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Organizational Culture and Its Impact on African American Teachers

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This article provides a descriptive analysis of how the organizational culture of schools and the cultural values that African American teachers bring into the school affect the professional experience of these teachers in schools where they are in the minority. The culture within an organization strongly influences how minorities will be treated by their European American counterparts. Because the majority establishes the work norms, there becomes a uniformity of rules and regulations with which people of color are expected to comply. Strong organizational cultures provide cues on how to behave and establish reinforcing expectations to influence organizational members.

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The personal experiences and professional education of teachers are two aspects that affect their routines and knowledge (Porter & Brophy, 1988) within their school environment. For teachers of color, part of their acculturation into a European American school requires that they acquire the necessary socialization patterns to understand their European American colleagues' codes of power. Teachers of color often are excluded and scrutinized by European American teachers who have minimal exposure to non-Anglo norms and values (Frierson, 1990). Because schools are based on normative theories of a European American culture, how do teachers of color in these cultural contexts assert their own values and beliefs?

This article provides a descriptive analysis of how the organizational culture of predominantly European American schools[1] and the cultural values that African American teachers bring into these schools affect their professional experiences where they are in the minority. The analysis of the data reveals three dominant themes that constitute the framework around which the findings are discussed. First, this study examines the performance pressures that the African American teachers experienced within their school environment and how they developed defense mechanisms to cope with their isolation and perpetual scrutiny of their abilities. Second, the analysis indicates that due to cultural differences between African American teachers and their European American counterparts, boundaries emerged with respect to their pedagogical approaches. Whereas the school culture supported more traditional pedagogical practices, which were not responsive to the academic needs of students of color, the African American teachers explored culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994) teaching strategies. Finally, the analysis reveals the entrapment of African American teachers into the role of the "Black expert." That is, the professional expertise of the African American teachers was limited to dealing with those issues that related to minority concerns.

Theoretical Framework

Organizational Culture

Organizational cultures are often influenced by how workers are socialized and how they fit within the organization's core values (Harquil & Cox, 1994). Because minorities are generally underrepresented in European American organizations, pivotal and peripheral norms are often established and enforced by the predominant culture (Cox & Finely-Nickelson, 1991). Thus, the majority culture constructs norms based on its own stereotypes and beliefs, resulting in barriers for minorities. Consequently, people of color are subjected to stereotypes, which may impede their professional advancement within the organization.

The culture within an organization strongly influences how minorities will be treated by their European American counterparts. Strong organizational cultures provide cues on how to behave and establish reinforcing

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expectations to influence organizational members (Cox, 1994). In these strong organizational cultures, minorities are required to conform to the values and norms of the majority culture with limited opportunities to assert their own beliefs. Because the majority establishes work norms, it establishes rules and regulations with which people of color are expected to comply.

Smart and St. John (1996) believe that strong organizational cultures are effective when there is congruence between the espoused beliefs and actual practices. Although many organizations may promote a commitment to hiring minorities, some are unwilling to support or facilitate minority members' transition to a majority organization. Cose's (1993) research notes that even if minorities are able to fit within the organization, they are never seen as individuals but as stereotypes of racial groups. Jablin (1987) asserts that small-scale socialization is often difficult for people of color to learn and to ascertain. Oftentimes, minorities in majority organizations do not have access to the informal networks that often develop in the workplace. As a result, many minorities feel isolated and believe that they are treated differently than their majority counterparts. Some people of color indicated that they are often excluded from social activities, scrutinized for their work, provided misinformation, and sabotaged in their work efforts by majority workers (Morrison, 1996).

Cox (1994) contends that group identities are central to how cultural diversity impacts behavior in organizations. He asserts that both phenotype identities (physical and visible observable differences of groups) and cultural group identities (shared norms and common social heritage) influence human behavior in organizations. In traditional, assimilation-oriented organizations, persons of phenotype groups that are different from the dominant group will have less favorable work experiences and career outcomes than persons from the same group. Within phenotype groups, there will be an inverse relationship between the amount of physical distinctiveness and career outcomes. In these organizations, minority group members are constantly under pressure to conform.

Organizational Culture and Acculturation

The theoretical premise for this study was to use Cox's (1994) research on group identities. His work was used as a broad overview to examine how workers from phenotype groups define themselves as well as how other groups view them. Two studies that examine issues of minority group identity within a majority group were used to frame the analysis for this study. These two studies include Cose's (1993) study of African Americans employed in majority organizations and Kanter's study (1977) of women in predominantly male organizations. Cose's (1993) study revealed that African Americans encountered difficult working environments that interfered with their well-being and their ability to position themselves within the organization. Many of these African Americans left their jobs because of the difficulties they faced working in organizations that are dominated by European Americans. Kanter's (1977) research on women employed in mostly Euro-

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pean American male organizations revealed that they had to cope with performance pressures that led to their entrapment within the organization.

Kanter's (1977) study on "tokens in the work place" indicates that the relative number of culturally different people in a group are seen as critical in shaping interaction dynamics. The authors are cognizant that the term *token* may carry negative and sometimes offensive connotations; however, in this paper the term is utilized as a way to frame the experiences of the participants in this study. Furthermore, it is a term that several of the study's participants used to describe their own workplace experiences.

Kanter's (1977) framework identified three perceptual tendencies that impact how under- represented individuals are perceived within organizations in which they are in the minority. The first perceptual tendency is that tokens have higher visibility than majority workers do. As a result, tokens are subject to performance pressures to ensure that they maintain the normative cues of the organization. Polarization or exaggeration of differences is the second perceptual tendency. The presence of a person bearing a different set of characteristics makes members of a majority group more aware both of their commonalities with and their differences from the token. There is a tendency to exaggerate the extent of these differences, especially because under-represented individuals are too few in number to prevent the application of familiar generalizations or stereotypes. Assimilation, the third perceptual tendency, reflects the stereotypical assumptions about tokens leading to status leveling and role entrapment. Kanter's three perceptual tendencies often create performance pressures where tokens become isolated and entrapped by the organization.

Cose (1993) interviewed African Americans who were employed in professional settings and encountered racism that interfered with their psychological well-being and their ability to position themselves within the organization. Cose's interviews revealed that many African Americans often experience the "dozen demons" that impact their psychological well-being. He contends that in the workplace, race takes on "special force." That is, employers search for specific assurances that the African Americans they hire have the qualities that allow them to blend in with other workers. Cose (1993) asserts that most African American workers experience coping issues because their fellow majority group members fail to acknowledge their status and contributions to the organization.

