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Systems of Success: African American Women Prepared

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Systems of Success: African American Women Prepared

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Abstract

This study generates a vision for African American schooling based on the lived experiences of Black women, born between 1965 – 1980, who have persisted through college and graduate studies. This research centers the voices of Generation X African American women, to discover the impact school systems have had on their development toward adulthood and how their experiences help construct their vision of Black education for the future. Using the ecological systems theory to position that school systems help create meaning and impact development towards adulthood, the study asks participants to envision an education system that enables success for African American students, while amplifying the hopes, dreams, disappointments, and disillusionment of their educational journey. Through qualitative interviews with participants the themes of relational Black teachers, affirmed personhood, and opportunities to self-actualize are explored. A five pronged system of Black student development (R.E.A.P.S.) is envisioned: (1) Relational Black Teachers; (2) Expectational Pedagogy; (3) Affirmative Environments; (4) Places of Cultural Community; and (5) Self-Actualization Opportunities.

Keywords: Black teachers, African American success, relational pedagogy, affirmed personhood, African American student achievement

To, for and through O.G.W.

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Systems of Success: African American Women Prepared

Background of the Problem

When the topic of Black achievement or Black success in schooling is discussed, it is often approached from a lens of failure. There are select texts that focus on the long history of academic attainment within the African American community, with a reflection on the factors that contributed to a people rising from slavery, persisting through Jim Crow, and ultimately navigating the current re-segregation of school systems. This study explores the contributing factors that have allowed African American women, from Generation X, to persist in K-12 education through postsecondary and professional graduation and solicits their vision for the future of Black education.

Black women of Generation X - were born between 1965 and 1980. This solidly places this cohort as some of the first students to realize fully integrated schools throughout the country. With the hopeful promise of Brown vs. The Board of Education, still glimmering in the not so distant past of just eleven years' prior, these Black women were born to experience education like no generation before them. By amplifying the voices of this generation, the research centers the educational experiences that shaped them into adulthood and how those experiences help them to imagine a system in which Black students can thrive towards success in the future.

The reason that this research is needed is because the American educational system actively works against the upliftment and achievement of Black students through systems of racism, cultural capital incongruence, opportunity hoarding, and low expectations. The educational structures, that predominantly serve Black students, have

to be critically evaluated in order to eliminate systems that don't benefit Black student

achievement and ultimately restructure those systems to prioritize functions that will lead

to successful progression towards adulthood. By using a critical approach to the

ecological systems theory to help understand the complex nature of educational systems

and problems, it sheds light on the integral perspectives in both methodology and broader

research objectives such as emancipation and social justice (Watson, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

The meaning generated from this study helps to address the problem of creating

school environments that ensure African American student success. Currently, African

American students are labeled as having an 'achievement gap'; however, the school

systems themselves have a deficit in creating environments for Black students to achieve.

This problem impacts Black students emotionally and academically because they are not

being served effectively. Many systemic factors contribute to this problem, including the

failure to recognize the impact of ecological systems, specifically the microsystem of

schools, on the growth and development of Black students as they interact with school

organizations built for others. This study contributes to the body of knowledge seeking

to create effective relationships between Black students and schools by highlighting the

lived experiences of Generation X, Black women who have persisted from K-12 through

graduate studies and their visions of successful Black education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to generate a vision for African American schooling

based on the lived experiences of Generation X African American women who have

persisted through college and graduate studies. The phenomenological inquiry aims to

uncover the meaning of African American womens' lived experiences in schools from the 1970s through present. Using the ecological systems theory to position that school systems help create meaning and impact development towards adulthood, the study asks participants to envision an education system that enables success for African American students, while amplifying the hopes, dreams, disappointments, and disillusionment of their educational journey.

Research Questions

This research describes how the lived experience of Generation X, African American Women in educational settings, K-12 through graduate school, helps to construct their vision of Black education for the future. For this study, the guiding research question is: How does the lived experience of Generation X Black women in post-Brown schools impact their vision of the future for Black education?   This study uses a critical perspective of the ecological systems theory to describe how education systems shaped and created meaning toward their development through adulthood.

How does your lived experience as a Generation X Black woman in post-Brown schools impact your vision of the future for Black education?

1. What K-12 and postsecondary experiences helped shape you?

2. What contributed to a good (successful) school experience for you?

3. What contributed to a bad (ineffective) school experience for you?

4. What is your vision for successful schooling for Black students – today and beyond?

Theoretical Framework

This research centers the voice of African American women, born between 1965 and 1980, to discover the impact school systems have had on their development towards adulthood. This acknowledges that, although schools are institutional organizations, to be effective for African Americans, schools also act as social, political, and cultural forces (Perry et al, 2003, p. 99). And conversely, those same external forces impact schools and how they function. All internal metrics, such as: attendance discipline, and academic performance can be linked to the positive and negative influence of the surrounding local environment (Ginwright, 2016). By understanding that schools hold more meaning than just a place to learn, and also understanding that schools reflect the larger community of which they are part - it is imperative to hear how the school system impacts Black people, and in this study particularly Black women from childhood through adulthood.

One theorist that classified how education can impact the development of children is Urie Bronfenbrenner, who created the ecological systems theory in which he posits that children mature within the contexts of relationships that involve families, schools, friends, neighborhoods and society.   Bronfenbrenner's model has five levels: individual, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Education exists within the microsystemic level which consists of an individual's relationship to their immediate environment (e.g., home, school, peers) and the specific roles inhabited during specified times. (Curry & Shillingford, 2015)

Bronfenbrenner theorizes that an individual creates meaning towards adulthood through their interactions with various levels of the ecological system. That means that

peers, family, and schools all have indelible influence in the growth of each individual

(Orrock & Clark, 2018, p. 1024). This interaction between child and school has a

profound impact on his/her level of development as a person, thus the relationship

between the school system and Black children has to be critically evaluated.

Brofenbrenner defines a microsystem as "a pattern of activities, roles, and

interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with

particular physical and material characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22).

Interaction at the microsystem level takes place face-to-face and involves the developing

person directly in settings such as a daycare or school. These environments are not static,

which means the relationship between the child and the setting evolve through a process

of interaction.   In a school setting, school policies, culture, and expectations can sustain,

develop, or instigate growth or stagnation as students navigate the system

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

This means that Black female students forge their identity toward adulthood

through a process of interactions with school systems by the material effect of their

perceptions, desires, fears, and knowledge base acquired through exposure to the setting

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The meaning is derived and validated by the lived experience of

the student and how the student assigns relevance to a given situation. The aspects of the

environment that are most powerful in shaping a person's development are those

interactions that have the most meaning to them in a particular situation. It is important

to note that the Ecology of Human Development finds the perception of the individual

and how they experience a setting to be of the utmost importance. Which means how

Black females perceive schools and their place within them, is as important as any

scientific features of the environment and/or setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This emphasis links well with a phenomenological view of the lived experience of participants in a study.

Contextually, schools are a part of an interconnected system that holds the same patterns as the overarching culture and social systems of society. The connections of the micro-, meso-, and exosystems can be distinct between different social classes, religions, or ethnic groups – but the examination of each sub culture and its system of interrelated patterns helps to describe and ascribe the functioning system of the larger macrosystem and how one develops within these systems. The complex nested, interconnected systems is viewed as a manifestation of overarching patterns of ideology and organization of the social institutions common to a particular culture or subculture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Therefore when trying to understand the behavior and development towards adulthood, the ecological systems theory does not rely on scientific objectivity, but instead focuses on the way the environment(s) is perceived by the person experiencing it (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). And since meaning is so important, when using ecological systems as a basis for research, the research is stratified by two or more ecological dimensions (e.g., race, gender, age cohort) to make detection of patterns easier to describe across a range of ecological contexts. Once the dimensions are identified, large samples are not necessary, but instead deliberate selection of participants is most critical to the study. Ultimately the researcher should keep in mind that, "in ecological research, the properties of the person and of the environment, the structure of environmental settings, and the processes taking place within and between them must be viewed as interdependent and analyzed in systems terms" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 41).

As a study that focuses on the meaning derived from the interaction between school systems and African American women, it is important to note that the above mentioned theory has its limitations. One exclusion in the ecological systems theory, is the lack of exploration of intersectional perspectives and how race, gender, and social class impact the interaction within the various levels of the model. In addition, more analysis is necessary to fully unravel how racism, segregation, and discrimination weaves into the ecological system and the impact of those factors in promoting affirmative development (Nichols, 2010). Therefore it is acknowledged that to fully use the ecological systems theory, one understands that racism occurs at all levels of the educational system (Brooks, 2018).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it gives voice to African American women, born between 1965 and 1980, as they recount their experiences within the American school system. As college educated Black women in the United States, it is important to understand why they pursued and persisted through postsecondary education to complete college and/or graduate degrees. And these voices are needed to craft the (re)imagining of Black education for the future, as envisioned by Black women, for academic practitioners.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Introduction

Previous literature highlights the struggles of segregated education, with its subpar facilities, miniscule budgets and lack of comparability to neighboring white schools. But, neglected are the stories of upliftment that can be found when elders speak of their segregated school experience. bell hooks recounts her experience as she shifted from all-Black, segregated schools to being bussed to an integrated school shortly after Brown vs. Board of Education, "School changed utterly with racial integration. Gone was the messianic zeal to transform our minds and beings that had characterized teachers and their pedagogical practices in our all-Black schools. Knowledge was suddenly about information only. It had no relation to how one lived, behaved. It was no longer connected to antiracist struggle. Bussed to white schools, we soon learned that obedience, and not a zealous will to learn, was what was expected of us" (hooks, 1994, p. 3).

As calls for Black children to be integrated into the American education system became louder and bolder, the nation began to see white theorists highlight various economic and cultural issues that they believed to hamper Black communities, which spawned compensatory education – the belief that Black children are low achieving due to 'urban problems' and are culturally deprived. With these ideas beginning in the late 1950's, around the time of Brown v. Board of Education, there was a movement to have schools compensate for the ill-informed deficits of Black children (Spencer, 2012).

This era of deficit informed thinking showed up in schools with the unsubstantiated claims of lack of parental involvement from Black parents, that Black families don't value education, and that Black students can't or don't want to learn. This model focuses failure on students and families, but never highlights structural inequalities inherent in the school system itself. With deficit thinking the blame lies with Black families that are deemed inadequate, instead of with the system that created these inadequacies. "Deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education" (Yasso, 2017, pg. 119). These assumptions lead to value being taken away from Black communities, instead Black students are then viewed as lacking the values of white, middle America. This leads to the under appreciation of Black cultural assets and the positive role of the Black community, church, and politics in shaping students, instead these Black spaces are identified as culturally deprived (Yasso, 2017, pg. 126).

In addition, Deprivation/Deficit thinking models fail to address the economic changes and persistent patterns of discrimination that underlay urban poverty and decline in Black communities - and, by default, hold the system blameless for the conditions of Black students. That is why it is critical to evaluate the educational system as a purveyor and/or limiter of growth towards adulthood for millions of African American students nationwide. These systems have the ability to deny African Americans the intrinsic support that is normally available to whites on an individual and collective basis (Feagin & Barnett, 2004).

As deficit thinking models became the de facto operating system of educational districts, we find sixty years removed from Brown vs. Board of Education that African Americans are still affected by these intrinsic beliefs. Through an examination of Blacks students and their relationship to schools since desegregation, and the systemic trends of racism; opportunity hoarding; cultural capital incongruence and low expectations that are inherent in the current American school system, this study explores ways that schools can act as a supportive microsystem.

Historical Overview

Segregated Black Schools Before Brown

There is growing literature that has created a counter narrative to the notion that Black schools, prior to Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, were abysmal places bereft of adequate teaching, facilities, and resources (Morris, 2004). Instead, there is a rich oral narrative of the legacy of purpose, literacy, leadership, and advocacy in the historically Black school (Perry et al., 2003). Before the landmark decision of Brown in 1954, oral-history interviews revealed that Black schools were anchors of the Black community where schools represented spaces of solidarity, places of politics and areas of safety (Love, 2019). Segregated African American schools were anchored by caring Black teachers, who commanded respect and engaged parental support through their alignment and membership in the surrounding community (Acosta et al., 2018). Authors and scholars, bell hooks and Gloria Ladson-Billings speak fondly when recalling their time spent in Black schools:

Almost all our teachers at Booker T. Washington were Black women.

They were committed to nurturing intellect so that we could become

scholars, thinkers, and cultural workers - Black folks who used our

"minds". To fulfill that mission, my teachers made sure they "knew" us.

They knew our parents, our economic status, where we worshipped, what

our homes were like, and how we were treated in the family. (hooks, 1994,

p. 2)

As a member of the baby boom generation, I went to urban schools

that were bursting at the seams; every classroom had at least thirty

students. Further, almost all of the children and most of the teachers were

Black. But the important thing was that the teachers were not strangers in

the community (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 7). Defacto racial segregation

meant that several of my teachers lived in or near my neighborhood. They

attended our church. They shopped in neighborhood stores. They

patronized local barbers and beauticians. (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 68)

In addition to the care and community demonstrated in segregated Black schools,

there was a political undercurrent that positioned Black schools as sites of resistance.

