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THE INFLUENCE OF POWER ON RACIAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL POWER:  
LEARNING WHILE A MINORITY IN A BULLITT COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL IN  
KENTUCKY

By

Michele Johnson  
B.S., Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, 2009  
M.Ed., Lindenwood University, 2012

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Education and Human Development of the University of Louisville  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Doctor of Education  
in Educational Leadership and Organizational Development

Department of Educational Leadership, Evaluation, and Organizational Development  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

August 2023

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A Dissertation Approved on

July 27, 2023

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband and my children. Joseph thank you for being my biggest cheerleader and biggest support. Marquis and Malachi, thank you for being extra patient and understanding during this entire journey. I pray that you both see that with hard work and consistency you too can accomplish your dreams.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE INFLUENCE OF POWER ON RACIAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL POWER: LEARNING WHILE A MINORITY IN A BULLITT COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL IN KENTUCKY

Michele Johnson-Gause

July 27, 2023

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine the influence of power on racial identity and social awareness of minority high schools' students in Bullitt County, Kentucky. The research will come from the student perspective of those attending high school with students predominantly from another racial background. Using purposeful sampling, 12 students participated in semi-structured interviews, providing insight into three research questions regarding racial identity, social power, and social awareness.

Student participants used their voice to share their lived educational experiences attending school with students from another racial background. Interviews were transcribed, coded and analyzed using In Vivo and Emotion coding. Six main themes emerged, and thirteen sub-themes emerged based on student data, those themes are: Identity, Cultural Acknowledgement, Racism, Interpersonal Influence, Sense

of Belonging, and Coping Mechanism. Each theme was used to address the three research questions regarding social power, racial identity, and social awareness.

Findings from this research suggested that while black students have a multitude of experiences during high school with individual from the opposite race, Black students used those experiences to help them understand who they are racially. Additionally, Black students learned how to use their own power to find their voice and being socially aware of others.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Waking up on September 2, 1957, had to be the most exciting day for nine black students in Arkansas. This was supposed to be the first day of school and probably the most exciting. Expecting to have some expectations and fears, it did not stop these nine students and their parents from getting up that morning and getting ready for their new adventures. However, before those students even got to school, they were notified that the Governor of Arkansas told the national guard not to let them in school that day. Imagine the thoughts that went through their minds. Finally, on September 25, 1957, nine black students were allowed to attend Central High School. However, even though they crossed one hurdle, the journey was just beginning for them. School was not easy; white students were unhappy about their presence and made it very well known. White students harassed them inside the school building and then were met outside with white people rioting and protesting their attendance at school. One cannot help but wonder how those nine black students interpreted those messages from their classmates, teachers, and community members who went out of their way to show they did not belong. How did those messages influence those nine black students' understanding of their racial identity?

The history of desegregated schools in the US public education system began in 1954. The *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case was a decision to end segregation

in public education. However, it created a false hope that US public education would change for the best and permanently. This journey began when funding and resources for segregated schools were not equal among all schools. African American parents and educators used their financial means to create better student learning environments.

Charles Houston, a lawyer for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), took on the task of ending segregation in public education (Ramsey, 2017). Houston also included Thurgood Marshall in his work, who was his previous student. Houston chose to include Marshall after seeing him win a case against the University of Maryland, forcing the University to approve a black student for admission.

After clarifying their goals and expectations, the two worked on numerous individual district cases, winning a majority. After the passing of Charles Houston, Thurgood Marshall continued with their work. Marshall decided to file the most significant lawsuit in education history, *Brown V. Board of Education of Topeka*. Using "expert legal, historical, and psychological testimonies from Pauli Marshall, John Hope Franklin, and Kenneth and Mamie Clark, whose famous doll test suggested that black children suffered low self-esteem due to learning in segregated environments" (Ramsey, 2017, para. 4). Based on this evidence the Supreme Court ruled to end segregation in public education.

Despite this victory, many states did not make any sudden changes, and some opposed the decision. However, Kentucky agreed to comply with the ruling but decided to use a different approach instead of suddenly jumping into making changes (Coleman, 1955). Kentucky lawmakers chose to use the "go slow" approach. With this approach, school districts had time to create planning committees and the best action plan to ensure

equal educational opportunities for all students. Kentucky's approach came with little to no pushback from either black or white local citizens, educators, or school officials.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem this research seeks to understand is the influence of power on racial identity for minority high school students in Bullitt County, KY. Cameron and McCall (2021) posit that little is known about the "social factors linking lived experiences to the opportunity gap between African American and White students" (p.12). Tatum (2004) suggests that more attention needs to focus on the "nonracist racial identity development of both white students and students of color in schools" (p.134). Jones (2018) adds the increasing need for White school districts to understand African American students' cultural and social identity development and its effect on their education.

While the research on racial identity and its social implications is growing, it is the goal of this research to fill in the gaps by adding in the lived educational experiences of African American high school students attending predominantly white schools and examining the contributing social factors that help them make meaning of their racial identity.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This phenomenological study aims to examine the influence of power on racial identity and social awareness of minority high school students in Bullitt County, Kentucky. The research will come from the student perspective of those attending high school with students predominantly from another racial background. While conducting this study, the examiner intends to understand better the meaning Black students make from their experiences and understanding of power. The hope for this study is for Bullitt



County School District to create programs and opportunities for minority high school students. The interviews in this research are semi-structured, and the number of enrolled minority students determines the number of participants chosen from all three high schools. The goal was to have 12 students from all three high schools.

There are three research questions guiding this study. These are:

**RQ 1:** How do minority high school students come to know/understand their racial identity?

**RQ 2:** What experiences have minority high school students had that shaped their racial identity?

**RQ 3:** How have minority high school students encountered power?

### **Significance of the Study**

Bullitt County Public School District's minority enrollment is 10% of its student population, with mostly Hispanic students (Public School Review, n.d.). Each year, the number of ethnic minority students has grown, especially the Hispanic population (Public School Review, n.d.). Bullitt County has attempted to become more diverse and inclusive of the various populations as a district. Some initiatives have occurred, such as training for building principals with Kentucky State University on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Community Picnic for English Learner Families allows district leaders, educators, and staff to understand English Learner families better. While all these efforts are a step in the right direction, it does not appear anyone has taken the time to understand what minority students are looking for in their educational experience. High school students were selected to participate in this research because they have more school experience at this level. This research hopes to help Bullitt County Public School District teachers, parents, and district leaders better understand how power can influence an adolescent's meaning of racial identity and social awareness.

## **Theoretical Underpinnings and the Selection of Methodology**

### **Conceptual Framework**

Using Racial Identity Development as a guiding conceptual framework for this qualitative study. Racial identity development focuses on the biological characteristics of individuals (Akos & Ellis, 2008). Racial identity in this study allows us to examine how adolescents understand who they are. Furthermore, how they take that meaning to create relationships with their peers, teachers, and other educators in their building and school district also helps us understand how power dynamics/structures are created in a school setting based on other students' meanings of racial identity. Martín Babarro et al. (2017) examine adolescent identity development as "the perceptions that young people have of themselves and the perceptions that others have about them" (p.35). Children need to learn things about themselves and how others view them. However, it is also essential to recognize that while a child is in the self-exploration phase, the process can be tainted by their experiences dealing with adversities such as racism (Jones, 2018). For this study, two forms of racial identity development were used: Black Racial Identity Development (Cross, 1979) and White Racial Identity Development (Helms, 1997). The goal is to explore racial identity development to understand the lived educational experiences of minority students and the factors that shaped their understanding of racial identity while attending a high school with predominantly white students.

Social power shows how expert, referent, legitimate, coercive, and reward power can induce psychological change (French & Raven, 1959). The potential to influence is explained through the work of French & Raven's (1959) bases of social power, while the work of Dahl (1957) shows how influence can impact social power. Social power aims to

understand the lived educational experiences of minority students' perception of social power and its impact on their understanding of others.

Social awareness is the final conceptual framework used in this research study. According to Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2012), *social awareness* is defined as "the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources" (p.9). Greene & Kamimura (2003) further defines social awareness "in terms of the importance that students attribute to 1.) speaking up against social injustice; 2.) creating awareness of how people affect the environment; 3.) promoting racial tolerance and respect and 4.) making consumer decisions based on a company's ethics" (p.3). The use of social awareness as a construct in this research will help explain the lived educational experiences of minority students. It will further characterize how they understood and made meaning from the social awareness of others.

### **Theoretical Framework**

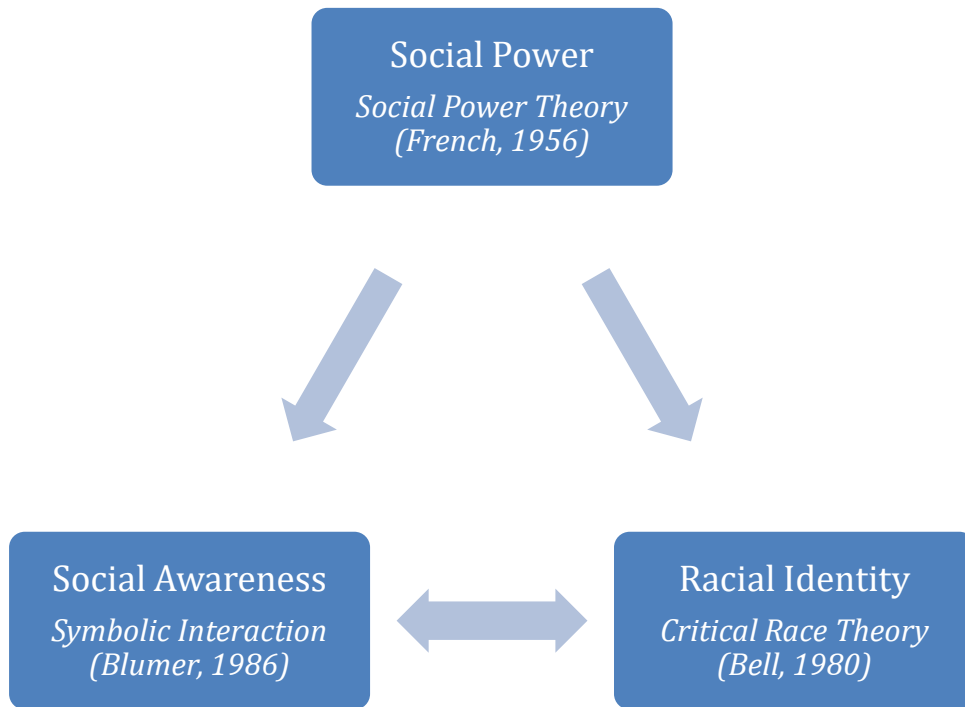
Critical Race Theory (CRT) is used as a theoretical framework to help understand the importance of racial identity and its need for continued research relating to the lived educational experiences of minority students attending predominantly white schools. CRT began with the work of Derrick Bell and his findings on interest convergence. Derrick Bell (1980) posits that people of color will not experience equality until it becomes the interest of white policymakers. The goal of CRT and its connection to racial identity development is to attest to minority students' lived educational experiences attending predominantly white schools. In this research, a more profound knowledge and

understanding of the lived educational experiences and their contribution to shaping the understanding of minority students' racial identity and their sense of belonging.

Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1986) is based on the way people make meaning of the things around them. Those meanings of things are based on social interactions with others. Symbolic interactionism also understands that the meaning of things goes through an "interpretive process" for people to understand their encounters. Symbolic interactionism relates to social awareness in terms of the ability to make meaning of interactions with others and understanding the impact of those interactions, creating a level of awareness for self and others and using that awareness for future interactions. This further supports the goal of examining the lived educational experiences that help shape minority students' understanding of social awareness of others. An example of the conceptual frameworks, along with the contributing scholars, is shown in the Figure below.

**Figure 1**

*Proposition: Social Power influences racial identity and social awareness*



*Note.* The image above represents the three constructs of Social Power, Racial Identity, and Social Awareness. Each construct is supported by a theoretical framework. The diagram shows social power influencing racial identity and social awareness.

The first construct of social power is supported by the theoretical framework of social power theory (French, 1956). Based on this theory French (1956) posit that three criteria occurs during the social interaction phase. The first criteria are power relation, which ties into Emerson’s (1962) power-dependence. For one to maintain power, they must rely on the other person being influenced by their power. If no influence occurs the other person loses their power. The second criteria are communication patterns. Communication patterns aligns with French & Raven’s (1959) social power. Using different forms of social power such as expert, referent power, etc. Communication patterns are used in a group setting to see how things are communicated and the language that is occurring. For example, how are people influenced by the communication and if they do not follow the patterns of communication, what happens with the group

interaction? The third criteria are opinion relation which aligns to Dahl's (1957) discussion on influence. If the person in power sets the tone for how the group dynamic is set up, how are others' opinions and thoughts received within the group.

This dynamic of social power is now setting the stage for social interactions within a group setting. Using the criteria associated with social power and tying it into the understanding of racial identity. The understanding of racial identity may come from early experiences or from family influences (Neblett, 2009). Racial identity is supported by the theoretical framework critical race theory (Bell, 1980). Based on the messages a person receives within the group dynamic, those messages can reshape one's understanding of their racial identity, intersecting social power with racial identity (Silke et al., 2017). You now have two experiences happening at the same time but represent two different understandings (Crenshaw, n.d). Social awareness is supported by the theoretical framework of Symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1986) showing how a person makes meaning of their racial identity and the influences of social power. As a result, the combination of these three constructs can create an understanding of how to socially interact with others. By understanding where a person fits in the power dynamic and beginning to realize where their social power exists, now a person can begin making new meanings of their racial identity, while also being socially aware of self and others.

## **Phenomenological Design**

### **Procedures**

When looking for the connection between social power, racial identity, and social awareness, the research continues to grow. Those three constructs will examine the

intersectionality between racial identity, social power, and social awareness. Therefore, phenomenological research is the best way to research this topic. Researchers must understand the purpose of choosing their research topic (Donalek, 2004). Donalek (2004) describes this as the process in which a researcher's work becomes a reliable source of information to others. Phenomenology research allows the researcher to be aware of their own experiences while being sure to put their own biases aside. Based on the current research for phenomenological methodology, descriptive or transcendental phenomenology would better fit the purpose of this research. Moustakas (1994) defines *transcendental phenomenology* as "recognizing that my own knowledge and experience, in a free, open, imaginative sense, ultimately would determine the core ideas and values that would linger and endure" (p. 25). With this lens, the voices of high school minority students will share their lived educational experiences with others.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

All participants in this research study were Black students that attended one of the three high schools in Bullitt County School District. A total of four students were selected from each school, with the total number of participants being twelve students from: Bullitt East, Bullitt Central, and North Bullitt High School. For this study, twelve students were determined to be enough to provide adequate data based on lived educational experiences of minority students. Students will be purposefully selected using Infinite Campus database, which can identify students based on race/ethnicity. Using infinite campus decreases the risk of students being misidentified regarding racial identity. Selection of students' race was selected by parents who update their students' information yearly. Once students are purposefully selected, students identified as

minority students will meet with the researchers to understand the purpose of the researcher and why their help is needed.

Students were invited to participate and provided the consent materials explaining the participation. Students will have one week to return both consent forms. Once all paperwork is submitted, students will participate individually in a 45-minute to one-hour semi-structured interview. Questions will be asked about the student's perspective of the power dynamics of their school regarding teachers, school administrators, peers, and friends. Next, students will be asked a series of questions specific to their meaning and understanding of their racial identity and its influence on their school experience (Neblett et al., 2009). Finally, students will be asked questions regarding social awareness regarding how they treat others and how those around them treat them.

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following terms were used in the context of this study:

***Social Power:*** The ability to influence change in others (French & Raven, 1959).

***Racial Identity:*** “refers to the notion that all people, regardless of their race, ascribe different psychological meanings to their race” (Carter & Johnson, 2018, p.2).

***Social Awareness:*** “the ability to take perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures to understand social and ethical norms for behaviors, and to recognize family, school, and community resources” (Collaborative for Academic et al., 2012, p.9).

***Power:*** “the means to meet survival needs or to create deficits in needs” (Pratto, Lee, Tan & Pitpitan, 2017, p.193).

***Minority Student:*** a person that has self-identified as black, African American or of African descent.



## **Limitations of the Study**

When completing this study, there are limitations to consider. A significant limitation is the sampling size of minority students attending high school in Bullitt County, Kentucky. Based on current enrollment, 94% of students are white, and 2% are black; this is the current enrollment of all Bullitt County Public Schools students. With the number of black students being low compared to the number of white students enrolled in Bullitt County Public Schools, the other limitation is the ability to recruit students. The researcher will have to ensure that parents understand the purpose behind the study and would give consent for their child to participate. The researcher must also ensure students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions about their daily experiences.

The other limitation of this study would be maintaining confidentiality and possibly creating a challenge because Bullitt County is a small district. The total number of students enrolled in Bullitt County Public Schools is 12,725. While the research consists of the participation of black students from all three high schools in Bullitt County, it is imperative to consider the experiences that can cause a student to be identified. If a student speaks of specific events or classes, it may make it easy to identify that student. While students will not be named in any research, it is essential to note that some students may be easily identifiable based on specific information that is shared due to the size of Bullitt County School District.

## **Organization of the Study**

Chapter one begins with an introduction to the problem of study- the influence of power on racial identity for minority high schools in Bullitt County, Kentucky. Chapter two details the literature review on black and white racial identity development, social power and its influence on education, and social awareness and its influence on students and educators. Additionally, Critical race theory (CRT), a formal theory of social power, and symbolic interaction theory are used as the theoretical view of how minority students' racial identity could be influenced by power and the social awareness of others. Chapter three explains the methodology for the topic of study. Chapter Four explains the results of this study. Chapter Five provides the findings and discussion based on the analyzed data from Chapter Four.

### **Summary of Chapter 1**

Chapter one begins with an understanding of the topic of study on how power influences racial identity and social awareness, learning as a minority student in a Kentucky Bullitt County High School. After a brief explanation of the connection to this topic, this section then proceeds to the theoretical underpinnings as well as the selection of methodology. The theoretical section of chapter one gives a summary of two theories that are used. At the same time, the methodology section explains the use of phenomenological research methods. The following sections provide the meanings of some common terminology used throughout this study and the organization of this study.

Chapter two will explore in greater detail the theories that are used. Chapter two provides three constructs and supporting evidence for how each impacts educators, youth, and families. The layout of chapter two begins with an explanation of social power along

with its supporting sub-constructs. The second section addresses the understanding of racial identity with a focus on two subgroups: white and black Racial Identity Development. The final section explains social awareness and its relation to emotional intelligence. After which, a summary of chapter two is provided.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, between fall 2009 and fall 2020, the number of Hispanic students enrolled in public education increased from 22 to 28%, white student enrollment decreased from 54 to 46%, and black student enrollment decreased from 17 to 15% (NCES, 2022). As of fall 2020, the total number of students enrolled in public schools was 49.4 million (NCES, 2022). Continuing this data by looking at the state of Kentucky, the total number of students enrolled in public education for the 2020-2021 school year was 638,236, with 68,784 African American students and 475,453 white students (KDE, 2022). This data shows the disproportionate enrollment of students based on the racial/ethnic identity of students enrolled in public education. How students of color engage with their schools and understand their racial composition can provide insight into their overall feeling connected to their school (Chapman, 2014). The purpose of this study is to examine the influence power can have on racial identity and social awareness of minority high school students attending school in Bullitt County, Kentucky.

The literature review in Chapter II examines the influence of social power and its relation to education, racial identity development for black and white students, and social awareness and its importance in empathizing with others. The first section examines the meaning of social power in terms of how outcome control has the potential to influence others; (Pereira et al., 2016). while also recognizing how influence can be used to control the outcome of others (Pereira et al., 2016). The second section examines the impact

social power can have on education. The third section discusses Critical Race Theory (CRT), Social Power Theory and Symbolic Interactionism as the theoretical lens for this study. The fourth section explains racial identity development among black and white students. The fifth section discusses the meaning of social awareness. An additional section describes the methodology of the literature review. The sixth and final section summarizes all information collected in the literature review.

