie, 2016).

Everybody's Counselor

The theme of everybody's counselor was in direct alignment with the literature as it pertains to the ASCA National Model and the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI). The model was written to ensure emphasis would switch from person-centered for a few to all students receiving support in an intentional programmed format (ASCA, 2005). The participants discussed their joy in working with students. They spoke of their body of work which may have begun supporting Black students, but their impact was felt by all students. They shared stories of students from all backgrounds coming back, and sharing how much they felt supported was evidenced in all interviews.

Evans et al. (2011) stated that it was imperative that school counselors convey multicultural advocacy as a natural byproduct of who they are as leaders within the profession. As mentioned in the literature, Black school counselors may perceive a greater responsibility to prioritize equity for marginalized groups in their buildings (Hart Research Associates, 2012). Mrs. Fairbanks shared how she was utilized in her district to create a diversity initiative. She attended school board meetings and advocated for minority representation on her cities school board. This was reflected in the TSCI model that was created after she had retired from the profession. Dixon et al. (2010) stated, "This new model of school counseling establishes high

standards for all students and allows school counselors to advocate for educational equity and access for students across the achievement continuum" (p. 108).

The TSCI identified four themes that provide a core framework of the role school counselors utilize in working with students in K-12 settings; leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change (ASCA, 2005). The four themes are fused throughout the four elements of the ASCA National Model and work in conjunction to solidify the counselor role in promoting and advocating for student academic success and implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2005). The participants were operating under these themes prior to the release of these tenants to be a leader and advocate and push for systemic change. Mrs. Raney stated, "I went to school board meetings all the time." She shared,

> There were other minorities in the system who just accepted what was happening because they felt like it didn't matter, and so I said, "It's going to matter. I'm going to make it matter." I want to make sure they know that it matters.

Mary Raney also spoke on the fact that she made herself available to present in classrooms on Black history and brought minority figures to the forefront in her building. She shared,

> I made myself available. I would put up bulletin boards and information about Black history. I did it year round . . . I would just put up Black History Month stuff in my office or things that I wanted to promote. I had really big pictures called Black Queens. Most of the things I put up had to do with minorities. No one else did, so I put up information about Black colleges. I took students to the Black College Fair. I would do a contest, and I would eliminate certain people and tell them it can't be about Martin Luther King or Rosa Parks. I would want them to do research and find out about somebody you don't already know information about. Sometimes the White kids would

> say, “Is this only for Black kids?” And I would say, “No, it's for anyone. Anyone can do it.” And then I would do quizzes during the announcements.

These aforementioned experiences by the participants in the study were shared in the literature in Wines et al. (2015) in which their sixth essential essence statement found:

> The participants described this essential essence statement as expectations of greater diversity; initial acceptance; multicultural awareness and development; supportive administration, faculty, and students; willingness to educate on diversity; development of district policy; and being a role model to African American students. (Wines et al., 2015, p. 69)

Safety was an important concept, as it addressed the perceived and real feelings of safety experienced from the Black counselors’ points of view of their positionality with their Black students. The participants described both direct and indirect experiences keeping students safe. Literature of Black students’ post-*Brown* experiences discussed how they may be put at ease by Black educators in their classroom (Naman, 2009). The participants discussed this same feeling in relation to helping students feel safe and for families to have hope by their presence in the building.

Everywhere I Go

The last theme that emerged was reflective in all of the participant’s life stories. Mrs. Emily Florence recounted that she was often contacted and approached by former students. She stated, “The other counselors would say that they don’t have kids come back like that.” In an environment where you are the one or maybe one of a few Black educators in the building, there was more of a sense the Black counselor will stand out. Mrs. Appleton shared that “students will recognize you first since there are so many of them [students].” I do not believe this recognition

was unique to the experience of only Black school counselors, but the tendency of being remembered may be heightened due to these educators being the only minority in a predominantly White school.

Participants also discussed the importance of community involvement and connections. This was also found in the literature in support of the TSCI. Collaborating with stakeholders is one of the core themes of TSCI (Martin, 2002). Collaborating with students families places the school counselor in a position to construct significant relationships with various underserved families in the community (Evans et al., 2010). Counselors can align themselves with school and community stakeholders to address the needs of the students and families they serve (Lopez-Baez & Paylo, 2009). School counselors familiarize themselves with community resources, agencies, legal ramifications, and school policies which enable them to discern and desegregate layers of influence that are directly impacting students (Trusty & Brown, 2005).