Using Cox's (1994) work on group identities in the workplace was important to define how the organizational culture influences majority and non-majority groups' interactions. Given that Kanter's study was based on European American women, it was limited in explaining some of the racial undertones voiced by the teachers in our study. The use of Cose's (1993) work complemented Kanter's (1977) research on tokens and provided a comprehensive foundation for analysis of the data (see Table 1).

Although the theoretical framework for this study was grounded in the organizational literature, it is important to highlight several studies that have contributed to the understanding of culture in schools and how that has

Table 1
Profile of Participants

Jane Smith: She was a first-year teacher at the district. She was a first-grade teacher with little exposure to a European American school. She grew up in the African American community and attended the local HBC. Jane did her student teaching in the city and felt very comfortable about her teaching. She took the job because of the district's reputation and their salary scale for beginning teachers.

Jackie Jones: She was a veteran teacher who taught in her European American district for 20 years. She had taught in mostly European American schools before coming to this district. However, she grew up within the African American community and also attended an HBC for her teacher preparation. She was a middle-school math teacher. She cited the reason for remaining with the district was as it was close to her home and paid well.

Sue Brown: Most of her teaching career was in European American schools. While she had only been with this district for five years, she had previously taught in another European American district for 10 years. She, like the other participants, grew up within the city and attended the HBC. Prior to high school, she had little association with the European American community. She also elected to teach in the district because of its progressive reputation and its salary and benefits. She was a business education teacher at the high school.

Sandi Davis: While she grew up within the African American community, she attended a private Catholic high school in the city that was well integrated. She also attended the HBC for her teacher preparation. The district hired her as a first-grade teacher. She has been with the district for 12 years. She originally applied to the city schools, but was informed there were no openings.

Mary Rogers: She grew up in an integrated suburb near the city and attended mostly integrated settings. Her teaching degree was from the HBC, and she did her student teaching in the suburban districts. When she completed her student teaching, the district hired her to teach English at the secondary level.

Rita Morgan: She, much like the other participants, grew up in the city and attended the HBC in the city. Her first teaching job was with this district, and she has remained for the past six years. She was the only African American teacher in her building and cited her first year as horrendous, but felt the need to remain at her school.

Julie Owens: She grew up in the African American community and attended the HBC for her teaching preparation. She has been with this district for 10 years teaching at the elementary level. The district offered her the position after she had completed her student teaching.

influenced teachers' pedagogical practices. Ladson-Billings (1994) and Foster (1997) articulate the significant role of culture in the educational experiences and success of African American students. Hollins' (1982) study of Marva Collins further illuminates the cultural congruence between the curriculum and students' cultural experiences outside the school. King (1991) also notes the emancipatory pedagogical practices of African American teachers who attempt to combat student alienation. Finally, Irvine (1990) examines how minority teachers are cultural translators and intercessors for African American students. These studies note that the teachers' cultural

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sensitivity translates into "culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings, 1994) peda-gogical practices, creating conditions where African American students will thrive.

Additional studies that examine cultural differences in schools also have contributed to the understanding of the importance of culture in schools. Metz's (1978; 1986) studies of racial desegregation in schools examine the influence of culture on school participants. In addition, Wells and Crain's (1997) study of African American students in white suburban schools re-vealed how some European American teachers resented the voluntary trans-fer program which resulted in tensions between students of color and teachers. Those teachers who were against the program were often the same teachers who also had negative feelings toward their jobs and students. Finally, Valenzuela (1999) revealed that schools with populations of linguis-tically diverse students often maintain colonial relationships in which earlier beliefs systems and cultural relationships are upheld, resulting in students' struggles in these environments. This lack of cultural sensitivity in both suburban and urban schools is a factor that the African American teachers we interviewed identified as a hindrance to their professional development. In addition, the success of the few minority students in these schools was adversely affected.

In this particular study, the theoretical frame of embedded intergroup theory was used to analyze the data in order to advance the understanding of group identities of teachers of color in predominantly European American schools. The significance of intergroup theory for understanding individual identity helps to conceptualize the effects of diverse identities within a larger organizational context (Nkomo & Cox, 1996). Embedded intergroup theory deals with general processes governing the operation of groups that coalesce in a wide range of specific circumstances (Watts, 1994). Key issues of inter-group theory related to issues of diversity include: (a) the circumstances that lead to the formation of groups, their boundaries, roles, and development cycle; (b) the effect of population membership, group membership, and intergroup dynamics in dealing with prejudices; and (c) problems of identity, power, conflict, and social comparisons in groups (Watts, 1994).

Use of this theory was a way to explicitly define and measure group identity of individuals and address the relevance of social categorization by others to one's group identity. Watts (1994) believes that intergroup theory assists groups in anticipating issues that may emerge and can help profes-sionals to creatively manage the conflicts within heterogeneous groups. Ac-cording to Nkomo and Cox (1996) complexities of examining issues of diversity in organizations result in an expansive concept aimed at under-standing the multidimensional structure and effects of differences in orga-nizations. Therefore, the theoretical framework for studying diverse identities in organizations, which lies at the heart of this study, suggests the need to move beyond traditional modes of thinking about group differences (Nkomo & Cox, 1996). The multiple theories used to examine these African American teachers' experiences reveal the complexity of the topic in how

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teachers of color perceive the organizational culture of their mostly European American schools.

Methodology

Data Collection

This was a qualitative study (Merriam, 1988) which used intensive open-ended interviews and follow-up interviews for data collection. Key respondents were selected and questioned for two successive interviews. The participants in this study were identified because there is considerable literature on African American teachers' pedagogy (Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; King, 1991; Irvine, 1990) to make comparisons between African American and European American teachers. Seven African American teachers from mostly European American suburban/desegregated schools were interviewed for this study. (These participants and their districts are discussed later in the paper.) Questions for the interviews focused on perceptions, experiences, and relationships between African American teachers, school administrators, colleagues, parents, and students. Four personnel directors from predominantly European American suburban school districts that surround a large urban metropolitan area were contacted regarding their district's willingness to participate in this project. All four districts agreed to participate and provided the names, addresses, and phone numbers of their African American teachers. As a way to make the initial contact, the researchers sent a letter about the project to all African American teachers in the four districts. The teachers were asked to contact the researchers if they were willing to participate in the study.

Initial contacts with African American teachers focused on their interest in the project, background, experiences, and relationships with their colleagues and principal. This first contact was used to focus the inquiry at the single-case level of analysis (Merriam, 1988). Secondary interviews were conducted to further investigate the initial themes that became apparent from the first contact. All of the interviews were taped and later transcribed.

