An Analysis of the Perspective, Perception, and Experience of African-American Teachers in a Tri-County Area of Pennsylvania as Related to the Historical Mandates of Brown v Board and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Have African-American Teachers Reaped the Benefits of their Expectations?

by

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Abstract

This study examines the experiences of African-American teachers and their perceptions of their experience throughout their career. African-American teachers have faced many challenges and have overcome many obstacles over the last half of the 21st century in the wake of *Brown v. Board,* and the *Civil Rights Act of 1964.* However, the stories of African-American teachers, past and present, may give additional perceptions to educational leaders willing to listen to their stories.

This study is intended to serve as an informative tool for educational leaders to become aware of how the culture of their school can influence the careers of African-American teachers and to provide school leaders with insight and courage needed to make changes where necessary. The "culture of power" that exists in a school reflects the rules of the culture of those who make policy and rules, whether written or implied.

This study examines the experiences of African-American teachers and puts to print their stories as told through their own narratives. Fourteen African-American teachers participated in granting videotaped interviews. Their careers ranged, from currently hired and teaching to retired, with varying years of experience. The ages of the participants ranged from mid-twenties to seventies. The participants resided and worked, or currently work, in a tri-county area of Western Pennsylvania. Their school districts were located in rural, urban, and suburban areas.

The goal of this study was designed to encourage readers, particularly educational leaders, to be more cognizant of the cultural differences among their colleagues by presenting a minority perspective via the lenses of African-American teachers.

Acknowledgment

This dissertation is the culmination of much more than words printed on paper. It is the result of a long and thoughtful process, not possible without the support of family, friends, and committee members, whose insight, patience, and criticism have helped shape my thoughts into something that matters.

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Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Andrew Tommelleo** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

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June 14, 2012

Dr. Robert Beebe, Principal Investigator
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RE: HSRC PROTOCOL NUMBER: 109-2012
TITLE: An Analysis of the Perspective, Perception, and Experience of African-American Teachers in a Tri-county Area of Pennsylvania as Related to the Historical Mandates of Brown v. Board and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Have African-American Teachers Reaped the Benefits of their Expectations?

Dear Dr. Beebe and Mr. Tommelleo:

The Human Subjects Research Committee of Youngstown State University has reviewed your response to their concerns regarding the above mentioned protocol and determined that your protocol now meets YSU Human Subjects Research guidelines. Therefore, I am pleased to inform you that your project has been fully approved.

Please note that your project is approved for one year. If your project extends beyond one year, you must submit a project Update form at that time.

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Human Subjects Research Committee and may not be initiated without HSRC approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly reported to the Human Subjects Research Committee.

We wish you well in your study.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Kasvinsky
Associate Provost for Research
Research Compliance Officer

PJK:cc

c: Dr. Richard McEwing, Chair
Department of Educational Foundations, Research, Technology & Leadership

Chapter 1

Come senators, congressmen, please heed the call.

Don't stand in the doorway, don't block up the hall.

For he that gets hurt, will be he who has stalled.

There's a battle outside and it is ragin'...

For the times they are a-changin'.

(Bob Dylan, 1964)

Bob Dylan wrote the song *The Times They Are A-Changin'* in 1963, nine years after the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregated schools were unconstitutional. This 1954 landmark decision overturned the decades-old "separate but equal" doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson,* instituted in 1896. *Brown v. Board* gave hope to African Americans, that, indeed, times were changing, and a segregated educational system would come to an end.

In 1892, in the state of Louisiana, Homer Plessy boarded an East Louisiana Railroad car that was designated for Whites only. Acting deliberately, Plessy refused to leave the "Whites only" car, and he was arrested and jailed. For his defense, Plessy argued that his constitutional rights under the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution had been denied when he boarded the car designated for Whites only. Plessy's case was defended by the Committee of Citizens, whose membership comprised the educated Free People of Color in New Orleans. The court

ruled against Plessy and in favor of the state of Louisiana's right to regulate railroad companies, as well as other "public" entities operated within state lines.

Plessy's appeal was taken to the United States Supreme Court, where once again, his argument was that he was denied his rights under the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution. The court found that the state of Louisiana had no law which would insinuate that Blacks were an inferior race. Justice John Marshall Harlan, a former slave owner, wrote in his dissent,

> But in view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. (Duke Law Journal, p. 139)

The Court's ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* supported government authority, according to the Fourteenth Amendment, permitting separate facilities for Blacks and Whites, so long as they were equal, and set in stone the doctrine of "separate but equal." Homer Plessy paid his $25 fine, ending his challenge. It would take another six decades for the "separate but equal" doctrine to be successfully challenged and overturned.

Although the dream for equality was derailed for decades by *Plessy v. Ferguson*, it would gain momentum and reach the station in the 1954 landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka, Kansas. For decades following the Plessy case, "separate but equal" treatment of both African Americans and Whites continued to preserve substandard treatment of African Americans. *Brown v. Board* would ultimately determine

the “separate but equal” doctrine to be a façade for perpetuating inferiority as a legal doctrine.

The plaintiffs in *Brown v. Board* were 13 African American parents of children from the Topeka School District. The parents’ goal was to force the Topeka Board of Education to rescind the practice of maintaining a separate elementary school for African American students. The Board based its current practice on an 1879 Kansas law which permitted, but did not require districts to maintain separate elementary school facilities, which, following the Plessy verdict was permissible.

Following the advice of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the plaintiffs had originally sought to enroll their children in an elementary school located in an integrated neighborhood. The parents were denied admission and directed to enroll their children in a segregated school. The complaint was filed in District Court. The ruling held in favor of the Board of Education, which cited *Plessy v. Ferguson*, upholding “separate but equal.” The District Court found that segregation in education placed an adverse condition upon students, but the decision to uphold the Board’s position was based on the equality of facilities, not the segregation of its children.

The District Court decision was appealed to the United States Supreme Court, where it was merged with five other cases. What distinguished *Brown v. Board* from the previous case of 1951 was that the court found no great disparity of equality amid the elementary schools in Topeka. The three judge panel of 1951 found that while segregation may have a deleterious effect upon African American children, they found no

substantial inequality of buildings, transportation, curriculum, or any educational qualifications of teachers. The fundamental argument before the United States Supreme Court was that, even though facilities were equal, the concept or practice of segregation was ultimately of great harm to Black students, and therefore unconstitutional. Fifty-eight years following *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the doctrine of "separate but equal" was finally abolished.