### **Social Power**

Looking at social power in terms of its place in social science, Pereira et al. (2016) provide a model for the levels of social power. The first level is *Outcome Control*, defined as social power being by its foundational relationship to social relations (Pereira et al., 2016). In other words, a person can control the outcome of others' behavior (i.e., choice of clothes, choice of shoes based on what other friends do to gain peer acceptance). The second level is *Potential for Influence*, where "social power is conceptualized as the capacity to induce forces that cause influence" (Pereira et al., 2016, pg.6). Meaning the potential to influence allows a person to use their resources to influence others in the hope to obtain power (i.e., a teacher using resources such as sending a student to the principal's office when their behavior does not comply with the rules set in the classroom). In this example, the resource used is based on the type of power the teacher chose to use: coercive power. The last level is *Influence*, defined as the meaning of social power based on the level of impact (Pereira et al. 2016). In other words, influence is based on the amount of impact a person could have on an individual or group (i.e., failure to dress like friends can result in them not talking to you or kicking you out of the friend group). In this section, three prominent theorists for each level

identified are examined. Emerson's (1962) work is used to explain outcome control. French and Raven's (1959) work will demonstrate the potential for influence, and Dahl's (1957) work will explain the impact of influence.

Emerson (1962) focuses on the *power-dependence relation* in terms of social power in his work. Emerson (1962) refers to this relationship as a mutual dependency in which "A depends upon B if he aspires to goals or gratification whose achievement is facilitated by appropriate actions on B's part" (p.32). The dependence in power dependence relation is based on "A's motivational investment in goals mediated by B and (2) inversely proportional to the availability of those goals to A outside of the A-B relation." While power is defined as A being able to overtake B based on the resistance B gives. In other words, the power-dependence relations theory means when a person is dependent on another person to obtain resources, it causes the person with the resources to gain power. For example, if a student has a basketball game but is told by the principal, they are ineligible to play in an upcoming game due to failing a class. The student explains to the principal that all their work has been completed and turned in. However, the teacher has not graded any assignments, nor has the teacher updated students' grades. They are causing the teacher to have power because they have control over students' grades. The basketball player depends on the teacher to correct their grade to play in the next game. In turn, this creates a power-dependence relationship giving the teacher power and making the student basketball player dependent on the teacher.

French and Raven (1959) defined power as an influence, the ability to invoke "psychological change" (p.151); through this definition, French and Raven identified five types of power: "Reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and

expert power" (p.151). Raven (2008) later added the Power/Interaction Model of Interpersonal Influence. Raven describes it as:

"Beginning with a consideration of the motivation for influence and the use of power, then to the factors which lead to choosing of power strategy preparatory devices for implementing the bases of power, how a power strategy is utilized, the effective changes or lack of change in the target of influence, the after-effects, and the readjustment of the perceptions and choices of future strategies by the agent (pp.4-5)."

A person using social power (French & Raven, 1959) to influence others could take the time to think about what they do based on the power another person has. An example could be a school using reward power to influence students' behaviors. The school offers an incentive for all students to participate in a silent dance party. Students can't have a D or F on report cards, no absences, and no corrective action forms. Students will determine the outcome by following the criteria to go to the all-school reward and giving the school the power to reward, causing students to think about their choices.

Dahl's (1957) work shows how influence can be used to create social power. Dahl (1957) uses the words influence and control interchangeably. He posits that A can have the power of B by getting B to do something they would not ordinarily do. Dahl uses Senators' work as a major example in many of his works. It is important to show how Dahl defines the word actors as "individuals, groups, roles, offices, government, nation-states, or other human aggregates." (pg.203). Dahl makes it clear that power is comparable, with five ways to determine: "(1) differences in the basis of their power; (2) differences in means of employing the basis; (3) differences in the scope of their power; (4) differences in the number of comparable respondents, and (5) differences in the change in probabilities" (p.206). Dahl's (1957) work on influence can show how power

can create social power. The connection between power and social power shows that influencing others can give an individual a sense of control over someone else. This feeling of power and influence can make individuals think about their choices and the outcomes depending on those choices.

Emerson (1962) shows the importance of outcome control and how it is used in social power. At the same time, French and Raven (1959) show the importance of the potential of influence in social power. Dahl (1957) shows us how influence can be used to create social power. All three authors have made a significant contribution to the understanding and application of social power. The research on social power shows how the ability to control others by influencing their decision-making process and the encounters minority high school students have could shape their understanding of racial identity.

**Social Dominance.** Social dominance can be used to control the actions and behaviors of others. It is through this control of fear that power can be established. Coercive power is when a person in power can control or alter an individual's motivation with lesser power by invoking fear of the consequences. According to French and Raven (1959), coercive power is getting others to comply by invoking fear. Coercive power is meant to instill fear in a person by them being afraid of being punished by the person in control (Raven, 2008). Elias and Mace (2005) found that coercive power can hurt students' outcomes in a school environment. Teachers exhibit power (coercive power) over their students. Assadi et al. (2016) posit that most students already expect to be punished by their teachers when they do not comply. For minority students in predominantly white schools, this form of



power can be seen to instill fear by having a lack of same-race peers to establish dominance over another group.

Vermande et al. (2018) define social dominance as people who are "effective at acquiring resources or 'getting what they want' (p.1814). Jonkmann et al. (2009) examined socially dominant students using the criteria of students who can persuade the thoughts of others, can be seen as student leaders, and are normally the focus of their class and peers. Participants in the study attended randomly selected schools in Berlin, Germany. Standardized assessments and questionnaires were given to students. The number of participants was 5,468 seventh graders spanning 266 classrooms. Results were based on three different hypotheses. Hypothesis one examined the "positive adjustment in terms of academic achievement, social acceptance, and positive self-perception, as well as indicators of maladjustment to positively prejudice adolescent's social dominance" (p.341). Jonkmann et al. (2009) showed social dominance is significant to peer acceptance and the impact on general intelligence, academic performance (i.e., grades), self-image, and deviant behaviors. Hypothesis two expected the power and objectivity of the indicators in hypothesis one to change based on classrooms; results confirmed this hypothesis. Hypothesis three focused on classroom change based on student's academic capabilities and their relation to social dominance. No modification or variability was shown based on the results of this study.

Cross and Fletcher (2011) examined the social influences among adolescents and social crowds. Participants in this study were high school students in grades 9-12 totaling 516 students from a Midwest high school. The student population was 96% white, 1% multiracial, 1% black, 1% Hispanic, and 1% Asian" (p. 697). Cross and Fletcher (2011)

focused on two hypotheses. Hypothesis one focused on how parents respond to their children and how that response could show an opposite impact on social dominance orientation.

In contrast, urgency from parents would impact the child's social dominance orientation. Cross and Fletcher (2011) found that the relationship between parent response and social dominance orientation was negative. Hypothesis two reviewed group association among adolescents and the ranking level among group associations with its impact on social dominance orientation. Cross and Fletcher (2011) found that students selected multiple names for crowd affiliation. This number had to be reduced and categorized based on the most popular names. There was a significant difference in social dominance orientation among males and females. Students identified and associated with more than one crowd. Males had higher social dominance than females but also showed significant changes in the crowd and social dominance orientation based on the crowd. Affiliating with different crowds and establishing that affiliation on the name associated with the crowd could help minority students understand their racial identity based on their choices of crowd affiliation.

Vermande et al. (2018) examined "whether three behavioral strategies (coercive, prosocial, and inspirational) and two social skills (social competence and manipulation) predicted dominance (resource control and popularity)" (p.1813). Participants were 752 young adolescents in the first grade of secondary school. This grade level is equivalent to sixth graders. Data came from 27 classes in the Netherlands. Vermande et al. (2018) define coercive strategies as aggressive behaviors (i.e., threatening or bullying behavior). Prosocial strategies are the ability to use resource control positively (i.e., negotiation of

items). Inspirational strategies are adolescents using their power to motivate others as a means to access resources. Vermande et al. (2018) results showed boys can use coercive behaviors and manipulation more, while girls use inspirational behaviors and resource control. All coercive, prosocial inspirational, resource control, popularity, and social competence variables related to and impacted each other.

All three findings support outcome control as it relates to the work of Emerson's (1962) power-dependence relation. These findings suggest adolescents can use social dominance to gain resource control. Connecting social dominance to power-dependence relations could show the importance of A maintaining its relationship with B. This research also ties into the analysis of French and Raven (1959) on social power as it relates to coercive power. This research can help us understand how outcome control can impact the potential to influence based on French and Raven's (1959) social power theory.

### **Deontic Reasoning, Social Cognition, and Social Norm**

Deontic reasoning is the ability to determine if specific actions are allowed or are not allowed to do (Beller, 2010). An example would be if a school is hosting a dance, and students must have a ticket and a school ID to enter. The teacher tells the student collecting tickets at the door all students must show their tickets and school ID to enter the dance. A student enters the dance with only a school ID and no ticket. The student collecting tickets at the door would use their deontic reasoning to determine if the student would be allowed to enter the dance. Social cognition is the ability to process, remember, and use information in social contexts to explain and predict the behavior of others and of oneself (Bulgarelli & Molina, 2016)

French and Raven (1959) explain that legitimate power "is probably the most complex of those treated, embodying notions from the structural sociologist, the group-norm and role-oriented social psychologist and the clinical psychologist" (p.153). Legitimate power is based on the role you are given within an organization. Legitimate power is based on the employees'/student's duty to accept the teachers'/employers' power play if the employee/student believes the person in the position of power has power (Raven, 2008). In the classroom, legitimate power is based on if a student feels the teacher has the right to make the request based on the teacher's position (Assadi et al., 2016). This type of Legitimate power only comes for as long as you are in that role.

Blanchette and Richards (2010) examined "whether affect influences higher level cognition processes" (p.561). This study analyzed "the effect of emotion in interpretation, judgment, decision making, and reasoning" (p. 561). Blanchette and Richards (2010) define interpretation as how a person can make meaning of multiple sources of information—simultaneously using that information to pull one meaning and structuring a mental image based on that one meaning of understanding. Judgment takes information to understand the validity and reliability of data based on multiple possible outcomes. Decision-making looks at how people use interpretation and judgment to determine options based on risk factors. The reasoning is to present information to make conclusions. Based on the research provided by Blanchette and Richards (2010), they concluded "affective variables have an important influence on cognitive processes" (p. 584).

Silke et al. (2017) examined "whether empathy (cognitive and affective) and peer norms (descriptive and injunctive) influence adolescents' implicit and explicit

stigmatizing responses toward peers with mental health problems" (p.118). Participants in this study consisted of 570 adolescents ranging from ages 13 to 18. Students were given two vignettes while also answering questions to determine stereotypical responses and any showing of understanding and individual perspective influenced by prejudice. This information gathered individual explicit stigma responses. While some students completed a questionnaire gauging their implicit reactions. Silke et al. (2017) found adolescents had more prejudiced responses toward peers with depression. The developing peer was seen as needing to be held accountable for their choices. Based on their perception of peers and social norms, adolescents responded more positively toward the vignettes if they believed their peers did the same. However, if adolescents felt their peers would not punish them for becoming friends with a person with mental health problems, they were less judgmental of that student.

These findings support the potential to influence based on French & Raven's (1959) bases of social power. The research suggests that deontic reasoning, social cognition, and social norms can impact one's "ability to invoke psychological change" (French & Raven, 1959, p.151). This research also ties into legitimate power, where a person can be influenced by social norms based on their social cognition and deontic reasoning abilities. This research ties into social power's impact on the meaning and understanding of racial identity.

**Social Influence.** Reward power involves a person in power who can exercise that power by rewarding others (French & Raven, 1959). Carson et al. (1993) define reward power as an employee's thoughts on the power a leader can have to reward their employees. Raven & Erchul (1997) explain reward power as "B" perception of A's ability and

readiness to reward B somehow if B complies" (p.138). Teachers ultimately have power in their classrooms through positive and negative reinforcements. A student's reward power from a teacher is solely based on how often a teacher rewards their students (Assadi et al., 2016).

An example of this would be the ability a teacher has to determine rewards or consequences for a student's behavior or failure to turn in assignments in class. This source of reward power can motivate students to perform better or behave better in a class, ultimately allowing the teacher to control a student's behavior. While reward power is based on the immediate gratification given to others, coercive power differs. Coercive power uses fear tactics to gain control instead of instant gratification (reward power) to gain control.

French and Raven (1959) explain the power of expert power is based on the "extent of the knowledge or perception which P attributes to O within a given area" (p.155). Raven (2008) agreed with this meaning by adding that expert power is based on an individual's competence in their given field. Expert power is being able to do something others can't do, causing them to rely solely on you and your abilities. Students will most likely view their teachers as the expert in their specific content area unless the student has reason to doubt the teacher's ability (Assadi et al., 2016). Students and parents see teachers as experts because they know the most about their subject field. For example, students are less likely to question a teacher's knowledge, or parents would be less likely to disagree with a teacher's comments on a student's grade or assignment if they see them as the expert on the subject matter.

Ciranka & Van den Bos (2019) takes *social motivation, reward sensitivity, and distraction* to turn those into formal modes to "identify developmental processes" (p.1). Previous research was used and quantified under each category for the data to be converted to formal modes. To ensure the quality of the formal modes, simulated models were created to determine the at-risk behaviors of adolescents. Ciranka & Van den Bos (2018) found that adolescents tend to air on the side of safe-promoting behaviors when peers influence risky behaviors.

Telzer et al. (2018) examined the impact of peer social norms and parental influence on adolescents' social influence development. This research uses social influence theory and social identity theory as the foundation. Based on research analysis, Telzer et al. (2018) found that peers and parents can positively impact adolescent social influences. MRI testing also confirmed evidence of this in the brain activity of adolescents. Telzer et al. (2018) also found that students who participated in extracurricular activities and developed positive relationships with other adults and peers also impacted their social influence.

Shimotomai (2020) examined the impact of adolescent connection to parents, which the examination of power parents can influence hold and the bases of social power exhibited by the mother and father. Participants consisted of 44 middle school students, 88 high school students, and 61 college students in Tokyo. Shimotomai (2020) found parents' legitimate and referent power had a more significant impact on middle school students. However, this impact declined as students moved to high school and college. Expert power had the most significant impact on all students compared to other power bases. Females view their mothers as more secure and stable relationships compared to

relationships with their fathers. Shimotomai's (2020) findings show as adolescents transition to high school and college, the perception of parents is based more on resource outcomes collectively versus parents' authority. As a result, when parents use different bases of social power, it impacts adolescents more than using the same bases of social power to parent collaboratively.

These findings show how Dahl's (1962) models of social power can influence. Evidence of this is demonstrated through research provided by Ciranka & Van den Bos (2019) assessment of youth social influence on decision-making. Telzer et al. (2018) development of social influence on youth. Shimotomai (2020) parental influence on social power. All the authors provide evidence of the impact of social power and its ability to influence others.

### **Social Power in Education**

Briner and Iannaccone (1966) examine the structure of a school building along with the role of the principal and assistant principals' social power. The setup of an office shows the social power of the principal and his role in the building. In most cases, the principal's interactions are mainly with the administration team (assistant principal, counselor, and instructional coach). It is the job of the supervisor to interact more with teachers and communicate the needs and wants of the principal. Even with the daily flow of the front office, the principal is usually the person in charge and delegates tasks accordingly.

While the principal and assistant principal have established their social power in the school and community, teachers exercise their power in a smaller setting of a classroom. Teachers sometimes never see how their roles can display reward (the ability



to reward or punish students), coercive (the ability to create fear in students to gain control), legitimate (based on their title as the "teacher"), referent (the popular or the most liked teacher), or expert (the teacher is the most knowledgeable in their subject field) power (French & Raven, 1959). Moscovici (2007) speaks on his experience as a science professor and his not realizing how much social power he held in the classroom. It was not until his students spoke against his abuse of power that he realized how much social power he had (French & Raven, 1959). After completing a study analysis with his upper-class students, Moscovici (2007) had students observe his teachings for an extended period, focusing on power. All students accounted for ways he could improve in each of his classes. Moscovici (2007) missed opportunities to build relationships or his relaxed approach to addressing tough questions. After this, he restructured his class with the mindset of intentionally using social power in his classes.

Once teachers understand their social power, they can begin to see how power structures (Domhoff, 2005) among students can interfere with the learning environment. For teens, their social interactions and experiences can have a significant influence. Martín Babarro et al. (2017) show how power structures within social groups can create "classroom cohesion and hierarchy in peer acceptance and rejection of victimization and aggressive students" (p.1203). Martín Babarro et al. (2017) findings showed if both boys and girls are not in a high-ranking status among peers, they are more prone to bullying or being outcast by other students. Students with a high-ranking status had more approval from classmates.

There is a power structure in schools that is felt and observed the moment you enter the building. Legitimate power resides with employees and is depicted in

organizational charts and hierarchical structures. The power dynamics influence the social system's operations, even the social exchanges between students and staff. Examining social power and power structures could ultimately impact racial identity development, making exploring social power and its influence on racial identity important to this research.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory and its root began between the 1960s and 70s, known as critical legal studies. Critical Legal Studies started with the work of Derrick Bell and his principle of interest-convergence. They focused on "how the law and legal institutions served the interest of the powerful and wealthy at the expense of poor and marginalized people" (p. 1). Bell describes interest-convergence in his writing on *Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence of Dilemma (1980)* as: "the interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites" (p. 523). After Bell's writing on interest convergence and including additional authors' contributions, CRT received its final origins in 1989.

Bell (2004) later wrote in his updated writing on *Brown v. Board of Education: Reliving and Learning from our Racial history* that the ideal of racial freedom for blacks is not truly something to obtain. Bell gives three insights as to why this is not achievable:

"First, the interest of blacks in achieving racial equality is accommodated only when that interest converges with the interests of whites in policy-making positions. Second, even when interest convergence results in a potentially effective racial remedy, that remedy is repealed at the point that policymakers fear the remedial policy is threatening the superior societal status of whites, particularly those in the middle and upper classes. Third, the rights of blacks are always vulnerable, subject to be sacrificed, or used as catalysts enabling whites to settle serious policy differences" (p. 22).

Bell (2004) then proceeds to show the comparison between the Emancipation Proclamation and the Brown v. Board of Education case. Both were meant to give blacks freedom; however, the actual reason behind each decision was mainly to benefit white policymakers. He called this process "racial fortuity" (p. 26). In other words, while two groups are making an agreement, the true intention is to make the agreement on the behalf of a "third party" (p. 26). However, the third party does not receive the immediate or direct benefit of the original agreement. Bell's (1980 & 2004) work and his many writing contributions, beginning with interest-convergence, started the work for Critical Race Theory.

Critical race theory is further expanded and defined by Delgado & Stefancic (2017) as "a movement of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (p. 1). Six central tenets are associated with CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Dixson & Anderson, 2014; Hiraldo et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The first tenet is ordinariness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), which shows race cannot be addressed because it is not acknowledged. The second tenet is interest convergence (Dixson & Anderson, 2014). Dixson & Anderson explain interest convergence in two parts:

"First, the interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when that interest converges with the interests of whites in policy-making positions." The second point related to applying interest convergence as an analytical tool is the importance of situating interest convergence as a piece in a dynamic system" (Dixson & Anderson, 2014, pg.69).