Summary

This chapter provided a discussion on the analysis and interpretation of the six themes found in the Chapter 5. The six themes were *racism*, detailing the personal, societal, and intuitional racism experienced and how these counselors combated these through advocacy; *coping strategies*, detailing the specific strategies used in working in predominantly White schools; *appearance*, detailing how appearance assisted in forging access into predominantly White schools; *supports*, detailing the various relationships that allowed access, guidance, and on-going support for these counselors; *everybody's counselor*, detailing the interactions with students and families; and *everywhere I go*, detailing the impact of their legacy in their schools and communities even today in retirement.

The results of this study were consistent with the literature of Black school educators post-*Brown.* Racism was experienced by all participants personally, societally and institutionally. Reports of isolation, devaluation, and tokenism as well as being used as resident experts were common. Black educators often feel like tokens and viewed as outsiders, only being consulted when the presenting problem has to do with race, ethnicity, or diversity (Bryant et al., 2005). Personal racism experienced by participants was in the areas of overt racism with colleagues and students in their early years in education, integration access, and experiences with microaggressions. According to Wines et al. (2015), pervasive evaluation was a theme found in White culture school districts where African American counselors served. This was similar to the societal racism received by participants of this study in feeling like they had to be the best due to being the only one.

Data collected supported the theme of coping strategies. The data revealed that the school counselors used in communication namely code switching and employed either a guarded or teamwork mentality in predominantly White schools to combat racism. The tendency of code switching by the Black school counselors in their predominantly White school was common. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) described this shift in communication as a change in their speech patterns. Behaviors may also shift everyday between home and work and back home in the evening. At times they may even attempt to hide their knowledge in one setting and work hard to express their intelligence and value in another. The contrast between being guarded and intentionally not connecting to the other side of being very embracing and approaching colleagues with an altogether team mentality will be discussed for future research.

The data also revealed that the school counselors supported their students in coping with the predominantly White environment. Passive factors include philosophies that assert that

Black teachers serve as educational success role models. Black educators who have an understanding of hardships as it relates to students of color allow them to have compassion for their students in the midst of maintaining a level of high expectation (Griffin & Tackie, 2016). Appearance emerged as a theme while participants were sharing their life story. Being well-dressed, being the "cat's meow," and being "just right" were discussed by the participants in relation to how they should be presented at all times with an emphasis near perfection in White spaces.

Supports were discussed as a theme, as it emerged by all four participants. The four participants shared how their relationships with their White male administrators moved beyond access but developed into ongoing support and guidance through their careers. The data also showed that Black school counselors were supported by other Black educators, White colleagues, and their family. Participants also discussed strategies they employed to ensure Black and other minority students were prepared with foreknowledge and strategies while they were also coping with the predominantly White environment. Black teachers perceive that they can utilize empathy differently in regard to their student's family pressures outside of school comparatively to their White caring co-workers (Griffin & Tackie, 2016).

Everybody's counselor was a theme that was shared with all participants. The interviews revealed that the counselors had to build trust. The counselors described this as a test to see if they were "real." The participants also shared how they created a safe haven for Black and minority students. Also, Black students may feel a perceived comfort with Black adults in their classroom, Black educators may hold Black students to a different level of academic excellence and expectation, and Black students reportedly do not feel stereotyped by Black teachers (Naman, 2009). Additionally, all counselors expressed that overall they truly had a burden for

all students which crossed color lines. The data collected provided evidence that their body of work which may have begun supporting Black students was felt by all students over their tenure.

The last theme that emerged was the impact of each of the participants throughout their community both as they were working as well as during retirement. Participants advocated for a necessity of being involved in the community. Lastly, the participants ended their interviews with reflections of their greatest joys and things they felt could have been done better.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and their integration into predominantly White public schools. The study was guided by one overarching research question: What were the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown*? In addition, specific research questions were addressed:

- What were Black school counselors' experiences with students and families in predominantly White schools post-*Brown*?
- What were Black school counselors' experiences with other counselors, teachers, and administrators in predominantly White schools post-*Brown*?