The desegregation of schools following *Brown v. Board* should have opened wide the doors of schools and classrooms across the country for administrators, staffs, and students, ending segregation. However, implementation continued to require a "pry bar" to force educational institutions to provide equal educational opportunity irrespective of race or ethnicity. Even as late as 1995, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas stated in *Missouri v. Jenkins (1995),*

> Given that desegregation has not produced the predicted leaps forward in Black educational achievement, there is no reason to think that Black students cannot learn as well when surrounded by members of their own race as when they are in an integrated environment. *(Missouri v. Jenkins* (93-1823), 515 U.S. 70 (1995)

Recognizing the need to enforce and eliminate unlawful segregation in public education, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) developed guidelines for the Commonwealth, as well as local government, to allocate educational resources in an equitable manner and eliminate disparities in education related to racially or ethnically identifiable factors (PHRC, 2009). The PHRC states,

> When any one school building comes to be viewed as improperly exclusive in fact or in spirit; when it is viewed as being reserved for certain community groups; when morale, teacher and pupil motivation and achievement are affected by racial or ethnic imbalance, the school system is adversely affected by segregation. (PHRC, August 24, 1998)

Brown v. Board may have overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* and opened the door for desegregation, but the case omitted the method of enforcement and the timeline to do so. However, one year later, following the 1955 *Brown v. Board II* decision, Justice Earl Warren urged localities to act on the new principles promptly and to move toward full compliance with them "*with all deliberate speed" (Plessy v. Ferguson* 163 U.S. 537 (1896)). Justice Warren's famous words would ensure that the verdict of *Brown I* would not only be fulfilled, but now gave local governments a timeline in which to do so, bringing an end to desegregation of schools.

In his opinion for the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board II*, Chief Justice Warren placed the responsibility to comply with and enforce desegregation on local school authorities, primarily the administration and school boards. If the dream of equity in education was to be fulfilled, it must happen through and within the schools, not from government. The United States Supreme Court in *Freeman v. Pitts* (1992) stated that "local autonomy of school districts is a vital national tradition" *(Freeman v. Pitts* 503 U.S. 467). Federal courts seem eager to return local control of schools out of frustration and defeat. Where there may be vestiges of disparity lurking with the system, federal courts have appeared to relinquish control to local governing bodies *(Dayton Board of Education v. Brinkman).*

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission declares in its *Equal Educational Opportunity Guidelines For Public Schools,*

> Those responsible for providing public education in the Commonwealth are obligated to provide equal educational opportunity irrespective of race or ethnicity. This obligation requires those responsible not only to take steps necessary to reduce racial or ethnic imbalance but also to remedy the adverse educational consequences caused by racial or ethnic isolation and societal discrimination. (PHRC. Aug. 24, 1998)

While Americans have battled for decades to achieve equity for students, evidence may exist that equity has still not been achieved by many school employees. In August 2003, a Howard Circuit Court jury ruled that Michelle Maupin, the only Black teacher in Centennial High School, had been subjected to a race-based hostile work environment as well as retaliation by school administration following her complaint. Maupin was awarded monetary damages after a jury found that she had been discriminated against by the school system and her former supervisors. In another case, jurors in Suffolk Superior Court, Boston, awarded a Black teacher, Jonathan Bonds, monetary settlement for his claim that the Boston Latin School refused to appoint him chairman of its history department in 2006. According to the 2009 Associated Press, the jury found the elite school retaliated against him based on discrimination after administrators stripped him of his teaching position and replaced him with a less experienced White teacher. Laws alone cannot change the problems of society. Wilson (1988) stated that leadership in education is necessary to make a difference.

Twenty years following *Brown v. Board*, Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 would add another piece to eliminating segregation in schools by authorizing the United States Attorney General to file law suits to enforce the act. The dream of equality would now have stronger tools in place to allow African Americans the expectation of enjoying the same freedoms and equalities that Whites in segregated schools had experienced.

Wilson (1988) stated "African Americans and social justice advocates have envisioned, demanded, and struggled to achieve the promises of equal opportunity, equal protection under the law, equal access to resources, freedom of choice, and personal liberty within this society"(p. 22). Given all that has taken place over the last half of this century, from *Brown v. Board*, through the Civil Rights Act of 1964, to the first African American president, the dream of equity, particularly in education, may still be beyond the grasp of many African Americans.

If public education is to prepare our children for the real world, then our schools must be representative of our communities. Opportunities to succeed must be available to all, both students and staff. However, if school districts fail to provide the resources and opportunities to do so, and inequities continue to exist, then public education fails everyone. "Where discrimination against African Americans is pervasive, society as a whole loses potential human capital" (Schiller, 1978).

In order to make systemic change, change must come from strong leadership within the organization. The challenge facing educational leaders in achieving equity is to recognize those structures that exist within their organization that can negatively influence the educational career of African American teachers.

Since the landmark case of *Brown v. Board* of Topeka, Kansas, opportunities for African American educators should have paved the way for rewarding experiences in education. Over 50 years have passed since this landmark case, and there is still a great underrepresentation of African American teachers in public education. About 9% of the nations' 6.5 million teachers are Black, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Fewer than 2 % of the nation's teachers are African American males (School Leader News, 2010).

As recently as January 31, 2011, filmmaker, Spike Lee, joined Education Secretary Arne Duncan in issuing a plea for more African American men to become teachers. Lee and Duncan issued their plea at a town hall meeting in Atlanta, at Morehouse College. With less than 2% of the nation's male teachers being African American, Duncan is hoping to fill the expected one million teaching vacancies nationwide with a more diverse teaching workforce. Through a video address at the Morehouse event, President Obama reinforced the need for African Americans to enter the teaching force by stating, "If you want to make a difference in the life of a child, become a teacher."

There are documented reasons for the lack of African American teachers. According to a report in July by the National Center for Education Statistics, fewer Black graduates are becoming teachers, as they are discouraged mainly by low pay. The starting salary for a teacher in a Pittsburgh suburban school is $38,000. In comparison, the entry level position for a budget analyst can be $47,710. An entry level insurance claims adjuster can earn $40,640 with no experience (School Leader News, 2010).

There is evidence to show that the classroom teacher continues to be the most important factor in student success (Hammond, 2002). However, if the teaching experience or pursuit thereof, is one of discontent, then educational leaders must take on the responsibility to ensure the path to being an effective teacher is not beset with roadblocks to impede a successful career.

For the past twenty-two years, my educational career has spanned three counties in Western Pennsylvania, as a classroom teacher, guidance counselor, and school administrator in the Wilmington, Shenango, and Laurel Area School Districts, as well as being Director at the Lawrence County Career and Technical Center. These positions have given me the opportunity to experience education in urban, rural, and suburban school districts. Throughout my career, opportunities have been provided for working with colleagues throughout the entire state. The opportunity to network with African American colleagues and share with them the rich and rewarding experience of a career in public education has been noticeably missing.

It is from these observations that this study will explore the educational experience of African American teachers and the impact this experience has had on promoting or discouraging teaching careers. Educational leaders must be aware of the lived experience of past, current, and future African American educators. Significant information may lead educational leaders and other policy makers to ensure that the path to a rewarding teaching career for African American educators is free of obstacles that would prevent them from achieving the same opportunities and satisfactions as their White colleagues.