The third tenet is social construction; Delgado & Stefancic (2017) posits that "race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society

invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient" (p.8). The fourth tenet is storytelling and counter-storytelling (Hiraldo et al., 2018); this tenet describes storytelling as stories presented as facts from the dominant culture. In contrast, counter-storytelling gives the power of stories to be heard by people of color (Hiraldo, 2018). The fifth tenet is whiteness as property (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) explained that whiteness as property is a crossing between race and the right to make decisions based on the race of a majority group (white people or people in high power). The sixth and final tenet is intersectionality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) which is defined as "the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation and how their combination plays out in various settings" (p.58).

For this research, intersectionality is highlighted. Intersectionality is a term developed by Kimberle' Crenshaw. This interest in intersectionality came from CRT scholars who wanted to understand how racial inequities are shaped by the experiences of others and how they are interpreted and influenced by a person's identity and social constructs. Crenshaw (n.d.) defines intersectionality as "a concept that enables us to recognize the fact that perceived group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias, yet because we are simultaneously members of many groups, our complex identities can shape the specific way we each experience that bias" (p.3). Similarly, Gillborn (2015) posits intersectionality as multiple encounters of inequality and identity as they relate to one another over an extended period. While Delgado & Stefancic (2017) defines intersectionality as "the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation and how their combination plays out in various settings" (p.58)

Intersectionality for this research focuses on how racial identity, social power, and social awareness intersect with the lived educational experiences of black high school students. At some point, all these constructs may intersect in the lives of black high school students, which could shape their understanding of who they are and how others perceive them. Crenshaw (2015) tells us that by using an intersectional prism, the goals to address should be "(1) analyze social problems more fully; 2) shape more effective interventions; and 3) promote more inclusive coalitional advocacy" (p.3). Through the lens of intersectionality, it allows this research to take a closer look at promoting more inclusive programming in the educational setting for students of color.

### **Racial Identity Development**

Racial identity development focuses on the biological characteristics of individuals (Akos & Ellis, 2008). While ethnic identity is "a complex construct including a commitment and sense of belonging to one's ethnic group, positive evaluation of the group, interest in and knowledge of the group, and involvement in activities and traditions of the group" (Phinney, 1996, p. 145). In this section the construct of race (Carter & Johnson, 2018) is examined. The People of Color Racial Identity Model (Cross, 1979) and Helms (1997) White Racial Identity Development is examined as well.

### **Race**

When examining the meaning of race, a variety of definitions could appear. In this study, we look at the definition of race from Carter & Johnson (2018), who defines race as an individual's skin color, physical features, and language. Butler (2010) adds that the meaning of race can be based on "social construction that refers to characteristics possessed by individuals and groups" (p.1). Both meanings use the same concepts to

define race; however, Butler (2010) incorporates the term social construction. This could imply that the idea of race from a social construction view is a term created and accepted by society versus being made by the racial group within itself. Helms and American Psychological Association (2007) posit that an individual's membership in their racial group is based on their experiences and how those experiences are internalized. Thus, the construct of race is based on the characteristics, feelings, and interpretation of an individual's racial group and their membership.

Even while examining the meaning of race, it is essential to understand how ethnicity differs from race. As stated above, race is defined by an individual's skin color, physical features, and language (Carter & Johnson, 2018). Ethnicity, on the other hand, "refers to the cultural practices (e.g., customs, language, values) of a group of people" (Helms, 1997, p. 236). The meanings of race and ethnicity intersect with one another. While Butler (2010) defines ethnicity as "the idea that one is a member of a particular cultural, national, or racial group that may share some of the following elements: culture, religion, race, language, or place of origin" (para. 3) Ford and Harawa (2010) notes that different societal factors will affect groups based on their race and ethnicity. Understanding the intersectionality and the differences between race and ethnicity could provide a foundation for understanding racial identity development.

### **Black Racial Identity Model: Cross's Nigrescence Model**

Based on the original works for Cross's Nigrescence Model, the People of Color Racial Identity Model is used to explain the stages one can go through to develop their racial identity. Cross's (1979) "*Negro to Black*" experience examined the experience that blacks encountered to give black people a real sense of self and a certain level of freedom

to be seen in a positive light. The first stage was the *Pre-Encounter stage*; during this stage, blacks would see the world from the white person's perspective. This, in turn, allowed black people to not like or accept anything "black-related," nor did they trust anything owned or created by black people. The second stage is the *Encounter stage* when a black person begins to change their heart based on something they see personally or through something that has happened to them that was deemed negative. At this point, the black person's perception of being black is seen with a greater appreciation of their race. The third stage is *Immersion/Emersion*; everything revolves around being black. Cross (1979) posits that black people desire to learn more about their cultural and historical roots. While also developing a dislike or disdain for white people or anything associated with being white. The fourth stage is *Internalization*, which is noted as the most challenging stage of transition. During this stage, if a black person's experience with white people is negative, they can remain in this stage and become focused on their dislike for white people. However, if their experiences are positive, they will reflect on that experience and begin to develop a positive sense of self. Allowing them to become more comfortable with who they are and how they are seen as black. The final stage is *Internalization-Commitment*; at this point, the black person is trying to increase change and awareness in their neighborhood. If a black person goes through all five stages, they will stay committed to change and growth for the long term.

Cross's model has gone through a revision, which is the Nigrescence Model (NT-R) (Worrell et al., 2001); within this model, Cross removed the final stage and included various ways of getting to each stage. In the first model, Cross said a black person had to go through each stage in order before moving to the next stage. He later changed that

with his revised model, noting that people might transition to each stage based on their experience and move around in any order (Worrell et al., 2001).

The final model created by Cross (Worrell et al., 2001) expanded the revised model by including additional themes in three of the original stages. Those included:

*"Pre-encounter* themes reflect either low race salience (assimilation) or negative race salience (miseducation or self-hatred), with miseducation attitudes reflecting the degree to which African Americans accept the negative societal stereotypes about themselves. The immersion-emersion theme includes "anti-white and intense black involvement attitudes and the internalization theme subsumes Afrocentricity and biculturalist, multiculturalist racial (i.e., multiculturalism limited to other marginalized oppressed groups), and multiculturalist inclusive attitudes" (p.158).

Through the multiple stages, a person of color will begin to gain a sense of self. It is important to note that an individual does not have to go from stage to stage in a direct pattern; instead, they can move among the stages simultaneously (Cross, 1994; Cross Jr, 1979).

### **White Racial Identity Development**

Janet Helms (1997) offers insight into the development of the white racial identity; in her model, she explains that an individual can experience six stages when identifying with one's whiteness. These stages include *Contact*, *Disintegration*, *Reintegration*, *Pseudo-Independent*, *Immersion-Emersion*, and *Autonomy*. Just as (Cross, 1994; Cross Jr, 1979) explained in his model, a person can move through any stage at any given time.

In the *Contact* stage, there is no acknowledgment of race or racism. A white person does not see their color as being in a position of power. If they do encounter an experience of having to confront race or racism, then that individual may move to the



Disintegration stage. The *Disintegration* stage is when an individual begins to recognize the impact of their race. They become more aware of the power constructs associated with their race. An individual may also experience a sense of shame and 'guilt.' After this, an individual begins to believe that white people have power, and if they have it, it is because that is what they deserve. This is the *Reintegration* stage. The *Pseudo-Independent* stage is when an individual now understands their race and the opportunities given. A white person will begin to sympathize with people of color and look for ways to rectify racism. However, white people struggle with who they are while being 'anti-racist.' The *Immersion-Emersion* stage is when a white person tries to better understand their identity and how to be against racism. They begin to connect with other white people who share the same experiences. The final stage is *Autonomy* when a white person now accepts and understands who they are while continuing to end social injustice.

Some empirical studies worth noting are one of Rowe's (2006), beginning with reexamining racial identity development. Rowe notes that White Racial Identity may look different because "it is not easy to imagine that race plays such a noticeable role in the lives of many white people that they recognize race as a significant part of their identity" (p. 235). This finding is supported by other researchers, such as Moffitt et al. (2021) and Sullivan and Ghara (2014). Rowe (2006) continues his findings by pointing out that Janet Helms's research was written in a book versus in a journal which left no room for her work to be "peer-reviewed" (p.237). Finally, you see Rowe (2006) grapple with faith over science. His main point was that empirical data does not support many of Helms's findings. Instead, he feels most of her conclusions are from her faith or beliefs.

Putting the empirical data into a practical setting to test the validity of Helm's white Racial Identity Development (WRID) is what Siegel and Carter (2014) achieved. It was in their research using WRID to examine the emotions white individuals exhibit during each stage. While also showing how these emotions can guide an individual's white identity development. Basing their study on Watson & Clark (1997, as cited by Siegel & Carter, 2014) using the "*Positive and Negative Affect Schedule-Expanded Form (PANAS-X)*." Also, creating a "control condition for no race condition and pretest/posttest subscales for race condition" (p.227), their findings overall showed that when white individuals fully reached the Autonomy stage, they showed more emotions out of all the stages. White racial identity development (Helms, 1997) is a framework to understand better how white individuals gain a better sense of self. It also helps to identify areas that may be unnoticed by a white individual of possible racist views and interpretations of their views.

Examining Cross's (1979) black racial identity model and Helms's (1997) white racial identity development, these frameworks may better understand the processes a person can transition through. This examination of racial identity among People of Color and white individuals could impact the development of racial identity and shows the importance of further research related to this study.

### **Racial Identity Development and Educators**

As we continue to examine racial identity, educators need to understand the experiences of People of Color and White youth. This section provides evidence-based research on building relationships with students of different racial and ethnic

backgrounds, the impact of the classroom environment on racial and ethnic identity, and how black and white students might make meaning of the world around them.

Harper (2007) proposes that teachers reevaluate their influence on black students in and out of the classroom. Taking into consideration things such as the layout of the classroom and seating arrangements. While most teachers cannot control the curriculum or standards covered in the classroom, they can control their curriculum presentation. For example, if a teacher is covering a lesson on slavery and makes a facial expression that is deemed by a black student offensive, it will make the student hostile towards that teacher. As a teacher, being mindful of their tone, word choice, or facial expressions can create a positive or hostile environment. Harper (2007) also emphasizes anything that portrays blacks negatively in the curriculum; the teacher can turn it into something positive by portraying the positive impacts blacks made in history. Davis (2020) suggests making black students more aware of academic programs that are available and attainable will get more black students invested in their academics. STEM programming and highlighting other successful black people will entice more black students. While also eliminating any negative stereotypical beliefs.

In their work, Utt and Tochluk (2016) provide white educators with a monthly 3-hour training that is "focused on investigating privilege, intersecting identities, anti-racist white history, and what it might look like to be a part of an anti-racist white culture while sharing personal struggles regarding efforts to live out an anti-racist practice" (pp.131-132). They developed a 6-stage strategy to help educators address the issue of racial identity within themselves and how to make them become better teachers as a result. These strategies are broken into two Phases, with the first one including "Understanding

oneself: *Analyzing privilege and microaggressive behavior, exploring ethnic and cultural identities, engaging with the history of white anti-racists and multiracial struggles for justice, developing intersectionality identity* and Phase two: *Building white anti-racist community and demonstrating accountability across race*" (Utt & Tochluk, 2016, pp. 130-131).

For many Latino families deciding to immigrate to the United States is not a decision that was made overnight. Noguera (2006) pointed out that educators need to recognize the trauma for Latino families when deciding to leave their country of origin and migrate to the U. S. Latino families often leave in the middle of the school year to visit their countries and family members. In some cases, this impacts the attendance of Latino students drastically as they miss many academic days. Noguera (2006) notes that schools should work to support and build relationships with Latino families instead of punishing them for their decisions. Noguera (2006) found for some Latino groups, when entering the US or depending on the time their children have been in the US, most youth will stop speaking their native language to be accepted for better opportunities. Most Latino students are seen by their teachers as well-mannered but academically low. It is important to note that while Noguera's (2006) article was highly insightful, it did lack recommendations for educators and school districts to remedy many of these impacts.

Cammarota and Romero (2006) provide insight into how educators can bridge the gap between Latino students. Their proposal was through the curriculum created to help students speak on the injustices in their school and the education system. This curriculum was based on the work of Paulo Freire (1993) and called *Critical Compassionate Intellectualism*. Cammarota and Romero's (2006) curriculum not only gave students a

way to share their voices but also helped educators build relationships with students by being vulnerable to share their experiences and concerns using poems.

### **Racial Identity Development and Youth**

Neblett et al. (2009) examine how racial identity helped black students understand and create meaning for themselves and their culture. Based on the results of Neblett et al. (2009), parents influenced how black youth developed their racial identity and how they created the meaning of race. This meaning was created by interpreting messages received from parents, for example, with all the media discussion on the social injustices of blacks and the police. If parents converse with their children, this could impact how black youth understand themselves as individuals and how other blacks are seen in the world around them (Neblett, 2009).

Murray et al. (2012) showed how the pressure of "acting white" (Mims & Williams, 2020) can create a level of anxiety in black youth. These direct and indirect messages can come from black peers accusing another black student of talking too properly or dressing too preppy (Murray et al., 2012). Recognizing that socialization (Neblett et al., 2009) and explicit and inexplicit communication (Mims & Williams, 2020) from peers can increase or decrease anxiety among black youth. Murray et al. (2012) posit that adolescents who reported feeling angry or frustrated from being accused of acting white by their black peers began to have increased anxiety. This evidence can show the importance of recognizing that as black students get older, their social groups can influence their racial identity.

Of the many studies and research developed based on white Racial Identity Development (Helms, 1997), the most common theme found was the lack of

acknowledgment of race from white people. White young people do not see their race as an issue (Moffitt et al., 2021; Rowe, 2006; Sullivan & Ghara, 2014). In a study by Siegel and Carter (2014), many white students identified that race is not a daily concern or concept that students must worry about. Helms's (1997) model relates to the Contact stage in which the acknowledgment of race and racism are not seen.

Moffitt et al. (2021) show the importance for white youth to better understand their racial identity and the value it holds today. This understanding can help white students bridge the gap between race and racism (Moffitt et al., 2021). It is through this understanding that White youth can begin to understand the social power (French & Raven, 1959) and power structures (Domhoff, 2005) that "is afforded to their racial group and the harm white privilege can cause" (Moffitt et al., 2021, p. 2).

Not only is it essential for white youth to explore the depths and meaning of whiteness, but it is also essential to focus on emotions (Siegel & Carter, 2014) that are experienced by each individual as they move through the stages of the white racial identity (Helm, 1984, 1990, and 1995). Sullivan and Ghara (2014) found in their study that for white respondents, more specifically white female students, their feelings toward other racial groups were higher than white males. White students' "feelings toward blacks and Asians increased as the white student population increased" (p.266). However, there was no explanation for why white students' "feelings" increased as the population of white students increased.

Carter et al. (2018) explain that while understanding the cultural difference among Latino youth, it is crucial to understand the impact of Latino racial identity development on our youth and how that identity development impacts them in the educational

environment. Carter et al. (2008) provided an example of the importance of cultural values that Latinos share and how it affects their racial identity development. Their research examined if Latino racial identity impacts their cultural value preferences and, if so, looked at racial identity development and how that affects their cultural value preference. Carter et al. (2008) showed that based on skin color, some Latinos believed in conforming to the values and norms of the dominant culture. Connecting Carter et al. (2008) findings to Ferdman and Gallegos's (2001) orientation on Undifferentiated, where Latino individuals accept the values and rules based on the majority group of society. It was also found that those unsure about their racial identity followed the values of their ethnic group. Overall, all students that participated in the study believed that all races should be accepted.

Martinez-Fuentes et al. (2021) focused on the impact of family on ethnic/racial identity and academic success among the youth. More specifically, the relationship between Latino youth, their shared values with family, and how prejudices from classmates and educators impact their overall academic success. Their findings showed the more a family engrains their values, the higher the self-confidence of one's racial identity, which affects their academic success positively. Their relationship between prejudices among educators and Latino youth was negative. However, there was no evidence that classmate prejudices impacted overall academic success.

Rivas-Drake et al. (2017) explored the impact of peer relationships on ethnic/racial identity among youth, focusing on the exploration and resolution of youth. Defining exploration as "expands knowledge of one's group" (p.711) and resolution as "provides for a sense of clarity regarding one's group membership" (p.711). Their

research examined how an individual related to their understanding of their ethnic/racial identity and how they determined their desire to seek friendships with students of different races and ethnicities. The research also looked beyond race and ethnicity at how youth chose friendship groups with compatible people, such as being of the same subgroup and sharing the same values and norms. The results of the research found a difference in how friend groups were chosen by gender; girls tended to have a more diverse friend group than boys. For boys, their friendship groups became more diverse when they went through the resolution stage. Looking beyond race and ethnicity, Rivas-Drake et al. (2014) found compatibility happened as friends began to spend more time together; they began to have a shared meaning of similar values.

Racial Identity Development focuses on the biological characteristics of an individual (Akos & Ellis, 2008). In contrast, the meaning of race examines the physical features of individuals (Carter & Johnson, 2018). These definitions are exhibited by research evidence using Cross's (1979) black racial identity model and Helms's (1997) white racial identity development model. Based on the research above, the evidence collected shows the meaning and impact of racial identity on this topic of study.

### **Social Awareness**

Social awareness is a component of social and emotional learning. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2012) defines social awareness as "the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources" (p.9). Being socially aware of the emotions and attitudes of others not only makes you more in tune with yourself, but it can



also show others that you understand and respect their feelings. While also recognizing the diverse background of those around you (Ross & Tolan, 2018). An individual also understands the power structures (Domhoff, 2005) as their influence on how they feel and act based on the power structure in the social setting.

While the research on social awareness is minimal because it is tied to a larger component of social and emotional learning, it will help youth and adults understand the impact of social awareness on racial identity development and its connection to social power and power structures.

### **Social Awareness and Education**

Transforming Education (2020) explains the importance of social awareness in education. Through social awareness, a more positive classroom environment is created. A positive classroom environment allows students to adjust quickly to their educational environment and have a better understanding of the opinions of others while also being able to better understand and respect the opinions of others. Also, decreasing classroom behaviors; social awareness allows individuals to understand their emotional needs and better communicate with others, reducing misbehavior. Social awareness also helps students build positive relationships with their teachers and peers by increasing their communication and problem-solving skills. Behaviors also decrease because socially aware students know how to ask for help with difficult situations. With all the necessary skills in and out of the academic environment, social awareness also helps students prepare for the workforce.

## **Symbolic Interactionism**

Herbert Blumer (1969) focused on the work of George Herbert Mead and created the term symbolic interactionism. Blumer (1969) defined symbolic interactionism as how a person makes meaning of one encounter to the next from an individual perspective. The study of symbolic interactionism, Blumer felt, could only be examined by studying the interaction of individuals in the rawest form by examining human interactions. In other words, to grasp the connection between individual human interaction, data should be collected from individuals' lived experiences.

Manford Kuhn (1964) is known from the Iowa School of Symbolic Interactionism (Carter and Fuller (2015)). His work was inspired by Herbert Blumer but differed because Kuhn felt the study of symbolic interaction could be examined scientifically rather than qualitatively. Kuhn (1964) focused on studying small group interactions versus individual-to-individual encounters, and he also felt the research could be done in the person's natural habitat or a controlled lab environment. As a result, Kuhn developed the *Twenty Statements Test (TST)*, which totaled 20 questions asking individuals who they were. Kuhn felt the responses could be used to show how individuals' perception of self is based on systematic observation and that an individual's self-identity could form based on the interpretation and understanding of encounters with others. Individuals make meaning of their identity based on their interactions with others and the understanding of rules and expectations set in their environment.

Sheldon Stryker's (1980) work came out of the Indiana School of Symbolic Interaction; his approach emphasized that social structures are based on understanding encounters with others. Stryker posited that symbolic interactionism could be tested using

both qualitative and quantitative research. Stryker focused more on the social roles of others and how social roles influenced social interactions that created social structures. According to Stryker (1980), expectations of roles change based on the cultural or social changes within an environment. Stryker's work focused mainly on role relationships as part of symbolic interactionism. His focus combined both the micro and macro levels of social interaction.