This final chapter presents advice from the four participants to current Black school counselors. Additionally, implications for current Black school counselors in the field, predominantly White KKi-12 buildings and districts, as well as implications for K-12 Educational Leadership programs will be presented. Limitations will also be discussed along with recommendations for future research. Lastly, a conclusion will provide an overview of the study and final thoughts.

Advice from Participants to Current Black School Counselors

The participants provided advice for today's Black school counselors. Lilly Fairbanks discussed the importance of talking about being Black based on the history of struggle and overcoming. Mary Raney stressed again the importance of community connection and

involvement so that the community knows and recognizes you. Emily Florence relayed the need for creativity and accountability, as well as the need to stand in righteous representation of oneself. Finally, Shirley Appleton concluded by sharing that current school counselors need to be concerned about and equipped to support the needs of the youth of today. Advice for current Black school counselors can be found in Table 2:

Table 2

Participants Advice for Current Black School Counselors

Lilly Fairbanks
Well, I will talk about being Black. I would talk about being Black because there are some people who get into certain settings and they forget that they are Black. I was at a round table discussion with a group of Black counselors, and they said, "What do you want to tell us?" I said, "I wanna tell you that if you have an opportunity that day to make a difference in a Black student's life, then you better do it." And because the way I feel about it. The way I taught my children . . . Years and years and years ago, somewhere, somebody was put on a boat, and they were pressed against each other. And they didn't know where they were going and why they were going. I mean many people died and they took it. Now, somebody on that boat, had sex, and that person lived. That person was your ancestor. And they took the beatings, and they took the not having food, and took everything they had to take and that child lived. How dare you? I mean, how dare you sit there and say I can't? How dare you sit there and pretend that you are not the strongest person in the world? I'm like . . . if someone did that so that I could live, if my grandmother's mother had to screw the slave master and have this baby probably out in a field and still walk tall, and I can't even take a minute out to tell someone who was treating one of mine because they are all ours, the good, the bad, and the indifferent. They are all ours. But also to know that you can be strong and get into that kid's face and say you are acting a fool today. You need to go apologize. And when you are done, you need to come back and apologize to me for taking my time talking to you.
Mary Raney
One thing I would say [is] get to know your community. Be an active part of it outside the school. As much as possible, let them get to know you and see you and be a part of everyday life. Because doing that, it's giving you a little peep hole into where they are, how they think, and their level of understanding. And then how they see you as a person. Because I think if you're in a school district . . . what was the focus of the community and how they see me as a person. And one way to find that out is by attending different board meetings. Pick a board at random and sit in and let people hear you and see you. So, you should get to a place that . . . should recognize you as being a part of the community. That they feel like you know what's going on. Don't be too busy. Kids react to you better when they know that you are someone who genuinely likes them. If you get to know them, either you like them or you don't. And if you don't like kids, don't go into school counseling. Just don't do it. Do something else. Work with adults.

They really need people who have a real concern for them and for their future. I would say don't be afraid to share parts of your life with them. If you present yourself to someone who has never done wrong and you've always been amazing in school and you're on every roll of honor that there was, they're not going to really open up to you or see you because they're going to say you don't understand. So, I would say take time to know people and allow people to know you.
Emily Florence
You have to be creative. You've got to care. You have to be the all and above. You can't settle. You have to be accountable. I've done it all, and it was not what I learned in a book and it was not a lecture. And I guess those special angels that are around me and have been placed there for me and took a chance that I was the one. And I tell you this, I wasn't a Black Power or Black militant in any way. That wasn't me. But I do say that if you say things and you stand for what's right, then you will be OK. Say, for instance, I never joined the Union because I felt I came to school every day and did my job every day and talked to people in a civil way. If I respected people, I didn't need to have anyone to represent me. I represented myself. In representing myself, I represented my parents because I wanted to make my parents proud. So, maybe the word is accountability. I mean, if you are sincere about the job and you are sincere about the people, then you're gonna do the right things. You're gonna do a good job. There's not too many things that I can think of that I would do over, you know. The things that I did so wrong or didn't do right. I just want to say I was me and I was doing it for you. No, not just for you, for the both of us, really. It was about the team. Because I want you to do well, and when you do well, then I'm blessed.
Shirley Appleton
It's harder in more urban areas, but young people are dying every day. You know young people are living with drug abuse, whatever. Stuff. You know, be concerned about . . . the challenges or whatever youth have today that weren't apart of how when I was growing up. You know, I'm down here in Texas, and you know the government snatched and separated families. And those kids who are staying here . . . is anyone gonna be prepared to deal with them in class, in school? You know, their mom and dad is in Honduras. I mean, we have not been. You know, people have not been real sensitive to this. The undocumented students were always afraid that when I go home, my mom may not be there. Anyway, I guess they need people who are in the here and now.