Records show that African American educators were organizers against the inequitable

facilities, lower salaries, hand me down materials, and inadequate budgets compared to

nearby all white schools (Acosta et al., 2018). In the classroom, Black students were

taught racial upliftment, social expediency, and political agency (Morris, 2004). As bell

hooks (1994) states, "for Black folks teaching-educating-was fundamentally political

because it was rooted in antiracist struggle" (p. 2).

Overall, the narratives capture how Black people experienced segregated schools by creating and participating in a school institution that was committed to the betterment of Black families, children, and communities. In addition, a common theme was the influence segregated Black schools had in the active opposition to oppressive social structures and legalized racism through its connection to its students and surrounding communities (Morris, 2004).

The Road to Desegregation

Beginning in the 1930s the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, led at that time by Charles Hamilton Houston, mounted concerted strikes at legally sanctioned segregation. Houston along with Thurgood Marshall sought to attack Jim Crow laws at their weakest point – the field of education. Over the course of two decades the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund chipped away at separate but equal laws by arguing the following cases: (Murray v. Maryland 1936; Missouri ex rel Gaines v. Canada 1938; Sweatt v. Painter 1950; McLaurin v. Oklahoma Board of Regents of Higher Education 1950 (Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, n.d.). Beginning in 1951 and decided in 1954, Thurgood Marshall argued in Brown, et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, et al. that separate schools were damaging to Black children through physically substandard facilities and psychologically damaging through the inherent message of the inferiority of Black children (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

In Feagin and Barnett's (2004) article *Success and failure: How Systemic Racism Trumped the Brown v. Board of Education Decision,* it's highlighted that from the beginning Black families and community leaders were not seeking desegregation in order to sit with white students, instead desegregation was seen as a vehicle to have greater

access to economic resources. They go further to point out that "green follows white" which means that the greatest resources were found in all white schools and in order to fully access those materials, desegregation was deemed necessary.

Even though the economic advantages of desegregation were obvious, there were major figures that voiced concerns about the impact desegregation would have on Black students and Black schools. This contingent of parents, teachers, and community leaders stressed the need to force the "equal" part of "separate but equal." One of the opponents was noted scholar W.E.B. Du Bois. Through the literature (Acosta et al., 2018; Darby & Rury, 2018; Love, 2019) and his own writing, Du Bois (1935) was insistent that Black children cannot get an equitable education in schools where teachers don't have care and affection for Black students and a knowledge of the student, his/her history, background and surroundings. In fact, he plainly stated that "under such circumstances, there is no room for argument as to whether the Negro needs separate schools or not. The plain fact faces us, that either he will have separate schools or he will not be educated" (DuBois, 1935, p. 329). Du Bois foreboded that if the Black student is integrated into white schools – the education that they would receive would be pitiful, because as evidenced in the North, Black students were at best tolerated and at the worst crucified (Du Bois, 1935).

Two decades later anthropologist and writer Zora Neale Hurston, submitted a scathing editorial to the Orlando Sentinel in 1955 expressing her opposition to the desegregation of public schools:

> If there are not adequate Negro schools in Florida, and there is some
> residual, some inherent and unchangeable quality in white schools,
> impossible to duplicate anywhere else, then I am the first to insist that Negro

children of Florida be allowed to share this boon. But if there are adequate

Negro schools and prepared instructors and instructions, then there is nothing

different except the presence of white people.

Du Bois' and Hurston's words foreshadowed what was to come for Black students

integrated into white public schools by expressing their beliefs that Black students would

not receive a comparable education in white schools.

Black Community Thoughts on Schools Post Brown

In the preceding literature the reciprocal relationship between schools, parents,

and the community was evident. The individual components of the microsystem

supported Black children and the interaction between the systems (school, families,

communities) completed a fully actualized mesosystem. In the years since *Brown,* the

literature shows a sense of reflection on the loss experienced and thoughts of whether the

Black community gained enough to cover the trade-offs. Scholars, such as Horsford and

Grosland (2013), have noted the problems created in the post-Brown era, namely 1) the

closing of Black schools, 2) the loss of jobs for Black teachers and administrators, 3) the

weight of desegregation efforts being placed on Black families, and 4) the dismantling of

the Black community.

When asked how *Brown* affected Historically Black Colleges and Universities

(HBCU), churches, businesses and social institutions, Civil Rights leader Julian Bond

noted that there was a brain drain (of students and teachers) in the community and a loss

of the middle class through the subsequent closing of Black schools, and the jobs that

came with them, post-*Brown.* He also lamented the less tangible losses of leadership,

inspiration, knowledge, and history that was found in Black communities and funneled through Black schools (Pon, 2004).

During the years between 1954 and 1969, it is estimated that at least 30,000 African American teachers were displaced as Black children were integrated into all-white schools (Acosta et al., 2018). Since 1954 the Black teacher and administrator population has been in decline (Dixson & Anderson, 2017). With this decline, there was also the fracturing of the relationship between the Black teacher and Black student.

As Brown eradicated legalized segregation, more Black students left their communities to attend white schools hoping to benefit from the greater access to resources, networks, and benefits offered in predominantly white schools (Morris, 2004). This meant that the Black community was moving away from a more than century long tradition of educating their children, neighbors, and community members – instead, the next generation would be primarily educated by white teachers in white spaces. The impact of this change was noted by Cheryl Brown Henderson, daughter of the late Rev. Oliver Brown, namesake of Brown v. Board:

> I began my formal schooling in the fall of 1955 in the wake of this change.
> The only glaring difference was that unlike my mother and sisters I have
> been educated Kindergarten through graduate school without being taught
> by a person of color. The lessons learned from that experience were
> largely about understanding that education is something one does for
> oneself. I encountered racial bias on the part of white educators. (Pon,
> 2004)

The lack of Black teachers was also recounted by author and professor Beverly Daniel

Tatum:

> I was born in 1954, the year of the Brown v. Board Supreme Court
>
> decision. My life has been very much influenced by that court decision.
>
> This is apparent to me because while I come from a long line of African
>
> American educators (I am a fourth-generation college professor), my
>
> generation is the only generation to have been educated entirely in
>
> predominantly white schools. (Pon, 2004)

Deterioration of Desegregation

After momentum was gained to move Brown v. Board with deliberate speed, the

most concerted efforts to desegregate took place during the years between the 1950s and

1970s (Feagin & Barnett, 2004). In 1973, The Court made a distinction between

state-mandated "de jure" segregation and "de facto" segregation that is the result of

private choices. The de facto form of segregation was deemed not unconstitutional

("Brown v. Board: Timeline of school integration in the U.S," 2004). In the 1980s, during

the Reagan and Bush presidencies, there was an intense effort to diminish desegregation

orders and, "in l991, the Supreme Court authorized the termination of desegregation

plans in the Oklahoma City (Dowell) decision"(Orfield et al., 2014, p. 10). The

deterioration of desegregation and resegregation of schools has been on the increase since

the 1991 decision.

Several scholars have noted what has been termed "second-generation

segregation" as American schools are re-segregated to resemble the pre-*Brown* era

(Darby & Rury, 2018; Ladson-Billings, & Tate IV, 2017; Lewis & Diamond, 2017).

Instead of explicit laws restricting the integration of schools, new lawful means of

segregation have been implemented. Housing segregation, attendance boundaries, and de

facto parental school choice decisions are ways that American schools are being reshaped

to exclude African American children (Lewis & Diamond, 2017).

The System of Schools

Overview

The historical overview shows the fracturing of relationships between Black

children and schools that occurred during the first few decades after the Brown decision.

The next section of the literature highlights the current challenges Black children face in

American schools: including, but not limited to (1) racism, (2) opportunity hoarding, (3)

cultural capital incongruence, and (4) low expectations, all of which have significant

implications for Black student success (Horsford, & Grosland, 2013).

In school districts that are predominantly African American as compared to

predominantly white districts, the resources available to students are not the same. "To

assess whether critical resources are different in predominantly white and predominantly

Black schools, one must consider the accumulation of small differences and an array of

resources often neglected in comparative assessments of schools. Schools with more

white children are more likely to have adequate media centers, computers, and other

technology, as well as newer buildings and more classes for advanced students. On the

average, such schools have more teachers (regardless of race) with substantial teaching

experience" (Feagin & Barnett, 2004, p. 1112). All of these resources, whether it be

access to high level courses, facilities, teachers, lead to students being able to think

positively about their future. When students have a set of resources available to them,

they are able to plan for the future and take advantage of opportunities (Tourse et al.,

2018). For African American students to be successful and continue through

postsecondary graduation, the availability of resources and the system of access to those

resources are key.

Systems of Racism

The structure and culture of American society sets the parameters for what is

possible within schools and how interactions and experiences operate inside (Lewis &

Diamond, 2017). Those interactions are impacted by institutionalized racism at each level

of the educational system that manifests at the individual level, and exists between

groups, it's also embedded in the subculture and structure of the school system (Brooks &

Watson, 2018). The system of "institutional racism relies on the active and pervasive

operation of anti-Black attitudes and practices" (Carmichael et al., 1992, p. 5).

Usually when racism is discussed, people picture the visible, in-your-face type of

racism that overtly shows the system of oppression. However, this version of racism has

mostly been replaced with a more persistently insidious and subtle format. In schools,

when speaking with students, it becomes routine to hear stories of Black students

assumed to be intellectually inferior and/or incompetent (Perry et al., 2003). These racial

microaggressions form the basis of everyday systemic racism that is used to keep Black

students in line (Dixson, & Anderson, 2017). Microaggressions can include race-based

status beliefs, racial stereotypes, and other subtle discriminatory acts used to stigmatize

Black students. The result of chronic racial microaggressions, can take its toll of African

American students through them perceiving their school environment as a stressful,

exhausting place that makes them feel a sense of loss, frustration, and injustice (Lewis &

Diamond, 2017).

In the current post-civil rights era, many African American children move through

the K-12 school system beleaguered by an ideology of Black inferiority that goes

unacknowledged by teachers and administrators (Perry et al., 2003). These beliefs

permeate deeply in the school system and set the stage for inaccurate cultural beliefs and

racial stereotyping that is detrimental to the successful progression of Black students

through the educational system (Lewis & Diamond, 2017).

In addition to micro aggressions, racial discrimination in schools can occur

through gatekeeping and screening, which creates barriers to Black students' successful

advancement through school. In essence, racism in schools is the function of racialized

hierarchies administering resource distribution that is usually to the detriment of Black

students (Vaught, 2011). In order to benefit in a racist school structure, Black students

receive the messaging that can only increase their worth through social connections to

people of greater privilege, obtaining high levels of education, acquiring a skill that is

valued by the dominant society, and/or attaining material resources (Tourse et al., 2018).

Essentially signaling that they are not enough and that they must attach themselves to

commodities that the dominant society deems as useful. Black students have to employ

extraordinary fortitude to survive a racialized day that includes microaggressions and

racial discrimination, both of which can have detrimental effects to academic success

(Feagin & Barnett, 2004).

Systems of Cultural Capital

Intellectuals define cultural capital as an "accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society and that cultural capital (i.e. education, language), social capital (i.e. social networks, connections), and economic capital (i.e. money and other material possessions) can be acquired two ways, from one's family and/or through formal schooling" (Yasso, 2017, p120). In fact much of what is expected for student success comes from informal settings, and are also tied to social capital, such as (1) the jobs that are available, (2) the notification of grants and scholarships, and (3) being connected to committees that are essential to career advancement (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 45). These cultural privileges are included in the assumed race-neutral politics of schools.

One undercurrent found in schools is the lack of acknowledgement of Black students and their special strengths that are rarely recognized when in predominantly white schools (Ladson-Billings, 2009). School systems tend to reward students who have a cultural presentation that conforms to white, middle-class values and expectations and by the same token, devalues cultural assets from Black communities (Lewis & Diamond, 2017). Which means, according to cultural capital theory, white middle class students and their families are seen as the norm for academic success (Welton & Martinez, 2013). Contrarily, Black students are seen as the antithesis and are often undervalued and determined to be deficient within educational settings.

Mainstream culture encourages a 'dog eat dog' mentality which rewards people who pursue their own interests and behaviors that promote individual gain at the expense of others (Ginwright, 2016). This mainstream cultural value of individualism shows up in

schools as a propensity to reward independence and autonomy, the cultural value of

competition means that someone else has to fail in order for an individual to succeed, a

value towards bureaucratic orientation focuses on rules and regulation and admonishes

deviation (Hale, 2001). Conversely, Black students and families value a sense of group

consciousness and collective identity that is aimed at the advancement of an entire group

(Yasso, 2017). This illustrates how white, mainstream values can be at odds with the

cultural capital of Black students and families. Instead, schools can accept the knowledge

that Black students bring with them from their homes and community to honor different

forms of capital and not just the normative white middle class (Yasso, 2017).