### **Methodology**

Various databases were used to determine the sources used for the literature review. Beginning with searching on the University of Louisville Library database under the ProQuest Dissertation and These Global. Keywords used were: Racial Identity "AND" Social Power "AND" Education first. After reading a few dissertations, the reference pages were used to find additional resources. Google Scholar was used to locate many of the articles for reference. The Find bar on the University of Louisville Library database only narrowed selections to articles.

Keywords searched when locating articles were: Racial Identity, White Racial Identity, Black Racial Identity, Latino Racial Identity Development, Critical Race Theory, Social Power, Education, Social Awareness, Emotional Intelligence, Teachers, Adolescence, and Youth. All these keywords were listed in several dissertations and articles. Once articles were located, abstracts were read to determine relatability to the research topic. If an article was found to relate to the topic, the save icon was selected, and a created list with relevant topic names was created to save all related articles. For example, if an article on white Racial Identity was found, a topic list was created and named white Racial Identity. All articles related to white racial identity would be saved under that list.

All articles were selected, reviewed, and determined by date relevance. If the article was older in terms of years, only two articles from that topic were selected. If an article was inaccessible, ResearchGate or Google Scholar was used to locate the article. Once articles were found, they were saved to the computer and uploaded to a folder on Google Drive.

### **Summary**

The idea of 'becoming' or finding one's voice and identity is indicative of the transformation that is typical for all adolescents; however, for some Black youth, the process of 'becoming' is influenced by structures of power and levels of social awareness. Through the theoretical lenses of Critical Race Theory and Social Interaction Theory, one can examine how Black youth in Bullitt County, Kentucky understand and make meaning of their racial identity.

Examining Critical race theory (Bell, 2004) allows the research to show how minority students could come to see, feel, and become their racial identity (Bell, 2015). Seeing one's race is examined through the lens of understanding how a person identifies themselves from a racial standpoint (Bell, 2015). While feeling comes from the understanding and realization of being a minority based on experiences of being a singleton in a majority-person setting (Bell, 2015), in other words, recognizing that a minority student may be the only person in a classroom where all the other students are white. Becoming black allows minority students to own their racial identity while being aware of the expectations set by the social structures established by peers and teachers (Bell, 2015). Critical race theory (Bell, 2004) sets the stage to understand how minority high school students understand and make meaning of their racial identity.

Social Power (French & Raven, 1959) allows examining power structures. The structures created in the school environment can create implicit and explicit messages that can influence how minority students interact with non-black students and staff (Silke et al., 2017). This interaction could determine the outcome of minority students' interactions with other students by potentially influencing their behaviors and actions (Dahl, 1957, Emerson, 1962, French & Raven, 1959). Social power connects with the research question of how minority students have encountered power. Sharing this experience could show how minority students understand and make meaning of their choice of crowd affiliation (Cross and Fletcher, 2011) based on the predetermined power structures created in the education setting.

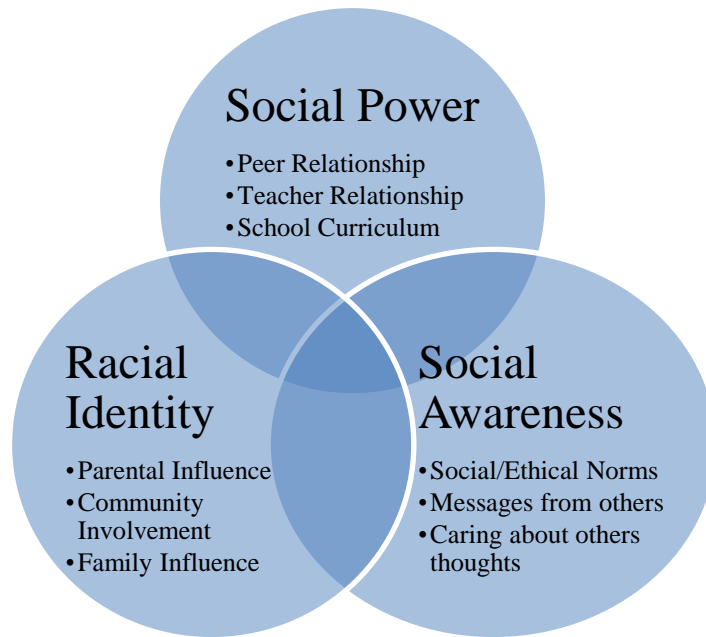
Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969) provides the framework for how minority students can use their encounters and experiences to make meaning of their interactions with others (Carter and Fuller, 2015). In turn, this interaction could alter or change how minorities interact with peers in the future based on previous encounters. Understanding the encounters could allow minority students to develop a social awareness of those around them. Being emotionally aware of one's feelings towards oneself and others.

Racial Identity development can lay the foundation for how minority students understand and make meaning of who they are. Figure 2 shows the interconnectedness of racial identity, social power, and social awareness. Most students' understanding of their racial identity is set by parents, family, and a person's upbringing (Cross & Fletcher, 2011; Martinez-Fuentes et al., 2021; Neblett et al., 2009; Shimotomai, 2020 & Telzer et al., 2018). Those messages created by parents and family members connect when

students encounter social power and social awareness in school. When students experience social power in a school setting, it can impact their understanding of racial identity. That impact can alter influence and add to their understanding of racial identity (Murray et al., 2012; Silke et al., 2017). This combined understanding of racial identity and social power can help students become more socially aware of themselves and others around them, which can help them understand where they hold their power within the educational environment.

**Figure 2**

*Interconnection of Influences*



## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This phenomenological study aimed to examine the influence of power on racial identity and social awareness of black high school students in Bullitt County, Kentucky. The research came from the student's perspective of attending high school with peers predominantly from another racial background. While conducting this study, the examiner intended to understand the development of power structures, such as social power, in a school setting. These power structures would set the stage for minority students to understand who they are and how they fit in racially. The desire is that this study would motivate Bullitt County School District to create programs and opportunities for minority high school students. The interviews in this research were semi-structured, and the number of enrolled ethnic minority students determined the number of participants chosen from all three high schools. The goal was to have at least ten students per high school.

There were three research questions guiding this study:

**RQ 1:** How do minority high school students come to know/understand their racial identity?

**RQ 2:** What experiences have minority high school students had that shaped their racial identity?

**RQ 3:** How have minority high school students encountered power?



## **Research Methods and Design—Qualitative Phenomenology Study**

Creswell (2014) described qualitative research design as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p.32). In this study, the individuals examined were minority high school students.

Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that when using qualitative research methods, it is essential to incorporate the four philosophical assumptions: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. In this study, we focused on two out of the four: ontology and epistemology. Using an interpretivism perspective, Kroeze (2012) posit that a person's understanding of life can only be determined by what they know. In other words, social interactions with others and the creation of meaning based on those interactions can be interpreted by a person's experience. The ontological approach examined in this study was the lived educational experiences of minority high school students and their impact on their racial identity and social awareness of self and others. The epistemological framework used is social constructivism. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), social constructivism offered individuals to make meaning of their lived experiences. In this case, minority students examined their educational experiences to make meaning of their racial identity and understanding of social awareness.

For this study, transcendental phenomenological methodology assisted in highlighting experiences based on narratives and meanings related to the influence of power on racial identity and social awareness among minority high school students in Bullitt County. Phenomenological research examines the lived experiences of others (Creswell, 2014). While transcendental phenomenology allows "recognizing one's

knowledge and experience in a free, open, and imaginative sense, ultimately it would determine the core ideas and values that would linger and explore" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 25). To have an authentic transcendental phenomenological design (Moustakas, 1994; & Peoples, 2021), the study included intentionality, intuition, and phenomenological reduction or epoche (bracketing). Through bracketing, the researcher could examine their biases through their own experiences in their current position. Furthermore, bracketing allowed the researcher to set aside those biases, thoughts, and perceptions.

This study allowed minority high school students to recognize and make meaning of their own lived educational experiences through semi-structured interviews, facilitated a free and safe space for the students to share their experiences, allowing them to recognize, understand, and make meaning of their own lived educational experiences while developing their sense of self and others.

### **Strengths and Limitations of Qualitative Case Studies**

One of the strengths of this study was the researcher's position of being an insider-outsider researcher. Working in the district as a school counselor supported the relationship-building process with students. Another advantage was that some students attending North Bullitt High School were previous students. This connection was beneficial when speaking with potential students at the other two high schools.

One of the limitations that occurred was the number of participants. Bullitt County had a significantly lower number of students of color than other districts, which limited the number of student participants. Another limitation was the number of students willing to participate. Students of color hesitated to participate based on the concern of being scrutinized by their peers and educators. This concern was addressed by

maintaining anonymity by referencing each student as "participant A or B." However, due to the low numbers of minority students, it may be easy to identify participants.

### **Context of the Study**

This study guided the influences of social power on racial identity and social awareness. Bullitt County school district was one of the larger districts closest to the Jefferson County area in Kentucky (National Center for Education Statistics. Direct District Information 2021-2022, n.d.). The school district housed three primary high schools, one alternative school, a vocational/trade school, and a STEM program for high school students. Bullitt County was considered a suburban area due to its proximity (National Center for Education Statistics. Direct District Information 2021-2022, n.d.). The district added a section on Embracing Differences (Bullitt County Public School District, 2022) to its website under the Mental Health Resource tab. This site provided resources and guidance on embracing people's differences while ensuring equity and inclusion of others in the district. Bullitt County served 12,725 students of those being 94% White, 1% Black, 2% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 2% two or more races (Bullitt County Public School District, 2022; National Center for Education Statistics. ACS School District Profile 2015-19, n.d.)

### **Data Sources**

Data collected for this research was accessed through the Infinite Campus student database to determine the subject pool. Demographic data included age, grade level, gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity. Once identified, students met with the researcher in a small group setting. The Purposeful Sampling approach assisted in the selection process. Information gathering occurred through semi-structured interviews.

Purposeful Sampling was designed to ensure that the researcher understood the research questions and the problem of the study (Creswell, 2014). This study's use of semi-structured interviews allowed students to speak freely about their experiences attending a predominantly white high school.

### **Study Participants**

The BCPS Infinite Campus student data system was the tool utilized to identify all students selected for this research. More specifically, the researcher leveraged the Tableau Visualization option of the data system, which identified the number of minority students. 10th through 12th-grade students were selected to participate in the study. Students were required to attend school at one of the three high schools in Bullitt County: North Bullitt High School (NBHS), Bullitt East High School (BEHS), and Bullitt Central High School (BCHS). Additionally, students were required to have established enrollment for at least two full years.

Participants for the study were identified by the school counselor at their respective schools using Infinite Campus. Even though an established relationship with the school counselor at Hebron Middle School (HMS) existed for some students, reliance on the relationship between the high school counselor and students was necessary. In total, 12 students from all three high schools were selected.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Students identified as minority students met with the researcher. This meeting allowed the researcher to discuss the study, its purpose, and the potential risks and benefits. All students received informed consent (Appendix B) for parent signatures (Appendix C) and an assent form for student signatures. Students had one week to return

forms to their school counselor. The researcher's contact information was provided for any questions or concerns. Personal phone calls were made to parents to speak with them individually about the research, the purpose of the study, and any potential risks and benefits.

Once all consent forms were returned, students and the researcher met individually to schedule a day and time that worked best for both parties. Interviews were expected to take 45 minutes to 1 hour, allowing time for the conversation to flow naturally and increasing the amount of information to be gathered.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

Interviews with the participants were conducted through one-on-one meetings with each student. Yin (2018) described interviews as a form of conversation. Using this form also allowed the researcher and the students to have a general discussion in the natural school setting as it related to the students' lived educational experiences. If the researcher required more follow-up questions or clarification of a particular response, a separate meeting would be scheduled to meet with the student again. The interviews contained 17 questions the researcher asked (Appendix A). Questions focused on power, racial identity, and social awareness: Questions 1-7 focused on basic demographic information, Questions 8-11 focused on racial identity, and Questions 12-13 focused on social power, Questions 14-16 focused on social awareness, and Question 17 allowed for any additional information. Session interviews were recorded and transcribed as information was collected.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations focused more on how the researcher would prevent harm and conduct the research according to ethical (moral) standards (Creswell, 2012, 2022). There were a few things to consider for ethical consideration of the research topic. One was the researcher's role as a school counselor, as rapport had developed with the students that attended NBHS. Asking students of color and their parents for permission to participate was not considered an area of concern. The researcher's concerns were for students that attended the other two high schools, where there was no previously established relationship. Other school counselors assisted in gathering potential participants. The desire had been to have their school counselor present to ease some of their apprehension and concerns; however, this depended on the relationship between the students and their school counselor.

Another concern was the willingness of students to participate in something that could cause uncomfortable feelings in the school setting and community. These types of conversations could trigger emotional anxiety and panic in students. As a result, the researcher reassured students that their identities would be protected. The researcher told the students the school name would be documented, but the participant names would be excluded.

The school selection plan required the researcher to contact the District Assistant Superintendent and Director of Secondary Education, requesting permission to conduct the research. After approval was obtained, the researcher asked that the school counselor identify all minority students that attend the school. Once students were identified, the researcher met with students in a whole group to introduce themselves, explain the

purpose of the research, and explain why their participation was requested. The researcher fielded all questions from the students during this time.

### **Data Analysis**

Moustakas's transcendental phenomenological model was used to analyze the data. This process included phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and the synthesizing of meanings (Moustakas, 1994). In order to manage a large amount of data, phenomenological reduction was used. Saldaña (2021) suggested a way to "enhance credibility and trustworthiness through nuanced analysis, and/or strategic, in-depth interviewing that explores with participants the subtle dynamics of attributions in action" (pg.255). Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, (2020) did not use data reduction. Instead, they termed it as data condensation, defining data condensation as "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that field notes, interviews, transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials" (pp.310-311). Peoples (2021) gave a method to reduce extensive data by creating a brief synopsis or summary of the participants' lived experiences. In this study, a large portion of the data was reduced to smaller pieces to identify themes. In order to understand themes easier, unnecessary words were removed from the transcriptions. Moustakas (1994) states that phenomenological reduction is done to explain what an individual sees from the conceptual viewpoint. For the reduction process, the researcher used bracketing. Bracketing helped identify keywords or phrases for how participants experienced power, racial identity, and social awareness.

Using first-cycle coding, all transcripts were revised to ensure accuracy. This step was to organize the data. During this step, the researcher re-examined the interview

questions. Saldaña (2021) identified that "first coding is analysis-taking things apart" (pg.6). In Vivo coding and Emotion Coding (Miles et al., 2020; and Saldaña, 2021) was used in the first coding cycle. In Vivo coding (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2021) identified keywords and phrases from the participants' actual words or phrases to identify themes. Emotion coding (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2021) identified themes based on the individual's internal and external experiences. Themes were labeled under the four categories based on the research questions.

Once themes were identified and labeled in the second step, they were organized based on the research questions. Four categories were created based on the research questions listed throughout this study. The first question was used as the main category to eliminate potential biases. Audio recordings were reviewed and compared to the transcription to ensure accuracy.

Moustakas (1994) suggested using the "horizontalization" process for the third step. During the process, Moustakas (1994) stated that it is essential to remember that every participant's narrative has the same value. With this step, the researcher identified every statement referencing power, racial identity, and social awareness. Anything irrelevant was moved to a different location to determine its use.

In the fourth step, the researcher created a cluster of meanings. Moustakas (1994) suggested using the horizontalization statements to combine themes and remove any statements that "overlap and/or repetitive" (pg. 118). Miles et al. (2020) recognized clustering as a way to lay the foundation to continue analysis and determine findings. The textual description was used to cluster themes based on the four research questions.



The final step was to review all final themes and determine how the experience with power influenced students' meaning and understanding of racial identity and social awareness.

### **Process for Exploring Researcher Positionality**

Milner (2007) explained the framework from a researcher's cultural and racial positionality. The first framework looked at Researching the Self, which required the researcher to look at their own racial and cultural experiences and work through any issues seen, unseen, and/or unforeseen before the research began. The focus question with this framework was: How can the researcher negotiate and balance their racial and cultural self in society and this research? How does the researcher know (Milner, 2007)? This reflection led to the researcher's upbringing attending an all-black school through the elementary and secondary years and reflecting on personal experiences of attending a predominantly white college and going through phases of racial identity while later in life rediscovering myself and my racial identity working in a predominately white school district. Furthermore, the researcher noted that her children attended a school in a predominantly white school district.

This led the researcher right into the second framework of researching the self in relation to others (Milner, 2007). It is essential to be aware of the power the researcher holds as a school counselor working in the district and conducting research. This power comes in two ways: first, the title of a school counselor, which may make students feel uncomfortable knowing the researcher is an employee. However, that power could also be swayed because, for some students, the researcher had them as previous students. Furthermore, a previous relationship had been established, which may make them feel

more obligated to participate. The other form of power was being a parent of students who attended school in the district. The researcher must be very well aware of both and their impact on the research.

The third framework involves reflection and representation (Milner, 2007). Milner (2007) stated in this framework that the researcher and participants should reflect together to think through what is happening in a particular research community with race and culture placed at the core while also being aware of any disagreements in interpretations between the researcher and the participants. This difference in interpretation can allow readers to learn how different people can understand, interpret, live, function, and are represented in society, which all ties into the influence of social awareness.

The last framework was shifting from Self to System (Milner, 2007), which allowed the researcher to shift awareness from their perspectives and examine things in a broader context. The researcher focused on the question: What systems, organizational barriers, and structures shape the community and people's experiences locally and more broadly? How does the researcher know? While at the moment, still need the answer to this question. Therefore this topic of study is essential to know from students of color perspectives what internal and external factors shape their meaning and understanding of their racial identity development.

### **Strategies for Ensuring Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability**

Ensuring trustworthiness can be a challenging process to capture. However, much research has been done to help researchers navigate that process, ensuring the credibility

and confirmability of this study so that the findings are not based on the researcher's biases but on the words and experiences of participants (Shenton, 2004). The researcher performed a follow-up with participants for clarification and understanding of conversations and experiences. Also, the researcher utilized "member checking" to allow participants to review transcripts and themes found by the researcher (Peoples, 2021, p. 1). This was a benefit for the researcher to ensure the participants' experiences were captured correctly. Transferability would ensure that the findings of this study could be used in future studies (Shenton, 2004). This was done by providing as much detail in the data analysis process (Peoples, 2021). Several steps were taken to review the transcriptions multiple times during data analysis. Using two sources of data coding during the first cycle allowed the researcher to check each line numerous times to ensure everything was noticed. Dependability supported the assertion that if the study were duplicated, an independent researcher could conclude with similar results (Shenton, 2004). To ensure dependability, Peoples (2021) suggested having external audits of someone not involved in the study's research process to review the data analysis to ensure accuracy.

### **Summary**

The purpose of Chapter 3 was to explain the methodological process of this research study based on the research questions provided. This study aimed to examine the lived experiences of how power influences minority students' meaning and understanding of their racial identity and social awareness. A description of the research design, data collection, participants, data analysis, ethical consideration, researcher positionality, and

strategies to ensure trustworthiness are all provided in this section. Chapter 4 will give the findings from the data analysis.

## CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This study was conducted to gain greater understanding surrounding three research questions. 1.) How do minority high school students come to know/understand their racial identity? 2.) What experiences have minority high school students had that shaped their racial identity? 3.) How have minority high school students encountered power? Chapter 4 shows the findings of the lived experiences of black minority students who attended school in a predominantly white School in Bullitt County, Kentucky.