Statement of Problem

The decades of fighting for school desegregation that led to reform and mandates through the government's sanction of segregation opened the doors, albeit with difficulty and resistance, for African American students and families. Equality of opportunity, access, and resources for teachers and administrators were guaranteed according to Civil Rights Act of 1964. Much was gained for African Americans as a result of desegregation. However, for some African Americans, there was also much that was lost. "Although they 'got what they fought for,' they 'lost what they had'… that many problems attributed to Black education today started with desegregation" (Horsford & McKenzie, 2008).

There exists an assumption that desegregation produced momentous advancement in the educational experience for African Americans. Patterson et al., (2007) indicate that desegregation led to a number of losses in a Black community in Kansas. Among these losses were the professional positions of African American teachers and administrators. When the African American community loses its teachers and administrators, the community loses the "decision-making authority over its children's education" (p. 77*)*. Despite the losses, defeats, and continued challenges to education, the desire to teach was not extinguished for many African Americans.

For many African Americans, the desire to teach was not about pay. Compared to many other professional positions, the average teacher salary is not high. However, for many teachers, the countless hours spent outside of the classroom in preparation for instruction, as well as time involved with addressing the personal and emotional needs of

students and families, is often time invested well. Rewards of teaching are often not measured in dollars, but in the personal satisfaction that comes from making a significant difference in the lives of children.

Maintaining an environment that attracts and promotes opportunities for African American teachers is critical to creating an expectation that teaching is a viable career for minority students. Brown (2000) wrote that the imbalance of minorities in the classroom was troubling to African American professionals who believed their presence was crucial to the development and success of African American youth. African American children need to see role models of professional people who represent their family and community.

The role of the African American teacher is often not only as a classroom teacher, but as a mentor to young minority students, and as a connection between the school and family. These teachers are encouragers, supporters, guidance counselors, and much more (Brown, 2006). How important to a children's education is having a minority teacher in their classroom? Hood (2000) states, "A staff that represents society in miniature has much to offer adolescents. The presence of teachers from various cultures also enhances a community's view of the school and becomes a springboard for teacher collaboration" (p. 16). A culturally diverse staff can open windows to the world for students.

Before teachers can open up windows of opportunity for students, they must first get through the doors of opportunity themselves. Today, getting *to* the door may be as difficult as getting *through* it. A culture of authority still exists in our educational system that continues to place barriers for African American teachers to achieve their goal of

pursuing a successful career in education. It should be a foregone conclusion that the problem of employment discrimination has been solved and that all applicants are hired based solely upon their qualification, race not having been a factor. History and current data reveal that this is not the case. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which is the agency responsible for enforcing federal employment anti-discrimination laws, reports that the number of charges of discrimination filed against private employers has increased by 13,000. This is the largest single-year increase since 1993. As of 2008, the most common allegation, claimed in more than one-third of the complaints, was discrimination based on race (Vertreace, 2010).

Dominant authority in education can be exercised explicitly or as an undercurrent throughout a building or district. Berry (2007), states that it is practiced covertly in several locations. Berry identifies locations such as teachers' curriculum, parents' desires, administrators' agendas, literary and subject area texts, curriculum artifacts, and government policies, all of which contribute to layers of authority in the hands of a dominant culture. Dominance through authority in education may, and can, lead to producing a sense of "Other" (Young, 1990), often making those not in the majority feeling left out or invisible. School leaders may not be aware of a culture that creates a feeling of "Other." Navigating through the undercurrent of dominant authority in education may have a significant impact on the personal experiences of African American teachers and serve as a deterrent to an already declining population of minority teachers.

The declining number of teachers is cause for further alarm as the population of minority teachers in the classroom also continues to decline. Minority teachers will be

retiring at a faster rate than the number of new minority teachers graduating and replacing them. Between 1992 and 1997, the ratio of White students to White teachers was approximately 15 to 1. During that same time span, the ratio of minority students to minority teachers was 43 to 1 (Zajano, 1997).

Why is the number of African American teachers decreasing? There are many obstacles for retaining minority teachers in the classroom (Su, 1997). Ineffective staff induction and professional development, emergence of the perceived bias of national certification tests, complexity of the classroom, and the increasing responsibilities for children, all play a role in building minority turnover. Administrators face major challenges in removing barriers to cultural diversity in the school, barriers that can lead to the dissatisfaction of African American teachers.

If schools are to be mirrors of society, then that society ought to be one that strives to bring unity and harmony to its members. Those who seek to find satisfaction in their life through a career in education should have the expectation that the same windows and doors of opportunity exist regardless of race, gender, or ethnicity. A professional's perception and perspective of their work environment should not be cluttered with false expectations of a successful career. That professional should also have the expectation to be accepted by colleagues and leaders. "The dream of each individual, whatever position be occupied, should be to see the whole of society, that men's hearts should communicate, their vision be unobstructed by obstacles, and that the opinion of all reign over each" (Foucault, 1980).

Purpose of Study

When community exists in society, its members become free enough to share ideas and resources and feel secure enough that all participants will get along. Educational communities are no different. One of the primary purposes of schools today is to function as a society that provides equal rights for all of its members, staff, students, and administration. The Mission of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission is, "to administer and enforce the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act and the Pennsylvania Fair Educational Opportunities Act through investigation, identification and elimination of unlawful discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunity for all persons" (PHRC, 2011).

Public schools should provide a community where all people can come together to know and understand each other. As the student population becomes more diverse, the staff must also be representative of those they serve. "Effective participation by members of all racial and ethnic groups in the civic life of our nation is essential if the dream of one nation, indivisible, is to be realized" (Alger, n.d.).

At this time in our country, educational leaders continue to face the challenge of narrowing the achievement gap for students. Progress is being made, slowly. For some African American teachers, educational equity may exist, and access to opportunity, advancement, resources, etc., may appear to be equitable for all teachers. The existence of such data does not, however, independently prove that all teachers are treated fairly and that discrimination does not exist. Internal controls, the existence of a dominant

culture of authority, may prevent African American teachers from living out their expectation of a successful, fulfilling career in education.

Educational leaders frequently rely on a variety of tools to assist them in the evaluation of their leadership, as well as the internal conditions of the school environment. Several methods of research, data, and a myriad of statistics, are at hand on a daily basis for school administrators. What are ever present in the building that may often be overlooked or unheard are the voices of their own staff. The stories of African American teachers must be heard by educational leaders so they can be responsive and responsible change agents. Schram, (2006) writes, "The way people tell stories influences how they perceive current events, remember past events, and prepare for future events" (p. 105).

There is reason to question whether or not African American teachers are enjoying the same fruits of their labor throughout their career in education as compared to their White colleagues. Do African American teachers in public education share the same experiences in their teaching career as their White colleagues? Is there equality in opportunity for African American teachers and White teachers? Does an undercurrent of White authority still exist, one that must be navigated differently for African American teachers than for White teachers? All of these factors and more contribute to the experience of African American teachers in public education. Listening to the voices of African American teachers whose careers span time from *Brown v. Board* to the present will, hopefully, assist educational leaders in making responsive decisions and policy that will eliminate the barriers to fulfilling a career in public education.