Implications for Current Black School Counselors

This study revealed several implications for today's Black school counselors working in predominantly White schools. It is important to note that the College Board 2012 national survey of school counselors stated that 96% of Black school counselors as members of a minority group themselves necessitated the need to strive toward equitable processes for their students (Hart Research Associates, 2012). The 2012 survey results are in direct alignment with the advocacy that the participants in this study engaged in throughout their careers. Therefore, I

believe it is essential for Black school counselors to be vigilant and proactive in addressing issues directly impacting minority students. Bemak and Chung (2008) encouraged all school counselors to have conversations directly with teachers who overtly or without intention perpetuate negative stereotypes of their minoritized students. Additionally, as these participants have revealed in the interviews, there was a need to challenge their counseling staff, school boards, and city offices to address the lack of minority representation and perceptions of institutional racism. "Undertaking such work is particularly difficult because it is likely to alienate and frustrate many persons who are content in maintaining the status quo regardless of the professional and respectful manner in which school counselors address these issues" (Bemak & Chung, 2008, p. 375).

After reviewing the literature and the data derived from the interviews, Black school counselors shared unique and personal experiences that shaped them within the cultural context of the society in which they lived. These unique and meaningful stories supported a shared commonality of the Black lived experiences that helped them support Black students to navigate predominantly White schools during their tenure. In the same way, today's Black school counselors should use their ability to connect with students in meaningful and intentional ways to support their academic success. Evans et al. (2011) stated that it is imperative that school counselors convey multicultural advocacy as a natural byproduct of who they are as leaders within the profession.

The necessity for the Black school counselor to be invested and a part of the community was addressed by all of the participants in this study. The dual positionality of both being a school counselor who collaborates with all stakeholders in the community along with being

Black and having an intra-group perspective of the needs had by minoritized students in predominantly White schools are strengths of the Black school counselor.

In reflection of the theoretical lens of BFT, Collins (1990) stated, "Rather than rejecting our marginality, Black women intellectuals can use our outsider-within stance as a position of strength in building effective coalitions and stimulate dialogue" (p. 36). As a component of the TSCI and thus the ASCA National Model, collaborating with stakeholders in our communities improves outcomes for students. School counselors are in the position to assist students and their families in securing necessary services by learning to utilize their unique position to persuade the political decisions to encapsulate the needs and resources lacking for their students (Trusty & Brown, 2005).

The participants shared a tenuous balance of how to support minoritized students, specifically Black students, in addition to the purposeful mattering of all students; thus, the theme of everybody's counselor emerged. Bemak and Chung (2008) supported the school counselor in taking calculated risks as inherent in the role and to develop as social justice advocates. The authors continued by acknowledging the potential for hurt and difficulty that could arise by taking such risks both personally and professionally.

Implications for Predominantly White K-12 Schools and Districts

The dearth of minority educators has been well documented post-*Brown v. Board* decision (Milner & Howard, 2004). Therefore, predominantly White schools that have one or a few Black educators on staff should be mindful of the experiences of the Black school counselors in this study. The levels of racism encountered by these four participants in different locales in all levels of public education were a common theme. Specifically, personal encounters

of overt racism and microaggressions created levels of stress that required the participants to use coping strategies to combat the negative experiences.

The participants recorded experiences of isolation, devaluation, and tokenism as well as being used as resident experts. Bryant et al. (2005) discussed how Black educators reported feelings of being a token in situations and being seen as an outsider solely being conferred with when the problem exhibited was steeped in diversity-related issues. Mindful diversity practices against pigeonholing the Black counselor or educator as a resident expert or representative of all Blacks could support the work of the school counselor in addressing the needs of their entire caseload. These mindful diversity practices should be discussed yearly in open and authentic dialogue to include personal, building, and district self-report and evaluation. The human resource department in partnership with building principals should participate in strategic planning on the recruitment, support, and advancement of minoritized staff to promote a diverse workforce reflective of their schools and communities.