This chapter presents findings, themes, and support of previous literature organized as follows, beginning with an overview of the context of study that includes information regarding the research sites and participants demographics. This section also includes a Table of participants demographic characteristics as well as a detailed description of each participant. Next, is the theory (ETIC) and inductive (EMIC) codes for bridging constructs and data. Followed by the findings, which includes a detailed table relating to each construct and its findings. After which the emergent findings and themes are presented. Concluding with a summary of Chapter 4 and moving to the discussion and recommendations in Chapter 5.

### **Sample**

Student recruitment was from three high schools in Bullitt County Public School District: North Bullitt High School, Bullitt Central High School, and Bullitt East High School. Every student who was parent-identified as being of black race in Infinite Campus student database system, was given an invitational letter to attend an

informational meeting with the researcher to learn more about the research topic. This letter included the research topic name, a brief description of the research topic, contact information of the researcher, location, time, and date of meeting. This letter also explained attending this meeting is voluntary and students are not required to attend. A sample of this letter can be found in (Appendix D). A total of twelve student participants consented, along with parent consent. Each participant completed a semi-structured interview on their respective school grounds in a secure location in the school's conference room. One student did identify as being “mixed” meaning one parent is of white descent and the other parent is of black descent. This student was an exception due to them self-identifying more towards their black descent.

### **Demographic Information**

Twelve black students enrolled and attending one of the three high schools in Bullitt County Public School District in Bullitt County, Kentucky participated in the study. The first six questions of the semi-structured interviews asked basic demographic information (Appendix A): (a) racial identity; (b) age; (c) grade level; (d) current high school; (e) number of years at current school; (f) number of years enrolled in Bullitt County Public School. The participants' responses to the first six demographic questions are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1***Demographics Characteristics of Participants*

Participant Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Racial Identity Preference	Grade	Yrs. in BCPS District	Yrs. in Current School	Current School
Student 1	18	Female	Black	Senior	12	4	BEHS
Student 2	17	Female	Black	Junior	3	3	NBHS
Student 3	16	Female	Black or AA	Sophomore	2.5	3	NBHS
Student 4	15	Female	Black	Freshman	7 months	7 months	NBHS
Student 5	18	Male	Black	Senior	6	4	BCHS
Student 6	16	Female	Black	Sophomore	5	2	BCHS
Student 7	15	Female	AA	Freshman	9	6	NBHS
Student 8	18	Female	Black or AA	Senior	7	4	BEHS
Student 9	17	Female	Black or AA	Senior	12	4	BEHS
Student 10	16	Female	Mixed	Sophomore	10.5	2.5	BCHS
Student 11	16	Female	Black	Freshman	9	5	BEHS
Student 12	16	Female	Black or AA	Sophomore	2.5	3	BCHS

Student 1 is an 18-year-old female who is currently a senior at Bullitt East High School. She identifies her racial identity as being African American and did not have preference on being called black or African American. She did mention that there are some cases when people are trying not to offend her that call her African American. She has spent her entire educational career in the Bullitt County School District. When she walked into the interview room ~~with me~~ she was very nervous, but after a few minutes she opened up more. She was very mature in her tone and showed a lot of emotions when sharing her experiences.

Student 2 is a 17-year-old female who is currently a Junior at North Bullitt High School. She identifies her racial identity as being black and did not have a preference on being called black or African American. She has attended school in BCPS for three years and has currently been enrolled at her high school for three years. She has transferred from another district in the state of Kentucky. She had a lot of energy and shared a lot of the things she is involved ~~in~~. One thing that she mentioned during her interview was being seen as the token black person. Maybe thinking people saw her as the safe choice because she is very active and outspoken.

Student 3 is a 16-year-old female who is currently a sophomore at North Bullitt High School. She identifies her racial identity as black or African American. She stated her racial identity is different based on who the person is. She felt if the person is from another racial background, they should identify her as African American. Whereas if they are from the same background, they can identify her as black. She has attended two high schools in the district. Completing a year and a half at Bullitt Central and 3 months at North Bullitt High School. She expressed that her family decided to transfer to one of the



other high schools in Bullitt County due to racism and lack of administration support. She has been in the district a total of two and a half years. She has transferred from another district in the state of Kentucky.

Student 4 is a 15-year-old female who is currently a freshman at North Bullitt High School. She identifies her racial identity as black and does not have a preference between being identified as black or African American. She has been enrolled at her current school for 7 months and has been enrolled in the district for seven months. She has transferred from another district in the state of Kentucky. One interesting fact about this student is that she and her family are originally from Congo, Africa. She and her family moved here when she was in second grade. This was one of the main ways she was able to identify how she was different from her peers.

Student 5 is an 18-year-old male who is currently a senior at Bullitt Central High School. He identifies his racial identity as black, making a strong point of that is how Americans understand race as either black or white. He has attended school in BCPS for 6 years and has attended his current high school for the last three years with one year being in another state. When speaking with this student he was very mature and beyond his years in thinking. He spoke a lot about his timing attending school in Illinois for one year during high school. That is when he began to realize the differences in who he was when he came back to school in Bullitt County.

Student 6 is a 16-year-old female who is currently a sophomore at Bullitt Central High School. She identifies her racial identity as black and does not have a preference on being identified as black or African American. She has been enrolled in Bullitt County Public School for five years. She has attended her current school for two years. When

speaking with student 6, she was very open and upfront about what she has experienced in high school. She has seemed to deal with a lot of conflict with her peers, but you could also hear in her story that she seemed guarded based on those experiences.

Student 7 is a 15-year-old female who is currently a freshman at North Bullitt High School. She identifies her racial identity as African American. She does not have a preference on being identified as black or African American. She stated that some people call her African American when they do not want to use the term black. She has been enrolled in Bullitt County Public School for six years. She has attended her current school for one year. Student 7 shared her experience from the perspective of not being afraid to confront others when they do things to offend her. She also expressed that she talks a lot with her father about what she experiences and really listens to his advice.

Student 8 is an 18-year-old female who is currently a senior at Bullitt East High School. She identifies as black or African American. She does not have a preference on being identified as either black or African American. She has been enrolled in Bullitt County Public School District for seven years. She has attended her current school for four years. When she entered the room, it was with a strong presence. At first, she seemed very nervous, but she answered every question in full detail.

Student 9 is a 17-year-old female who is currently a senior at Bullitt East High School. She identifies as black or African American. She does not have a preference on being identified as either black or African American. She has been enrolled in Bullitt County Public School for 12 years. She has attended her current school for four years. Student 9 shared her experience of being raised in an adoptive family and how that taught her to respect everyone's differences.

Student 10 is a 16-year-old female who is a sophomore at Bullitt Central high school. She identifies her racial identity as mixed. She stated one parent is black and one parent is white. She feels she resonates more with her black peers and feels they share a lot of the same experiences and encounters. She has attended Bullitt County Public School for 10 years. She has attended her current school for two and a half years. Her demeanor in the interview was very comfortable. At times during the interview, she crossed her legs in the seat and shared her experiences with a smile on her face. She maintained eye contact during the entire interview but was very upfront and honest about what she experienced and how she felt.

Student 11 is a 16-year-old female who is a freshman at Bullitt East High School. She identifies as black. She does not have a preference on being called black or African American. She has been a student in Bullitt County Public School District for five years. She has attended her current school for one year.

Student 12 is a 16-year-old student that attended Bullitt Central High School her entire freshman year and half of her sophomore year. She is currently attending North Bullitt high school and has been enrolled for three months. Her changes in schools are due to racial/bullying issues. She says now that she has switched schools her experiences have been much better. She feels administration handles everything immediately. She feels she can trust her teachers and administration with any concerns she may have, and it will be addressed.

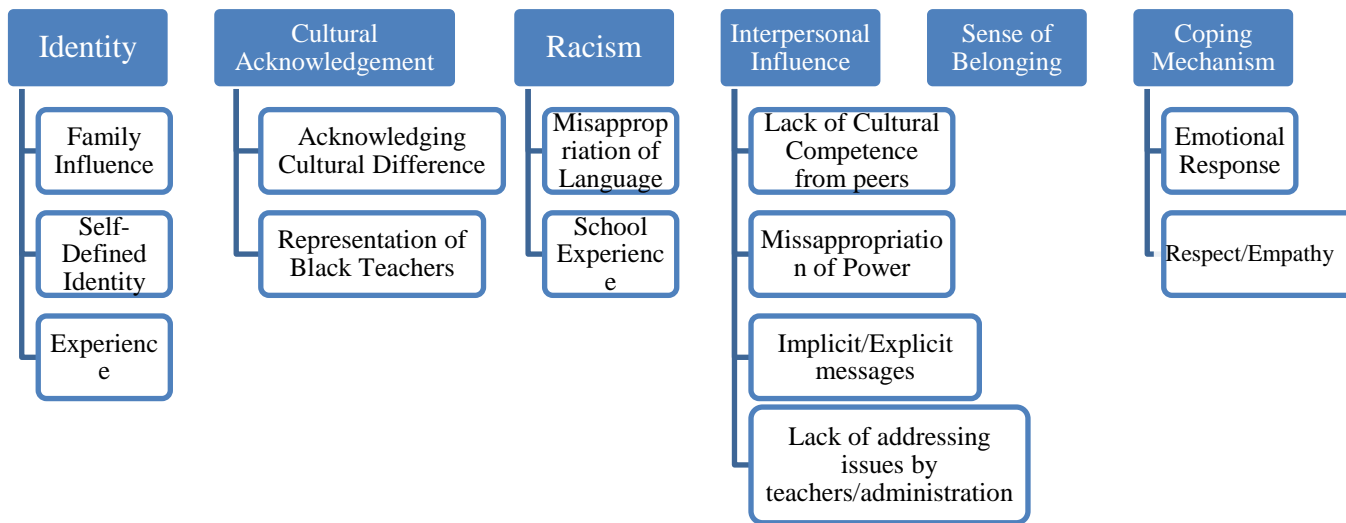
### **Identified Themes**

The three research questions guiding this study informed the basis for conducting the data collection and analysis of this study. Six main themes and thirteen sub themes

emerged based on the semi-structured interview transcriptions and audio recordings. Each theme is shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*Thematic Analysis Diagram*



Each theme related to the research questions that guided the semi-structured interviews. Those themes were based on the constructs of Racial Identity, Power, and Social Awareness. All student participants participated in interviews located at their respective high schools. Student participants completed and returned student assent and parent consent forms before each interview was conducted. Students spoke on their lived educational experience attending a school in a predominantly white school district.

The coding analysis was peer reviewed by two individuals. One has a PhD in Counseling Education and the other is a doctoral candidate. The next sections provide descriptive details of the process to develop each theme.

## Theme Development

To find emerging themes based on individual interviews, the process of horizontalization was used. Moustakas (1994) suggests using the horizontalization statements to combine themes and remove any statements that “overlap and/or repetitive” (pg. 118). He also states it's important to remember every participant's narrative has the same value. Participants' statements were coded and organized to develop themes and subthemes (Table 2). Each theme and subtheme answered the three research questions for this study.

**Table 2**

*Participants statements coded into themes and subthemes*

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Identity	Self-Defined Identity  Experience  Family Influence	black, African American  Prejudged, feeling different Childhood, primary school, feeling different, adjustment  Family, taught, learned
Cultural Acknowledgement	Representation of black teachers/staff  Acknowledging Cultural Differences	Truth, not many, small, nonexistent, rare, none, hidden  Teaching black History, Celebrating black Culture
Racism	Misappropriation of Language	N-Slur/word, niggers, light-skinned jokes, called out for hair looking different, monkey, internalized racism, black, casual racism

	School Experience	Childhood, primary school, feeling different, adjustment
Interpersonal Influence	<p>Lack of cultural competence from peers</p> <p>Misappropriation of Power</p> <p>Lack of Addressing Issues by teachers/administration</p> <p>Implicit/Explicit Messages</p>	<p>Words other races should not say, uneducated, know nothing about the past, stereotyping</p> <p>Bullying, power, charge, teacher comments, teachers, upset, teacher position, unfair consequences, targeting</p> <p>nothing happens, bullied, lack of consequences for non-black students, nothing ever gets done</p> <p>Students, Teachers, Administration, not wanted, not liked</p>
Sense of Belonging		Got each other backs, universal nod, give each other a look, having been black in common, sitting with other black students, understand what each other go through
Coping Mechanism	<p>Emotional Response</p> <p>Respect/Empathy</p>	<p>fight, angry, mad, bothered, outed, alone, outcast, upset, uncomfortable, singled out, deal with, withdrawn</p> <p>Having an understanding for others, treating others the way they should be treated</p>

Each participant's statements are written verbatim, to capture their actual thoughts, words, and feelings. Grammatical errors presented based on the participants' speech, were not corrected. This allowed each interview to capture the authentic lived educational experiences of every black high school student interviewed to share their story of attending a predominantly white high school in Bullitt County, Kentucky.

### Construct 1: Racial Identity

#### **Theme 1: Identity**

Martín Babarro Javier et al. (2017) examines adolescent identity development as “the perceptions that young people have of themselves and the perceptions that others have about them” (pg.35). It is important for students to understand who they are and how others may see them. This theme has three subthemes; (a) self-defined; (b) Experience; and (c) Family Influence. Each sub theme is discussed in more details below along with participants' statements.

**Self-Defined.** During the interview session students were asked the question, *how would you describe yourself in terms of racial identity?* Out of the 12 participants, 6 students preferred to be identified as black only. Two students preferred to be identified as African American, while three participants said they did not have a preference. One student, student 10 identified as mixed, she stated “*black and white, my dad's black. My mom's white.*”

Student 1 did point out that she “does not have a problem with being called black.” However, she noted “*when people they're referring to me as something they're*

*afraid of saying black. So, they like, say African American...don't want to offend me...doesn't bother me.*” Student 3 shared some slightly different sentiments as to which she preferred, for her it depended on who the person was that was addressing her. She states *“I don't like white people being like black. they be trying to be slick with it.”* Student 5 said that it seems we as Americans make it harder than what it needs to be. He seems to have a more systemic approach in his thinking. During his interview, he shared, *“that's what Americans have like, kind of like identify us. You can say African American, but at the end of the day, like everybody knows black, white.”*

**Experience.** Participants were asked the question of *“Can you describe the first time you understood you were black or African American?”* Many participants described events that happened earlier in life, some events took place in a personal setting and others in a school setting. Each event occurred in a neighborhood setting or during elementary or primary school years.

Student 1 describes moving from Chicago to another state and attending a school in which she was the only black student. That is when she understood, she was African American. *“First grade, coming from an all-black Chicago school and being the only person that looked different in my class. Up until middle school when there was another black girl.”*

Student 2 described understanding she was black when her and a relative heard derogatory language from a neighbor. However, she did express that her mother



explained to her what occurred, and the conversation of race was an open topic of conversation in her family.

“It was like when I was younger and me and my cousin used to live like, around the corner from each other. So, we still, like, I was like young, I don't know why we were outside by ourself, but we used to like, meet each other at the corner or whatever. And we had this like, really grumpy neighbor who's his like, house, like at the corner. And he used to like, yell at us and we didn't understand why. He was like, well, like, get away from here. Get away from here. And like, like her house was right there. So, we just meet right there every day. And yeah. Then my mom was like, oh, he, he's calling us the nigger, you know, he was niggers get off my porch and like, we weren't on his porch, you know, he basically just yells at us every time we walked past his house.

A follow question was asked by the researcher, if the parent explained what everything meant that had occurred with the neighbor. Her response was, *“I mean, it's, it's always been like a conversation. It's never been like, hidden from me. Like I always knew but I didn't know why he was yelling at us because we were not on his house.”*

Student 4 explained she understood she was black when she saw her parents. She said, *“I was like born in Africa...Central of conga, I moved him in first or second grade.”*

Student 5 explains he noticed that he was black later in high school. He attended a predominantly black high school for one year when he moved to Illinois, and he later returned to his high school the following year.

Took place last year...went to school in Illinois for a school year. differences between a predominantly white school and a predominantly black school, they held pep rallies to talk about our blackness...talk about how strong we are and give us looks on our culture. Bullitt County does not do that. So, when I came back and I saw the differences for what they were, it was like, I'm not the same as the people that surround me. I understood what I could do and what, and then what I couldn't, I understood what information I'd have to find out about myself and what information was going to be given to me.

Student 6 and Student 10 expressed situations involving their hair. This is how they both understood their racial identity. Student 6 shared, “*elementary school when I kind of noticed that I wasn't the same those other people. And they made fun of me for like, the way my mom used to do my hair.*” While student 10 shared a different experience involving her hair, “preschool. It was always like a hair thing. I had different hair than other kids. And people started noticing that. I would go home and ask like, you know, why's my hair different? Why does my dad look different than these other people's dads?”

Student 8 explained that moving to Bullitt County and attending a predominantly white school was a hard adjustment for her.

When I first moved out here and came to a new school. Everybody like grew up together and they were all like very well, they were very friendly towards each other. sit at this one table and it was a majority of white kids... constantly say the N-word. And the one black girl that did happen to sit at the table with them, she was totally fine with it. She was okay with it. And I was like, um, I don't like the fact that you guys are so openly comfortable with saying a racial slur. And like it's very rude and it's racist. And then they would literally try to attack me and come on me and gang up on me and have a conversation about it and it was just like she didn't help. So, I was just kind of there alone. And then they would also talk things like black lives matter would get brought up and then once guy was like, white lives matter and it was just like, I felt very alone and isolated. I also just think like maybe like the beauty standard as well. Because like, I, like I noticed a lot of my friends that are white girls, they were like, they were very pretty and they would always have guys that asked them out and another light-skinned friend that I had who was mixed, everybody would be approached more, but I was like, I felt like the only one that didn't get approached. Like maybe it was because I'm darker. Or maybe I just didn't grow into my feet.

Student 9 also shared a similar experience with friends and trying to fit in with her peers.

I would say fourth or fifth grade...social studies class...a section on slavery and literally the heads turned like every single head in the classroom turned. I've always known like, you know, I have different skin being my, both my parents are white. That day on the playground, the friend group told me that I couldn't be in their family anymore because I didn't look like them.

Student 10 shared she understood that she was black during elementary. She noticed the difference in language from the other students.

First grade. Everyone there was white and they like, speak, spoke Spanish. I would see how they would like look at and treat me compared to other kids. We were like supposed to have an assignment where we draw Martin Luther King. They would like always look at me, they needed me for reference, my teacher, she would also treat me differently not giving me a chance to speak. she wouldn't help me out that much. give me a chance to finish something.

Each participant spoke greatly about wanting a sense of belonging in their respective school setting. The theme for sense of belonging, were broken into two sub themes of universal understanding among black students and family like connection.

Participants were asked the question, "What experiences have you encountered as school that you think would cause you to think differently about your race?" Here are some examples of experiences participants shared.

Student 1 shared her experience of being called out by a teacher in front of her peers for her hair being different. She also shared being called racial slurs that often did not get addressed. Student 1 stated, "*Teachers like call me out in class for looking differently... her hair looks like this and our hair looks like that. Third*

*grade...encountered like racial, like slurs, like all through high school. Nothing really gets done about it.”*

Student 2 had a very positive outlook on how she viewed her experiences.

However, she also shared an experience of being stereotyped by her peers.

Well I don't really take it negatively because they can't do a lot to put me down. I was in class and this guy, do I have their names? and this guy, I was talking to my friend and well, basically I'm like almost named after my dad cause my dad's name's like (Blank) and I'm (Blank) and she's like, oh, you named after your dad like that. And she's like, oh, yeah, yeah. And we were talking. And he comes up behind me, he's like, you have a dad like that. I looked at him and I was like, like, why wouldn't I have a dad? Like, you know. So, it was super weird.

A follow up question was asked of how the experience made her feel. Her response was as followed, *“not okay. Made me feel like outed. Cause everybody looked at me. So.”*

Student 3 shared that she did not view herself differently, but it did make her look at “them” differently. *“It doesn't really make me think differently (about me), but it makes me think different about them.”*

Student 4 shared her experience as having to fit in with others. *“It's like having to like fit in with people and stuff like that...you don't really see a lot of black people around the school. You feel the need to like act more like the others...change your hair or like the way you dress.”*

Student 5 chose to answer the question in a way that showed it is more of a “mind over matter” way of thinking.