Research Questions

Listening to the voices of those who have persevered and sacrificed to fulfill their dream provides an opportunity for educational leaders to see the challenges that may exist in developing a healthy environment in their schools for African American teachers. This awareness will lead to providing an environment that will encourage more African American students to view education as an attractive career. This study is designed to ask questions that will evoke thoughtful answers that will prove meaningful.

It is my intent to explore a variety of themes from the following research questions.

1. How did your family view education?
2. What kind of relationship did they have with the school?
3. What was your expectation of being a teacher, and how did your teaching experience live up to that?
4. What obstacles had to be overcome to pursue your career in education?
5. What support systems existed to help you overcome both short and long-term challenges as a teacher?
6. Describe any inequities that you feel existed between your experience and those of your White colleagues.

7. Does/did a culture of authority exist in your school district? If so, was it dominated by White administration? If yes, what must an African American teacher learn to navigate through this, get hired, or advance?

8. What are your thoughts on why there are so few African American teachers in public education?

9. How do African American students view you as a teacher? What advice do/would you give these students to succeed?

10. What would a school district need to offer to attract you to a teaching position in that district?

11. What conversations must take place, and with whom, to end negative racial attitudes in schools?

Significance of Study

The culture of an organization does not develop overnight. The culture of a school, like that of any other organization, develops over time. When people realize that the current culture must be reformed, change can occur, however, not quickly and not easily. Change will only occur when those in authority realize their duty to change and begin the process to do so. Without the support of administration and/or policy makers, changing the culture of a school will be difficult.

A primary responsibility of educational leaders is to create and maintain an environment that rewards and encourages the effort and experience of those with whom they work. When the culture of authority works to the detriment of its staffs' having to

learn how to navigate through, under, or around that culture, it becomes a necessity for some to find fulfillment or satisfaction in their daily work lives.

To illustrate this point, a colleague visited my office to discuss his concern regarding the negative atmosphere that was developing in his school as a result of a number of incidents with high school athletics. A common feeling among staff and students was that preferential treatment had been given to certain athletes. Discipline appeared to be distributed inconsistently depending on the athletic ability of the individual students. Attempts were made by parents to discuss these concerns with coaches, but the issues of unfairness were not perceived to be addressed.

High school administrators maintained that policy was being followed and that the concerns of staff were unwarranted. Ultimately, the superintendent and certain board members maintained that policy and procedure had been followed and would continue to support the decisions of the coaching staff. It is the perception of many in both the school building and community that the culture of authority in that school district was not acting in the best interests of its members. It is also the belief of many that those in authority had conducted business that way for many years and the culture of authority would not change easily or quickly.

Lester (1998) states, “Teachers who think reflectively about their own teaching are better equipped to be lifelong learners; they are also in a more favorable position to initiate changes in their existing practice through personal awareness of the classroom and its culture.” I believe that educational leaders must also think reflectively about the

culture in their building and how it affects the experience of all staff members, with particular attention given to the teaching experiences of African American teachers.

I chose to focus this study on the experience of African American teachers in public education, in regard to whether their career in education has been a fulfillment of what their perception of a successful career should be. The right to pursue the same freedoms of opportunity as their White colleagues, as granted by the federal government over the last 60 years, should have fulfilled the dreams of all African Americans pursuing a career in education. The hope of one day getting hired in public education should be a realistic goal for African Americans who have persevered through an educational degree program. Obstacles that prevent candidates from getting the opportunity to knock at the door, let alone pass through that door, should not exist, given all that has taken place in our history.

Conversations with African American educators have given me an insight into issues that illuminate the challenges they have faced or may continue to face, that negatively impact their career. It is my belief that educational leaders must reflect on these experiences if they are to be the agents of change in our educational systems. School leaders must be responsible for providing a community of people who can share views and interact positively with others, who have the freedom to benefit from the diversity of that environment.

When educational leaders fail to recognize that impediments to achieving success do exist for African American teachers, they risk losing the benefits of enriching the lives of not only that person, but for all who would benefit through the diversity of the school

environment. Regents of the *University of California v. Bakke* (1978) found that educational benefits of diversity are not theoretical, but real. Hood (2000) states, "A staff that represents society in miniature has much to offer adolescents. The presence of teachers from various cultures also enhances a community's view of the school and becomes a springboard for teacher collaboration." Schools must reflect society. A major victory was won by the University of Michigan in 1997 that upheld the right of universities to consider race in admissions. The Supreme Court ruled 5 to 4 in favor of the Michigan Law School endorsing the principle of diversity in the selection process. The Supreme Court's ruling was an affirmation of the Bakke case of 1978 (University of Michigan News Service, 2003).

There are eight school districts in Lawrence County, Pennsylvania, including one comprehensive Career and Technical Center. Each August, on the first day of school, K-12 students from each school district arrive at the front door of the school with certain expectations. Every student, regardless of ethnicity, can expect a safe and secure environment. Every student can expect a well-balanced selection of nutritious food to be served at lunch and, possibly, breakfast. Each student can expect a curriculum designed to meet both state and federal standards. Each student can expect to be taught by a certified and qualified teacher. However, few students can expect to be taught by a minority teacher who is reflective of the minority population in this tri-county area.

There are 39 public school districts in Beaver, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties of Western Pennsylvania. There are 4,281 public school teachers in this tri-county area (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2011). White (Non-Hispanic) teachers account for approximately 98% of all teachers. African American teachers account for nearly

1.5% of all teachers, with "Other" ethnicities making up the slightly one-half percent. With the percentage of White (Non-Hispanic) teachers accounting for just slightly more than the Pennsylvania state average, the teaching population in Beaver, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties remains below the representation of minority populations for the overall state.

Percentage of Population (Pennsylvania)

County	White	African American
Beaver	92.1	6.2
Lawrence	94.3	4.1
Mercer	92.8	5.4
State	85	10.9

In 1999, the percentage of minority teachers in this nation accounted for approximately 5% of the total teaching population in public schools (Futrell, 1999). This statistic has changed very little in almost a decade. The Pennsylvania Department of Education Division of Data Services (2007) reports 123,395 teachers currently working in 501 school districts in Pennsylvania. White (Non-Hispanic) teachers make up 116,050 or 94% of all teachers in the state's public school system. African Americans account for 5,873 or 4.75& of all teachers. Hispanic teachers total 887 or nearly 1% of the total teachers. Asian/Pacific Islanders, American Indian/Alaskan Natives total 585, or less than one-half percent, of the total teaching population.