Systems of Opportunity Hoarding

Opportunity hoarding is the process of privileged groups regulating the control,

circulation and access to certain goods (Lewis & Diamond, 2017). In this case, education

is the good that is hoarded by white students and parents. The system of schools

emboldens the influence of white families and their collective power enables them to

expand and restrict educational opportunities (Castro, 2013*).*

One way white families hoard opportunities, is through feelings of entitlement to

high-track classes and the assumption that they deserve the best teachers and curriculum -

even if it is at the expense of others in the school population (Darby & Rury, 2018).   In

school based studies, teachers have described the pressure they receive from white,

middle-class parents to maintain the schools' tracking system, which creates and

reinforces advantages for white students while typically relegated Black students to lower

tracks and ultimately less success (Lewis & Diamond, 2017). When opportunities such

as honors classes, Advanced placement, and STEM immersion are seen as the sole

privilege of white students, it creates in-school barriers for capable Black students that

are pushed out or not considered for those same courses. The accumulation of these

opportunity denials for Black students and opportunity hoarding for white students have

long term implications of setting one group up to fail while another group sets on the path

to succeed.

Prior research has found that access to resources such as college preparatory

course work, high level curriculum, and involved school counselors leads to increased

college enrollment and in school achievement (Welton & Martinez, 2013). However, in a

recent sample of 85% of the nation's public schools, "55% of all high schools offer

calculus though only 29% of predominantly African American high schools offer this

course" (Curry & Shillingford, 2015, p. 56). In addition to access to high level math

courses, a key marker to college and career readiness is the access and completion of

advanced coursework. But it has been found that the embedding of honors courses and

Advanced Placement courses are often not equally distributed and/or offered to African

American students (Darby & Rury, 2018). In fact, Black students are often tracked to

lower level courses or are not made aware of the requirements to enroll advanced

placement courses (Welton & Martinez, 2013).

Derrick Bell highlighted this phenomenon previously: "Extra money for special

programs with better, higher-paid teachers follows white students into special,

upper-track classes even within integrated schools, where most Blacks are trapped in

lower-track, generally ineffective and less expensive course offerings" (Feagin & Barnett,

2004, p. 1121). Students in privileged tracks in early grades tend to perform better in later

schooling, and thus over time the relegation of Black students to lower level tracks seeks

to fulfill a discriminatory cycle of restricting access to higher level educational

experiences for Black students regardless of their academic abilities (Feagin & Barnett,

2004).

In addition to the lack of high level courses or access to them, another key aspect

of success in school is due to the instructor in the classroom. Studies have confirmed the

impact of having a highly qualified teacher that is properly certified can have on the

progress of a student's learning. But, it has been found that "high-poverty schools have

difficulty attracting and retaining highly effective teachers. In these settings across the

country, more than half the math and science teachers do not hold certification in their

teaching fields" (Darby & Rury, 2018, p. 103). In addition, Black students have been

found to be shut out of access to the most qualified teachers, facilities, and courses.

Instead, white students are often the benefactors of these resources – leading to a prime

example of whiteness as property (Anderson, & Dixson, 2017). Which means that these

resources are often hoarded and retained as the sole property of white students and/or

affluent districts and Black students are kept from utilizing these resources and

knowledge through a system of gatekeeping.

Systems of Low Expectations

Low expectations of Black students stem from institutionalized racism, lack of

representation in high track classes, and a deficit model of their cultural capital. One

scholar asked, "If a teacher looks out at a classroom and sees the sons and daughters of

slaves, how does that vision translate into her expectations for educational

excellence"(Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 34)? And another states, "I personally witness

educators lower their expectations for students of color while insisting they were doing what was best for their students" (Love, 2019, p. 21).

Schools usually focus on grade-level performance, rather than high achievement when discussing education for African American students and there is the assumption that these students do not have a strong community of caring parents that expect them to succeed (Love, 2019; Perry et al., 2003). In fact, in qualitative interviews with Black parents they have discussed the burden of low expectations on their children and how they grapple with supporting their children's education under such circumstances (Lewis & Diamond, 2017).

The standard assumption is that white students are supposed to succeed and that Black students have to prove that they can do well (Lewis & Diamond, 2017). As such is touted as an exception or aberration when African American students do make it through the system and attain what the cultural collective deems as success (Vaught, 2011).

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

The intent of this study was to explore the ways in which Black, Gen X women have experienced education and how they construct the future meaning of Black education. The approach is qualitative with a constructivist worldview, utilizing a phenomenological design, and internet-based interview method. In the first, qualitative phase of the study, interview data was collected from Black women born between 1965 - 1980 who have matriculated through college and graduate school to understand their educational experiences and how those experiences help them develop a vision for Black education. The computer-assisted interview data was then analyzed to determine themes, patterns, and interpretation.

The applicability of a qualitative phenomenological research design and interviews using a constructivist-worldview for this study are discussed in-depth in this chapter. The research plan, including methodology, study participants, procedures, analysis method, and ethical concerns are also primary components of this chapter.

Research Questions

This research sought to describe how the lived experience of Generation X, African American Women in educational settings, K-12 through graduate school, helps to construct their vision of Black education for the future. For this study, the guiding research question was: How does the lived experience of Generation X Black women in post-Brown schools impact their vision of the future for Black education? This study

used a critical perspective of the ecological systems theory to describe how education

systems shaped and created meaning toward their development through adulthood.

The participants responses related to the primary question of:

How does your lived experience as a Generation X Black woman in post-Brown

schools impact your vision of the future for Black education?

Secondary questions included:

1. What K-12 and postsecondary experiences helped shape you?

2. What contributed to a good (successful) school experience for you?

3. What contributed to a bad (ineffective) school experience for you?

4. What is your vision for successful schooling for Black students – today and
    beyond?

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach based upon a constructivist worldview.

Using a qualitative, phenomenological research method, enables the researcher to

describe the lived experience of a phenomenon as described by the participants. The

constructivist worldview seeks to understand the meaning that multiple participants have

placed on the phenomenon through social and historical construction (Creswell, 2018).

Research Approach – Qualitative

"Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning

individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018,

p. 4) . The research process includes evolving questions, collecting data primarily from

the participant's setting, analyzing the data through the building of themes, and the

subsequent interpretation of the meaning gleaned from the data by the researcher. Researchers who support qualitative forms of inquiry also support using an inductive style, with a deep focus on individual meaning, and a commitment to relaying the importance of the situational research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

As qualitative research focuses on an inductive process, qualitative researchers have included theoretical perspectives in their work. This theoretical lens gives a vantage point for studying issues of gender; class; and/or race. According to Cresswell, when implemented the theory in qualitative research will appear as "an argument, a discussion, a figure, a rationale, or a conceptual framework, and it helps to explain (or predict) phenomena that occur in the world"(Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 52). In this research, micro-level theories of ecological human development are being explored to give meaning to the experience of Generation X Black women in post-Brown schools and school systems and how those experiences help them form a vision for Black education in the future. In addition critical perspectives are implored to understand and empower participant's voices to include stories of race, class, and gender within micro-systemic constructs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Philosophical Worldview- Constructivist

Worldviews represent a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of analysis that a researcher brings to a study. Worldviews reflect the vantage point and philosophical view of the researcher conducting the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). When used, the research paradigm explains how the researcher sees the world, how they act within that world, and how they interpret beliefs and principles carried out in the world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

The Constructivist Paradigm strives to understand the subjectivity of human experience by interpreting what the participants are saying, thinking or meaning through the context provided with an emphasis on understanding the individual and how they view the world (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Researchers that adopt the Constructivist worldview, believe that participants aim to understand their lived world. This self-interpretation is usually based on traditions, culture, or history. In order for constructivist researchers to accurately interpret context – they are challenged to have background knowledge of the meanings, beliefs, and values of the participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Researchers acknowledge that their own background can shape their interpretation and understand their own culture and historical experiences can impact the translation of meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Through this critical examination, the researcher ensures the social, historical, and cultural contexts of the lived experience are accurate and do not reflect biases or issues of power due to the researchers vantage point (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The constructivist paradigm lends itself to qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and document reviews noting that interaction between the researcher and participants is integral to the social construction of the participants' reality (Mertens, 2014).

In Creswells' (2018) text, they identified the following assumptions of a Constructivist Worldview:

1. "Human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting.

2. Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives – we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture.

3. The basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community" (p. 8).

Research Design – **Phenomenological**

Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals, recounted by the participants as it relates to a phenomenon, by relaying the essence of the experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Phenomenology was developed as a philosophy by Edmund Husserl around 1900, and then further conceptualized by Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. A phenomenological approach aims to understand social phenomena from the participants' own perspective as they have experienced it and as they perceive it (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). "How people define their world is related to 1) the interactions they have with others, 2) how they perceive others to perceive them, 3) the ways in which they have learned to deal with life experiences and 4) the amount of perceived control they have, and 5) the significance of perceived control to them" (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 36).

In phenomenology the goal is to shift from describing independent phenomena to searching for the common essence in the lived experiences. To do this, the researcher uses care when deriving the description of the essence or content of the phenomena (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In its purest sense, phenomenology asks - what is it like to experience this phenomenon? - via a first-person account.

Research Method – Computer-Assisted Interviewing

This study used Internet Based Interviews (or computer-assisted interviewing) as the research method. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), "Computer-assisted interviewing can be conducted through e-mail correspondence, implying an asynchronous interaction in time, with the interviewer writing a question and then waiting for a reply, or through chat interviews, mediated for example by one of the virtual communities that exist on the internet. For qualitative research projects conducted in virtual realities on the internet (e.g., in the form of online ethnography), computer-assisted interviews are very important, and one advantage is that they are self-transcribing in the sense that the written text itself is the medium through which the researcher and respondents express themselves, and the text is thus basically ready for analysis the minute it has been typed"(p. 172). While traditional interviews can produce the authenticity needed when employing a constructivist worldview, computer-assisted interviewing has drawbacks. Due to the interview process being online, this methodology assumes that both the interviewer and interviewee are comfortable with written communication. Also, the written format precludes the interviewer from contextual body language clues during the interview. Finally, the written format may lead the interviewee to leave out detailed descriptions. (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) Therefore, cross checking the interpretation of meaning is crucial.

 In *Interviews* by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), the authors describe twelve aspects of the phenomenological interview:

- Lifeworld – is the immediate experience of everyday life

- Meaning – is interpreted from what is said and how it is said

- Qualitative – the interview works with words

- Descriptive – the focus is on precise, nuanced descriptions

- Specificity – actions are elicited, not opinions

- Deliberate naivete' - the interviewer is open to new information

- Focus – particular themes are explored

- Ambiguity – the interviewer is tasked with clarifying answers

- Change – Interview subjects descriptions and attitudes may evolve

- Sensitivity – Each interviewer may produce different statements based on feelings toward the topic

- Interpersonal situation – there is reciprocity between interviewer and interviewee

- Positive experience – a well conducted interview may provide new insights to the interviewee.

Procedures

Phase one of the study used computer-assisted interview technology to collect qualitative data regarding educational systems and their impact on African American Generation X women. In the next phase the qualitative data was winnowed, coded, themed and analyzed.   Finally, the researcher discussed the results and recommendations for the future.

Table 1

Visual Model for Qualitative Methods Procedures

Phase	Procedure	Product
Phase 1: Qualitative Computer-assisted interviews	Purposive Sample, 6-10 Participants	Transcripts or Recorded Data
Phase 2: Qualitative Data Analysis	Winnow Data, Assign Codes, Render Information, Represent Description of Themes, Visual Map of Codes/Themes, Narrative of Each Theme	Themed Representation of Data
Phase 3: Interpretation Analysis	Analysis of Survey Results	Discussion of Results, Recommendations for Future Research

Role of the Researcher

In this study the researcher gathered the information and was the main interpreter. The researcher used computer-assisted interviews, with the participants in their own natural setting. In the interviews, open-ended forms of data were used. When interpreting the data the researcher focused on centering the participants' meaning. This

research was emergent and shifted and changed as data was analyzed. The researcher

was reflective of their background and how it could potentially shape the interpretations.

Participants

This study included 1) African American women 2) born between the years 1965

through 1980 3) that have completed college and/or graduate degrees. A

computer-assisted interview procedure was used to gain information about the

educational influences that shape their visioning of Black education in the future. The

researcher used a purposive sample of purposely selected individuals that fit the selection

profile.

The research was conducted online using a form submittal application.

Open-ended interview techniques were used to allow participants to freely provide

information and opinions. Participants were recruited through professional, Black

women's groups via direct solicitation. For this phenomenology study the researcher

required between 6-10 participants.

Instrumentation

The qualitative portion of the study focused on the meaning that the participants

hold about their experiences in educational settings. This phase was conducted as

individual computer-assisted interviews of 6-10 women initially who are between the

ages of 40-55, who are Black, and who have completed college and/or graduate school.

The questions sought to understand the women's perceptions surrounding their internal

drive, school preparation, and societal factors that either helped or impeded their

progression through college and career.

Data Collection

In the first phase of the study, a computer-assisted interview with 6-10 initial participants was conducted. After the first interview group did not yield enough information, interviews were conducted until no new insights were introduced. The individual interviews were recorded through an online application and were automatically transcribed via the participants typed entry.