Data Analysis

A qualitative thematic strategy of data analysis was employed to organize and to make judgments about the meaning of the data. This inquiry process led to a single-case level of analysis whereby the findings were aggregated to incorporate a thematic approach. This process allowed important themes and categories to emerge inductively from the data across cases. The findings from the interviews were clustered by key themes across schools and single cases. The data were analyzed using what Conrad (1982) calls a *constant comparative method*, which compared the research on embedded intergroup theory with the African American teachers' perceptions of their schools. By comparing data from this study with research conducted by Cox

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Table 2
Themes and Sub-Themes: Organizational Culture and Acculturation

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I. Performance Pressures

   Coping with Automatic Notice–African American teachers placed under scrutiny by their European American colleagues, parents, and the principal.

   Symbolic Consequences and Isolation–Teachers as representatives of their race resulting in isolation.

   Discrepant Characteristics–The need for teachers to prove their abilities and accomplishments.

   Cultural Switching–A process through which African American teachers adjusted to and negotiated the norms of the majority school culture.

II. Boundary Heightening

   Pedagogical Mismatch–Differences in instruction, classroom management, and expectations between majority and African American teachers.

   Negative Stereotypes–Views that European American teachers held about their African American students.

   Pigeonhole Effect–Being perceived as the "Black expert."

III. Role Entrapment

   Stereotyped Role Induction–Hiring the "Right" kind of Black

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(1994), Cose (1993), and Kanter (1977), the researchers were able to establish a theoretical framework for understanding how group identities in organizations affect the relationships among teachers of color and European American teachers. The findings from this study closely followed themes that evolved from Kanter's (1977) study of women in male-dominated corporations. Cultural switching, an additional theme not found in Kanter's work, developed from our data. This theme was used to define how African American teachers experienced cultural incongruity between their cultural norms and values with those of the European American schools (see Table 2 for key themes and subthemes).

As a way to bring about a collective interpretation in the data analysis, the researchers perceived it was important for readers to understand the complexities in collecting and analyzing cross-cultural research. Stanfield (1993) argues that there are ethical considerations in researching people of color because of cultural, class, and gender differences, and that such research requires a special sensitivity about these discrepancies. Furthermore, researchers in mainstream disciplines rarely consider how their own racial identities influence their interpretations (Stanfield, 1993). For this project, a European American researcher completed the interviews with the African American teachers. The analysis was a collaborative endeavor between the European American researcher and a colleague of color. In this cross-cultural analysis each researcher analyzed the data separately to ensure a reliable coding system (Merriam, 1988). Discussions between the researchers about the differences in the cross-cultural interpretations of these participants' experiences were a way to establish a reliable and trustworthy interpretation of the findings (Merriam, 1988).

This study was conceived as an exploratory study to investigate how African American teachers perceive the organizational culture of a European American suburban school, and how that influences their group relationships with European American teachers. Given the restricted focus of this study, the authors identified a number of possible limitations. Although the pool of subjects was small and may not be generalizable to all schools, the participants' experiences and perceptions provided much commonality in terms of themes and findings. However, this study does provide an in-depth examination of patterns of experiences in a few sites to help us examine similar contextual configurations as they play out elsewhere.

While the findings presented in this article were based on the African American teachers' self-reports, many of the participants had taught in these schools for many years and had similar experiences across districts and schools. The study was limited only to African American teachers and did not include their European American colleagues. It is not the intention of the authors to misrepresent and to perceive the European American teachers as one undifferentiated group, who are all similar in their relationships with African American teachers. The authors are cognizant of the complexity that exists within this group and are cautious about portraying European American teachers as monolithic. The authors are equally concerned, however, about representing the voices of the African American teachers in a manner that captures their experiences and perceptions. This study seeks to provide further understanding of how the participants in this study perceive their relationships with European American colleagues. Consequently, additional studies of European American teachers' perceptions are also needed to determine the complexity of the balance of racial power in relation to the number of teachers of color in these contexts.

Data Sources

Districts. This study took place in small predominantly European American suburban districts that participated in the desegregation plan. These suburban school districts surrounded a large Midwest metropolitan area.[2] European American schools have many cultures across and within the schools; therefore, it is important to define these districts' culture of whiteness to provide an understanding of the context in which these schools were located. The schools that were examined in this study were situated in four districts that were extensions of the more affluent metropolitan region. These districts were recognized as having the most desirable elementary and secondary schools in the area. Although the suburban school districts were acclaimed for their academic superiority and excellent resources, the neighboring inner-city districts did not share this glowing reputation. In their quest to receive what they perceived as a high-quality education, the inner-city students, the majority of whom were African American, participated in the interdistrict desegregation program.[3] The wealthier suburban districts where this study took place received additional state funding to accept the students

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from the inner-city schools. The overwhelming majority of the students and teachers at the suburban schools were European American, with only a smattering of students of color, and even fewer teachers and administrators of color. In fact, the superintendents of these school districts noted that they "tried to hire teachers of color, but they were not qualified enough."

There were few African American students who lived in these districts. Most of the African American students transferred from the city's desegregation program. The suburban districts participating accepted less than 25% of minority students from a court-mandated desegregation program. The ratio of teachers of color to the number of European American teachers in these suburban districts was less than 4%. However, the schools where these teachers were interviewed differed by size, number of other teachers of color, school levels, and organization.

Because of the limited number of African American teachers in these schools, all participants who contacted the researchers were interviewed. The researchers did not communicate with those teachers who chose not to participate in the project. The teachers who were included in this study varied in years of teaching in the predominantly European American schools. Only 1 participant had less than 1 year of teaching in a European American school. Two veteran African American teachers who were interviewed taught in a European American school for 12–20 years. The other 4 participants had been with their schools for 5–years. The 7 participants had taught and average of 8.4 years in these schools. Four teachers were from the elementary grades, 2 were at the secondary level, and only 1 participant taught at the middle school. All of the teachers attended a historically Black college for their teacher preparation. Of the 7 teachers, 6 grew up in the African American community whereas only 1 lived in a suburban, integrated neighborhood. Only a few of the participants had taught in urban schools where African American students were in the majority. Most of these participants' teaching experiences were in these European American suburban schools. The teachers stated that they came to their mostly European American districts because they were committed to serving African American students who transferred there from the city's schools. They also stated that these districts paid well and there were resources that were not available to them if they taught in the inner-city schools. (See Table 1 for a profile of the African American participants.)

Findings

Data analysis revealed three major themes, each comprised of a number of subthemes as represented in Table 2. In the discussion of the findings that follows, the three themes examined are performance pressure, boundary heightening, and role entrapment. The ensuing discussion reflects the perceptions and views of African American teachers about their predominantly European American work environment and colleagues. What will become evident and notable in this discussion is the pervasive power of racial cat-

egories in erasing individual variability and complexity. Inasmuch as the authors recognize the diversity and individual complexity that exists among both the African American teachers and their European American counterparts, the data from the participants in this study pointed to an undifferentiated treatment by the European American peers.