There are things that should have made me think negative, but like, life is easy and people make it hard. If you change your mindset and wish you are something else, like you just going forever hate yourself, right? I've been singled out just because of my color, right? I've always took it as this is a time for me to perform instead of a time for me to get down on myself and think, okay, what if I was a different color?

Student 6 shared an experience of being bullied and others making racist

comments to her. When she tried to address the situation, it led to an altercation. This altercation got her suspended, but when she explained the situation to administration, it was still seen as being her fault for fighting another student. There was no acknowledgement from the participants perception of what the other student said that led that moment.

I guess it's kind of both. There was this situation that I had with this girl me and her have been friends throughout middle school she was just like talking about me...that don't make sense...we've been friends for a longest she kind of just started like saying the word and just like, being, not necessarily racist, but just like around the wrong group. And that group didn't care what they said or what it meant she used to bully me. So, when we became friends I was like, oh, okay, well the bullying ended then. Um, but then I, like, she started bullying me, like bullying me again last year. I wasn't gonna say anything or do anything, I was just gonna let it, you know, fly through cuz I don't feel like talking about it or dealing with it. She said go kill yourself to me... my temper like just shot out of the roof we ended up fighting it. I got suspended, but while we were in the office, which it bothered me because they were like, yeah, we have a zero-tolerance policy for that, but they didn't do anything they still blamed most of it on me...when I told them the whole story and she tried to show them screenshots, they weren't going for it. We're just gonna focus on the fact that we just had a fight.

**Family Influence.** Participants shared how their family influenced the way they perceived themselves. Some participants saw family influence as a reason for why some people view others differently or in a negative manner. Student 6 expressed that everyone

has someone in their life that may be older and has a negative way of thinking and seeing the world. *“Everyone's always gonna have that grandparent that taught them this or that mom that taught them that.”* While student 8 shared her family having an influence on how she sees and treats people. However, she tries to understand how people can be taught one thing from family, but easily influenced by outside influences.

You have to understand the boundaries within like all races the way my parents taught me and how I grew up and what my sisters and I were raised. And how our parents like raised us to be like, to not be mean or rude it's kind of difficult because everybody should understand like treating others with basic human decency. And basic human kindness it's weird because some people are taught that but then they're just like, oh well you look like this. When you grow up and you get all these opinions and then you start to develop perspectives and views and ideas and just like become a little bit biased.

Student 9 explained how being raised in an adoptive family influenced how she saw herself.

If I didn't have the family that I had, it would be a lot harder...We're all adopted. everybody has like completely different backgrounds...behavior issues. Everything, we're all different. My family's different than me and I love them with all my heart...So I, for myself, it's like, I don't care.

## **Theme 2: Cultural Acknowledgement**

Participants were asked *“When you think of black or African American students, teachers, and administration, what words or experiences come to mind?”* Two of the most common subthemes found were Representation of black teachers and staff and acknowledging cultural differences. Participants spoke on wanting to celebrate more of their black history and share it with their peers and teachers.

**Representation of Black Teachers.** When using words or experiences to describe black teachers and administration a few words stood out.

Rare cuz like we don't really have many of them. safe place. not that many teachers...I don't know any black teachers that work here. I don't think I've ever had a black teacher in Bullitt County. I don't think we have any black teachers. black teachers in my building, I don't really know them as well. I don't really have a relationship with them (teachers). the one black teacher that I know in that school is super quiet. She's from Africa. I didn't have a lot of black teachers out here. Mr. Square and Ms. Anderson are the first two black teachers that I've had. very helpful...I do feel seen with them. We have black staff. You rarely ever see them. Our black staff has like, the least like, leading roles in the building. We only have two black teachers. I didn't have many black teachers. beautiful because I had one resource teacher. She would help out. hire somebody who can help you.

Students shared the similar words and experience when expressing that came to mind when thinking of black teachers and administration. The common thing found with these questions showed students saw a lack of representation of black teachers and administration.

**Acknowledgement of Cultural Differences.** Participants also shared that they wanted to see more teaching of black History. Participants wanted their peers and teachers to join in as well and celebrate their culture, while also learning more about their black peers.

Student 1 shared an experience with being a member in her school's multicultural club. She expressed her frustration of teachers not being willing to participate and feeling like she had to do everything for them to get a response.

So, like for this black history month, we, for multicultural club, Mr. Square, he sent out a Google form for teachers to be able to like sign up to decorate a door, like for science hall, it'd be like science teachers, like black science teachers from history. And within the first week, only two, three teachers had signed up for it,

him being included and Ms. Anderson being included. So, we had to like convince teachers like sign up for a door and still teachers weren't open to do it, but you go through the halls now and like teachers' doors are decorated how they wanted to be decorated. Like they can't take out the time to like celebrate us or acknowledge us. And I just felt like, like, it wasn't acknowledged, like black history month wasn't acknowledged at all. Other teachers, like we dec we had to do it for them or like we had to like, Hey, you should sign up for this. Okay, we'll do it. It really was like anybody, like anybody in the multicultural club, but mainly it was me and my friend [inaudible] because we the ones decorating doors. That's just more of like what I thought and like what I noticed cuz I also had the Google form, like with the teachers who signed up for a door and eventually like more teachers ended up signing up. But the fact that we had to like consistently ask, ask them like sign up for a door. Sign up for a door. Do you want me to decorate your door for you? Since you can't.

Student 5 shared that he notices Bullitt County does not do enough with black students and sharing their history.

Bullitt County doesn't do a good job with the colored students. Teaching us our history I went to, uh, H.B.C.U..They stood up for the national anthem...Then there was the Negro national anthem... everybody stood there with their fist up still at the flag. Why don't we do that in schools?

Student 2 acknowledged a teaching attempting to teach black history but felt her frustration of feeling like it was not good enough. "black history and school...history teacher, she does like a good job...I didn't feel like it was enough.

Student 9 expressed her frustration regarding this school year and the schools attempt to celebrate black History.

Black History month this year really upset me. the only thing that we got was they put a sign, the no R word pass in the cafeteria. Very upsetting cuz it's like you guys can't do any more than that last year we read um, uh, like fun facts on the morning announcements we don't even do that anymore because people were getting bullied for reading them. I just feel like that's an issue that your change



was okay. I'm not sure if it even was reported because we all know that nothing would happen.

## Construct 2: Social Power

### **Theme 3: Racism**

Jones (2018) posits it is important to recognize that while a child is in the self-exploration phase, the process can be tainted by their experiences dealing with adversities such as racism. Participants shared a variety of experiences of racism that occurred in the school environment that identified a common theme. Two sub themes emerged under Racism, those are misappropriation of language and school experiences.

**Misappropriation of language.** All participants shared that at some point during their educational experience they have been called the N-word/slur. Some students said it was done in passing in the hallways, while others said they were specifically targeted. Here are some specific statements participants shared in regard to misappropriation of language:

- call me like the N- slur,
- they're always like slick comments...you hear the N word like 10 times a day,
- somebody called him a monkey,
- walking down the hallway...hear like somebody like call me the N-word really quick,
- N-word just bein thrown round,
- joke around with the N-word,

- tell me that the N-word isn't racist and it's just a word,
- I've got called the N-word,
- called me the N word...didn't really care what I thought,
- I've heard a lot casual racism and, and just plain racism with them

**Racism-School Experience.** Participants gave encounters of situation that occurred in the school setting that fell under the sub theme of racism as a school experience. Student 7 spoke on an encounter that occurred involving a white classmate making racial comments on social media. Student 7 shared, *“A girl had made a video...She was like, fuck niggers. I was mad, I was angry... I had walked up on her and I guess I scared her. Because it does bother me, but I'm like, everybody says it.”*

Student 8 shares an encounter during school in which students made racial comments and how it made her feel being the only black student in the classroom.

Racist experience. Freshman year. One of the only two black students in the class. These two white kids, like they called my name to look at them. He pulled up his sleeves to reveal that she wrote the N-word. Both smiling and it was just so weird cuz it was like these were the same type of people that claim that they aren't racist or have any prejudice or like they don't see color, but yet you're so comfortably open with like look looking at me and making me feel uncomfortable.

Student 10 shared her experience with a specific group of students that she identified as “hicks. She also shared her thoughts on the county. She stated, she felt *“this is the most racist school in the county... we don't rarely have any black people.” “I don't like hicks... I have bad experiences with them.”*

Student 6 also shared an experience of students making inappropriate racial comments.

She shared her lack of trust in administration and them addressing the issue appropriately.

Dude started singing Wade in the water. I was just telling myself not to look up. He asked the girl...she was like, no. And he was like, that's a slave song. I was the only black kid in there and then I just found it weird. I don't feel like I can go to the administrators about it cuz what are they gonna do? we don't have any proof for this kid doing this even though you're saying it. I feel like there's like the term no policy doesn't mean anything. Y'all are saying it just makes me upset because y'all don't care about any other race that happened at this school at all.

Student 9 shared an incident that occurred at school and her parent being aware.

Her parent was very upset with the comment that was made toward her daughter via electronically. "Last year and my mom got really mad about this one. It was a meme and it was a squid word meme and it was laughing, and the words were, you're black."

Student 8 expressed a concerning situation that involved a non-black student presenting himself as a black person. However, student 8 stated she was not sure if the student did it on purpose or if it was in relation to attending the game.

We also had blackface at a football game. I try to be understanding cuz like some people don't know the full history or context of things. He looked back at his friends and laughed. He got told to like leave the stands and like wipe his face, but I think they let him back in.

#### **Theme 4: Interpersonal Influence**

French (1956) explains the "present theory reduces the process of influence in N-person groups to a summation of interpersonal influences which considers three complex patterns of relations: (a) the power relations among members of the group, (b) the communication networks or patterns of interaction in the group, and (c) the relations

among opinions within the group (p.181). Participants in this section share experiences where they showed how influences from non-black students, teachers and administration impacted their educational experiences. In this section five subtheme emerged: (a) Lack of cultural competence from teachers; (b) Lack of cultural connection with non-black peers; (c) Misappropriation of power; (d) Lack of addressing issues by teachers/administration; and (e) Implicit and Explicit messages from non-black students and teachers.

**Lack of Cultural Competence among students.** Several students expressed their frustration of non-black students not being educated when interacting with black students. The common word that was expressed was “uneducated.” Below are some statements given by student participants:

- uneducated narrow minded, ignorant...dictatorship,
- selfish, racist, rude...just people who don't know anything about the past... irritate me...Irritating, annoying, rude again,
- some just aren't aware...aren't super educated,
- uneducated,
- you don't wanna help fix it,
- the n-word is a huge one. derogatory like term, um, it's just brushed off. It's like it doesn't matter,
- a lot of them that I've had to experience are very rude...very close minded,
- say very insensitive stuff...when you try to ask them or confront 'em...you're soft, you can't take a joke. They ask me if I have a dad. somebody told me before that all black people don't have a dad,
- all races don't have a dad. Some do like people do. Just does make sense,

- aren't as educated or aren't as exposed as they should be,
- touching my hair or asking me some pretty ridiculous questions,
- stuff that I don't even think they're realizing that they're being racist,
- they've grown up with having this mindset that they don't even understand like microaggressions,
- oh No. I feel like, and again, like uneducated is the bottom line here,
- they know they're not supposed to say it's just one word that they can't not say.

**Misappropriation of power by peers and teachers.** Some students shared words and phrases they associated with non-black students, teachers, and administration. After which, some specific encounters will be shared from some student participants.

Participants shared they felt black students are bullied by non-black students. Which represented an imbalance of power from one racial group to the next.

Student 1 shared an experience of non-black students writing a derogatory phrase on another student's desk. She expressed how that made her feel that other students had power or in charge in the school. "Somebody called him a monkey. Wrote monkey on his desk and he felt like that everybody had more power over him. So, I think of like power and like charge."

Student 6 expressed other students being mean to a teacher due to a language barrier. "*The one black teacher that I know in that school is super quiet...She's from Africa. People are like really mean to her because like, I guess they can't understand her.*"

Student 3 shares her experience of being ignored by her teachers when asking for help or wanting to ask a question.

Not all the teachers, like one or two. Like you can tell they act so different, one teacher...I'll raise my hand and she'll try not to look at me or if she's walking past me, she acts like she doesn't see me. But if we make eye contact, she's like, oh, I already saw her so I have to go help her.

Student 7 shared an experience of a teacher asking about her preference for fruit and making an inappropriate comment toward her response.

I've had an encounter with one teacher. She asked me what my favorite food, I don't have a favorite food, but I do like fruit. I like watermelon. she paused, of course you do. So, it kind of made me think at the teachers a different way.

Student 10 shared two experiences, one regarding a teacher choosing to make an inappropriate joke about a black student. Her other experience is from teachers touching her hair because they are intrigued by her hair texture.

one teacher, who I think he was trying to make a joke, but it didn't go well and he told a very, a dark-skinned student that, um, she was almost blacker than her Chromebook. Which was obviously did not go well with the student at all. She was very upset. My thing is even when you can tell what they're thinking, you'll never ever say cuz of their position. You can't ever call them out on it. You can't ever like address it cuz, you know, but you know what, they're implying. There's just so much like casual racism. Stuff that I don't even think they're realizing that they're being racist. They've grown up with having this mindset that they don't even understand like microaggressions. What teachers do that really bothers me is like, touch my hair. They're not hurting me, they're not like being, you know, so I can't even really say anything besides like, please don't touch my hair.

Student 10 also shares an experience that was shared by another student that noticed a teacher treating black students differently from white students.

One of the teachers here was racist. only two black students in the class. They were given back like flashcards. You had to like write the answer on the flashcards. Every white student, the teacher just like flipped through and then put it down and then flipped through and then put it down wasn't actually looking. With the two black students, she checked every single one and then was like, here's the ones you got wrong. Gave it back to them.

Student 11 shared a similar experience as student 3 with teachers choosing to ignore her when she needs help.

If I am struggling with something and I would ask someone for help and they'll like, just give me attitude when the white student asks...And then she'd be like, oh sure, I'll help you. I try to engage in conversation but they just like, give me like one-word answers.

Student 8 shared an experience with a teacher who was upset that she chose not to stand for the pledge of allegiance. At some point she mentioned feeling targeted by the teacher.

I don't stand up for the pledge of Allegiance. This one teacher, he kept coming up to me and my friend. He kept telling us like how other people in other countries would get shot if they didn't stand for their pledge. We're allowed to sit if we don't, if we don't wanna stand he kept coming to both of us and saying it and then after a while he just kept coming to me he started threatening that I was gonna get kicked out of a club that I was in at this point I'm being targeted. You're saying all this stuff to me, but yet I have a white friend who's doing the exact same thing and you only like gave him a little slap on the wrist.

**Lack of addressing issues by teachers and administration.** Participants shared their experiences with reporting specific encounters to teachers and administrators.

Participants felt things that were reported where either not handled appropriately or overlooked. Some participants shared some brief phrases and words they associated with

when thinking about teachers. *“Teachers are nice...but they're just there. None of my teachers really do much. I'm not sure if it even was reported because we all know that nothing would happen.”*

Student 8 shared an experience of being addressed by administration for standing up for something she believed in. Her experience involved the participation of another student that was white. She felt the other student was not held accountable; however, the administration chose to focus more so on her involvement in the situation.

A friend of mine, her and I were trying to protest the dress code at one point during the school year, our junior year. We got called to the principal's office...He told me about how this was like ground and rules for suspension but didn't say anything to her. It was very weird...you're telling me all this stuff about how this could be ground for suspension...but you won't tell my friend who happens to be a white girl. You start telling her how you are kind of disappointed cuz you're super impressed with like her musical talents being in choir and then doing color guard. I'm also on the color guard...You didn't say anything to me about being impressed with my skills.

Student 12 shares her experiences at her previous school within the district. She felt administration never addressed her issues. She shared that her mother spoke with the school as well and things were not handled appropriately.

At my old school they would like, every time I would get into something they say they would deal with it and they never did. (Bullitt Central). The principal, she's really like, she keeps up with that. I would report it and I literally, my mom called up to that school multiple times. And I have messages and screenshots of where people's calling me the N word. And like slave and monkey and all this and I showed them and it was a fake account, but I ended up finding out who the girl was. And I told them, point her out picture and everything. They still didn't do anything. Mm. Like she got to stay on her team. She didn't get suspended, they didn't talk to her or anything. And my mom called up to the school and she said



she called one of the administrators and they were like laughing about it. So that's why mom doesn't like that school.

### **Implicit and Explicit messages from Non-Black Students, Teachers, and Administration.**

Participants during the interview were asked the question “*“What kind of messages have you received from non-black students, teachers, and administrators?”*”

Students shared some messages that have either been explicitly told to them or things they felt were implied:

- this town is not for us (Implicit Messages),
- this school system is not made for us (Implicit Messages),
- I feel like it's implied by everybody, but mainly our staff, like our assistant principals, our counselors. (Implicit Messages),
- Go back to where you came from (Implicit Messages),
- some teachers have told me they expect more from me and those are the teachers I respect. (Explicit Message),
- there are teachers who see my color and they'll be like, I expect from, I expect more from you. (Explicit Message),
- there are also teachers who will be like, I expect more from you just because they know who I am. (Explicit Message),
- Implied. I wouldn't hate you if you weren't black. (Explicit Message)

### Construct 3: Social Awareness

#### **Theme 5: Sense of Belonging**

Participants during their interview expressed the need for having a sense of belonging when they are in school. This need is satisfied with sharing common experiences with other black students that created a family like relationship. Student 5 shares that to him, black students are like family. He expressed feeling like he has a sense of obligation to hold black students to a higher standard. *“But for black students it's kind of been like family with the other black kids in school.”* Student 6 shares the same sentiments as student 6, sharing, *“other black kids in the school, I think of all my friends cuz that's mostly my friends. Super funny and nice and my friends. Finally, somebody's here that I can talk to.”*

Participants shared many experiences of their encounters with other black students. These encounters presented themselves in expressions of universal nods, looks of understanding, and sharing common conversations of their individual experiences.

Student 5 talks about their experience with other black students as sharing that common bond even if they don't know each other by name or personally. *“We understand even if we don't know each other on a first name basis, we got each other back...that's how it has to be.”*

Student 2 expresses the use of having a universal nod among all black people. She

Also expressed that she is not sure if black students are aware because they never respond back to her. *“Like when black, they have like the universal like nod, like when you see another one and like a nod, you know, nobody nods and it irritates me.”*

However, Student 5 shares at his school that all black students give each other a nod or look that shows they understand one another. *“We give each other a look and we just kind of know. recently I've been seeing like new faces and you know, they're my skin color, so I'm like, wow.”*

Student 9 experiences sound somewhat different from the other two experiences. Student 9 shares how a group of young black ladies became friends based on one common factor of being black.

We um, had a friend group of four. We're cool now, just not as close as we were. We clicked up simply because we were all black. That's all we had in common at first. And it, it kind of sucked. I have to sit with these people because they're black because nobody else will.

### **Theme 6: Coping**

Participants shared many encounters and experiences they have or are currently experienced during high school. Many of their responses are portrayed as a coping mechanism to help them get through or better understand their situations. Two sub themes emerged, emotional response and respect/empathy.

**Emotional Response.** Participants shared a variety of emotions when it came to speaking about their experiences attending school in Bullitt County. Student 9 shared that even the

experience of speaking with me made her nervous; *“I was even nervous to talk to you. I feel like that's just kind of everybody.”* Her perception was the same for all participants.