Additionally, Bemak and Chung (2008) argued that it is imperative to confront the deliberate and inadvertent modalities in which the current status quo preserves the innumerable practices of inequity that produce negative academic outcomes, comprising the educational achievement gap in the United States. In the participants' combined average of 20 years in school counseling, the data revealed various incidences that if they had not addressed a matter of inequity, it would have not been noticed or addressed. An example is when Mrs. Raney found the communication disparity in a discipline referral skewed more negatively for a Black male involved as opposed to the White male in the same incident. Additionally, Mrs. Raney, Florence and Appleton ensured qualified Black students were considered and honored for scholarship programs. Therefore, K-12 school settings should engage in culturally responsive discipline

practices, ensure qualified minority students are represented in scholarship opportunities, as well as in school-wide assemblies, and in student leadership roles. All participants reflected on the need for more Black counselors. They also expressed frustration that since their retirement there may be no one in the building to advocate and support minority students. Therefore, it is imperative in predominantly White K-12 settings that culturally responsive consciousness is raised despite the presence of a minority educator in the building.

Implications for K-12 Educational Leadership Programs

Diversity education is needed on covert racism specifically addressed at understanding tokenism, resident expert, microaggressions, devaluing, and othering in relation to minoritized staff, families, and students in predominantly White settings. The current curriculum should be evaluated to ensure adherence to culturally responsive practices in K-12 educational leadership programs. Additionally, personal, school-based, and district-wide diversity statements should be created by each principal/superintendent leader that dismantles color-blind business as usual models of working with all students the same.

Limitations

The participants of this study were all women, although men were actively sought out during the recruitment process. The woman's lens is not surprising due to the gender demographics of school counselors currently in America. "More than three-quarters (77 %) of counselors are women" (NOSCA, 2011, p. 45). Since I used purposeful sampling, participants would have begun working as an educator in the years of 1960-1980 to ensure the historical time frame was representative of their post-*Brown* Era experiences. The average age of my participants were a little over 76; thus, the aging population limited the participants available as well as how they accessed current technologies used in recruitment (e.g. emails, social media

platforms, smart devices, and other technology). One potential participant was a man who met all of the required demographics of the study. I was able to obtain a mailing address. After a few weeks, I had a call from his spouse about the letter they received. Upon discussing the study with his spouse, I was made aware of his battle with dementia; therefore, they decided to decline the study. This caused a renewed fervor to preserve the historical perspectives of Black school counselors before they fade away forever. The study was also delimited to Black school counselors which currently makes up about "8 percent of all counselors" (NOSCA, 2011, p. 46).

Recommendations for Future Research

This study examined the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown.* There is a lack of research as it pertains to the lived experiences of professional school counselors who are Black or other minoritized individuals. Therefore, I recommend more research expanded to current Black school counselors lived experiences. We are still living in a post-*Brown* society with the continued reality of an ever-present academic achievement gap along racial lines. Additionally, I would recommend the inclusion of a diverse group of school counselors ethnically as well as from geographically different regions to provide rich detail to the lived experiences of school counselors today.

Additionally, I would recommend the inclusion of Black male school counselor perspectives. This could add additional data to inform lived experiences across the matrix of gender and race. This study also revealed contrasting methodologies on coping with being the only Black educator in the building. One modality was to be intentionally guarded and not connect with colleagues on a personal level. The other was to embrace a team mentality. I recommend further research on this dichotomy of strategies and any similarities or variances on perceived stress in predominantly White schools.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and their integration into predominantly White public schools. The study was guided by one overarching research question: What were the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown*? In addition, specific research questions were addressed:

- What were Black school counselors' experiences with students and families in predominantly White schools post-*Brown*?
- What were Black school counselors' experiences with other counselors, teachers, and administrators in predominantly White schools post-*Brown*?