Performance Pressures

The African American teachers in this study reported that they experienced the pressures of automatic notice due to their high visibility within the organization. Kanter (1977) argues that acceptance in a group and the opportunity to achieve one's potential are amplified when there is an unequal representation of both minority and majority group members. In the manner of Kanter's (1977) tokens, these teachers were often the subject of conversation, questioning, gossip, and careful scrutiny. As a way of coping with performance pressures, these teachers developed strategies to address the high degree of visibility they encountered in their schools. They noted that they often used strategies of isolation to minimize their differences.

The following four subthemes captured the essence of the teachers' experiences with performance pressures: (a) coping with automatic notice; (b) symbolic consequences and isolation; (c) discrepant characteristics; and (d) cultural switching.

Coping with Automatic Notice

The African American teachers in this study had to deal with automatic notice because they were either the only teacher of color or one of two in their school setting. These teachers could not remain anonymous when all of their actions were public. It was impossible for these individuals to have any privacy because they were always under review by the European American counterparts, parents, and the principal. As a way to cope with their concerns about automatic notice, they stated that they had to have a strong sense of purpose for wanting to remain at their school. Their reliance on a strong support system outside the school and the ability to connect to their cultural identity kept them grounded. The African American teachers' conceptualization of cultural identity aligns with Cox's research (1994) in which he conceives of this idea as two pronged. On the one hand, *cultural identity profile* refers to the culture group(s) with which an individual identifies, whereas *identity strength* refers to the significance that an individual places on a given cultural group. These inter-related prongs constitute the essence of these teachers' sense of cultural identity.

Throughout the interviews, these teachers spoke openly about how their sense of who they were and a connection to their community were important in dealing with the automatic notice they encountered. It was apparent that the longer these participants remained in their school, the more they were able to cope with the over-observation that took place. That

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is, the teachers found a way to draw from their cultural identity and use it to transcend the negative effects of the dominant school culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The first-year teacher noted her sense of cultural identity but was unable to call upon it during difficult times. Those participants with 5–10 years of experience felt the stress of being scrutinized, so they developed coping mechanisms that allowed them to draw upon their identity to provide them with a sense of security. The African American teacher with 20 years of teaching experience spoke of her strong cultural identity that allowed her to keep focused and to detect institutional racism.

The participants with 5–10 years of experience relied heavily on their cultural identity as a security factor and were not intimidated by the normative structure of the school. In some cases, teachers believed that their ability to draw on their cultural identity gave them strength to cope with difficult European American students who at times challenged their reasons for teaching at the school. Teachers believed that the security of their cultural identity allowed them to deal with a strong organizational culture that had little exposure to African Americans. As this comment illustrates:

> The strange thing is when you think of yourself, you have these labels. My label is I am a Black woman. Sometimes it's harder dealing with the fact that because I am Black in an all-White school that I am dealt with differently. And I see the difference having taught in an all-Black school that I need to feel secure enough about my self-image that I don't have to cat walk down the street, and I don't have to talk like I don't belong where I am when I am here. My feelings still get hurt being here, but the environment I was raised in was so nurturing that once you get out of it you are strong enough. You have to be secure enough about yourself and that the standards you are setting are standards that not only are appropriate for your kids, but for all kids. You have to have a level of confidence that you have to pass on to not only your minority students, but to the other students as well.

Jane Smith, the recently hired African American teacher, cited her strong sense of cultural identity as a baseline to retain a sense of confidence and to decipher the norms and beliefs of her European American school. Unlike the other African American teachers, she felt uncomfortable expressing her voice because she was unsure how the European American teachers and students would accept her. She was troubled with her inability to balance who she was with the expectations that the school held for her. She felt confined by the perceptions of the European American teachers and was uncomfortable being herself. A comparison of the first-year teacher's comments to the other participants with 7–10 years of experience showed that she expressed a strong connection to her cultural group. Yet, she did not know how to draw on her prior experiences to negotiate the school's organizational culture. As she reflected,

> The other day I was really loud and I thought, "I'm that typical Black person." I am just trying to be myself. I am always saying to myself,

"don't lose your identity when you get out there." And I start doing that. People then say that's typical; that's how people act. You see that's one of the reasons why I sometimes can't be myself because I just want to be loose. And it's kind of hard because then you want to watch yourself to make sure you're not being loud or have White people say that's how Black people act.

Both Jackie Jones and Sandi Davis, who were veteran teachers, believed that their European American colleagues tried to test them, and if an African American teacher was not strong in her cultural identity and was unwilling to speak out, the faculty would prevent her from being successful. Both spoke of the conflict between asserting their cultural identity with learning how to cope with the assumption of deficiency by their European American colleagues. They believed that a strong sense of identity enabled them to define what they perceived as racist practices by the European American teachers. This cultural identity became a psychological armor that protected them and gave them a reality check of potential racial issues. By having a strong cultural identity, they were able to navigate the prejudices and deal with the low expectations that permeated their interactions with their European American colleagues. A strong cultural identity was needed so African American teachers did not appear vulnerable to their colleagues.

Symbolic Consequences and Isolation

The African American teachers' movements tended to have symbolic consequences, whereby these teachers not only represented themselves but also carried the burden of representing their race. Cox (1994) asserts that imbalanced group representation has serious consequences for non-majority group members, resulting in more stereotyping and subtle forms of discrimination. The African American teachers were often questioned by other teachers about racial stereotypes and their beliefs on racial matters. They often felt that their colleagues did not view them as "Black." They had to undergo a great deal of personal stress and had to expend additional energy to maintain personal relationships with the European American teachers. These individuals had to face partially conflicting and often contradictory expectations from their peers. They felt there was an expectation to agree with their colleagues about how to teach both European American and African American students. Because of their unwillingness at times to align themselves with the European American teachers, they often had to endure the stresses of social isolation as a strategy to ensure their place at the school. As this quote noted:

At lunch times I sit in my own room. I have a refrigerator and a microwave in my room. I just mainly want silence from teachers. So I close the door and heat up my lunch and have 30 minutes to myself. I guess they do say insensitive things. The reason I don't eat lunch with them is that I don't like discussing students over lunch. I don't

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> like to be negative. Because I keep myself positive, then I can func-
> tion. I like to exercise, listen to music, and I like to go to a movie. I
> just can't do it and if I am washed out then I have to go home and go
> to bed. I've learned how to pick my battles and then how to withdraw
> to maintain my sanity.