National, state, and local data confirm that the number of minority teachers is decreasing and falls significantly below the number of White teachers (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1999). Several states have developed

policies and guidelines for the recruitment, hiring, and retention of minority teachers to help close the gap and open the doors for African American teachers. However, there continues to be many reasons why minorities choose not to pursue teaching as a career choice. As educational leaders seek to identify barriers and develop more effective strategies for recruitment and hiring of qualified candidates, they must also be attentive to how their school culture is perceived by those seeking to enter the profession.

Some would argue that the quality of the teacher makes the difference in the classroom, regardless of whether the teacher is Caucasian or African American. If our classrooms are to be mirrors of society, the diversity of both student and teacher must also reflect the population. It is essential for all teachers to have the knowledge, skills, and training to successfully teach diverse student populations (Futrell, 1999). Teachers make the greatest difference in whether students learn and reach high standards. Student achievement gains are much more influenced by a student's assigned teacher than other factors such as size and class composition (Darling-Hammond, 2002). It appears reasonable to provide all students the opportunity to be taught by teachers who can best reflect their own diversity, culture, and life experiences.

Getting through the door and getting hired does not necessarily lead to equal opportunity. The presence of diversity does not automatically translate into a school culture that provides equity for all teachers. Educational leaders must recognize the patterns of inequities internal to school patterns that are embedded in many assumptions, beliefs, practices, procedures, and policies (Skrla et al., 2009). These patterns of inequity can influence the experience of African American teachers.

Equitable education exists when African American teachers have access to opportunities that are not inferior to those of their White colleagues. This study will explore three dimensions of equity: access, treatment, and outcomes. Decades after *Brown* and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, do African American teachers have equal access to hiring, teacher placement, resources, and representation in the policy and decision making process in schools? Are African American teachers afforded the same treatment as their White colleagues or have they been treated as those who Young (1990) would identify as "Other." What are the short and long-term outcomes that educational leaders should seek to ensure that educational equity exists in their schools? What factors exist that impede the progress of enabling African Americans to achieve equity in their educational career?

When Chief Justice Warren proclaimed in *Brown v. Board II* that the responsibility to comply with and enforce desegregation on local school authorities rests primarily on the shoulders of the administration and school boards, he would not have expected to find an inadequate system in place more than 60 years later. Bringing about change in schools is a complex matter. Approaches to reform are many, and there is no magic formula to produce change easily or overnight. What does remain constant throughout research is that the quality of the classroom teacher matters. It is therefore important that educational leaders be more cognizant of how the culture of authority influences the experience of the African American teachers.

Listening to the voices of African American teachers whose careers have spanned history from *Brown v. Board* to the present is intended to uncover personal testimony from those who have experienced the promises of change and the hope of the

realization of a dream. Their stories will span their educational careers from realizing the desire to teach, various experiences throughout the teaching career, to retirement. “Stories remind us what is important in life…, and sometimes inspire us to lead lives of moral integrity” (Coles, 1989).

The way people tell stories influences how they perceive current events, remember past events, and prepare for future events (Schram, 2006). Research may provide evidence to support that federal, state, and local governments have provided the keys to unlock the doors of equality, but the voices of those who have sought entrance through those doors may provide a different story.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Robert Coles (1990), in his book, *The Call of Stories,* writes of storytelling as the form of both personal narratives and the established literary tradition that gives us a fuller understanding of ourselves and the experiences of others. "The whole point of stories is not 'solutions' or 'resolutions' but a broadening and even heightening of our struggles." They remind us of what is important in life, admonish us, point us in new directions, engage us in self-reflection, and sometimes inspire us to lead lives of moral integrity. Often they embody "the moral contradictions and inconsistencies in our personal lives," and thus give context and meaning to the social and political narratives of society at large (p. 203). The stories told by African American teachers may fill in a missing piece for educational leaders by helping them to be more aware of their role in achieving educational equity and social justice in education.

Exploring the perspectives of African American teachers whose experiences in education have spanned time from *Brown .V Board*, through the Civil Rights movement to the present time, may produce a different account of the benefits or disappointments that came as a result of desegregation. As Horsford and McKenzie (2008) write, "Their reflections may suggest that although they got what they fought for, they lost what they had." The stories of African American teachers may shed a light on public education, administration, and policy that educational leaders have an obligation to follow.

By a ruling of 9 to 0, the landmark decision of *Brown v. the Board* of *Education of Topeka, Kansas*, opened the door to social justice in schools by holding that segregation was unlawful. The Supreme Court Justices declared that segregation denied

African American children the right to equal protection of the laws as afforded to them by the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. Separate elementary schools in Topeka had been operating under an 1879 Kansas Law which did not require (but permitted) racial segregation to exist and operate under the administration of the Topeka Board of Education. The Topeka Board supported the doctrine of 'separate but equal' as instituted in the 1896 landmark case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. But, as Chief Justice Earl Warren stated following the Brown verdict, "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (Nationalcenter.org).

Chief Justice Warren ordered implementation of the decision by placing the authority to do so squarely on the shoulders of local government, i.e., school boards and educational leaders. For equity to be served in public schools, it must come from within the policy makers of our school systems, not from the hands of government officials. Enforcement to do so, however, would come from the state.

Pennsylvania's Human Relations Commission adopted the Equal Educational Opportunity Guidelines for Public Schools on August 24, 1998. The Commission stated

> that equal educational opportunity not only requires the elimination of unlawful segregation found to exist but also requires the allocation of educational resources in an equitable manner and the elimination of disparities in educational results correlated to racially or ethnically identifiable factors. (p.1)

The Commission concluded, "Whenever any such action or inaction, past or present, has adversely affected public education, it is the obligation of those responsible for providing public education in the Commonwealth to correct the situation."

The fights to overturn the "separate but equal" doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson* were battles for future change. Courts cannot change what has already happened, but they make changes that protect us for the future. Educational leaders must be change agents who can determine the problems of today, but have a vision of what could or should be, and use this vision as motivation of a sense of action. Stevenson (2008) writes that a change agent is fueled by passions and must understand people. If the authority to change the culture in our schools rests on the shoulders of our administration and policy makers, they must be aware of the current issues that exist, and be visionaries who are willing to be authentic leaders, leaders who walk their talk.

Bill Maxwell (2008), of the St. Petersburg Times, writes that African Americans must make educational achievement the new Black movement, one that is even more powerful than the original Civil Rights Movement. It must be embraced by every Black household, every family and every individual. According to Maxwell, leadership must be able to communicate with the community and must have the ability to inspire parents, as well as students. Leadership, Maxwell states, "must have that special gift of connecting with children."

A study conducted in 1986 by the Holmes Group stated that if our schools are to be mirrors of our community or society, then our teaching force must also bear that same reflection. It is essential to create a profession that is representative of society as a whole

to avoid having a teaching force composed primarily of people from majority backgrounds teaching students from predominantly minority groups.