A literature review was conducted for this study which included the history of school counseling, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and its impact on the displacement of Black educators. The literature also explored in parallel to Black school counselors the experiences of Black teachers and students post-*Brown.* Demographic data were provided on today's school counselors, and germinal studies on Black school counselors in the literature were presented. The literature review ended with BFT, which was the lens used in viewing this study.

A qualitative study was conducted to capture the lived experiences of the research participants using multiple case studies. A narrative approach using life story was used to garner rich descriptive details of participants' experiences. Purposeful sampling was used in the selection of participants who began working in the field of education between the years of 1960 and 1980. Four Black school counselors served as participants and were interviewed in semi-structured interviews lasting approximately two hours each. Informed consent was obtained per Institutional Review Board policies.

Data were coded and analyzed by themes using constant comparative method. "This method involved comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data was grouped together on similar dimensions and were given a name." (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 32) Six themes emerged as a result of the data analysis: racism, coping strategies, appearance, supports, everybody's counselor, and everywhere I go. The themes were supported by the literature and aided in answering the research questions. Participants' life story narratives provided a rich background to support the case study methodology. The collective narratives provided shared experiences that linked the cases together in forming a historical framework consistent with the post-*Brown* era being studied.

The participants' narratives detailed their personal experiences being in all-Black communities, schools, and neighborhoods. The childhood experiences reflected love and adoration for their teachers and the hierarchy of respect that was afforded to those who were Black educators in those all-Black settings. Emily Florence stated, "I loved and adored my English teacher. She was what we called the cat's meow. If I want to reflect back to a counselor, she would have been the counselor, my mentor, my mother, and big sister." Lilly Fairbanks, shared, "When I went to school, my teachers loved us. We had all-Black everything, and we respected everyone. We respected the janitor and the teacher. I mean all of those people in that building cared about you." The participants also shared conversely their experiences of integrating into predominantly white settings. Emily Florence stated,

> My sister's class, which was the class behind me, she was the first class and she was going to be a senior. So, she transferred into the White school as a senior, and she was only there for that one year. And they had to make it work, you know. I remember her telling me that she got on the yearbook committee because she was on the yearbook

> committee at [Lincoln] at the Black school. So, they tried to move them along like cattle or whatever. And some of them made it, and some of them didn't.

The participants' stories formed counternarratives to the outcome of *Brown v. Board,* which is one of the tenants of Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT includes the telling of stories as a significant tool to defy the permeation of a White-culture mindset. "Stories by people of color can counter the stories of the oppressor. Furthermore, the discussion between the teller and listener can help overcome ethnocentrism and the dysconscious way many scholars view and construct the world" (Tate, 1997, p. 220). This prompted a dual perspective in viewing this study through BFT and CRT. CRT is rooted in Du Bois' social-psychological concept of viewing race through a conceptual framework or theoretical lens. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) were influential in introducing and advancing the concept of CRT in the field of education.

There are five core tenets of CRT: (1) the position that racism is ordinary and not irrational, (2) the concept of interest convergence, (3) the social hierarchy of race, (4) the idea of storytelling and counter-storytelling, and (5) the position that Whites have actually been recipients of laws pertaining to civil rights (Delgado & Stephanic, 2012). The spreading out of educators of color and the limit of only one in the building was a direct result of Brown *v. Board.* This result was not a win for students, especially Black and Brown children. These displacement practices were reflective of the racism and White supremacy that was seen in education. "First, that racism is ordinary, not aberrational—'normal science,' the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country" (Delgado & Stephanic, 2012, p. 7).

Based on the analysis of data, Black school counselors encountered racism from the various perspectives, including personally, societally, and institutionally, in predominantly White schools. Data supported feelings of isolation, devaluing, microaggressions, the issue of being seen and used as a resident expert of Black students, and issues of tokenism. This is supported through a CRT lens and BFT, as BFT asserts the position of struggle as inherent in Black women as well as the microaggressions that take place as inherent in the fabric of a race-constructed hierarchy.

Coping strategies were used by the participants in the form of code switching in behavior and speech patterns. Additionally, participants reported being on guard or embracing their status of being the only Black educator in the building. Literature revealed the stressors associated with maintaining professional relationships with colleagues along with a tendency for Black women to isolate themselves in predominantly White schools (Hall et al., 2012). Black school counselors also reported helping Black students navigate predominantly White schools by providing them with strategies and role-modeling tips to be successful.