As longer-tenured teachers in European American schools, both Sandi and
Jackie stated they isolated themselves. They often ate lunch in their rooms
rather than spending their energies listening to racial slurs about minority
children by their colleagues. Also, by becoming socially disengaged they no
longer had to "bite their tongues" during faculty meetings when pedagogical
and discipline differences became apparent to them. These two teachers
experienced coping fatigue from their exchanges with European American
faculty. They stated that they employed a multitude of strategies to maintain
their peace of mind. They acknowledged that while they made attempts to
distance themselves from faculty, they continued to be advocates for the
African American students. They developed finely tuned defense mecha-
nisms such as withdrawing when the emotional costs were too high. A
precarious balance of using protective strategies in conjunction with a will-
ingness to address prejudices became their defense mechanisms.

The four participants with 5–10 years of experience stated that they
ignored racial slurs. These participants did not maintain the same social
distance as the longer-tenured African American teachers. These teachers
ignored comments but continued to address prejudices or to model better
practices for their European American counterparts. They often reflected on
their decisions whether to challenge their colleagues or to ignore controver-
sial issues. As evidenced, the longer an African American teacher remained
in the European American school, the more outspoken they became. Vet-
eran African American teachers tolerated less "racial talk" from their Euro-
pean American colleagues. In contrast, those participants with minimal
longevity were more willing to disregard their co-workers' racially motivated
questions and bear the burden of hearing complaints about teaching chil-
dren of color. As this quote reflects:

> So it's been a lot of different things, a lot of paths to cross, a lot of
> times where I had to grit my teeth, grin and bear it and just go on. But
> I felt like, going back to my first year, if I didn't stay then I couldn't
> make a way for someone else. . . . So ethnic jokes started to spread
> and then people felt comfortable or I became invisible to them at
> times and they wanted to say something about this Black person and
> they went with a negative term and I would call attention to it. So I
> had to assert myself to get more respect and make sure. I didn't do it
> in a combative way. It offends me greatly.

The first-year African American teacher struggled with how to cope in her
school. She was unable to handle the stereotypical questions about African
Americans. She stated on several occasions that she often felt that the Eu-

ropean American teachers tried to intimidate her. She felt her only recourse was to burst into tears. She often questioned her decision to remain at the school. She talked about how her principal made her feel incompetent when she accidentally sent a paper home with a sticker placed upside down. She never spoke of strategies she used to deal with low expectations and the anger from the European American teachers that she was an affirmative-action hire. She stated that she eventually gained enough confidence to defy her colleagues and parents. As she recalled in her interview:

> She was one of my more boisterous parents. And I think she wanted to intimidate me. I mean the night before I was just so upset with these teachers and parents that I just cried to myself. I pulled myself together and told them that if they did not like the way I teach I'm sorry. I think they really wanted to get me to a point where they could tell me what to do and how to do it. My principal told me she would support me, but she pulled a child out of my class. But then she [the principal] told me she was not pulling any more children from my class. And in a way I wish that she had just pulled them out and that would be one less headache for me.

Throughout these interviews, the African American teachers cited problems of dealing with public scrutiny and the challenges of representing their race. The longer these teachers remained at the school, the more they developed defense strategies that were meant to isolate them and limit their contacts with the other teachers. Relatively new African American teachers soon became adept at learning not to react to insensitive comments. Social isolation both within and outside the school environment became an important strategy to cope with the burden of being an African American in a predominantly European American school. These teachers were very specific in how they could maintain a positive self-image, yet retain their value as a teacher. Strategies of isolation and keeping a low profile helped them endure at their school.

Discrepant Characteristics

The teachers reported that they had to establish themselves as "qualified" teachers and had to prove their worth to their colleagues. This is a phenomenon that Cose (1993) refers to as *dilemma of the qualified*, where African Americans have to justify their skills and abilities to ensure their place within the majority group. These participants encountered European American teachers who believed they were affirmative-action hires. Much like Kanter's (1977) participants, these teachers felt their visibility often overshadowed their accomplishments. The African American teachers reported that colleagues made them feel as if they were defined by their color and not their teaching ability. As this quote represents:

> I thought I am going into a staff of teachers where they know I'm being hired because I am Black and that special concessions were

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> being made. And I really did not want my peers looking down on me or think negatively. Then having to put up with the crap that goes with your peers putting you down. I just don't trust these people so you are always wondering. Yet, when they have a difficult Black child or a problem with a Black parent, I become the person they come to.

The elementary teachers, Jane, Sandi, Rita, and Julie, reported that if both their African American and European American students performed well on tests or projects, their colleagues often sabotaged their efforts. Sandi Davis reported that her reputation to teach difficult students became known to the school's parents. The principal informed her that many parents requested her, because her students had improved their reading ability. Because of parents' recognition, she encountered situations where European American teachers pulled their students from her room if their academic performance improved. Rita Morgan noted that as she walked in the hallways, both African American and European American students often made overt gestures seeking her recognition. She stated that the European American teachers in response would either ignore her or discipline students for their noisy behavior.

African American teachers who taught at the elementary schools believed that their presence and significant student achievements caused additional problems for them. The teachers all stated that their European American colleagues were not culturally responsive to the "deseg" children. As a result, these teachers felt there was an unwritten expectation that African American students were not to be favored nor given a different set of behavioral expectations. If an African American teacher did not adhere to similar philosophical beliefs about standards of behavior, he or she encountered additional consequences.

Cox (1994) states that leaders in corporations are pivotal in how issues of diversity are enacted within the organizational culture. He asserts that the problems of managing a diverse workforce become compounded because of the cultural ignorance of majority group leaders. For this particular study, principals in these schools were influential in establishing how African American teachers would be treated and accepted at the school. Participants expressed concern that their principals were very naive in handling racial tensions that occurred at the school. They expressed their opinions on how their principals needed to validate their teaching ability and "ready" the school for the possible negative reactions to hiring a teacher of color.

The elementary African American teachers noted the shock and dismay of parents' reactions when their European American children were placed in their rooms. This resulted in some parents asking for transfers, causing a stir in the school with implications that the African American teachers were unqualified. When Sandi Davis approached her principal about a concern over a racist parent, the principal could not understand and refused to mediate the situation. Sue Brown stated that the principal's reputation was at stake and not hers. Her principal informed her, like the other African American teachers, that the only reason she was hired was because she was

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"Black." Her principal then proceeded to inform her that he did not want to hear complaints about her teaching. In proving themselves as teachers and not affirmative-action hires, these teachers were expected to excel and be capable of carrying out the school's intent. Unfortunately, their physical presence often overshadowed their competence as teachers. As this quote reflects:

> We choose who we want, and I think a lot of times he [the principal] is trying to protect himself. He doesn't want too many in there [African Americans]. He's trying to protect himself; he has parents to deal with. And now that things are conservative, we are not ready for an African American principal. They can tap assistant principals' jobs because they handle the discipline problems. That is just the way it goes.