The study utilized four steps to collect data: 1) participant selection and recruiting via online communities for Black women 2) Individual open-ended interview questions were disseminated, 3) Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data was made, and 4) to ensure internal validity the following strategies were be employed: Member checking was used to verify the researcher's interpretation versus the participants intent, the data was triangulated through various sources. Procedures were documented to check the reliability of the study.

Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis included the preparation and analysis of the data gained through individual computer-assisted interviews. The data was transcribed directly via the participants typed response. After transcription, initial codes were generated and combined into themes. The themes were then evaluated for the essential meaning. The researcher used QDA Miner Lite as the data analysis software to code the transcripts and determine emerging themes originating from the computer-assisted interviews.

Validity

One internal threat to validity was the possible interpretive validity. This study was conducted through online computer-assisted interviews and sought to recount the lived experience of the participants. There was the likelihood that there could be a failure to accurately portray feelings and or sentiments given by the participants studied.   One way the researcher combated the interpretation validity, was to crosscheck the interpretation through direct follow up with the participants.

An external threat that could invalidate the qualitative results was the interaction of selection and treatment. Since this study focused on African American women, of Generation X - the data may not generalize to other ethnicities nor African American people in previous or post generations. To counteract this threat, the researcher restricted claims about groups to which the results could be generalized.

Ethics and Human Relations

Since the participants were past graduates of various educational institutions, no immediate threats were inherent in this study due to their separation from the institution. If the participants stayed engaged with their alma mater, there was the potential to not divulge information that would put the elementary, high school and/or college in a negative light. One way the researcher mitigated this situation, was to make sure that the institution and participants remained anonymous without any identifying characteristics revealed in the study.

The researcher could find that they were a former graduate of the school district and/or college that was discussed in this study. In this instance, the researcher refrained

from interjecting or interpreting the data with a personal lens, instead only using the

participant's recollection of experience.

   Research participants were identified through the school databases, Black women

professional organizations, and/or online sources. Once identified, letters regarding the

research study were emailed to potential participants. All participants were over the age

of 18. The researcher requested an expedited review through the Institutional Review

Board.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

Chapter 4 explains how participants described their experiences of being a Black,

female, Generation X student in schools post-*Brown*. The literature review in Chapter 2

revealed the meanings that previous generations ascribed to their schooling in segregated

and newly desegregated schools, the impact of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka

on Black communities, and the challenges faced by Black students when encountering

the current system of schools. This section is dedicated to the voices of Black women

born between 1965 and 1980 that experienced schools during the highest concentration of

integration.

Using an age cohort, in addition to race and gender, is significant as it establishes

a baseline of historical trends that are common in the macrosystem of the larger culture.

By classifying the different generations of African Americans, we can identify the

worldviews that have been shaped by their vastly different opportunities and experiences:

"The Silent Generation (born 1928-1945) endured the full effects of the Jim Crow laws.

Baby Boomers (1946-1964) were the children of the Civil Rights Movement.

Generation X (1965-1980) came of age during the Fair Housing Act and the Black Power

Movement" (Bruce, 2018).

Thirteen participants of this study belong solidly within Generation X (born

between 1965 - 1980), with two participants born in the year 1981 which serves as a

bridge to the next generation. Using a purposive selection of age group enables the

participants to have the same historical context of being beneficiaries of the Civil Rights

era, growing up during the Reagan years, and living through the "war on drugs"*(Tatum,*

p19).

Another common historical fact for Black Generation X women is that in 1988

school integration, in Southern States, reached its highest level with close to 45% of

Black students attending majority-white schools. (Orfield et al., 2014, p. 10).   The oldest

participants in this study would have been exiting college and the youngest entering

second grade in highly integrated settings. These macro systemic trends serve as a culture

grounding to explore the meaning that the participants place on being a Black, female

relating to and operating within the microsystem of schools and schooling.

The meaning generated from this study helps to address the problem of creating

school environments that ensure African American student success. Currently, African

American students are labeled as having an 'achievement gap'; however, the school

systems themselves have a deficit in creating environments for Black students to achieve.

This problem impacts Black students emotionally and academically because they are not

being served effectively. Many systemic factors contribute to this problem, including the

failure to recognize the impact of ecological systems, specifically the microsystem of

schools, on the growth and development of Black students as they interact with school

organizations built for others. This study contributes to the body of knowledge seeking

to create effective relationships between Black students and schools by highlighting the

lived experiences of Generation X, Black women who have persisted from K-12 through

graduate studies and their visions of successful Black education.

The purpose of this study was to generate a vision for African American

schooling based on the lived experiences of Generation X African American women who

persisted through college and graduate studies. This phenomenological inquiry uncovered the meaning of African American womens' lived experiences in schools from the 1970s through present. Using the ecological systems theory to position that school systems help create meaning and impact development towards adulthood, the study conceptualized participants' visions of an education system that enables success for African American students, while amplifying the hopes, dreams, disappointments, and disillusionment of their educational journey.

The first section of Chapter IV describes the demographics and characteristics of the participants of the participants, their response rate and duration of the recruitment and data collection process, along with a summary of 15 participant interviews. In the findings section, each research question is explored and the findings are interpreted, coded, categorized, and themed. Chapter IV ends with a summary.

Participants

The purpose of this study was to generate a vision for African American schooling based on the lived experiences of Generation X African American women who persisted through college and graduate studies. Originally, the researcher sought 6-10 participants for this study. However, fifteen Black women participated in open-ended, computer-assisted interviews. The researcher recruited ten participants directly, through Black professional women organizations, and five additional participants were solicited by the original ten participants. The interviews took place over a period of two weeks and were all conducted through an online form submittal. This allowed the interviews to be self-transcribed from the participants' written interview entries.

Participant 1

Demographic / School Information

Participant 1 is a Black female who was born between 1970 and 1974. She has earned a graduate degree (e.g.; MA, MS, MBA).   She has never attended a school with more than 25% of the teaching staff being African American. She was educated in public schools from kindergarten through graduate school. In grades K-5, Participant 1 attended a school with a predominately Black student population. In grades 6-12, Participant 1 attended racially mixed junior and high schools. In undergraduate and graduate school her schools had a predominantly white student population and teaching staff.

Interview Summary

Participant 1 was brief in her narrative and mainly offered one sentence responses. From her interview, she spoke about her experiences as a part of a team and/or group. Formative K-12 experiences for her centered around her acquisition of new friends after changing elementary schools, being a member of a record setting track team in junior high school, and receiving an athletic college scholarship. She attributes her friends and teachers with contributing to a positive school experience.

Participant 1 felt that the lack of diverse teachers in her K-12 schools had the most negative effect on her. When asked what she would change most about her schooling, she again mentioned not having African American teachers. Participant 1, highlighted her profession as a teacher and her goal to provide positive experiences for her Black students. As a teacher, in an educational setting, she mentioned feeling most ignored and misunderstood serving on a curriculum committee.

When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 1 spoke as an educator wanting to show her Black students the positives of life by sharing her experiences in the hopes that it will shape her students' lives.

Participant 2

Demographic / School Information

Participant 2 is a Black female who was born between 1970 and 1974. She has earned a professional degree (e.g.; MFA, JD, Ed.S). She was educated in public schools from sixth grade through graduate school and a private school in grades K-5. In grades K-12, Participant 2 attended schools with an ethnically diverse student population (Black students were greater than 25%, but less than75% of the student population) and she also classified the teaching staff as ethnically mixed (Black teachers were greater than 25%, but less than75% of the teaching staff). In undergraduate and graduate school her schools had a predominantly white student population, with a teaching staff that was less than 25% Black.

Interview Summary

Participant 2 was assessed for gifted classes while in elementary school. She received pull out services for math and reading in a small group setting with other identified gifted students. Her junior high school was dedicated to the performing arts and had a non-traditional school day with opportunities for independent learning and mixed grade level classes. She mentions the transition from a private, Catholic elementary school to her public junior high as being a negative experience, due to curriculum being behind and the lack of honors classes offered at the public school.

She was raised in a family culture that placed high emphasis on education – with family members that were working professionals with college degrees - she was also expected to attend college. Her family was very engaged in her education and her parents participated in school activities. During high school, her Black, female guidance counselor provided access to college recruitment and college fairs. She mentions that access to those opportunities was not provided to every student.

In college, she attended a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) for one year and then transferred to a predominantly white institution (PWI). At the PWI, she sought out safe spaces such as the Black United Students association to help her navigate the system, talk through her struggles, and affirm her knowledge that was being minimized by white professors.

When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 2 wants safe spaces for Black students to ensure that they have a support system and feel "good enough". She would also recommend attending a HBCU or joining the Black Student Union at predominantly white institutions.

Participant 3

Demographic / School Information

Participant 3 is a Black female who was born between 1975 and 1980. She has earned a graduate degree (e.g.; MA, MS, MBA).   She has never attended a school with more than 25% of the teaching staff being African American. She was educated in public schools from kindergarten through graduate school. In grades K-12, Participant 3 attended schools with an ethnically diverse student population (Black students were greater than 25%, but less than75% of the student population). In undergraduate and

graduate school her schools had a predominantly white student population and teaching

staff.

Interview Summary

Participant 3 was brief in her narrative and mainly offered one sentence responses.

In elementary school she says that living in a predominantly Jewish, suburban

neighborhood helped shape her formative years because she was able to learn a lot about

other cultures. She considered her neighborhood to be diverse.

However, later in the interview she mentioned a negative of her K-12 experience

being the racism that she encountered while living in the suburb. She also remembers

African American students at her school protesting for more African American classes to

be offered. The protest resulted in African American history classes being added.

When discussing her schooling she mentions positive teachers, coaches and

administrators that encouraged her. She felt misunderstood in school when she had

difficulty reading fast.   She attributes a cohort program, for students "on the bubble",

with helping her to succeed academically.

In college, her advisors told her that she wouldn't accomplish her goals. She used

their admonishment to motivate her to prove them wrong. She felt most validated as a

Black female student when she overcame challenging circumstances.

When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 3 simply

states that she wants to see Black students reach their highest potential regardless of the

situations that they encounter.

Participant 4

Demographic / School Information

Participant 4 is a Black female who was born between 1970 and 1974. She has earned a doctorate degree (e.g.; MD, Ph.D, Ed.D).   In grades K-12, she attended schools with a predominantly Black student population (more than 75% of the students were Black) and an ethnically diverse teaching staff (Black teachers were greater than 25%, but less than75% of the teaching staff). Participant 4 was educated in public schools from kindergarten through doctoral school.   In undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral school her schools had a predominantly white student population and teaching staff.

Interview Summary

Participant 4 spoke highly of several teachers in her K-12 experience at predominantly African American schools. In elementary school she considered herself to be very shy and credits her fourth grade teacher for giving her the opportunity to come out of her shell, by literally holding her by the hand until she was comfortable speaking with others. At a gifted junior high school, she spoke of the exceptional amount of invested educators that expected excellence from the students. In high school, she mentions a Black male teacher that acted as a father figure to many students and maintained an endearing relationship with her over 30 years later. She credits her teachers and family for supporting her in her education as she graduated as class valedictorian.

In college, she did not receive the same type of support. She recalls an incidence in which she told her advisor that she planned to change her major, "There was no concern as to why. It was just, ok. When other classmates and dissimilar ethnicities stated their intentions to change from this certain major, efforts were made to retain them and offer assistance". If she would change anything about her schooling, she said that she

would attend a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) for college, because she feels that she would have been better supported by faculty.

When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 4 wants schools to incorporate cultural curriculum that is important and impactful. She believes that schools have to understand how minorities learn, and that that learning process may differ from the majority. She would also like to see an increase in hiring of minority educators.

Participant 5

Demographic / School Information

Participant 5 is a Black female who was born between 1970 and 1974. She has earned an undergraduate degree (e.g.; BA, BS).   In grades K-12, she attended schools with a predominantly Black student population (more than 75% of the students were Black) and a predominantly Black teaching staff (Black teachers were greater than 75% of the teaching staff). Participant 5 was educated in public schools from kindergarten through high school.   In undergraduate school, she attended a private university with a predominantly white teaching staff and student population.

Interview Summary

In her interview, Participant 5 spoke of two transformative experiences that shaped her: 1) the murder of a good friend in junior high school and 2) the birth of her son in tenth grade. The first experience taught her not to be too trusting of strangers and to not rely on adults for help. The second experience helped her to adopt a no excuses stance and to commit to ending a cycle of poverty.

Her teachers, family members, and role models motivated her to do better and focus on her studies in order to succeed. In addition, extracurricular activities such as: choir, cheerleading and track helped her forge supportive friendships. Child education classes connected her to resources.

Even though she spoke highly of supportive school faculty, she noted incompetent educators that didn't teach, never gave a test nor instruction, and only gave worksheets to fill out from bell to bell. She cited the lack of resources, structure, and condition of the classrooms as aspects of her schooling that she would most like to change. She also wished that the student population and teaching staff at her school were more diverse.

 When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 5 wants more inclusion and diversity in schools. She insists that all students, no matter of socio economic issues, should be able to get the same resources and education as private and suburban schools.