Appearance was interpreted in duality. The first interpretation was based on the participants' backgrounds. The concept of respect and perfectionism as it came to personal grooming and presentation was ingrained in the participants from childhood. In addition to the shared experiences of being raised in all-Black neighborhoods and schools, for the most part, the collective expectation was one must not act up in front of White folks. You must look the part of the perfectly groomed and well-behaved little girl. This led to the second analysis of the data that reflected appearance not only in outer presentation of dress but also included the addition of a narrative on a lighter skin tone by one participant, Emily Florence, on enabling her access to employment.

Supports were necessary to cope in predominantly White spaces as one of the few, if not only, Black educators in the building. Supportive relationships were discussed concerning other Black educators, colleagues, and family. Notably, all of the participants discussed one key White male administrator that helped to guide them during their promotions and tenure in the profession. Collins (1990) positioned that the conditions of race, class, and gender oppression can vary dramatically yet generates some uniformity in the epistemologies of minoritized groups. Based on the analysis of data, the researcher concluded that supportive White men did generate uniformity in oppression, as there was no discussion or promotion towards building principal leadership or licensure towards a superintendent position. Lilly Fairbanks stated, "He [the superintendent] said, 'You can inspire more people as a school counselor since you don't want to go for your principal license.' And I said, 'There are not African American principals in [Inner Town] so I don't want to waste time doing that and sitting on a license that I will never use."' These oppressive practices were reminiscent of the devoted mammy, which Harris-Perry (2011) asserted that the control behind this image is to oppress or exploit Black women socially, economically, and politically.

The theme of everybody's counselor revealed the participants perceived need to show they were real an essential component to building trust in predominantly White schools. The participants discussed having to prove themselves as being genuine and authentic with their families. Additionally, a discussion was had on whether the Black school counselor felt that it mattered that they were Black in their predominantly White K-12 buildings. Three of four answered emphatically that it mattered every day. One participant, Emily Florence, stated that she did not feel that it mattered. However, upon analysis of the data from her interview transcript, there were several poignant stories that were shared that illustrated that in fact her

unique positionality as a Black school counselor in the building urged her to sponsor Black student support groups, to provide inside tips and strategies to Black students before meeting with their assigned counselor, and to reverse another counselor's decision to pull a Black college-bound student from a required math class, to name a few. Black students may feel a perceived comfort with Black adults in their classroom, Black educators may hold Black students to a different level of academic excellence and expectation and Black students reportedly do not feel stereotyped by Black teachers (Naman, 2009).

The participants shared experiences of their legacy everywhere they would go, both while actively working as a school counselor and currently in retirement. They recalled accounts with students returning and sharing stories of their impact on their lives. The connection to the local community was paramount in its importance for all of the school counselors. Even Mrs. Appleton, who was an outlier, having worked in a large metropolitan area and did not spend a lot of time in the direct neighborhood of her students, stressed the importance of being involved in the community. Therefore, a strategy for being successful as a Black school counselor in a predominantly White school is to get to know the community and be a part of the community so families and students know that you are real and are knowledgeable of their needs.

With the inclusion of these Black narratives in the literature of school counseling, the historical accounts of these lived experiences provide current practicing Black school counselors novel or historical reflections to inform current practice. In 2003, the ASCA National Model was developed to create professional standards for school counselors (ASCA, 2003). However, these Black school counselor forerunners were displaying the tenants of the TSCI of leadership, advocacy, management, and systemic change long before the development of this model of school counseling.

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APPENDIX A: INITIAL COMMINICATION

Greetings.

My name is YeVonne Jones and I am a doctoral candidate at Indiana State University in the Educational Leadership program. I, along with my dissertation chair Dr. Kandace Hinton, am conducting research on the lived experiences of Black school counselors. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Black school counselors post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision and their integration into predominantly White public schools. I will be studying Black school counselors' experiences with students and families in integrated schools as well as their experiences with other counselors, teachers, and administrators throughout their career. It is my hope that you will consider participating in this study. This study might provide an understanding of the collective similarities and differences of Black school counselors lived experiences in integrated schools as well as how Black school counselors navigated their spaces in predominantly White schools. This research will also contribute to the gap in knowledge in the current literature.