It is possible for a minority student to graduate from high school and never enter a classroom taught by a minority teacher. Middleton et al., (1988) believed that statement to be true over 20 years ago. That assumption may still be valid today. Minority teachers serve as more than just classroom teachers for minority students. For many minority students, they serve as role models and may be better able to meet the needs of minority students (Piercynski et al., 1997). Garibaldi (1992) states, "It is virtually impossible to truly educate a multicultural population with a homogenous teaching force."

"Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle" (Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967). Knowing that inequities exist and that change must take place does not come about easily, nor does a plan develop automatically. The entire school staff does not automatically climb on board. Not all teachers, administrators, or board members may be in favor of change. Whether people want to admit it or not, some professionals will have conscious or subconscious bias towards minority students, minority parents, or minority communities. The educational leader who stands up as the agent for change may not find the support necessary to make that change come about.

Someone must lead the charge for equity. That leader must be authentic. That leader must "walk the talk." To expect change to take place, educational leaders must treat their professional colleagues in the same manner as they expect teachers to treat their students, with respect and compassion for those they serve. Bandura and Walters (1963) described this authentic leadership as modeling. Leaders should model what

others are expected to follow. If educators in the school are expected to develop an attitude of equity towards their students and classrooms, then educational leaders must deliver that same attitude for equity toward their staff. “Transformations do not take place until the culture of the school permits it, and no long-term, significant change can take place without creating a culture to sustain that change” (Richardson, 2005, p. x).

Developing an “equity” attitude means treating all people with dignity, respect, appreciation, and care with no exceptions (Skrla et al., 2009). If educational leaders are to be agents of change for equity in schools, they must be willing to treat all adults in the manner that will be expected of those adults toward their students and parents. Therefore, our schools must be committed to the recruitment and hiring of individuals, both leaders and followers, with the commitment to bringing about changes necessary to provide equality for all.

Treating people with respect does not mean that problems are not addressed. Addressing issues of racism, prejudice, and bias can be difficult; however, such discussions must take place. Staff must be confronted and dealt with when racism, prejudice, or bias does not meet the expectations of administration. However, respect and appreciation for those staff members as professionals must be maintained. Singleton and Linton (2006) refer to these meetings as “courageous conversations.” By ignoring these issues, educational leaders do an injustice to their schools by not moving in the direction they intend to lead. Singleton and Linton (2006) define “courageous conversations” as having the following characteristics: (a) they engage those who won’t talk, (b) they sustain the conversation when it gets uncomfortable or diverted, and (c) they deepen the conversation to the point where authentic understanding and meaningful actions occur.

The United States Department of Education estimated in 1998 that 2.2 million teachers would be needed in the next decade These high figures are partially based on the projection of teacher retirements; however, poor salaries, school violence, better paying jobs, inability to make policy decisions, and poor job satisfaction have led to a decline in the teaching population (Olaf, 2001). By 2006, the nation's school age population had increased from 51.7 million students to 54.6million. This is a growth of nearly three million students (Zajano, 1997).

The declining number of teachers is cause for alarm as the population of minority teachers in the classroom also continues to decline. Minority teachers will be retiring at a faster rate than the number of new minority teachers graduating and replacing them. Between 1992 and 1997, the proportion of White students to White teachers was approximately 15 to 1. During that same span of time, the ratio of minority students to minority teachers was 43 to 1 (Zajano, 1997).

The teacher shortage in our nation is a significant problem. The recruitment, hiring, and retention of minority teachers must be given priority in school districts if the shortage of qualified minority teachers is to decrease. The disproportionate shortage of minority teachers compounds this problem. We might assume that, for all students to achieve, the composition of classrooms must be representative of our communities and society as a whole, in order to increase the number of qualified minority teachers.

Darling-Hammond, (2002) in, *Defining "Highly Qualified Teacher"* states that a teaching staff has much to offer everyone, school and community, when its composition reflects society. The article states, "A culturally and linguistically diverse staff can open windows to the world for students." Teachers make a greater difference in the life of a

child than does class size or class composition. Some would argue that good teachers make a difference regardless of their ethnicity. Gordon (2002) argues, "mere membership in a particular ethnic group does not ensure that one will be able and willing to work with people from the same apparent ethnic or language group" (p. 124). Shaw (1996), states that role model designation by virtue of race alone is unrealistic and condescending. However, researchers (Delpit, 1995; Foster, 1994; Irvine, 1990; King, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994) have suggested that African American teachers may deliver a sensitivity and interest to the problems of African American students that other teachers might not.

Patterson et al., (2007) reported on the consequences of *Brown v. Board* on desegregation in Parsons, Kansas. They argued that African Americans lost more than they gained as a result of desegregation. According to their report, three generations following *Brown v. Board* of the African American community had lost cultural capital, which included the loss of African American teachers, as well as talented young adults. The Parsons schools were, according to Patterson (2007), "the glue that held the community together" (p. 84). When the Parsons schools closed, the school districts lost decision-making authority over the African American children, a significant number of African American teachers, and equally important, a sense of community. As a result of desegregation, Parsons, Kansas, lost the social and cultural capital of its African American community. They "paid a high price for desegregation," as reflected in the report. The loss of African American teachers meant a loss of role models for African American students, which contradicts Shaw (1996).

The White culture of Parsons denied that race had anything to with the cultural issues following the loss of their teachers and administration. Patterson et al., (2007)

concluded that the system of White privilege perpetuated the inequities of cultural capital. Educational leaders ought to be aware of the role that history plays in developing policy and decision making in schools that may lead to inequities in education. Educational leaders should also be aware of the cultural capital that exists in the students' communities, and be willing to use these valuable resources to enrich their students' experiences.

Delpit (1995) argues that children deserve to be made aware of the cultural power that exists in their community and schools in order to be better able to negotiate the unwritten "codes" that exist. These codes dictate rules for participating in power, as well as ways of talking, writing, dressing, and thinking. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power. She defines this "culture of power" as the relationships with influential individuals that lead to the acquisition of valued cultural capital. Those with power are frequently least aware of its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence (p.84).

Delpit wrote over ten years ago that it was time to take a closer look at our educational system and evaluate the presence of minority involvement and support. Educational leaders must to be willing seek out and include the voices and experiences of others in order to provide diversity in our schools. Failure to do so will only continue the existence of Young's "Other." When we fail to notice and accept those who stand outside the majority of a culture without intent to do so, the dominant group of an organization often determines the norms for the members of that organization.

Futrell (1999) acknowledges that it is equally important for all students to be taught by teachers of diversity. In 2003, the Southern Regional Educational Board

(SREB) conducted a study of effective strategies for recruiting minority teachers. SREB's perspective on the need for minority teachers in the classroom was that minority role models benefit all students, as well as providing other teachers with insights into helping minority students succeed.

Nicole Rose, an African American teacher, expresses her belief of the advantages of diversity in an article by Dr. Gilbert Brown (2006). She states, "A school climate is created by the individuals that make up that school…Lack of diversity cripples learning opportunities for students and repeatedly presents education from a single perspective" (Brown, p. 6).