Participant 6

Demographic / School Information

Participant 6 is a Black female who was born between 1970 and 1974. She has earned a professional degree (e.g.; MFA, JD, Ed.S).   In grades K-8, she attended public schools with a predominantly white student population and an ethnically diverse teaching staff (Black teachers were greater than 25%, but less than75% of the teaching staff). In grades 9-12, she attended a public school with an ethnically diverse student population (Black students were greater than 25%, but less than75% of the student population) and teaching staff. In undergraduate and graduate school schools had a predominantly white student population and an ethnically diverse teaching staff.

Interview Summary

Participant 6 spoke about her experiences in an elementary school that exposed her to art, music, and nature. In junior high school she attended a gifted school that had a robust and challenging course schedule. She continued high school in an academically gifted program that taught college curriculum while in secondary school.

When speaking of her school experiences she noted a few stand out teachers that went the extra mile to "see her" and light a fire inside of her to pursue lifelong learning. Her love of reading and realization of the nuances of writing was heightened through the Language Art Social Science program at her high school.

Her negative experiences she primarily attributed to being a female and mentioned briefly negative teacher interactions. If she could change anything about her schooling she wishes that she had the opportunity to take more science and math courses, and would like more artistic courses during elementary school.

 When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 6 wants more choices and better systems of education that can make school a positive experience. She wants Black students to see the value of education, and become lifelong learners, through access to widespread opportunities and intentional exposure. She wants Black students to be able to have these experiences without going broke.

Participant 7

Demographic / School Information

Participant 7 is a Black female who was born between 1970 and 1974. She has earned a graduate degree (e.g.; MA, MS, MBA).   In grades K-5, she attended a public school with a predominantly Black student population and Black teaching staff (Black

students were greater than 75% of the student population and Black teachers were greater than 75% of the teaching staff). In grades 6-12, undergraduate, and graduate school, she attended public schools with a predominantly white student population and a predominantly white teaching staff.

Interview Summary

Participant 7 spoke of being shy in her younger years and the school experiences that increased her confidence. In 4th grade she won the Math Bee, which helped her to build her confidence in her academic abilities. In junior high school, she was on the track team where she had to push past her comfort zone to meet new people. She briefly mentioned supportive teachers, but did not provide examples of a particular person of impact. Instead, self-motivation, hard work and the need for accomplishment were recurrent themes.

The move to a new predominantly white school in her 11th grade year served as a negative point in her school career. The teachers looked down on her or didn't feel that she was capable in her academics. Which was contrary to her previous performance and this made her question her abilities. She noted that when she asked a question in class, some of the teachers took that as a sign that she couldn't do the work – instead of just taking her queries for what they were.

In college she had to navigate a predominantly white institution (pwi) which she credits for making her learn how to network and find resources to help her navigate the system. She is very clear that Black students need teachers that look like them in decent numbers and feels this is critical in the K-12 age group. She mentions bias in schools and

the difficulty that students have in navigating those interactions without representation in the schools.

When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 7 believes that "successful schooling includes Black students going to a school with students and teachers that look like them in decent numbers, especially in the K-12 age group." She believes this is necessary to build self-esteem and confidence in students to combat the bias that they encounter in schools without representation. She also wants the schools that Black students attend, to have sufficient funding to keep up with their peers of other races.

Participant 8

Demographic / School Information

Participant 8 is a Black female who was born after 1980. She has earned a graduate degree (e.g.; MA, MS, MBA). In grades K-12, undergraduate, and graduate school, she attended private schools with a predominantly white student population and a predominantly white teaching staff. During graduate school, she also attended a public school with a predominantly white student population and a predominantly white teaching staff

Interview Summary

Participant 8 attended the same school kindergarten through eighth grade, and was usually the only Black girl in her class (sometimes there were two). During that time she had to explain why she was different (hair, music, and neighborhood). She also noted a sense of embarrassment about the economic difference of her lower class city neighborhood vs. the middle class county neighborhood of her school classmates. She

remembered the large houses, quiet subdivisions and the stark difference from the

depressing things she saw everyday in her own neighborhood. During grade school she

felt that her classmates were less exposed to "differences" and were immature and didn't

know what to say.

In high school she also attended a private school, but was now one of eleven

Black female students. She spoke highly of her time at the all-girls school. She felt a

sisterhood with the other Black girls and they pushed each other and supported each other

academically. She also noted that by this time she was clearer about her identity as an

African American female and was able to assume roles of leadership in her

predominantly white school.

Participant 8 did not mention any teachers or school personnel that positively

impacted her life until her undergraduate years of college. During that time, her classes

in her major were taught by a Black, gay, male tenured professor who was also the

department chair. He was the only other Black person that she saw on a regular basis and

he acted as a mentor for her. She wishes that she had more mentorship opportunities

during school, because many times she felt like she was forging a path by herself.

When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 8 would

like more structured curriculum, small classes, engaging teachers, and rigorous

competitive work with high standards.

Participant 9

Demographic / School Information

Participant 9 is a Black female who was born after 1980. She has earned a

graduate degree (e.g.; MA, MS, MBA).   In grades K-5, she attended a public school with

a predominantly white student population and a predominantly white teaching staff. In grades 6-12, she attended a public school with an ethnically diverse student population (Black students were greater than 25%, but less than75% of the student population) and predominantly white teaching staff. In undergraduate and graduate school, she attended private schools with a predominantly white student population and a predominantly white teaching staff.

Interview Summary

Participant 9 couldn't remember any experiences from her years kindergarten through fifth grade in which she attended a primarily white school. In grades 6-8, she spoke of having teachers in her community that knew her family. Her sixth grade teacher had also taught her older sister in sixth grade. The teacher was familiar with her family and the learning expectations/dynamics. She credits this experience as one of the most positive experiences from her K-12 years.

She obtained her associate's degree and felt the small cohort program had the most impact on her. At that time she had professors that showed a genuine internet in her education, but also her as an individual. She felt well prepared for her profession.

This changed when she went to a private, predominantly white institution for her undergraduate degree. When she asked for financial assistance options, she was told " well perhaps you don't belong here". This made her wish that she would have attended more diverse institutions – not just Black and white, but other ethnicities as well.

 When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 9 wants more diversity in schools with appropriate representation.

Participant 10

Demographic / School Information

Participant 10 is a Black female who was born between 1970 and 1974. She has earned an undergraduate degree (e.g.; BA, BS).   In grades K-6, she attended private schools with a predominantly white student population and a predominantly white teaching staff. In grades 9-12, she attended a public school with a predominantly white student population and a predominantly white teaching staff. In undergraduate school, she attended a private school with a predominantly white student population and a predominantly white teaching staff.

Interview Summary

Participant 10 attended a predominately white, evangelical Christian school during her elementary school years and was one of a handful of Black students in the school. The school was strict and restrictive. She noted that the environment did not embrace multiculturalism. From that experience she learned how to "blend in" and separate who she really was from what the school expected her to be. She felt like she lived in two different worlds between home and school. Her home life was full of color, music, dance, freedom and self-expression – school just felt starkly white.

In eighth grade she moved to a new state and attended public school for the first time. She was more advanced than her peers and had an 8th grade English teacher that took notice of her academic abilities and insisted that she enroll in Honors English the next year.

In her high school years she had incidences where she felt misunderstood. Her speech teacher was cold and very antagonistic towards her and her Black friends. At one

point her teacher requested meetings with the students' parents due to a "Maury Povitch" type skit that they performed for a school project. She does not think that she and her friends would have been reprimanded if they were white. The prejudice of being treated differently and more harshly for being Black had a negative impact on her.

During her school career she felt most supported by her Mother and most validated around other Black female students and her sorority members. She had Black teachers and female teachers who really seemed to care, noticed her talents and wanted her to succeed. She felt that her school experience would have been better if it was more inclusive (of all races/colors/cultures) and creative.

When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 10 advocated for accessible and/or free college. She wants completely integrated schools – no more all Black or all white K-12 spaces. She wants to ensure that tax revenue is shared equally to fund all schools so students have access to "the best". She wants education to include student voice and be completely re-envisioned to include: 1) curriculum that includes life skills; 2) regular meditation/mindfulness practices; 3) more specialty programs – like STEM, Performing Arts, etc; 4) More multicultural programs and curriculum with accurate history 5) classes held outdoors on a regular basis when possible 6) international programs including Zoom pen pals for young children and exchange programs for the college aged 7) no more State tests required for passing students from one grade to another.

Participant 11

Demographic / School Information

Participant 11 is a Black female who was born between 1970 and 1974. She has earned an undergraduate degree (e.g.; BA, BS). In grades K-12 and undergraduate school, she attended public schools with a predominantly white student population and a predominantly white teaching staff.

Interview Summary

Participant 11 was brief in her narrative and mainly offered one sentence responses. However, she spoke vividly of her 8th grade social studies teacher. She recounted that "she was beautiful, Black, supportive, understanding of Black studies, she was my first Black teacher that was young." She also felt most validated when she was able to take an African studies course in college. If she would change one thing about her education, she wishes that she would have attended a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) for her post secondary education.

She felt most ignored and misunderstood during her Kindergarten through sixth grade school years. One teacher admonished her and told her that she would never write in cursive – this memory was sustained as an experience that shaped her. In high school, she remembers her 12th grade Vocational Technology teacher trying to fail her. A high school dean had to stand up for Participant 1 to ensure that the failure didn't happen. She credits her mother as being the biggest influence in her persistence towards completing her college degree.

When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 11 wants Black students to have more teachers who like them and understand how Black kids learn.

Participant 12

Demographic / School Information

Participant 12 is a Black female who was born between 1970 and 1974. She has

earned a professional degree (e.g.; MFA, JD, Ed.S).   In grades K-12, she attended public

schools with a predominantly Black student population and a predominantly white

teaching staff. In undergraduate school, she attended a public school with an ethnically

diverse student population (Black students were greater than 25%, but less than75% of

the student population) and teaching staff (Black teachers were greater than 25%, but less

than75% of the teaching staff).

Interview Summary

In her elementary school years at a predominantly Black school, Participant 12

remembers feeling encouraged and well liked by her teachers. She had a 5th grade

teacher who continued to mentor her through high school and kept track of her progress

in college until the teacher passed away. When she thinks of positive experience in her

K-12 schooling she says that, "I went to all Black (student population) schools all

throughout my K-12 education. The love and acceptance from my peers was priceless.

My cultures music, food, style; all of it was always present, not questioned, unapologetic,

beautiful. I would never replace that experience". If she would change one thing about

her schooling, she wishes that she had more exposure to different careers so she could

follow a path that was more aligned to her passions.

Her sixth grade through twelfth grade recollections had a recurrent theme of

friendship. She spoke candidly about the loss and changes in her friendship circle and the

lessons that she gained from those interactions. In college, the Black Student Union had

the most impact on her as a space where she had her first experience in social justice and advocacy. She credits her dad with being a task-driver and relentlessly pushing her to pursue excellence.

Participant 12 mentioned her profession during the interview. As a Black female working in educational administration, she felt strongly that she continues to demand a seat at the table and push for her voice to be heard.

When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 12 was clear that she wants Black students to feel accepted, loved, and encouraged. She wants them to know their distinct purpose in this world and have teachers and administrators that look like them. She advocates for more mentorship programs for Black students and an accurate depiction of Black and African history in schools. She also insisted on more professional development in schools regarding implicit bias and how to create equitable schools.

Participant 13

Demographic / School Information

Participant 13 is a Black female who was born between 1965 and 1969. She has earned an undergraduate degree (e.g.; BA, BS). In grades K-8, she attended public schools with a predominantly Black student population and a predominantly white teaching staff. In grades 9-12, she attended a private school with a predominantly white student population and teaching staff. In undergraduate school, she attended a private school with a predominantly white student population and teaching staff.

Interview Summary

Participant 13 spoke of having Black role models, both male and female, during her elementary school years. In first grade, she recalls learning Black history and competing in Black history quizzes and competitions through the school year. This experience shaped her to know the true Black experience of those that came before her. Her junior high school years culminated in her being the valedictorian of her school.

In high school, she attended a private, elite country day school where she caught two city busses each day to get to school. It was during this time that she realized the difference between social classes. Participant 13 saw the contrast between the lifestyle of her extremely wealthy, high-performing peers who were driven to school by parents or private staff vs. the marginally middle-class and extremely impoverished people that she had previously encountered. This dichotomy was very hard to reconcile. And as a result it impacted her self-esteem and self-perception in terms of self-worth and value.

She spoke of having to employ tenacity and fortitude to persist in school environments. Her drive culminated in her striving for perfection by adopting a model student persona, due to her "not wanting to fail". She had people that believed in her and her abilities – which helped her believe that she belonged in the school hallways that she occupied. If she would change one thing about her schooling, she would like to have benefited from the resources and opportunities that her schools provided – without the elitism.

Participant 13 felt most ignored as a Black female while in her college major of study. She was referred to as "the Black one" when she was completing her college internships. She spoke of being the only Black person in her college major and felt alienated by the lack of effort to learn her name.