This qualitative study will use semi-structured interviews to collect data and construct themes as it relates to the lived experiences of Black school counselors. I would like to visit with you at a time and location which is convenient for you. I will conduct an introductory interview which will serve as an explanation of the study, and explanation on your rights as a human subject as well as provide a consent form for you to sign. We will also set up a time to complete a face-to-face, one-on-one interview which will last approximately 90 minutes. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

The interview will be guided by a question protocol which is designed to be conversational in order for you to tell your life story as a school counselor. The interview will be recorded using an audio device. The information obtained through the interviews or written documentation will be kept confidential. You will be contacted post-interview in order to review transcribed information for accuracy and to provide additional clarification as needed. Upon completion of the study, pseudonyms will be selected and used for all participants.

I would be greatly honored by your participation in this study. I am hopeful that you find this an intrepid study worthy of your consideration. I would also be grateful with any support in identifying additional potential participants and encourage the sharing of this letter and my contact information below. Please respond via email or phone if you are interested in participating in this study. Also, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at yjones4@sycamores.indstate.edu or mobile (765) 631-4716.

Sincerely,

YeVonne A. Jones

APPENDIX B: INTRODUCTORY QUESTION PROTOCOL

The following questions will be used to gather demographic data and build rapport.

1. How old are you?
2. Do you identify as being Black?
3. How long have you been or did you work in the field of school counseling?
4. What levels did you counsel and for how long at each level?
5. Who or what influenced you to become a school counselor?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The following questions will be used to guide the interview process.

Family Background and Cultural Influences

How would you describe your parents?

What is the ethnic or cultural background of your parents?

What do you think you inherited from them?

Was there a noticeable cultural flavor to the home you grew up in?

What are some early memories of cultural influences?

Was your family different from other families in your neighborhood?

What was going on in your family, your community, and the world at the time of your earliest memory?

Schooling

What is your first memory of attending school?

What do you remember most about elementary school?

Did you have a favorite teacher in grade school? Junior High or High School?

What are your best memories of school?

What are your worse memories of school?

What was the most significant event of your teenage years?

Were there any stories of family members who attended segregated schools?

Were there any specific events or stories related to the *Brown v. Board* of Education decision of 1954 that you are any family members experienced?

Do you remember what you were doing up to or after the 1954 *Brown v. Board* of Education decision?

Did you have experiences attending segregated schools? What level? Junior high, high or college?

Did you have experiences attending integrated schools? What level junior high, high or college?

Early Career Exploration and Experiences

What is your earliest memory of what you wanted to do for a career as an adult?

Who or what influenced you to become a school counselor?

What was your education and career path to becoming a school counselor?

What is your earliest memory during your first years as a school counselor?

What was important to you in your work in the early years?

What was the most difficult in your work?

Did cultural influences impact your early years of work as a school counselor?

Did the *Brown v. Board of* Education decision impact you in your early years as a school counselor?

Was the Brown decision a victory for Black students, for Black teachers, for Black families and communities, as well as for Blacks in general?

Recall any stories of interactions with White, Black, Brown and/or other ethnicities in your early years.

Recall any interactions with families of your students.

What were your early interactions with your administrators in your building?

Describe your case load in your early years.

Describe your job duties and functions in your early years.

Were these the same or different than other counselors in your building? If applicable, describe.

Describe any experiences where being Black mattered in your early years.

Periods of Time in Counseling Career

What were the significant events that took place during your first 10, 10-20, 20-30?

Years of counseling?

Are there students or experiences that stand out during this time?

How did your role or duties change during this time?

Were these the same or different than other counselors in your building if applicable, describe?

What cultural influences impacted your interactions with students, families or colleagues?

Did the *Brown v. Board of* Education decision impact you or your career during this time?

Describe any experiences were being Black mattered during these years.

How were your interactions the same or different with White students and their families?

How were your interactions with Black students the same or different with Black students and their families?

How were your interactions with other marginalized groups e.g. poverty, other minoritized groups the same or different with students and their families?

Did you hold membership in any state or national professional counseling organizations?

How aware were you of the evolution of school counseling as a professional?

Retiring

What was retiring from work like for you?

Did you miss it or were you glad to have it over?

What were your disappointments?

Were there things that you wanted to accomplish and were unable to?