Student 2 shared that she felt she must come off guard toward her peers and even teachers. This for her was a coping mechanism so that she can feel safer in her environment. *“I come off a bit mean, I have to because like, I don't feel like the safest here. So, I feel like I have to.”*

Student 9 states that part of her way of coping is to just deal with the issues and After while you tend to forget them. *“I've dealt with this for 12 years... to me it's kind of like people are dumb, I can move on...that's not okay. There's so much that you forget and that's kind of sad.”*

The component to the emotional response is based on the question, *“So how might those messages influence your interactions with others in your school that are from a different racial background?”* Student 1 shares that she used to be very active her freshman year, but over the years she has somewhat withdrawn from her peers.

not like anybody...I don't interact with a lot of people here as much as I used to... I don't try not be like that freshman year. Like I was involved in everything. Like I was friends with everybody, but like over the years, like these experiences happen.

Student 2 shared her thoughts of wanting to stay around and associate with other black people. *“It makes me not wanna talk to them. It makes me wanna stick with the people I know and other black folk. It makes me put all of them in one belt.”*

Both Student 5 and 6 discuss wanting to keep their circle of friends small and not associate too much with their white peers.

It makes me depend on them less. I don't ask everybody cuz I don't like asking for. I know like you can't judge everyone off of everyone. I just don't talk to people honestly. I keep a close circle. I don't feel the need to talk to everybody. I don't feel the need to meet new people you have to earn my trust cuz I've been like cheated so many times.

Student 5 also shared how some white students try to make a connection to him based on his race. However, for him it is something that cannot be understood unless you experience it for yourself.

I can tell like, what's going on around me. I'm very observing. I can see the way people look at me and I can see the way, I can see how they're looking at me. Trying to be racially woke, certain people who will be like, we understand you. I get that you try to be there for me because of my color, but you don't really understand the hardships. You are mentally involved and you know your information... you can't really know anything until you dealt with that. You know more than me because of my color, because of what you looked up.

Student 9 shares that based on her experiences, she feels alone and, in some cases, choosing not to deal with what she encounters.

It makes it hard to connect with anybody...even feel comfortable walking in honestly building good relationships with anybody in here makes it so hard. not only do people not understand...but nobody here is willing I feel like, I feel like little struggles... little problems, it makes me feel alone and I kind of single myself out on purpose cuz I just don't wanna deal with it. Either be alone all day or deal with racist remarks or something like that. I don't necessarily need that protection, but it's good to know I have it if, if I needed it. I can't have a good conversation with anybody else without it getting to race it just singles us out. Constantly, even more than we already are.

Student 10 shared she is more consciously aware of what she says around her

white friends, because she does not want them to feel comfortable saying inappropriate things. Student 10 shared, *“I’m more cautious about the things I say. Like a race joke or something I don’t say it around my white friends because I don’t want them getting the idea that I think it’s okay for them.”*

**Respect and Empathy.** Despite all that participants have encountered during their high school experiences. They tend to show the upmost regard for others. Expressing that they prefer to treat with respect, and even for some realizing it is just a learned behavior. Here are some single statements that were made by participants:

- different experiences and grow up different ways and like there's also something like internalized racism as well,
- diverse or like we all come from different walks and paths of life as well,
- I try to like treat everybody like respectfully and equal,
- make sure that I don't like go too far and if I do go a bit too far... I try to apologize and take ownership of that,
- I treat people like more or less the same,
- I am not gonna treat them that way,
- I'm also going to engage in conversation,
- I wouldn't want to be treated that way if I was in their shoes,
- I'm nice...slowly opening up to them,
- if you treat everybody respectfully but other kids are observing,
- I'd probably say personality and things that we've accept that we've shown them,
- we're accepting of what we're not accepting of,
- I try to be accepting most of the time,
- I try to be understanding, but sometimes when people just say like, what I think are ignorant things like I just can't help but like say something,

- I try to be respectful about it,
- if you were respectful first, I would be respectful of you,
- I don't feel any empathy...they're at an advantage in this school... if something ever goes wrong for them, it's fixed...it's acknowledged,
- I'm not gonna like not like you since you're white...I can kind of tell when it's like that kind of white person who like doesn't really talk to black people,
- So, to try and base how you treat everyone often yourself, you can't really do it,
- you have to understand the boundaries within like all races,
- it's kind of difficult because everybody should understand like treating others with basic human decency. And basic human kindness,
- I'm gonna figure out who you are as a person,
- I try to treat everybody the same... I do have like bias,
- Be more respectful,
- I try to be nice to everybody but like I don't give it my all to be friends with them cuz it's like I don't know who they are,
- I try to like see them before I become friends with them,
- I treat everybody the same...black kids, like, I kind of like, kind of nudge them more,
- I'm fair to everybody, but when I see a black kid who's doing the same, I be like, work a little bit harder,
- different than me if they're of a different, um, race than you, like, would you treat them how I wanted to be treated,
- You don't know like their situation or anything, so you shouldn't really judge somebody,
- I may ask a question like I may ask, oh, uh, what country is like your ancestry from,
- try not to like word it in a rude way, just like, where are you from,
- try to assume that because you're this race you're not automatically from America,

- I would treat like anyone else,
- give them the same attention,
- Talk to them, get to know them,

## **Summary**

In Chapter 4, data was analyzed using the data analysis steps outlined in Chapter 3. Using Moustakas (1994) methods of analysis for qualitative transcendental phenomenological data. Semi-structured interview was conducted with twelve black high school students currently attending a predominantly white high school in Bullitt County, Kentucky. Using semi-structured interviews as a data gathering technique, allowed black high school students to share their in-depth experiences. Participant interviews were used verbatim to analyze their experiences with the phenomenon. During the data analysis process, six themes emerged. Each theme related to the lived educational experiences of black students attending a predominantly white high school in Bullitt County Public School. Based on participants responses the following themes emerged: (a) Identity, (b) Cultural Acknowledgement, (c) Racism, (d) Sense of Belonging, (e) Interpersonal Influence, and (f) Coping.

In Chapter 5, a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, implications, limitation, recommendations, and conclusion are included.



## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study aimed to examine the lived educational experiences of black high school students attending a predominantly white school in Bullitt County, Kentucky. Specifically examining how power and social awareness influence black students' racial identity. This research examined actual stories of black students and accounts of their experiences, understandings, and influences that contribute to understanding their racial identity.

In this study, three research questions were answered. Those questions are:

**RQ 1:** How do minority high school students come to know/understand their racial identity?

**RQ 2:** What experiences have minority high school students had that shaped their racial identity?

**RQ 3:** How have minority high school students encountered power?

Chapter 5 includes a summary of the findings, limitations, implications of the findings, practice, and future research.

### **RQ1: Students Understanding of their Racial Identity**

The first research question explored students' definitions of their racial identity. The interview question asked was, "*How would you describe yourself in terms of racial identity?*" Some students did ask for clarification of the question. However, it was intriguing to hear the responses of students. Most students self-identified as being "black." While a few students said, they do not have a preference for being

identified either "black" or "African American." One student's response stood out the most. Student 5 said, *"That's what Americans have, like, kind of like identify us. You can say African American, but at the end of the day, like everybody knows black, white."* For him, it was the simplicity of rationalization of let's not make things complicated.

However, some students expressed different sentiments about being addressed by their counterparts as "African American" based on the perceived notion that this identification is used out of fear of incorrect racial identification by others. Student 1 shared, *"I don't find a problem with like just black. When people they're referring to me as something they're afraid of saying black. So, they like, say African American...because they don't want to offend me...but it doesn't bother me."*

Students shared early experiences of better understanding their racial identity based on specific encounters. Students shared stories of early encounters with neighbors and encounters from preschool and elementary school. It was terrific that students could remember events from the early stages of life. However, it did raise the question of was this experience traumatic. Furthermore, is this why students can give accounts of specific occurrences because it is something that has stuck with them and will continue to stick with them for the rest of their lives? Cross (1979) identifies this stage as the *Encounter* stage; in this stage, a black person has an experience with a white person that they deem negative or positive. He points out that if the experience is negative, it can stay with them forever. However, if the experience is positive, this is when the black person will move forward to the next stage. For example, Student 2 gave an account of an experience when she was younger and living in another area. She said, *"I don't know where I was living at the time. It was like when I was younger and me and my cousin used to live like, around*

*the corner from each other. So, we still, like, I was like young, I don't know why we were outside by ourself, but we used to like, meet each other at the corner or whatever. And we had this like, really grumpy neighbor who's his like, house, like at the corner. And he used to like, yell at us and we didn't understand why. He was like, well, like, get away from here. Get away from here. And like, like her house was right there. So, we just meet right there every day. And yeah. Then my mom was like, oh, he, he's calling us the nigger, you know, he was niggers get off my porch and like, we weren't on his porch, you know, he basically just yells at us every time we walked past his house."* She explained that after the incident, her parents spoke to her about what was happening and how to handle the situation. She said the conversation of race and racism was never a topic hidden from her. Thus showing the importance of family influence and how consistent discussion about race can impact students' perception of their racial identity.

Family influence also played a role in how participants understood their racial identity. For example, if parents converse with their children, this could impact how black youth understand themselves as individuals and how other blacks are seen in the world around them (Neblett, 2009). Codes identified were family, taught, and learned. While understanding what the research showed regarding the impact of family influence, it is amazing how natural the sub-theme of family influence emerged during the interviews. No specific questions were asked regarding if students felt their family had any influence on their understanding of their racial identity, it was something that students shared voluntarily. Student 4 made it plain and simple when asked, "*Can you describe the first time you understood you were black or African American?*" Her answer said it was based on her parents, who are African. She explained that her family moved to

the United States when she was in second or third grade. This was shocking because, listening to her, her speech and dialectic sounded more American. I even expressed during her interview that I thought she would tell me she moved here as a baby. However, her moving to the States, being in school with other minority and white students, and seeing the difference in her parents compared to other families, helped her understand her racial identity.

Family Influence for some students was more of recognizing differences in their family structure. One student participant identified as "mixed." One parent is white, and the other is black. Recognizing the racial differences between her parents and then recognizing the differences between herself and her peers influenced her racial identity. Another student shared being adopted and having white parents, even though all her siblings are black. Early on, she expressed that it was based on her family's conversations about race that influenced her understanding of her racial identity. Telzer et al. (2018) examined the impact of peer social norms and parental influence on adolescents' social influence development. His research found that peers and parents can positively impact adolescent social influences.

### **RQ2: Student Perception of High School Experiences that Shaped their Understanding of Racial Identity.**

Cultural acknowledgment was a theme that presented itself continuously among students. Jones (2018) Students' understanding of their multiple group membership and how their cultural identity is a manifestation of the intersection of these groups that helps them to answer the question "Who am I?" (p.36). Students expressed their confusion about not

having black teachers in their buildings. The interview question, "When you think of black or African American students or teachers in your building, what words or experiences come to mind?" Students' facial expressions changed as they began to ponder the question. Most students looked at me with the expression, "What teachers?" Only Bullitt East High School was identified as having two black teachers. Those students shared that they felt seen by having black teachers in the building. Students also shared that they felt a safe space and connection with their black teachers.

Students also expressed the frustration of needing representation of their culture in the curriculum and through school activities. Student 1 shared her story of the multicultural club celebrating Black History by asking teachers to decorate their doors. This celebration sounded optional for teachers, allowing them to complete a form to sign up and choose their design decoration. The frustration came when teachers did not sign up nor did they decorate their doors. Student 1 said it was only when she and other members of the multicultural club personally volunteered to decorate the teachers' doors that teachers agreed to participate. I asked if she thought teachers feared decorating out of fear of offending minority students. Or did the teachers not know who to choose for their decoration selection? She acknowledged that that may have been the case. However, she expressed that if that were true, teachers could have asked. Jones (2018) posits that "an acknowledgment of African American students' social and cultural identities is necessary for providing a solid education for these students. Teachers must be aware of how their beliefs about social and cultural identity inform their teaching practices and influence the academic success of all students" (p. 36).

Participants shared the desire to connect to their school and the people they see daily. Most of their interaction to create that sense of belonging came from students that looked like them. Code words emerged, such as having each other's backs, universal nod, giving each other a look, having been black in common, sitting with other black students, and understanding what each other goes through were used frequently by students. Participants expressed that even if black students did not know each other by name, they always gave a nod or expression of understanding, creating a family-like connection among black students. Black students felt it was easier to share their experiences, and that connection gave them a sense of belonging and understanding. Cross (1979) called this the immersion/emersion stage when black people want to find symbols of their black racial identity that separates them from white people.

Students shared various emotional responses toward their experiences at their respective high schools. Code words for coping were fight, angry, mad, bothered, outed, alone, outcast, upset, uncomfortable, singled out, dealt with, and withdrawn. Students showed their resiliency to be able to move forward and still show up for school each day, despite what the day may bring. Students' resiliency and family influence taught them to show others respect and empathy. Student 9 shared how the messages she receives from non-black students influence her interaction with them. She said, "It makes it hard to connect with anybody. Even feeling comfortable walking in, honestly. Building good relationships with anybody in here makes it so hard. Not only do people not understand. However, nobody here is willing, I feel. I feel like little struggles... little problems, it makes me feel alone and I kind of single myself out on purpose cuz I just don't wanna deal with it. Either be alone all day or deal with racist remarks or something like that."

Students still desired respect and empathy for others, including their peers, teachers, and administration.

### **RQ3: Student Perceptions with Encounters of Power**

The theme of Racism was a shared experience among black students. Two sub-themes emerged of misappropriation of language and school experiences.

Participants shared the use of the N-word being used interchangeably, and white students not understanding the inappropriateness behind using the N-word. Janet Helms (1997) describes this as the Reintegration Stage of white racial identity development. She states that white people become more aware of the power constructs associated with their race. After this, an individual begins to believe that white people have power, and if they have it, it is because that is what they deserve. Students shared their experiences of feeling different and judged based on the lack of understanding by their peers. Students also seemed to develop a coping mechanism based on being called derogatory names consistently. A thought was generated when reviewing the interview responses. Students pointed out that they felt white students were "uneducated" when addressing or interacting with black students. That seems to be the common word used by student participants. If black students felt white students were "uneducated," then it may be that the use of the N-word is not used as a term of endearment, but maybe it is used as a slang word. For example, Student 12 stated that "there is so much casual racism. Stuff that I don't even think they're realizing that they're being racist. They've grown up with this mindset that they don't even understand like microaggressions."

Interpersonal influence was another theme found. Interpersonal influence (French, 1954) is another way to change a person's attitude or behavior through conformity.

Students shared this use of interpersonal influence by seeing a lack of addressing issues involving race by the administration, a lack of cultural competence from their peers, misappropriation of power, and implicit and explicit messages from their peers, teachers, and administration, for example, recognizing that socialization (Neblett et al., 2009) and explicit and inexplicit communication (Mims & Williams, 2020) from peers can increase or decrease anxiety among black youth. Student 8 shared an encounter with a teacher due to nonparticipation in standing for the pledge of allegiance. At some point, she began to feel targeted by the teacher, while the teacher continued threatening her for exercising her first amendment rights. She said she did not report this to the administration because she knew it would not be addressed.

The structures created in the school environment can create implicit and explicit messages that can influence how minority students interact with non-black students and staff (Silke et al., 2017). Code words used for implicit and explicit messages were students, teachers, administration, not wanted, and not liked. Student 5 shared a positive connection with his teachers and administration in one interview. He stated, "some teachers have told me they expect more from me, and those are the teachers I respect. There are teachers that see my color, and they'll be like, I expect from, I expect more from you. There are also teachers who will be like, I expect more from you just because they know who I am. I really haven't talked to administration that much. Administration, they kind of just look at me as like the athlete or like the good kid in school." However, student 10 suggests that she has good connections with some teachers. However, she feels some teachers share implicit messages toward minority students.



Moreover, teachers will not address specific issues involving race. She shares, "I've only really had good experiences because I really only had like, mostly good teachers when she hears something or notices something. She speaks up about it. But there's a lot of teachers that don't. You're choosing to ignore it; you're choosing not to address it. One teacher, who I think he was trying to make a joke, but it didn't go well and he told a very, a dark-skinned student that, um, she was almost blacker than her Chromebook. Which was obviously did not go well with the student at all. She was very upset. My thing is even when you can tell what they're thinking, you'll never ever say cuz of their position. You can't ever call them out on it. You can't ever like address it cuz, you know, but you know what, they're implying."

### **Implications of Practice**

Students expressed distrust of teachers and administration when addressing issues involving race. A district can implement district-level policies on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belongingness. These policies should address issues involving students, teachers/staff, administration, and district-level leaders. Starting the foundational policy implementation process sends the message that the district is supportive and aware of the issues surrounding its minority population. This policy should also include options for reporting any discrimination. Reporting should be easily accessible but anonymous for the reporter to feel safe and free of repercussions. Creating a diversity, equity, and inclusion department would benefit the district by having trained professionals to develop policies and oversee the implementation of those policies. This department can also be responsible for training staff and developing programs that create a culturally competent workforce.

Districts should also focus on expanding their curriculum. A culturally Responsive Curriculum could serve as a beginning process for addressing the issues of students not feeling a sense of belonging. Yoon & Martin (2019) describe the purpose of a cultural response curriculum as "the use of cultural referents in teaching bridges culture and classroom instruction, valuing and recognizing the children's own culture, and shaping thinking processes" (pg.698). Cultural representation was a common concern expressed by students. A good starting point would be a book by Zaretta L. Hammond called *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

In this study, twelve black high school students were interviewed to share their lived educational experiences. One suggestion for future research would be to expand the number of student participants. Although, Creswell & Poth (2018) do not give a specific number for qualitative interviews. Creswell & Creswell (2018) recommend between three and -10 for phenomenological studies. Including more students in the study can be time-consuming, but the results may show a variety of different experiences for students.

Expanding the research to include middle school students might prove beneficial as well. Middle school students typically begin to develop a sense of identity during the beginning stages of adolescents (Erikson, 1950). During middle school, most students begin to develop a sense of self. While also engaging in social interactions and discovering new friend groups. Adding middle school students to the research could

provide more insight into the early stages of racial identity development during the early adolescent phase.

Another suggestion would be to research the parents of minority students. Through examining the experiences of parental choices to live within a predominantly white neighborhood, results could yield...

- parents wanting a better educational opportunity for their child/children,
- living in a safer neighborhood,
- identifying more with the opposite race
- wanting to move away from family members.
- job relocation
- an employee of the school district

While also exploring how and why they chose their child's school. Based on the experience of speaking with a few parents, parents showed much remorse for their choice of location.

Future researchers could seek more male participation. Based on the interview of one male student, there was a difference in treatment from peers, teachers, and administrators. Future researchers can expand on the difference in lived educational experiences between male and female students. Alternatively, solely focus on the lived educational experiences of black male students.

Because this work is generalized for one specific county, I suggest conducting a cross-comparison analysis of other districts. This study can be duplicated for other counties and districts. However, it may differ in responses from participants in other districts.

Another implication for future research is the location of interviewing participants and interviewing in a group setting versus an individual. In a school setting, interviewees were nervous about meeting. Most students shared the sentiments of (a) thinking I was a white woman and (b) being more nervous to meet one-on-one. Some students suggested I interview them with their friends because I would get more information from them, and students would be more likely to participate if they knew their friends were involved.

An additional implication would be to create a diversity, equity, and inclusion department within the school district. For smaller districts that may not have the financial means to create this department, the Kentucky Department of Education (KD) now has programming and support services for every region in Kentucky. Those support services are called “communities of practice” that will provide a designated person to come to the district to offer training for district leaders, staff, and teachers.

A final suggestion would be to develop a support system for minority students and staff. Systems of support allow diverse groups to develop a sense of belonging while also being able to share their encounters and experiences with someone or a group of people who may have had similar experiences. This can be done using school counselors as the starting point. Creating a small group on the school level could be a starting point. For staff, creating monthly events and celebrations to acknowledge the hard work of teachers, staff, and district leaders. Below is an example of what the implementation process can look like for building a culturally responsive district.