When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 13 would love for Black history and women's history to be incorporated naturally in all areas of study. She spoke of the oppressive systems of racism, patriarchy, ageism, ableism, and sexism that limit the potential of Black students across the nation. As such, she would like more diversity, equity and inclusion because representation matters.

Participant 14

Demographic / School Information

Participant 14 is a Black female who was born between 1970 and 1974. She has earned a professional degree (e.g.; MFA, JD, Ed.S).   In grades K-5, she attended both public and private schools with an ethnically diverse student population(Black students were greater than 25%, but less than75% of the student population) and an ethnically diverse teaching staff (Black teachers were greater than 25%, but less than75% of the teaching staff). In grades 9-12, she attended a public school with a predominantly white student population and an ethnically diverse teaching staff.   In undergraduate and graduate school, she attended a public school with an ethnically mixed student population and predominantly white teaching staff.

Interview Summary

Participant 14 was brief in her narrative and mainly offered one sentence responses. She spoke of teachers that shaped her and/or contributed to a positive school experience. In elementary school she says that she had teachers that encouraged her. In junior high school she specifically recalled a teacher that told her that "she had her degree and we should try to get ours" too. She positively mentioned that teachers kept her on track and that her counselor checked in on her.

In high school, the social standards of the popular kids influenced her. These students were going to college. Also, her parents insisted that quitting was not an option. A college professor advised her that "it was not about who gets the highest grades sometimes. It is about who finishes opposed to who drop-out". She also was able to engage in extracurriculars that impacted her as a student. Her involvement in Junior Achievement gave her leadership responsibilities, her first job, and a friendship connection with the CEO of the organization.

Negative experiences that characterized her schooling were being bussed too early to school, teachers that did not seem to care, and being teased in elementary school for her hair being different than the others. She also mentioned "bad" children disrupting class and having old and very used textbooks as ineffective experiences during her K-12 years.

 When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 14 wants Black students to have teachers with experience and knowledge, be able to visit more outside of the classroom environment, and have increased opportunities for hands-on learning.

Participant 15

Demographic / School Information

Participant 15 is a Black female who was born between 1970 and 1974. She has earned a graduate degree (e.g.; MA, MS, MBA).   In grades K-12, she attended public schools with a predominantly white student population and an ethnically diverse teaching staff (Black teachers were greater than 25%, but less than75% of the teaching staff). In undergraduate school, she attended a private school with a predominantly white student

population and an ethnically diverse teaching staff. In graduate school, she attended a

school with an ethnically diverse student population (Black students were greater than

25%, but less than75% of the student population) and ethnically diverse teaching staff.

Interview Summary

Participant 15 spoke of being most validated as a Black female in a school setting

when teachers recognized a talent or gift in her and actively tried to draw her out of her

shell. She remembers a time in elementary school when her third grade teacher pushed

her out of her comfort zone by nurturing her innate abilities. Her teacher had her present

at the parent teacher association in front of adults – which gave her confidence in public

speaking. She also spoke about the few times that she had Black female teachers, as they

had the most impact on her due to them taking a personal interest in her and her feeling

that they truly cared about her success. They pushed her to be more than mediocre and if

she was struggling with a concept they worked with her to get to the root of the problem.

Outside of the positive experiences in elementary school, her middle school and

high school years were characterized by feelings of invisibility which were exacerbated

by microaggressions from students and staff. She vividly recounts being miserable in

middle school and found that she had no one to relate to due to being one of only a

handful of Black students at the school. She didn't have classes with any of the Black

students and found herself friendless and crying everyday. In sixth grade she spoke of an

incidence where a boy, with a locker above her, dropped his books on her head. He said

"sorry" but proceeded to laugh. She felt this experience summed up how she felt at

school: no friends, no help, unnoticed, and unmattered. She begged her mother to change

schools. Her new school had a more diverse student population and she thrived there.

During high school she remembers a vice principal that had a noticeable contempt for her. This was evident in the "overtly nasty" interactions that he had with her. She states that although "I'd NEVER been in trouble at school, I was an honor roll student, on Student Council, in National Honor Society and I always spoke to him respectfully. Despite all of that his disdain for me was clear". If she could change one thing about her schooling she wishes that she had gone to schools with more diversity because the unpleasant nature of her school experiences impacted her confidence and caused a blow to her self-esteem due to feeling like she was someplace where she was not wanted. These feelings impacted her not wanting to engage in after school activities and sports, which limited extra-curricular and social opportunities.

By the time Participant 15 had entered college, she vowed to not let external situations impact her joy and peace. So, she adopted the resolve to make the most of whatever situation that she was in by choosing to change her attitude and focus on the good parts of her environment.

When visioning for successful schooling for Black students, Participant 15 wants Black students to feel like they are seen and heard in their schools.

Findings

This research sought to describe how the lived experience of Generation X, African American Women in educational settings, K-12 through graduate school, helped to construct their vision of Black education for the future. The qualitative portion of the study focused on the meaning that the participants hold about their experiences in educational settings. This phase was conducted as individual computer-assisted interviews with 15 women who are between the ages of 40-55, who are Black, and who

have completed college and/or graduate school. The questions sought to understand the women's perceptions surrounding their internal drive, school preparation, and societal factors that either helped or impeded their progression through college and career.

The qualitative analysis included the preparation and analysis of the data gained through individual computer-assisted interviews. The data was transcribed directly via the participants typed response. After transcription, initial codes were generated and combined into themes. The themes were then evaluated for the essential meaning.

The researcher used QDA Miner Lite as the data analysis software to code the transcripts and determine emerging themes originating from the computer-assisted interviews. Participants were asked the following interview questions:

<u>Central Research Question</u>

How does your lived experience as a Generation X Black woman in post-Brown schools impact your vision of the future for Black education?

<u>Research Question #1</u>

What K-12 and postsecondary experiences helped shape you?

1. Please describe an elementary school (K-5) experience that helped shape you?

2. Please describe a middle/junior school (6-8) experience that helped shape you?

3. Please describe a High School (9-12) experience that helped shape you?

4. What person or program had the most impact on you as a student? Why?

Research Question #2

What contributed to a good (successful) school experience for you?

1. What contributed to a positive school experience for you in K-12?

2. What was the biggest influence in determining your persistence in undergraduate, graduate, professional, or doctoral school

3. When did you feel most validated, as a Black female, in a school and/or educational setting?

Research Question #3

What contributed to a bad (ineffective) school experience for you?

1. What contributed to an ineffective/negative school experience for you in K-12?

2. When did you feel most ignored or misunderstood, as a Black female, in a school and/or educational setting?

Research Question #4

What is your vision for successful schooling for Black students – today and beyond?

1. What would you change most about your schooling? Why?

2. What is your vision for successful schooling for Black students - today and beyond? (what resources and experiences would you want for future generations in order for Black students to be prepared for success?

Overarching Themes

The researcher used QDA Miner Lite as the data analysis software to code the transcripts and determine emerging themes originating from the computer-assisted

interviews.   There were 304 coded segments; four categories developed (external

challenges, future vision, school system, support); and forty codes assigned. The top ten

codes are listed below.

Table 2
Code Distribution

Category	Code	Count	% Codes	Cases	% Cases
Support	Teacher	27	.089	13	.867
Schools	Alienation/Non Support	27	.089	12	.800
Schools	Black Teachers/Staff	17	.056	11	.733
Support	Self Resolve/Fortitude	17	.056	11	.733
Schools	Access	16	.053	10	.667
Schools	Validation	19	.063	10	.667
Schools	Curriculum	18	.059	9	.600
Schools	Minority Population	12	.039	9	.600
Future	Representation Student,Staff	9	.03	8	.533
Schools	Racism & Prejudice	13	.043	8	.533

Three overarching themes surfaced: *When I Look at You, Valid/InValid,* and

Young, Gifted, and Black. The findings capture how the participants processed,

understood, and lived through their experiences. The researcher was challenged to

convey the "essence" of their shared experience of being a Black, Generation X female in

American schools.   The research sheds light on the impact that schools have on students'

journey to adulthood and how to more effectively tailor the school experience to validate

Black students.

Theme 1: When I look at you, I see myself [Relational Black Teachers]

One of the first themes that developed was the importance of teachers as a support system. Participants – noted six factors of support in their persistence through schooling: Family, Friends, Self, Teachers, Programs, and Student Unions. Teachers were most often mentioned, with 13 of the 15 participants citing teachers as a contributing motivation toward the successful completion of their education. As the interviews were analyzed it was evident that not just teachers in general were important, but Black teachers specifically were motivating factors – with 73% of participants specifying Black teachers as motivators.

The keywords of care, support, and mentorship were recurrent recollections when speaking of how Black educators impacted them. Participant 15 recounts,

> The few times that I've had Black female teachers were the most impactful
> because each of them took a personal interest in me and truly cared about my
> success in the class. They pushed me to be more than mediocre and if I was
> struggling with a concept they worked with me to get to the root of the problem.

Similarly, Participant 10 mentioned the feeling of care from Black teachers, "I also felt validated by Black teachers/faculty and female teachers/professors who really seemed to care, noticed my talents and wanted me to succeed" (Participant #10).

The "care" of Black teachers was not tied to being concerned about the participants' health, welfare and safety – but, a broader sense of care for the Black students' potential. The quotes highlight the concept of "being more than mediocre",

"noticed my talents" and "wanted me to succeed". These Black teachers went beyond

teaching to make sure that their students met or exceeded their potential.

One of the second takeaways on the importance of Black teachers was that many

participants considered their Black teachers to be mentors and role models long after their

time in the classroom. Participant 4 recollects,

African American male teachers are not plentiful. In high school, I encountered an

African American male teacher who served in a fatherly role to many students.

Some, who didn't have fathers in their lives. Although my father was present, his

positive impact created a long lasting support for me and we still have an

endearing relationship over 30 years later.

The maintenance of the mentorship relationship outside of the classroom was also echoed

by Participant 12, "I had a 5th grade teacher who continued to mentor me through HS

graduation and then kept up on my progress through college until she passed"

(Participant #12). Both of these teachers are an example of Black teachers that fulfill

support system roles beyond what is expected of a teacher. Checking on a student for

decades, suggests a level of responsibility that echoes the support-level of an engaged

family member.

Participant 8 focused on Black mentorship at the college level,

In undergraduate college, I was taught in my major by a Black, gay, male tenured

professor who was also the department chair. In this setting he was the only other

Black person I saw on a regular basis. He was my mentor. Mostly in my college

education, I would seek out the Black people in admirable positions and develop

relationships with them to get advice and learn from them.

Her statement highlights how Black students need and want to see successful role models in school and learn from them. Having a tenured, Black professor leading her major was impactful for her and an admirable feat. Participants recognized their teachers as occupying dual roles of the "Black teacher as a mentor" and the "Black teacher as a role model".

Black teachers and professors serve as first hand examples of college educated professionals to Black students in schools and often offer support and needed representation. Participant 8 spoke glowingly of her teacher, "My 8th grade social studies teacher. She was beautiful, Black, supportive, understanding of Black studies, she was my first Black teacher that was young." Support was also mentioned by Participant 7 when explaining why Black teachers are important for Black students,

> I believe successful schooling for Black students includes going to a school with students and teachers that look like them in decent numbers, especially in the K-12 age group. I believe that helps to build self-esteem in confidence in students because oftentimes Black students are faced with bias in the school, which can be hard to navigate without representation.

The essential meaning conveyed in "When I look at you, I see myself" is how important Black teachers, who serve as role models and see the potential of their students, are to the successful teaching of Black students. The lived experiences of the participants highlight the need for teachers that form supportive, enduring relationships with students through high expectations and the persistent nurturing of success.

Theme 2: Valid/InValid [Affirmed Personhood and Safe Spaces]

Theme 2: Valid/InValid, focuses on two opposing concepts: 1) being affirmed / accepted in school vs. 2) being alienated / not supported in school. An exceeding majority of the participants recount experiences in schools where they experienced the latter, the study included 80% of the cases with the coding: Alienation/Non-Support. As this study focuses on effective schooling for Black students, the concept of alienation is counteracted by examples of affirmed personhood within school settings.

The participants who experienced alienation and non-support, spoke of feelings of not belonging, having to change who they were to fit in, and being unacknowledged and/or nameless. All of these emotions were tied to feeling like an outsider in school, which had an impact on their development and self-esteem:

I was described as the "Black one "when I was completing my college internships. I was the only Black person in my college of study, so I did tend to stick out. But it would've been nice if they had taken the time to learn my name. (Participant #13)

Surviving such a strict religious school that didn't embrace multiculturalism taught me how to "blend in" and separate who I really was from what they expected me to be. (Participant #10)

Starting college at a private, predominately white institution, when asked for financial assistance options, it was said to me "Well perhaps you don't belong here. (Participant #9)

I moved from a primarily Black school to a primarily white school, and there was an adjustment period. When I asked questions, some of the teachers

looked at it as if <u>I wasn't capable</u> of doing the work vs. just taking my queries for

what they were. (Participant #7)

In undergraduate school. I recall going to an advisor and telling

them I was changing my major. There was <u>no concern as to why</u>. It was

just, ok. When other classmates with dissimilar ethnicities stated their

intentions to change from this certain major, efforts were made to retain

them and offer assistance. (Participant #4)

Contrasted, are the examples of communal support and safe spaces for Black

students in school. These participants shared stories of validation and positive

encouragement that helped them to feel that they belonged in their school:

I went to all Black (student population) schools all throughout my K-12

education. The <u>love and acceptance from my peers</u> was priceless. My

culture's music, food, style; all of it was always present, not questioned,

unapologetic and beautiful. I would never replace that experience.