School culture does not develop overnight. According to Deal and Peterson (1990), school culture arises in response to persisting conditions. It is the individuals within organizations who create culture. But the culture creates the fabric of that organization. The culture becomes what Peterson and Deal refer to as the "ethos" of that organization, or the fundamental character or spirit of the culture. When it is determined that the culture must change, it may be difficult, but not impossible.

Educational leaders who are willing to challenge and change the culture of their schools must be sensitive to the underlying cultural currents that flow through their buildings. Delpit (1995) suggested that individuals outside of the culture of power must be able to interpret the "codes" and determine the reality of what is transpiring in their schools from their administration, their staff, and their students. As Deal and Peterson (1990) wrote, "The leader must listen to the echoes of the school history." Of greater import, "Leaders must listen for the deeper dreams and hopes the school community holds for the future" (p. 203).

What happens when educational leaders are responsible for creating a subversive culture? When the power of authority denies the dreams of their staff, how does this impact the culture of the building? What impact does this have on the school culture, particularly when the leaders are White? Berry (2007) writes in her contribution to *The Great White North,* that assumptions that White is right can be packaged covertly in several locations in education. She identifies these areas as teacher/parent/administrators' agendas, literary and subject area texts, curriculum artifacts, and policy.

In order to create a culture of fairness and equity, White administrators must consider as Carr and Lund (2007) state, "that race is still a pivotal concern for everything that happens in society, and especially in schools" (p.xii). They contend that White racial identity is about White privilege. School leaders cannot have discussions concerning race without accepting the argument that Whiteness has its privilege. While that privilege may not appear to exist to those belonging to the majority race, privilege may be very visible to those living outside. Ignoring educational inequities within a school allows the status quo of a negative culture to continue placing barriers to successful educational careers for African American teachers, as well as other minorities.

Educational leaders are incumbent to respect the differences of others, their opinions, perspectives, experiences, etc., and be open to how these differences may positively impact their schools. But, they must be cautious of seeking to add "difference" to their building. Diversity can be defined as "variety." When educational leaders add diversity to their staff, they are recognizing the differences of others and promoting the opportunity to celebrate the different experiences, perspectives, and uniqueness that diversity may bring to the classroom, and to the district and community.

Recruitment

The challenge to effectively recruit minority teachers rests heavily on the shoulders of administrators. Before school district administrators can truly expect to recruit and hire minority candidates, they must first understand how ethnically diverse candidates perceive the school district (Jorgenson, 2001). Hood (2000) stated that schools must reflect society. Administrators must acknowledge the heritage of all staff members and widen the understanding of other peoples' cultures. Schools must also be aware of the subtle issues that may result in creating a negative school environment, i.e., logos, pictures, and school rules. School environments with little or no diversity can often become hostile, creating strained employee relations, low employee morale and confidence, and poor job performance, all of which can trigger turnover for minority teachers (Sims, 2004).

In 1999, the Educational Testing Service reported a significant gap in passing rates on its PRAXIS test between Whites and minorities. Passing rates nationwide for Whites were 82% while African American rates were 46% (Gursky, 2002). Passing rates for PRAXIS for minorities continues to be a barrier to enter the teaching field.

Fong (2001) provided additional recommendations to address the challenges to creating a "safe haven" for prospective minority teachers in an environment that lacks diversity. The object is to create occasions whereby new faculty can be free to speak their frustrations, uncertainties, ideas, and aspirations to one another without administrative supervision. For many minority teachers working in communities with little or no diversity, it may be difficult to find social companions who share their cultural backgrounds.

Retention

Why is the number of minority teachers decreasing? There are many obstacles for retaining minority teachers in the classroom (Su, 1997). Low salaries, ineffective staff development, emergence of teacher credentials, complexity of the classroom, and increasing responsibilities for children, play a role in excluding minority teachers.

The AACTE responded to the decline in minority teachers by publishing a 1987 policy statement, "Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention: A Call to Action" (Rettig, 1998). Several recommendations resulted from this study which included the following targeted initiatives: national and state scholarship programs, high school and college work-study programs, two-year and four-year college cooperative programs, financial assistance and incentives, support programs for new teachers, and effective programs for teacher assessment.

In addition to environmental barriers, several other barriers have been identified that prevent minorities from either entering the teaching field or staying in an educational career. Jorgenson (2001) states that prospective minority teachers are dissuaded from education careers by low salaries, crowded classrooms, students' lack of respect for teachers, and poor working conditions that they have witnessed first-hand.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 significantly increased accountability in public education. Public schools felt tremendous pressure to meet the needs of all students and placed the responsibility of meeting those needs on the shoulders of educational leaders. With this pressure came public awareness to hold each school district accountable when not achieving according to Federal and State expectations. Since its inception, NCLB has met with considerable debate over its policy

and effectiveness in schools in closing the achievement gap of students, as well as its effects on teachers, resources, and instruction. Of interest, is the role that equity plays in this policy.

Leonardo (2007) argues that while NCLB targets race as a problem to the success, it does not address the source of the problem. NCLB may acknowledge the symptoms, but not the root causes affecting the academic success of minority students. Leonardo's belief is NCLB framed race as incidental "because they are White or Black," not because "they happen to be White or Black" (p. 269). Leonardo quotes Welner and Weitzman (2005) regarding accountability in NCLB by stating,

> Students should be responsible for their own learning. Teachers should be responsible for teaching. Principals and school districts should provide teachers and students the resources needed for success. But confronted with the reality of the crisis conditions in many American schools, these simplistic responses amount to little more than empty blustering. (p. 246)

As NCLB enters its second phase of reauthorization, it is critical that educational leaders look deeper into the structural obstacles that exist due to cultural inequities in our schools and communities.

Educational equity exists in schools when minority teachers, specifically in this study, African American teachers, are provided the same opportunities as enjoyed by their White colleagues. Wilson (1993) described equity-based education as measured in three concepts: access, treatment, and outcomes. Are African American teachers given the same access to programs, classroom assignments, resources, support, etc., as afforded

to all teachers? Are African American teachers treated equally by their administrators and colleagues? Wilson (1993) defined the third concept, outcomes, as being divided into both short and long range components. Short range outcomes are those that influence the cognitive and affective experience of individuals. Long range outcomes relate to the ability to transfer their experiences to additional opportunities, such as promotion or vertical transfers.

Skrla et al., (2009) believed there is a complex relationship between accountability and equity; it is ever changing, dynamic, and often a product of policies and procedures within the schools. Accountability policies alone will not provide needed change in schools. If and when inequities do exist in public education, they do so because of the systems in place in those schools. It is attitudes, assumptions, practices, and policies that prohibit educational equity. The first step in making changes that promote educational equity is the willingness of educational leaders to face the current environment and to accept ownership of the problem.