Cultural Switching

The African American teachers in this study experienced cultural dissonance between their cultural norms and values with those of their European American colleagues. This incongruency between the norms and values of these two groups of teachers necessitated cultural switching, a process through which African American teachers adjusted to and negotiated the norms of their European American school culture. As a result of a lack of other teachers of color in the workplace, these individuals experimented on a trial-and-error basis with how to develop a full repertoire of cultural understandings of the European American schools.

Analysis of the data indicated two distinct processes by which these participants developed strategies for interacting with European American teachers. Some African American teachers learned normative cues by being diplomatic learners who spent their time observing and testing their perceptions about their interactions with their colleagues. The other method was characterized as being direct, forthright, and assertive. As the African American teachers maneuvered this process of cultural switching, they were better equipped to protect themselves and to address prejudices they encountered.

All of participants except Mary Rogers grew up in the African American community and attended an historically Black college (HBC). However, even Mary believed that her integrated background did not ensure a successful transition to her school. As these participants entered their schools, they experienced cultural incongruency in knowing, understanding, and expressing their ideas about teaching with European American colleagues. All of the African American teachers found themselves constrained and unable to use social cues to navigate their school's institutional culture. Each participant described frustrations in understanding and embracing the cultural norms and values of their schools.

Many of the African American teachers felt they needed to be diplomatic learners and experimented slowly in how to assert themselves in ways that would be productive. Participants who adopted diplomatic strategies in their

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cultural switching were concerned with how they were perceived by the European American faculty and how they interacted with them socially and professionally. Their intent was to dispel stereotypical myths that often pervaded their conversations with these teachers. However, over time they became adept at asserting themselves without appearing as if they were "militant." These participants believed that keeping a low profile was important for their transition to the school. After an extended period, these participants developed more one-on-one relationships with some European American teachers, but they were still cautious in their interactions. As noted:

> Assimilation in the workplace is just another place where African Americans have to assimilate in order to play the game, to get where you want to go, or to fit in. If I were an African American in the school and I was Black power, and I said, let's hold a rally, or let's do a march, or why are you looking at me because I'm two minutes late? Is it because I am Black? How long would I be here? So you can't wear your anger and your mission on your shoulders. There is a way to make change and helping White people become more aware of things. But a riotous attitude or being aggressive doesn't work here. I learned by watching the faculty how to get your ideas across or help people to try to understand things better.

Those who used a more diplomatic process stated that they developed strategies to make their points known without intimidating the European American faculty. Some participants stated that they acquired cultivated responses to racially related questions. They also learned how to develop a body language that would not reveal their uneasiness in interacting with European American faculty. Usually within the first 2 years, they began to voice their opinions, knowing that the European American faculty would be more amenable to their suggestions.

In sharp contrast, the other African American teachers who used a more assertive approach in their cultural switching were more outspoken in their views. They challenged what they perceived as unfair and racist treatment of students. Some of the participants felt that being direct and speaking out in their interactions with European American faculty was essential to asserting themselves. By affirming their presence, they pushed their own beliefs and values. These strong individuals would not allow their colleagues to take advantage of them or to repress their sense of self. They interpreted their colleagues' cultural norms as racist, so they assumed a combative role. Two participants talked about how they told European American faculty members to change what they perceived as prejudicial practices or tendencies when teaching African American students. For these participants, making "your voice known" was important in learning cultural switching. Once their presence was established, they relaxed their guard but their suspicions about European Americans were always in the forefront.

European American teachers did not accept those African American participants who used the assertive approach. However, these individual

participants were less concerned with how they were perceived in learning the norms and values of their school. The veteran teacher, Jackie Jones, who used this strategy, stated she used defense mechanisms like eating her lunch alone or limiting her contacts with European American faculty. She often talked about being antagonistic and these difficulties became apparent in her relationships with faculty. As Jackie noted:

> One of the things that helped me during that first year of teaching, because I was thrust into a situation that I had never dealt with. . . . I was arrogant and cocky with the white faculty and parents. In fact, my principal asked me about it. And I looked at him and I said you are right. I have to be because I am the person in charge. New, non-tenured minority teachers do not want to take a chance on being flagged as a militant, but I did not let them see me as easy either.

It was interesting to note that the other more experienced teachers were unlike Jackie. The other veteran teachers felt that when they entered the school, they used a more subtle approach. The different ways of approaching their European American colleagues about school issues were often problematic among the more veteran participants. Although these individuals did not challenge the established norms all the time, they made their beliefs known. As noted in the following quote:

> For the first 5 years I did not know where I was. In a hole or a fog or just not understanding what was going on. I understood what was going on but not really knowing what to do. I used a direct approach but I did not see anything happen. They can't really say I did anything wrong because I got very good reviews. But now I am more relaxed with my faculty and less likely to make any issues.

Boundary Heightening

The second theme that emerged from the data is boundary heightening. Research suggests that cultural differences among minority and majority group members create a common bond among those with similar beliefs and values (Cox, 1994). This commonality establishes boundaries that separate those that are different. The African American teachers in this study experienced some differentiation from European American colleagues because the culture that these teachers brought with them informed their practice as teachers and guided their interactions with colleagues and students.

Because the African American teachers perceived the institutional culture of their school as not supportive to their use of culturally relevant practices, these participants could not effectively teach in ways that affirmed them. As a result, boundaries became apparent in areas of pedagogical practices and negative stereotypes that were conveyed about students of color.

Pedagogical Mismatch

The African American teachers all reported that there were differences between them and their peers in the area of pedagogical practices. There were

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differences in instruction, management practices, and academic expectations of their students. The African American teachers reported that they gave their students a clean start, developed individual behavioral plans, employed hands-on cooperative learning strategies, used alternative forms of assessment, and held one-on-one discussions with students. They reported that their European American colleagues perceived these "little extras" as giving students breaks. The elementary African American teachers spoke about using multicultural literature and exposing all students to cross-cultural literature. To help their African American students, the secondary African American teachers developed cultural apprenticeships for the students, assisted them through the maze of a secondary program, and often did one-on-one counseling. These are strategies similar to what Ladson-Billings (1994) refers to as *culturally relevant pedagogy.*

The pedagogical practices of the African American teachers were in sharp contrast to those described by Scofield (1989) in her study of teachers in desegregated middle schools, which employed a "color-blind" approach to their teaching. That is, the European American teachers in her study noted that they did not see race or color and taught all children the same. This perspective means that racial differences were not apparent in these teachers' understanding, which resulted in limiting inter-racial experiences that were supposed to occur in these schools. Wells and Crain's (1997) study also notes the same findings where teachers in suburban (desegregated) schools also used similar color-blind pedagogical practices.