(Participant #12)

In high school, I went from being the only Black girl (sometimes

there were 2) to 1 of the 11 Black girls. This was an amazing experience

for me being able to find others that had the same academic goals as I did

and experienced it in the same environment. <u>We all formed a sisterhood.</u>

(Participant #8)

Participant 9 recalled, "the program professors showed a genuine interest in my

education as well as who<u> I was an individual</u>." Participant 15 stated, "<u>feeling like

there was a place</u> for me at school contributed to my most positive school

experiences." And, Participant #13 said, "I had a good brain, and people who

believed in my ability, and that I belonged in all of the school hallways that I

occupied."

As opposed to the messages of alienation and non-support ("learn my name",

"separate who I really was", "you don't belong here", " I wasn't capable", and " no

concern as to why"); Validation, for Black students, manifests as the need to belong

within the school environment. That belonging can come from supportive peers who

form a "sisterhood" or it can come from instructors that want to know who Black

students are as "an individual".

The essential meaning conveyed in Valid/InValid is the importance of schools

acknowledging the personhood of Black students. Black students can't be a nameless

face in a sea of whiteness, Black students can't be made to suppress who they are to fit in,

Black students can't be told that they're not capable and don't belong. Instead, safe

spaces are crucial for Black students. Schools can be intentional about providing

opportunities for Black students to lean on peer networks and schools can be purposeful

in helping faculty forge relationships with Black students to acknowledge Black students

as individuals, and not as a monolith.

Theme 3: Young, gifted, and Black [Opportunities to Self-Actualize]

Theme 3 explores the relationship between opportunity and Black student

success. Woven through the participants narratives were examples of academic

programs, organizations, and activities that increased their academic, leadership or social

prowess. Three of the participants attended gifted schools or received separate services

for gifted individuals. Participant 2 speaks of her focused math and reading instruction,

"I was assessed for gifted classes at a time when catholic schools hadn't offered that and I started taking math and reading separate with a smaller group of other identified gifted students" (Participant #2). Participant 4, who went on to become the valedictorian of her high school, had early gifted instruction, "it was a gifted school that helped mold (me) into always giving my best effort and it helped prepare me for my trajectory in academics" (Participant #4). Participant 6 also received gifted instruction, but at the high school level by, "Attending two high schools as a part of the academically gifted program and having actual college curriculum taught" (Participant #6).

In addition to gifted programs, other participants mentioned programs that helped them academically. Participant 3 cited, "the cohort program that I was in during middle school. It was geared to assist students on the bubble to be successful academically." Participant 6 mentioned, "The Language Art Social Science program opened me up to the special nuances of writing and heightened my love of reading, that was already within." Participant 10 was identified for Honors classes, "Seeing that I was more advanced in my English studies than over students in my class, my new 8th grade English teacher cornered me one day and insisted that I take Honors English the following year. And, of course, I did. Being in Honors / AP classes offered me a lot more" Participant #10).

Leadership, creative, and social activities rounded out the responses of school based programs that were instrumental in the development of the respondents. Participants 9 and 14 mentioned leadership opportunities ,"I participated in a tobacco free program that allowed me to lead a group of my peers who visited elementary schools to encourage the students to say no to drugs and smoking." and "Junior Achievement, it

showed me the value of time and money. I was President of my Junior Achievement

team. That business sponsor gave me my first job and I became friends with the CEO."

Participant 10 spoke of opportunities to explore her creative side, "My high

school theatre classes and school talent shows gave me a creative outlet and encouraged

me to pursue more creative endeavors." And, Participant 7 found a social outlet through

sports, "Running track was a positive experience that helped me to learn to push

[through] something difficult. It also allowed me to focus on an interest outside of

academics and meet new people."

Each of these responses highlights the effectiveness of having access to a robust

menu of options that help Black students reach their full potential. The respondents were

able to attend schools that offered: 1) gifted instruction 2) cohort programs for marginal

students 3) creative literacy programs 4) leadership organizations 5) arts and theatre

programming and 6) team and individual sports.

The essential meaning derived from "Young, Gifted, and Black" is that Black

success is tied to having opportunities that uncover each student's gifts and talents. There

is not one way to label success – self-realization is achieved through access to

experiences tailored to each person.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to generate a vision for African American schooling based on the lived experiences of Generation X, African American women who have persisted through college and graduate studies. This chapter includes a discussion of the major findings as it relates to the literature on the history of Black schooling, the ecological system of schools and examples of effective pedagogies for African American students, and the implications that may be valuable to school systems and educational practitioners. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, future areas for research, and a brief summary.

This chapter contains discussion and future research possibilities to help answer the research question: *How does your lived experience as a Generation X Black woman in post-Brown schools impact your vision of the future for Black education?*

The essential meaning derived from Black, Generation X women regarding a vision for the future of Black education was comprised of three themes: 1) When I look at you, I see myself 2) Valid/InValid, and 3) Young, gifted, and Black. These themes correlate to the importance of Black teachers and mentors; creating safe spaces of affirmed personhood; and providing opportunities to self-actualize.

Analysis of the Findings

While the individual demographics of the participants' schools varied, each of the three common themes were prominent factors in motivating the women interviewed to persist in their education through college and graduate school. Each theme is described in detail in the following sections.

Theme 1: When I look at you, I see myself

The essential meaning conveyed in "When I look at you, I see myself" is how important Black teachers, who serve as role models and see the potential of their students, are to the successful teaching of Black students. The lived experiences of the participants highlight the need for teachers that form supportive, enduring relationships with students through high expectations and the persistent nurturing of success.

The literature review explained the importance of Black teachers to the Black community pre-Brown vs. Board of Education. After desegregation and in settings that were predominately white, the participants of this study also shared memories of the Black instructors who cared, supported, and mentored them towards success. Marva Collins spoke about the magic of being a teacher of Black students,

> Being a teacher is to become a part of a kind of creation. A creation of knowing that miracles occur because you cared, loved, and patiently kept polishing until the dark corners of a child's mind become brightened, and as you watch those formerly sad eyes become luminous, you then know why I teach. You know there is no brighter light ever to shine than that which comes from a child's eyes formerly hidden in the dark. (1992, p. 155)

One of the most important factors found in the teacher-student relationship of this study and in the narratives found in the literature review, was a phenomenon labeled as "relational pedagogy", which means the teacher has formed relationships that extend beyond the classroom and into the community (Ginwright, 2016). Participants in this study spoke of relationships with teachers that spanned decades, with the teacher periodically checking on their progress through school. Another participant related the story of having a teacher from her community that knew her family, "My 6th grade teacher was also my older sister's 6th grade teacher. She was familiar with my family and the learning expectations/dynamics" (Participant 9).

The other factor noted in the Black student / Black teacher relationship was the notion of wanting the student to succeed. Gloria Ladson-Billings studied effective teachers and found that while the teachers did know the students' families, they also understood the dreams, talents, and aspirations of the student (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Participant 15 spoke of her teacher,

> My third grade teacher saw something in me and nurtured that. She would look for opportunities to push me beyond my comfort zone and help me shine. For example, she asked me to present something at a PTA meeting. I had to read and speak on stage in front of an audience of all adults. That experience gave me the confidence for public speaking. To this day, public speaking doesn't make me nervous.

Theme 2: Valid/InValid

The essential meaning conveyed in Valid/InValid is the importance of schools acknowledging the affirmed personhood of Black students and creating safe spaces

within that structure. Black students can't be a nameless face in a sea of whiteness, Black

students can't be made to suppress who they are to fit in, Black students can't be told that

they're not capable and don't belong. Instead, safe spaces are crucial for Black students.

Schools can be intentional about providing opportunities for Black students to lean on

peer networks and schools can be purposeful in helping faculty forge relationships with

Black students to see the students as individuals, and not as a monolith.

   Affirmed Personhood. In the literature review the structural racism found in

schools manifests as microaggressions and/or racial discrimination. As such, scholars

suggest that we begin to attack the destructive and punitive educational system, through

the realization that schools act as spaces of whiteness, white rage, and white supremacy,

all of which function to terrorize students of color (Love, 2019). The participants of this

study echoed incidences of dealing with microaggressions and racial discrimination,

through narratives such as: "Dealing with prejudice. Being treated differently or more

harshly for being Black." (Participant 10); "There was racism in some situations based on

where I lived in a suburb." (Participant 3); and "When I was at my locker once, a boy

whose locker was above mine dropped his books on my head. He laughed and said sorry

but his snickering spoke louder than his words" (Participant 15).

   When encountering these, and other, situations participants stated that they felt

misunderstood, ignored and/or invisible, embarrassed, and as if they didn't matter. The

undercurrent of their feelings, helps explain the need for affirmation of Black students.

When Black students feel respected, welcomed, and/or treated well, it influences their

social interactions, but also positively impacts their motivation, performance and learning

(Lewis & Diamond, 2017).

Safe Spaces for Black Students. Conversely, it has been noted that when Black students' affirmation is sought through contact with racist systems or through the validation of whites, they will struggle with their identity (Tatum, 1999). In the previous literature it was stressed that "most if not all of the historically Black segregated schools that African American children attended were intentionally organized in opposition to the ideology of Black intellectual inferiority" and "everything about these institutions was supposed to affirm Black humanity, Black intelligence, and Black achievement" (Perry et al., 2003, p. 88).

In the absence of all-Black schools, it is possible to create safe spaces for Black children by developing environments where they feel valued, protected, accepted, and socially connected. Often times as the student's awareness of racial discrimination and microaggressions become more evident, it is best for Black children to be able to share their experience with others that have experienced the same (Tatum, 1999). It has been recognized that African American children can filter their self-concepts through a lens that emphasizes group membership and communal settings (Curry & Shillingford, 2015). Therefore, the "safe space" can take the form of social clubs, Black Student Unions, and other purposeful group interactions between peers and/or trusted adults. Participants in the study mentioned utilizing Black Student Unions as a place of protection and grounding as students at predominantly white institutions (pwi): "Black United Students when I attended a PWI. The support from the staff and professors where they understood my struggles with some of my professors who minimized my knowledge" (Participant #2) and "Black Student Union organization in undergrad. It was my first experience in social justice and advocacy. I continue those practices to this day" (Participant #12).

Others mentioned the importance supportive women, "I felt most validated around other

Black female students, including my college sorority sisters" (Participant #10).

These narratives underscore the importance of students' having a place to be

refreshed and rejuvenated within their cultural community to allow them to discuss racial

encounters, feelings of anxiety, and general adolescent concerns (Tatum, 1999).

Theme 3: Young, Gifted, and Black

The essential meaning derived from "Young, Gifted, and Black" is that Black

success is tied to having opportunities that uncover each students' gifts and talents.

There is not one way to label success – self-actualization is achieved through access to

experiences tailored to each person.

School leader, Marva Collins, acknowledged that, "you're going to have a

brighter group of children - not by genetics, not because of who their families are, not

because they're on welfare, but because of what they have been exposed to" (Collins,

p29). Exposure to opportunities is what parents want for their children, so much so white

parents have hoarded opportunities for the benefit of their families as evidenced in the

literature review.

Participants in the study credit their success to having access to academic

programs that "prepared me", "opened me up", and "offered me a lot more". These

participants were able to access gifted, honors, and advanced placement classes. Which

from the literature, many Black students are left out of or selectively entered into the

advanced curriculum system.

Other participants spoke of programs that allowed them to increase their social

capital by stating "allowed me to lead", "showed me the value of time and money", and

"encouraged me to pursue creative endeavors". Social capital is the network of people

and resources that provide support to navigate society's institutions (Yasso, 2017). Often

Black students are left out of the informal social networks that provide crucial

information on institutional norms, job openings, and other barometers towards

successful entry into the workforce. Having access to programs that increase the capacity

for leadership, financial, and creative skills helps to build Black students' efficacy in

these realms.

Implications of the Study

Chapter I included an overview of Brofenbrenner's *Ecology of Human*

Development theory. The theoretical framework included the positioning that schools,

school policies, culture, and expectations can sustain, develop, or instigate growth or

stagnation as students navigate the system. This section discusses how the theoretical

framework fits with the uncovered themes and essential meanings.

Brofenbrenner defines a microsystem as "a pattern of activities, roles, and

interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with

particular physical and material characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22).

Interaction at the microsystem level takes place face-to-face and involves the developing

person directly in settings such as a daycare or school. These environments are not static,

therefore the relationship between the child and the setting evolve through a process of

interaction. This means that Black students forge their identity toward adulthood

through a process of interactions with school systems by the material effect of their

perceptions, desires, fears, and knowledge base acquired through exposure to the setting

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979). And ultimately, how Black females perceive schools and their

place within them, is as important as any scientific features of the environment and/or setting.