Table 3

*Example for implementing a culturally responsive district*

<b>Create the Team</b>	<b>Review The Work</b>	<b>Organizing</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
Vision Mission Does it align to BCPS mission and vision?	What research has been done? What does the data show? Don't reinvent the wheel-build from it.	Building systems Policy development Curriculum Development Parent and Community Input	Implement in Phases Building Principals Instructional Coaches Counselors/YSC Teachers Parents/Students MTSS Coaches	How and who will monitor this work? How often will this be monitored? Monthly? Yearly?

**Summary**

Juneteenth, a national holiday in the United States, recognized on June 19th, as a day of freedom for enslaved black people. President Joseph Biden signed this day as a national federal holiday on June 17th, 2021. By proclaiming this day as significant, black people across America understand that they matter and that their voices have been heard. That moment in history in 1865 when the last group of enslaved people finally understood what freedom meant. To live and go where you pleased, finally believing that you now share the same rights as those who have held you captive for years. You now share the equal rights of being a human being. That moment of President Biden acknowledging the impacts of racial trauma that have existed for many black people is now a representation of you are seen, you are heard, and you belong.

It is the fight of Ruby Bridges and the Little Rock Nine, who fought their way through the crowd to have equal access to the same quality education—the voices of the

young people during those times who wanted to learn just like everyone else. The desire for quality textbooks and a comfortable environment makes learning enjoyable and safe. The fear of parents when they sent their children to school and not knowing when the call would come to say their child is never coming home. The moment in 1957 and 1960, when Congress acknowledged that you are seen, you are heard, and you belong.

It was the election of the first Black President, President Barack Obama, in 2008, the moment in time that gave so many black people hope. The hope is that we as a people have the right to sit in rooms that were once preoccupied with others. We have the right to walk through doors once shut in our faces. We have the power to raise our voices and speak the words against social injustices so eloquently that it can change the trajectory for those who will one day lead in the future. It is the moment when America said you are seen, you are heard, and you belong.

The moments of our past allow us to have the freedoms and rights our ancestors so bravely fought. The ability to receive the right of passage to obtain a quality education. One that allows every student to find their place in a safe environment. An environment that welcomes all people regardless of their color and says that you belong. For these 12 black students who bravely shared their stories, you can see and hear their pain and frustration. However, you also can feel their moments of joy and pure happiness. The moment when they experience what it feels like to be a teenager. I want to tell you that you are seen, you are heard, and you belong.

I remember the verse at the end of the Hamilton screenplay that says, "Who lives, who dies, who tells your story." That one verse holds much power as to who is chosen to

make sure the voices of the unheard are truly represented each day. "For with great power, great responsibility is given" (James 3:1-8).

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What is your age?
2. What gender do you identify as?
3. Which school are you currently attending in Bullitt County Public School?
4. In what grade are you enrolled this school year?
5. How long have you been a student in the school you are currently attending?
6. How long have you been a student in any Bullitt County Public School?
7. How would you describe your racial identity? Please elaborate.
8. Can you describe the first time you understood that you were black/African American?
9. What experiences have you encountered at school that you think would cause you to  
think differently about your race?
10. When you think of black/African American students/teachers in your school  
what  
words or experiences come to mind?
11. When you think of non-black/African American students/teachers in your  
school  
what words or experiences come to mind?
12. What kind of messages have you received from non-black students, teachers,  
and  
administrators?
13. How might those messages influence your interactions with others in your  
school  
that are from a different racial background?
14. How do you think those messages influence others' interactions with you and  
other  
students in your school from the same racial background?
15. How do you understand the differences among those around you based on  
your self-  
defined racial identity?
16. Please describe or give an example of how you might treat people differently  
based  
on their racial background.
17. Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you'd like to share with me?



## APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT ASSENT

### The Influence of Power on Racial Identity and Social Power: Learning While a Minority in a Bullitt County High School in Kentucky

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Michele Johnson. When a person is in a research study, they are called a “subject” or “participant”. Research studies are done when people want to find new ways to do things. You are invited because as an African American/Black student attending high school in Bullitt County Public School District, you may be able to offer some insight into your educational experiences of attending school with students from a predominantly White background.

#### **What will happen to me in this study?**

If it is okay with you and you agree to join this study, you will be asked to complete an interview with me answering 17 questions. I will ask you questions about your lived experiences in high school as it relates to your meaning of racial identity. Your interview will be audio recorded and all interviewees’ responses will be transcribed and analyzed. Email may also be used to contact you throughout the study; however, clarification of information will be done in person. If this is needed during the study a date and time will be scheduled in advance to ensure there are no interruptions during the instructional day.

#### **Can anything bad happen to me?**

In this study, nothing will physically happen to you. However, some of the conversations we discuss may cause you to feel uncomfortable or bring up some hurtful memories. You may also feel some anxiety about being interviewed. Please notify your parents immediately, if you feel the conversations are too traumatic for you to deal with.

#### **Can anything good happen to me?**

While there are no direct benefits to your participation in this study. Your experiences will help me understand how minority students' educational experiences influence their racial identity. Your participation may help implement additional programming and support for students of color.

#### **Will anyone know I am in the study?**

Your family, the researcher and the research team will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

#### **What happens if I get hurt?**

If you feel you are being hurt in any way during this research study, your parents have been given specific information on what to do.

**Who can I talk to about the study?**

If you have any questions about the study or any problems to do with the study you can contact the study investigator at 502-572-0155 or email me at [m0tay117@louisville.edu](mailto:m0tay117@louisville.edu) . You may also contact Ron Sheffield at 757-879-8872 or email at [ron.sheffield@louisville.edu](mailto:ron.sheffield@louisville.edu).

**What if I do not want to do this?**

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. It is up to you. You can choose to participate now and change your mind later if you want, or you can say no right now. You can also ask all the questions you want before you decide. If you want to quit after you are already in this study, you can tell the study investigator and they will discuss it with your parents.

You have been told about this study and know why it is being done and what you have to do. Your parent(s) have agreed to let you be in the study. If you have any questions you can ask the research investigator and research team at any time.

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_____ Printed Name of Participant Signed	_____ Signature of Participant	_____ Date
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\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Parent/Guardian

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_____ Printed Name of Investigator	_____ Signature of Investigator	_____ Date Signed
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## APPENDIX C: PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMED CONSENT

The Influence of Power on Racial Identity and Social Power: Learning While a Minority  
In a  
Bullitt County High School in Kentucky

### **Parental Consent**

#### **INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE:**

Dear Parent,

My name is Michele Johnson; I am working under the direction of Prof. Ron Sheffield, in the

College of Education at the University of Louisville. I am a doctoral student at the University of Louisville. I am conducting a research study about racial identity. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information that will help you decide if you will give consent for your child to participate in this research.

#### **KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY:**

The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether you want your child to be a part of this study. This study aims to examine the influence of power on racial identity and social awareness of minority high school students in Bullitt County, Kentucky. I expect that your child will be in this research study for only the time of the interview. I do not anticipate any risks to your child, but some kids might have anxiety about being interviewed. I want to assure you that there are no right or wrong answers. Email may also be used to contact your child throughout the study; however, clarification of information will be done in person. If this is needed during the study, a date and time will be scheduled in advance to ensure there are no interruptions during the instructional day.

#### **STUDY PURPOSE:**

This study aims to understand the influence of power on racial identity and social awareness of minority high school students in Bullitt County, Kentucky. The research will come from the student perspective of those attending high school with students predominantly from another racial background.

#### **NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:**

If you agree to participate, your child will be one of 12 participants who will be participating in this research.

#### **PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:**

If you agree for your child to participate in the study, she or he will participate in an individual interview in which I will ask your child to respond verbally to 17 questions about their lived educational experience that shapes their understanding of their racial identity, understanding of power and social awareness of others. I will audio record the interview in order to conduct an analysis of all interviewee responses later. The interview will take place at school in the conference room and should take approximately 45 minutes to an hour, depending on how detailed your child's responses are. Email may also be used to contact your child throughout the study; however, clarification of information will be done in person. If this is needed during the study, a date and time will be scheduled in advance to ensure they are no interruptions during the instructional day.

**RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES:**

There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study. These include: The child may be uncomfortable answering the interview questions and the time the child spends for participating in the study might be considered an inconvenience.

**SAFEGUARDS:**

To minimize these risks and inconveniences, the following measures will be taken: The child can skip any questions that he or she feels uncomfortable answering during the interview. The child may skip any activity as part of the research and/or intervention. The interviews may be scheduled at a time convenient to the child and at a private place.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. We will protect your child's privacy to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your child's name will not be made public.

Once your information leaves our institution, we cannot promise that others will keep it private.

Your child's information may be shared with the following:

- The sponsor and others hired by the sponsor to oversee the research
- The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Protection Program Office, Privacy Office, others involved in research administration and research and legal compliance at the University, and others contracted by the University for ensuring human participants' safety or research and legal compliance
- The local research teams
- Researchers at other sites participating in the study
- People who are responsible for research, compliance and HIPAA/privacy oversight at the institutions where the research is conducted
- Applicable government agencies, such as:
  - Office for Human Research Protections

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:**

Your child’s participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline participation at any time. You may also withdraw your child from the study at any time; there will be no penalty. It will not affect your child’s grade, treatment/care, etc. Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Attached to this document are the research questions your child will be asked during the interview.

**BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:**

Although there may be no direct benefit to your child, the possible benefit of your child’s participation is to help the school(s) and teachers to engage in reflection on how power can influence a student’s racial identity and social awareness of others.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Since participation in this study is voluntary, the alternative to participating is to choose not to participate. As the parent/guardian, you are welcome to attend the session with your child. However, if you are unable to attend, someone (district administrator) will be near to help supervise your child. Please select from the options below:

- Yes, I would like to attend the interview session with my child.
- No, I would not like to attend the interview session with my child, however, I would like for a district administrator to supervise my child once the interview session is complete.

School Location	Date	Time
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**U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Funded Studies**

Because this school system receives funding from the DOE, we are required to tell you the following information.

The information we collect from the education or study records of you or your child may only be used to meet the purposes of the study as stated in this consent. We will conduct this study in a manner that does not allow identification of you or your child by anyone other than study team members or others who may have a legitimate reason to know. All instructional materials or survey instruments used for the research, including teachers' manuals, films, tapes, or other supplementary instructional material used in connection with this study, are available for you to see before the study begins if you ask to see it. If you want to see any of this information, please contact Michele Johnson, at (502)572-0155 and they will give you a date and time when it will be available for you to review. Once we have completed this study, we are required by the U.S. Department of

Education to destroy or return to the school system all personally identifiable information when no longer needed for the purposes of the study. We expect this study to last for no more than one year, and we will destroy or return the information to the school system by July 1, 2021.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

If you have questions about the study, you can ask me now or anytime during the study. You can also call me at (502)572.0155 or e-mail me at [m0tay117@louisville.edu](mailto:m0tay117@louisville.edu). You may also contact Dr. Ron Sheffield the Principal Investigator, by phone at (757) 879-8872 or by email [ron.sheffield@louisville.edu](mailto:ron.sheffield@louisville.edu).

If you have any questions about your child’s rights as a participant in this research or if you feel your child has been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at the University of Louisville (502)852-5188 or by email: [hspofc@louisville.edu](mailto:hspofc@louisville.edu). You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

**Acknowledgment and Signatures**

This document tells you what will happen during the study if you permit your child to take part. Your signature and date indicate that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to permit your child to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which your child is entitled by signing this informed consent document though you are providing your authorization as outlined in this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

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Participant Name (Please Print)

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Parent/Guardian Name (Please Print)	Signature of Parent	Date
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Printed Name of Person Explaining Consent Form	Signature of Person Explaining	Date
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Signed Consent Form (If other than the Investigator)

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Printed Name of Investigator (PI, Sub-I, or Co-I)	Signature of Investigator (PI, Sub-I, or Co-I) Date
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## APPENDIX D: ADULT CONSENT FORM

The Influence of Power on Racial Identity and Social Power: Learning While a Minority  
In a  
Bullitt County High School in Kentucky

### **Adult Consent**

#### **INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE:**

Dear Participant,

My name is Michele Johnson; I am working under the direction of Prof. Ron Sheffield, in the

College of Education at the University of Louisville. I am a doctoral student at the University of Louisville. I am conducting a research study about racial identity. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information that will help you decide if you will give consent to participate in this research.

#### **KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY:**

The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether you want to be a part of this study. This study aims to examine the influence of power on racial identity and social awareness of minority high school students in Bullitt County, Kentucky. I expect that you will be in this research study for only the time of the interview. I do not anticipate any risks to you, but you may have anxiety about being interviewed. I want to assure you that there are no right or wrong answers. I will offer the opportunity for interviewees to read the transcript of their interview to ensure transparency and integrity. Email may also be used to contact you throughout this study; however, clarification of information will be done in person.

#### **STUDY PURPOSE:**

This study aims to understand the influence of power on racial identity and social awareness of minority high school students in Bullitt County, Kentucky. The research will come from the student perspective of those attending high school with students predominantly from another racial background.

#### **NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:**

If you agree to participate, you will be one of 12 participants who will participate in this research.

#### **PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:**

If you agree to participate in the study, you will participate in an individual interview in which I will ask you to respond verbally to 17 questions about your lived educational experience that shape your understanding of your racial identity, understanding of power and social awareness of others. I will audio record the interview in order to conduct an analysis of all interviewee responses later. The interview will take place at school in the conference room and should take approximately 45 minutes to an hour, depending on how detailed your responses are.

**RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES:**

There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study. These include: The participant may be uncomfortable answering the interview questions and the time the participants spend for participating in the study might be considered an inconvenience.

**SAFEGUARDS:**

To minimize these risks and inconveniences, the following measures will be taken: The participant can skip any questions that he or she feels uncomfortable answering during the interview. The participant may skip any activity as part of the research and/or intervention. The interviews may be scheduled at a time convenient to the participant and at a private place.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. We will protect your privacy to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public.

Once your information leaves our institution, we cannot promise that others will keep it private.

Your information may be shared with the following:

- The sponsor and others hired by the sponsor to oversee the research
- The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Protection Program Office, Privacy Office, others involved in research administration and research and legal compliance at the University, and others contracted by the University for ensuring human participants' safety or research and legal compliance
- The local research teams
- Researchers at other sites participating in the study
- People who are responsible for research, compliance and HIPAA/privacy oversight at the institutions where the research is conducted
- Applicable government agencies, such as:
  - Office for Human Research Protections

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline participation at any time. You may also withdraw yourself from the study at any time; there will be no penalty. It will not affect your grade, treatment/care, etc. Likewise, if you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

**BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:**

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation is to help the school(s) and teachers to engage in reflection on how power can influence a student's racial identity and social awareness of others.



**ALTERNATIVES:**

Since participation in this study is voluntary, the alternative to participating is to choose not to participate.

**U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Funded Studies**

Because this school system receives funding from the DOE, we are required to tell you the following information.

The information we collect from the education or study records of you or your child may only be used to meet the purposes of the study as stated in this consent. We will conduct this study in a manner that does not allow identification of you or your child by anyone other than study team members or others who may have a legitimate reason to know. All instructional materials or survey instruments used for the research, including teachers' manuals, films, tapes, or other supplementary instructional material used in connection with this study, are available for you to see before the study begins if you ask to see it. If you want to see any of this information, please contact Michele Johnson, at (502)572-0155 and they will give you a date and time when it will be available for you to review. Once we have completed this study, we are required by the U.S. Department of Education to destroy or return to the school system all personally identifiable information when no longer needed for the purposes of the study. We expect this study to last for no more than one year, and we will destroy or return the information to the school system by July 1, 2023.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

If you have questions about the study, you can ask me now or anytime during the study. You can also call me at (502)572.0155 or e-mail me at [m0tay117@louisville.edu](mailto:m0tay117@louisville.edu) . You may also contact Dr. Ron Sheffield the Principal Investigator, by phone at (757) 879-8872 or by email [ron.sheffield@louisville.edu](mailto:ron.sheffield@louisville.edu) .

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at the University of Louisville (502)852-5188 or by email: [hsppofc@louisville.edu](mailto:hsppofc@louisville.edu). You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

**Acknowledgment and Signatures**

This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature and date indicate that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document though you are providing your authorization as outlined in this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

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Participant's Name (Please Print) Signed	Signature of Participant	Date
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Printed Name of Person Explaining Consent Form Date Sign Consent Form (if other than the Investigator)	Signature of Person Explaining
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Printed Name of Investigator (PI, Sub-I, or Co-I) Date	Signature of Investigator (PI, Sub-I, or Co-I)
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APPENDIX E: INVITATION LETTER

**Initial Email/Invitation Participant Letter**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

My name is Michele Johnson and I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled “The Influence of Power on Racial Identity and Social Power: Learning While a Minority in a Bullitt County High School in Kentucky.” So that you are aware, this study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the Ed. D. in Educational Leadership and Organizational Development through The University of Louisville. I will be serving as the co-investigator in this study (502.572.0155, or [m0tay117@louisville.edu](mailto:m0tay117@louisville.edu) ). My Doctoral Committee Chair and Principal Investigator is Dr. Ronnie Sheffield (757-879-8872, or [ron.sheffield@louisville.edu](mailto:ron.sheffield@louisville.edu)). You are being asked to volunteer as a participant because you are an African American student in a Bullitt County Public high school and I believe that you could offer great insight into the lived educational experience of a minority student.

If you choose to participate in this study, it will include an interview conversation with me one on one that should last between 45 minutes to one hour. This interview will take place during the school day in a secure location away from distractions. I will record the interview via a tape recorder to ensure thoughts are captured. I will also be taking written notes during the interview. Email may also be used to contact you throughout the study; however, clarification of information will be done in person. Participation in this study is voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating or withdrawing from the study.

If you are interested and would like more information, please plan to meet with me on the following day and time:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 502.572.0155 or email me at [m0tay117@louisville.edu](mailto:m0tay117@louisville.edu) .

I look forward to meeting you soon!

Michele Johnson

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Michele Johnson-Gause  
Address: 7612 Avalon Garden Dr  
Louisville, KY 40228  
DOB: St. Louis, MO- October 31, 1984

**Education:** Ed.D., Educational Leadership & Organizational Development,  
University of Louisville  
2020-2023

M.A., Counseling,  
Lindenwood University  
2009-2012

B.A., Sociology,  
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville  
2003-2009

### **Work Experience**

**Jefferson County Public Schools**  
Louisville, KY

April 2023-Present

**Position:** Middle School Counselor

Responsible for ensuring the social/emotional wellbeing of 300+ 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.

Worked to recover 125 failing 8<sup>th</sup> grade students into passing grade level status in a two-month timeframe. Helped to create new school master schedule that was based on data-driven results to ensure all students' academic needs are met for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year.

2023 **Bullitt County Public Schools**  
Shepherdsville, KY

October 2015-April

**Position:** Middle School Counselor

Responsible for providing a comprehensive school counseling program for 534 students grades 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>.

Provided individual and group counseling on an as need bases for all students. Taught classroom counseling lessons once a month based on student, parent, and teacher needs assessments. Served as mental health coach for staff, providing SEL techniques to use in classroom setting.

2015 **Saint Louis Public Schools**  
Saint Louis, MO

October 2012-May

### **Publications**

C., & Brydon-Miller, M., Hicks-Hawkins, R., Johnson, M., Jones, V.M., Wade, Woolridge, E.R. (2022). Harnessing the Affordances of Action Address the Challenges Of The Covid-19 Pandemic: Educational Leaders Take. Action Research Online. *Canadian Journal of Action Research*, 23 (2).  
Researchers to