In faculty meetings and personal conversations with European American colleagues, the African American teachers discussed and shared pedagogical strategies they used to improve African American students' academic outcomes. However, they reported that their European American colleagues believed that the only reason African American students did well in their classrooms was because of the racial affiliation and not related to their pedagogical practices. Participants noted that the European Americans teachers were not willing to explore similar pedagogical practices. These participants felt that because of the politics surrounding desegregation program and the district's legal responsibility to accept students of color, their European American colleagues were unprepared to teach these students. Because of the perceived racial tensions in these participants' buildings, African American teachers debated on how to approach their colleagues:

> I try to look at different ways of expressing and allowing them to show me their intelligence in different areas rather than test taking. I allow them to show me different ways in how they demonstrate their learning. The teachers here think I spend too much of my efforts in making sure these kids are successful. But that is the reason I am here—it is for them?

Another teacher noted that there were discussions at her school about strategies teachers should use to respond to the African American students in the district. She noted:

> The principal came in and wanted to know what they [the faculty] were doing to accommodate the Black learning style. And the reply was nothing and why should we? And I said [to the faculty] that's not true, that I use multiple strategies so all children can be successful. Yet, these teachers complain about these Black kids and how they don't learn and what a problem it is to teach them. I can't see where is the harm in using alternative methods.

The African American teachers reported that the greatest difference in comparison with their European American colleagues was in the area of discipline. Participants stated that the power and control of traditional management practices used by the European American teachers resulted in African American children being more aggressive. In comparison, these African American teachers stated they employed a flexible management style. They developed multiple strategies to deal with one-on-one behavior problems. Although this was time consuming, it proved beneficial in dealing with difficult student behaviors. The African American teachers also reported that they were often criticized if they did not punish the deseg children like the other European American students. As noted:

> Discipline and the way instruction was done in the city versus here— in the city the class sizes are larger and there are fewer opportunities for choices to be made. And then you come out here and there are smaller classes, more choices being made and you're gonna act out. The teacher would tell the students that by lunch time they had to have A, B, and C done. Because no one is making them do their work, they don't get anything done. And until they (African American students) learn the rules and the ropes, they would get into trouble. It takes the kids a good full school year to be "acclimatized." There is such a different set of expectations here for the Black children.

Negative Stereotypes

Both the elementary and secondary African American teachers reported that their European American colleagues' held negative beliefs about African American children. They concluded that their colleagues gained information about students of color through other European American teachers resulting in stereotypes. As a result, these participants reported that the European American teachers held low expectations for the deseg students, used unfair grading practices, and placed African American students in low-achieving classes. African American teachers reported that pedagogical practices of their counterparts resulted in attributional information that was subtly conveyed to African American children. Each participant explained that their focus was always on the child, while they noted that the European American teachers focused on their own needs. As one teacher reported:

> The grading practices of White teachers are so subtle. Some of it has to do with position and power. I deeply believe White teachers give

> themselves the privilege of giving African American kids lower grades, because their experience has been that the parent may not fight as hard. And their head set is that they are not as bright as the other kids. Black children here are adult shy and do not know how to brown-nose like the White children do. It makes a difference. When I looked at the remedial grouping, I saw they were all Black children. That's when I clearly saw color and how White teachers here place students. I had a hard time understanding why. Why are Black kids always the ones that are low? I then work with these children so they are successful, even the White children improve. It just goes to show you how biased these teachers are.

Pigeonhole Effect

Similar to Kanter's (1977) participants, these African American teachers experienced reminders that the only reason they were hired was because of their expertise on issues related to the desegregation program. Thus, they became the resident Black expert and felt they were hired to teach only the African American students. This is a phenomenon Cose (1993) referred to as *pigeonholing*, where minorities are needed because of their knowledge about other minorities.

The participants felt that the European American teachers failed to acknowledge differences that exist within members of one minority group. For example, the teachers discussed their interactions with African American students and the difficulties they experienced to gain the trust of some students. This was particularly true for those African American students who perceived the African American teachers as "sell outs." It was apparent that the European American faculty members were unaware of these trust issues and expected the African American teachers would be responsible for all African American students. Although the participants found the role as the Black expert meaningful, it also had its disadvantages. As Sandi Davis reflected:

> These teachers here think I know everything about Black children, but I never grew up in the city and have never experienced the difficulties these students have had. I have to gain the trust of these students because sometimes they think I am not an advocate for them. I have to go out of my way with some students to identify with them. Yet, the teachers expect me to have success with every Black student and I find that really troubling.

The African American teachers noted that their role as the resident Black expert absolved European American teachers from being culturally responsive to African American students. Several participants noted that when student placements were made, many African American students were placed in their rooms. Furthermore, European American teachers believed that unmanageable European American children would also benefit from having an African American teacher. Although these African American teachers stated,

"they were there for the students," they grew weary of complete ownership for minority causes. As noted:

> We were placing kids and we were trying to get a group. We didn't really know what kids would be best. And so when the teacher took the list down to the chief [the principal] he goes, "Well, just put all the Black ones in her room. Black folks like other Black folks." So this is the type of logic that I have to deal with. He's a Black problem child; put him in her room. Black teachers are supposed to be disciplinarians. "Put him in there, she can deal with it." It's just a lot of ignorance. I had a higher number of Black students in my room. I'd have four or five and everybody else would have one or two. After I was there a while, I said to the principal spread this out if we are gonna give them a nice experience here, then they shouldn't all be with me should they? A change was made right away, but only because I requested it.

As the minority spokespersons, they spent their time explaining to European Americans why "Black folk do what they do." Questions of why African American children did not make eye contact, why they always sit together, and why they wear their hair in a certain manner were continually presented to them. Participants often felt their role was to respond to European American teachers' questions about African American students. Although participants found the role as the Black expert meaningful, it also had its disadvantages. As noted:

> Part of the problems we are facing here at the school is that these teachers have no knowledge of their culture. And they [European American teachers] expected them to be like the majority culture. They wouldn't accept any slang talk at all. Even in children's private conversations, teachers have told them not to talk like that. It's a different language, and they need to use it.

As Black experts, they also served on curriculum committees and developed the multicultural activities. Many African American teachers stated they felt pressured to be involved in the Black History Month activities. The elementary participants were particular torn because they felt their colleagues wanted to do "just" enough activities to be "politically correct" but often did not incorporate their suggestions. As this comment reflects:

> Every time February comes it's like, "What are we going to do?" Every time it's Martin Luther King's birthday, "Well what ideas do you have?" And sometimes, I want to do things, but I don't want to do things because I am Black and it seems you should do them because you're Black. I talk about China in my room and I'm not Chinese. But I do these things because the kids should be exposed to all of the cultures. It's like they (the faculty) would readily accept another culture and do things, but don't want to do anything that deals with African Americans or Black culture at all. And that's what I had a hard time dealing with.