Implications for Theory

Schools are in the inner ring of the microsystem, which means that schools hold as much influence on a Black child's development as the child's family, peers, and/or church. It is neglectful to minimize the impact of school on a child's successful progression towards adulthood by only measuring the school system's academic inputs. Instead, it is important to look at how the Black child perceives their worth in schools by the messaging imparted through the lack of positive representation, denial of personhood, and inefficient opportunities to self-actualize.

This study takes the position that the current American school system is deficient in creating environments that ensure African American student growth because: (a) schools have not implemented an environmental structure to effectively support Black students and (b) schools neither acknowledge nor are aware of their impact on Black student development. Furthermore, the researcher positions that schools can act as a factor to instigate growth for Black students when the environment is specifically tailored to validate their existence. As evidenced in the study, Black students sustained meaningful development under the tutelage and mentorship of African American instructors; when they had safe spaces that affirmed their personhood, and through programs that enhanced their academic, leadership, and social skills.

Development as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) includes two main components: (a) "Development involves a change in the characteristics of a person that

is neither ephemeral nor situation-bound" and (b) "Developmental change takes place

concurrently in two domains, those of perception and action" (p. 28).

Below are examples from participants that show how they developed towards

adulthood through the sustained change of their personal characteristics, their

self-perceptions, and their capacity to enact strategies:

> I recall being extremely shy in the 4th grade. Every week my teacher chose
>
> someone to collect lunch counts from each classroom and deliver them to the
>
> office. She chose me and I cried and initially refused to do it. She walked with
>
> me to a couple of classes to collect the lunch counts. As a result, I became more
>
> comfortable around people. I can say, to this day, that shyness is not an issue
>
> anymore. (Participant #4)

> In middle school, I had an exceptional amount of invested educators.
>
> They expected excellence from the students. It was a gifted school that helped
>
> mold me into always giving my best effort and it helped prepare me for my
>
> trajectory in academics. (Participant #4)

> The Black Student Union organization in my undergraduate years had the
>
> most impact on me as a student. It was my first experience with social justice and
>
> advocacy. I continue those practices to this day. (Participant #12)

> My third grade teacher saw something in me and nurtured that. She would
>
> look for opportunities to push me beyond my comfort zone and help me shine.
>
> For example, she asked me to present something at a PTA meeting. I had to read
>
> and speak on stage in front of an audience of all adults. That experience gave me

the <u>confidence for public speaking</u>. <u>To this day, public speaking doesn't make me</u>

<u>nervous</u>. (Participant #12)

These examples show how schools can impact growth towards adulthood for

Black students that is sustained and actionable as defined by Bronfenbrenner. The

development and growth in personality, academics, social justice, and public speaking

were changes that were fostered within the microsystem of schools, but were also applied

to all areas of their lives over a continued time spectrum.

Implication for Practitioners

In order for the microsystem of schools to positively impact Black student

development towards adulthood, as positioned in the study, the researcher suggests a

Five Pronged System for Black Student Development (R.E.A.P.S):

Relational Black Teachers.   As found in the research, Black teachers act as

mentors and role models to Black students and have a propensity to form enduring

relationships with students, as such, Black teachers are at the forefront of positive

motivating factors towards Black student success. These relationships can be classified

under the title 'Relational Pedagogy'. The basis of this teaching method is that the

school/instructor is explicitly focused on developing quality interactions with students to

promote academic, positive social, and emotional development (Reeves & Le Mare,

2017). As Ginwright (2015) states,

> "There is not one formulaic process that establishes relational pedagogy. For
>
> some teachers, relational pedagogy is established by building trust, honesty, and
>
> vulnerability in class lessons. For others, it may be built by nurturing and
>
> fostering relationships outside the classroom with students' extended family.

What is key, however, is that relational pedagogy creates a rapport and respect

between students and their teachers and builds a reservoir of capital that can be

spent in ways that ultimately improve the quality of the school day" (p. 104).

Schools can be a positive microsystem when the environment/setting is committed to

developing mutual respect, rapport, and relationships with Black students.

Expectational Pedagogy. Expectation is defined as the "degree of probability

that something will occur" (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, n.d.). In the

literature and in the study, Black student development and success is ensured when there

is an explicit expectation of achievement. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009) found in her

studies of effective teachers that they understood the dreams, talents and aspirations of

the students and had an expectation that the student would reach their potential. Schools

can foster an environment that focuses on Black students achieving beyond grade-level

benchmarks by supporting Black students reaching their potential through an

expectational pedagogy of high standards.

Affirmative Environment. In affirmed environments, Black students are seen as

individuals with feelings. In this study, participants cited feelings of not belonging,

having to change who they were to fit in, and being unacknowledged and/or nameless

within their school environments. Schools can examine the ways in which they are

inflicting micro-aggressions on Black students and make a conscious effort to implement

an environment that affirms the personhood of Black students.

Places of Cultural Community. Safe spaces for Black students to commune

with others of the same cultural identity were crucial in successfully navigating

predominantly white spaces. Participants cited informal groups of like-minded students

and formal structures of Black Student Unions as being a helpful source of support when faced with being the minority in a school population. Schools can implement safe spaces in the school environment by promoting student unions and/or a trusted faculty member to act as a sounding board when encountering marginalization.

Self-Actualization Opportunities. Participants in this study thrived when they had the opportunity to increase their social capital by engaging in activities that "allowed me to lead", "showed me the value of time and money", and "encouraged me to pursue creative endeavors". Having a robust menu of in-school and after-school programming that explicitly intends to increase Black students' access to people and resources that provide support to navigate society's institutions is essential. Schools can evaluate their enrichment offerings to ensure there is balance of academic, sports, and leadership opportunities that help Black students reach their fullest potential, while breaking down any structural barriers to access that are inherent in society.

Limitations of the Study

While the researcher agrees that the qualitative, computer-assisted interviewing methods chosen were right for this study in light of nation-wide limitations to travel and contact, the researcher acknowledges that face-to-face interviews would have been the preferred method. For example, due to the interview process being online, this methodology assumes that both the interviewer and interviewee are comfortable with written communication. Also, the written format precludes the interviewer from contextual body language clues during the interview. Finally, the written format may lead the interviewee to leave out detailed descriptions. (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Therefore, more insights may have been gathered with the inclusion of in person body language and a more natural interview setting.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher would recommend expanding the research to include more participants from Generation X African American women - as their voices are lacking in the current literature. Also, the responses should be analyzed by school type to determine if there is a significant difference in responses from participants as they encountered predominantly Black schools, predominantly white schools, or fully integrated school spaces.

Conclusion

This study takes the position that the current American school system is deficient in creating environments that ensure African American student growth because: (a) schools have not implemented an environmental structure to effectively support Black students and (b) schools neither acknowledge nor are aware of their impact on Black student development. Furthermore, the researcher positions that schools can act as a factor to instigate growth for Black students when the environment is specifically tailored to validate their existence. Through the lived experience of Generation X Black women and their vision of successful education of Black students, a Five Pronged System for Black Student Development (R.E.A.P.S) was developed to address the essential meaning from their relationship with schools. The application for practitioners includes implementation of : (1)Relational Black Teachers (2)Expectational Pedagogy (3)Affirmative Environment (4)Places of Cultural Community and (5)Self-Actualization Opportunities as positive steps to ensure African American student success.

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Appendix A

November 06, 2020

Principal Investigator: Dawna Wharton (UMSL-Student)
Department: Education EDD-Doctorate

Your IRB Application to project entitled Systems of Success: African-American Women Prepared
was reviewed and approved by the UMSL Institutional Review Board according to the terms and
conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2035202
IRB Review Number	282006
Initial Application Approval Date	November 06, 2020
IRB Expiration Date	November 06, 2021
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Exempt
Exempt Categories (Revised Common Rule)	45 CFR 46.104d(2)(iii) with limited IRB review
Risk Level	Minimal Risk
Approved Documents	Revised-Consent Form for Study Participants Online/Email Recruitment Script Interview and Survey Questions for Study Particpants

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must
comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. Enrollment and study related procedures must remain in compliance with the University of
   Missouri regulations related to interaction with human participants following guidance at
   http://www.umsl.edu/recd/compliance/umsl-guidance-covid19-restart-6.25.2020.pdf.
2. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the
   expiration date.
3. All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation utilizing the Exempt Amendment
   Form.
4. The Annual Exempt Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30
   days prior to the project expiration date to keep the study active or to close it.
5. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.

If you are offering subject payments and would like more information about research participant
payments, please click here to view the UM Policy: https://www.umsystem.edu/ums/policies/
finance/payments_to_research_study_participants

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the UMSL IRB Office at 314-516-5972 or email
to irb@umsl.edu.

Appendix B

Consent Form

Summary of the Study: Systems of Success - African-American Women Prepared

Please note that participation in this study is voluntary.

The Principal Investigator, Dawna CS Wharton, is conducting a study seeking to understand African-American, generation X, women's perceptions surrounding their internal drive, school preparation, and societal factors that either helped or impeded their progression through college and career. Your participation would include: completing an email survey and/or phone/internet interview regarding the meaning that the participants hold about their experiences in educational settings. Participating in this study will help educational practitioners adopt successful strategies and strengthen their schools systems' support of African-American students.

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dawna CS Wharton. The purpose of this study is to generate a vision for African-American schooling based on the lived experiences of Generation X African-American women who have persisted through college. Approximately ten participants may be involved in this research at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

2. Your participation will involve:
   - Completing an email survey.
   - Participating in a follow-up interview – either in-person or via phone/internet.
   - The amount of time involved in your participation will be: less than two hours to complete the survey and optional follow-up interview.

3. There is a potential confidentiality risk associated with this research. The principal investigator will make sure that the institution and participants remain confidential without any identifying characteristics revealed in the study and will do everything we can to protect participants' privacy. As part of this effort, participants' identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this study.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or withdraw your consent at any time. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this study. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection) that would lead to disclosure of your data as well as any other information collected by the researcher.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Dawna CS Wharton at XXX-XXX-XXXX. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research, at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I hereby consent to my participation in the research described above.

* Required

1.   Please indicate your consent before proceeding: *

Mark only one oval.

  ( ) Yes, I have read the informed consent and will participate

  ( ) No, I will not participate   *Skip to section 6 (Do Not Consent)*

Research
ID

> We will internally identify you based on your email address. We will not contact you at any point without permission.

2.   Please Enter your email address: *

_____

Demographics

3.   Select Your Age Cohort: *

Mark only one oval.

  ( ) Born Before 1965   *Skip to section 7 (Inconsistent Screening Responses)*

  ( ) Born Between 1965 -1969

  ( ) Born Between 1970 - 1974

  ( ) Born Between 1975-1980

  ( ) Born After 1980   *Skip to section 7 (Inconsistent Screening Responses)*

4. Select the highest level of Education you have completed: *

Mark only one oval.

◯ No formal education   *Skip to section 7 (Inconsistent Screening Responses)*

◯ High School   *Skip to section 7 (Inconsistent Screening Responses)*

◯ College - A levels (AA, AS,...)   *Skip to section 7 (Inconsistent Screening Responses)*

◯ Undergraduate Degree (BA, BS, ...)

◯ Graduate Degree (MA, MS, MBA....)

◯ Professional Degree (MFA, JD, ED.S....)

◯ Doctorate Degree (MD, PH.D, ED.D....)

5. Please classify your school (check all that apply): *

Check all that apply.

	I attended a public school	I attended a private school	The student population was less than 25% Black	The student population was more than 75% Black	The teaching staff was less than 25% Black	The teaching staff was more than 75% Black	n/a
Elementary School (Grades K - 5)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Junior or Middle School (Grades 6 - 8)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
High School (Grades 9 - 12)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Undergraduate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Graduate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Doctorate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Survey
Questions

Please answer the following questions with as much detail and context as possible
regarding your experiences as a Black female student in schools, post Brown vs. Board
of Education.

6. Please describe an elementary school (K-5) experience that helped shape you? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Please describe a middle/junior school (6-8) experience that helped shape you? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Please describe a High School (9-12) experience that helped shape you? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. What contributed to a positive school experience for you in K-12? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. What contributed to an ineffective/negative school experience for you in K-12? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. What was the biggest influence in determining your persistence in undergraduate, graduate, professional, or doctoral school: *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. When did you feel most validated, as a Black female, in a school and/or educational setting? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. When did you feel most ignored or misunderstood, as a Black female, in a school and/or educational setting? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. What person or program had the most impact on you as a student? Why? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. What would you change most about your schooling? Why? *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. What is your vision for successful schooling for Black students - today and beyond? (what resources and experiences would you want for future generations in order for Black students to be prepared for success?) *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Further Questions

17. May we contact you via email to clarify any responses or questions?

     Mark only one oval.

     ◯ Yes

     ◯ No

Do Not Consent	As you do not wish to participate in this survey, please go to the submit section to end.
Inconsistent Screening Responses	Unfortunately you are ineligible to participate in this survey, as your response is inconsistent with the prescreening responses. Please go to the submit section to end.