Role Entrapment

The third and final theme is role entrapment, which refers to the idea that in some work environments, majority group members believe that non-majority group members fit preexisting generalizations that force them into playing limited roles within the organization (Kanter, 1977). Therefore, the expertise and contributions of the minority group members are limited by the narrow vision of their majority colleagues. In this study, the African American teachers expressed role entrapment concerns. These teachers realized that the reason they were hired was to support the desegregation policies to attain racial balance in the suburban districts. Therefore, their contributions were limited by this restricted delineation of their expertise.

Stereotyped Role Induction

These participants stated that their districts were looking for African American teachers who were similar to the European American teachers. Three participants who had been with the district the longest thought the district hired "White"-looking African American teachers. In the early days, when districts were responding to hiring quotas of African American teachers, there was a progression to hiring fair-skinned minorities. Jackie Jones, a 20-year veteran, believed that at first the district hired very "White"-looking African American female teachers, then eventually moved to darker-looking African American women. As noted:

> The teachers started coming in. I did notice the district tended to hire . . . light-skinned Black people. I guess they sort of edged them in. I don't consider myself one, but maybe I don't look. . . . Maybe I look a little Hispanic. I'm not sure what they thought. . . . But anyway they didn't hire any dark-skinned Black teachers until a while passed and then they edged them in after that. I saw the progression—women first, faired-skinned, darker women, males. Seemingly that was the progression.

Mary Rogers stated that African American males were given closer scrutiny than the African American females. In this participant's experiences, she believed that many of the European American female teachers were often uncomfortable with having a Black male at their school. As she noted:

> Black males in the district are looked upon as fearful by female parents, and I think by some female teachers. It's one of those things that were really funny to see. Mr. Smith (another African American male at the school) was this tall, darker-skinned, Black handsome man, but I was surprised to hear how many White women talked openly about their feelings about him and his deep voice. Yet, when I talked to another White woman teacher she tells me how she is so afraid when she goes to bed at night that a Black man might rape her.

Sandi Davis also thought the district wanted African American teachers who would blend in and would be able to cross over to a European American school's values and beliefs. She believed that due to the European American teachers' limited exposure to minorities, districts did not hire African American teachers who would make them uncomfortable.

These African American teachers agreed that these districts hired a "safe Black." Outspoken African Americans who had an agenda of addressing racial inequities at a school were given either difficult working conditions or were isolated from other African American teachers. Those African Americans who understood the codes of power and the appropriate language and dress were more suited as the "token Black." As these comments reflect:

> A Black male who used to work in this district who was conscious to the depths . . . and very vocal. He ended up leaving because of that. At another school in this district they also had a Black male, very outspoken. I didn't see any problem (with him) but the school did.

Another participant concurred:

> There's a very small percentage of Blacks here who are outspoken. There is this hidden pressure to conform or they make life so difficult you have to leave to save your sense of purpose.

Conclusion

The exploratory study undertaken here suggests the prevalence of an organizational culture within European American schools, which defines instructional and management practices and influences how other cultures are perceived. This was a case study that examined how African American teachers perceived these environments and how this may have influenced their relationships with their European American counterparts. Their beliefs, as informed by their own cultural values, revealed there is minimal consideration of how their presence might impact the norms and values of predominantly European American school. Although this study represents a small sample of self-reported African American teachers' perceptions of these environments, it does illuminate patterns of experiences in a few similar contexts to help us understand the complexities of group identities.

The question remains, how do European American schools develop an organizational culture that supports teachers of color? It becomes apparent that strategies are needed to create a more positive social context for minority teachers where European American teachers are in the majority. When minority teachers are hired, there is an expectation that these individuals serve in the role as the Black expert and provide that context for the school. European American colleagues fail to understand the differences that exist within minority cultures, and instead project narrowly defined roles for these Africa American teachers. As a result, the teachers in this study believed they were prevented from contributing to the school because their function was

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conceived as and restricted to representing the "Black" perspective. The dominant culture's stereotypical views and beliefs about the portrayal of these teachers further restrained the effectiveness of African American teachers. To ensure a school's espoused beliefs about the views of a minority group, the district was apt to hire African Americans who were perceived as "safe" and less likely to challenge the school's perceptions about African American students and teachers.

Ensuing from these findings, European American schools need to take proactive steps to scrutinize their culture and to create an environment that is supportive to African American (and other minority) teachers, as well as European American teachers. Given the exploratory nature of this study, the authors offer some proposals to consider. These proposals are certainly not exhaustive; however, they do provide a foundation from which to begin. First, European American schools have to view African American teachers as whole participants who do not represent racial stereotypes. The expertise that African American teachers bring should be utilized to serve the interests of all students, not only the minority students.

Second, principals and other school administrators need to implement concerted strategies to recruit a wider pool of minority teachers. If European American schools are committed to diversity, they have to go beyond the traditional networks to identify competent African American teachers. It is onerous to be the only, or one of two minority teachers in the entire school, and to be the sole respondent to "Black issues."

Third, school leaders have to assume a leadership where they are collectively responsible for providing in-service programs that encourage all teachers to dialogue about teaching children of color. African American teachers are successful not only because of their cultural translator role but also because of their use of pedagogical practices that are used to teach all children. Principals must encourage their faculty to address differences in pedagogy and discipline practices to determine best practices for all children. Both African American and European American teachers must be willing to explore race-related issues in their discussions about student placements and how to respond to students of color in these contexts.

Finally, minority teachers are often burdened with the psychological pressure of having to prove their worth because their European American colleagues, as well as their students' parents often question their expertise. Although minority teachers have other competencies, they are often pigeonholed into the role of the Black expert, a position that may curtail their effectiveness within the school environment. Principals need to be supportive of their minority faculty and not place them in a position where their professional development and integrity are compromised by racially insensitive comments from parents and other teachers.

Notes

[1]European American schools have many cultures across and within schools. In the context of this study, the term *European American* refers to schools with a culture of

whiteness. The authors provide a detailed discussion of this concept later in the paper under the description of the school districts.

[2]To preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of the African American teachers who participated in this study, the authors cannot provide a more detailed description of each participating school district where this research was conducted. Providing such details would compromise the position of the participants.

[3]When the desegregation program was implemented in these school districts, it was court-mandated rather than voluntary. The program now operates on a "voluntary" basis whereby students can elect to participate and withdraw as necessary.

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