I believe the words from Lisa Delpit's book, *Other People's Children,* speak of the essence of this study when she writes,

> When we teach across the boundaries of race, class, or gender - indeed when we teach at all - we must recognize and overcome the power differential, the stereotypes, and the other barriers which prevent us from seeing each other…Until we can see the world as others see it, all the educational reforms in the world will come to naught. (Delpit, 1995)

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study examines the experience of African American teachers and their perceptions of their experience throughout their career. Schram (2006) writes, "Perceptions present us with evidence of the world, not as the world is thought to be but as it is lived." African American teachers have faced many challenges and have overcome many obstacles over the last half of the 21st century due to *Brown v. Board*, and the Civil Rights Acts of 1964. However, the stories of African American teachers, past and present, may give additional perceptions to educational leaders willing to listen to their stories.

This study is intended to serve as an informative tool for educational leaders to become aware of how the culture of their schools can influence the career of African American teachers and to give them the courage needed to make changes. The "culture of power" that exists in a school reflects the rules of the culture of those who make policy and rules, whether written or implied. Those with power are least aware of its existence, while those without are often most aware (Delpit, 1988).

The stories people tell reflect how they perceive current events, remember past events, and prepare for future events (Schram, p. 105). Narratives need to have a "voice," according to Schram, and the narrative requires the narrator's perspective. This qualitative study will be based on the personal accounts of the lives of selected African American educators.

Research has given us the printed word and data to show what should have taken place in school culture. These words reveal the reality of what has, and may continue to exist in schools today. "Words are the coinage of qualitative research. Qualitative research deals primarily in words and pictures" (McEwan & McEwan, 2003, p. 20).

Qualitative research using the Narrative Inquiry is not intended for large numbers of subjects. Its value is in the study of personal experiences. The participants in this study have been limited to fewer than 15 African American educators who have worked in Beaver, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties of Western Pennsylvania. The primary method of data collection was in-depth interviews by an unbiased third party. The interviews were recorded, with permission from the participants, and transcribed. The information was reviewed and discussed by both the author and the interviewer to ensure the reliability of the interview process.

At the conclusion of the review process following the first round of interviews, it may be determined that a second round of interviews may be necessary to gain a deeper understanding of information exposed during the first interview. A trial run interview will be conducted with the interviewer to determine whether any question would require more clarity for the participants. Ambiguity would most likely disrupt the flow and depth of responses. The trial run will also allow the interviewer to be more prepared and informed to develop his own point of view for prompting more thorough responses from the participants. The trial run interview is designed to provide a more accurate time schedule, given the number of participants and questions, therefore, giving consideration for participants to plan for their evening.

The interviewer was informed prior to the actual interviews that narrative inquiry was not designed for brevity. Czarniawski (2002), and Riessman (2002b) discuss how "long stories" are not digression from the participants' answers, but the object of the investigation is the story. Coffy and Atkinson (1996) reported that narrative research is an accounting of the way people, "produce, represent, and contextualize experience and personal knowledge through narratives." Transferring knowledge through stories is a natural impulse, and narrative research allows the researcher to build upon this innate human trait.

Michelle Foster (1993) wrote that the voices of African American teachers were not adequately represented among first person narrative accounts. Of the 65 first person narratives researched, only three were African American. Rarely, did she find research indicating African American teachers attempting to change the status quo of a culture of power. Foster believed it was essential that the stories of African American teachers be told in order to understand the resilience and strengths of the African American communities and to incorporate what was best about the past and the communities of today.

Rudestam and Newton (2001) suggested that how data are collected must be independent of the form that the data might take. Recording data can be categorized along two dimensions: fidelity and structure. According to Rudestam and Newton, an open-ended interview, done properly, has high fidelity with little structure. Their preference is for tape recording, that, when transcribed, produces a more accurate record than the sole use of field notes. Rudestam and Newton suggested that a diary or journal s

be kept by the interviewer to record impressions or reactions, as well as any other significant events that may occur during this data collection segment of the research.

Following the interview process and the completion of data collection, the researcher met with participants to present the written narrative, and the researcher's interpretation of the participants' responses. The intention of doing so was to confirm the accuracy of the data collected.

Data Analysis Method

From her research in *Narrative Analysis*, Katherine Kohler Riessman wrote, "Story telling is what we do with our research materials and what informants do with us. A teller in a conversation takes a listener into a past time or world and recapitulates what happened then to make a point" (Riessman, 1993).

Narratives must be preserved as they make meaning out of life experiences. Narratives structure perceptual experience, organize memory, and "segment and purpose-build the very events of a life" (Brunner, 1987). As a perceived "privileged," White male administrator, conducting research on the educational experiences of African Americans, I do not have access to their individual experience. Through narrative, it is possible to study what can be revealed about one's social life or culture through an individual's story. Through narrative, it is possible to study racial oppression and other practices of power that may be taken for granted by the listener (Riessman, 1993). Narrative tells not only about past actions, but how individuals understand those actions, and what those actions mean to the speaker (White, 1973).

Labov (1972, 1982, and 1997) identified work on analyzing narratives of personal experiences as a representation of the reportability of a narrative, which is the event

within the narrative that makes it unique, worth telling, and worth listening to. Combining efforts with Waletzky(1997), Labov's research created a structural approach to personal narratives that assigned each narrative to a specific type: viewpoint, reportability, and credibility. The narrative analysis created by Labov and Waletzky (1997) has been used to evaluate the narratives collected over the interview process at the conclusion of the data collection period.

Each narrative in this research was given through the single viewpoint of the participants. The viewpoint of participants identifies the personal relationship that this individual has with their own story or personal experience within the context of the interview. Labov (1997) stated that a narrative of personal experience is told only from the teller's point of view; therefore, there are no other options. The events are seen from the eyes of the narrator (p. 411).

Reportability is what makes each story unique and worthy of the effort of taking the time to listen. It is the telling, not just the story teller that causes the listener to pay attention. Labov (1997) described how these narratives of personal experiences, told from the teller's point of view, contain events that make the story distinctive. Labov's belief is that the most reportable event in the narrative is the reason for the participants to tell their story, and the desire to share this story with others.

According to Labov (1997), credibility is the extent to which the listeners believe the events told to them are real, and that the details actually happened according to the way the narrator has told them. It is the persuasiveness of the narrative that gives credibility to the story. Through a detailed chain of events, as well as cause and effect, the narrator is able to persuade the listener into believing the credibility of the story.

Halverson (2008) writes, “People initially tell the stories of their lives precisely because there is a unique event that makes them worth telling”.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended “member checks.” Participants are given the data to review and provide feedback as to the validity of the researcher’s representation of their story. Lincoln and Guba maintained that the more positive feedback given by participants, the more credibility given to the presentation of data. Ultimately, Stivers (1993) believed that the final analysis is the researchers, and the researcher must take full responsibility for its truths.

Selection of Participants

There were 14 African American teachers participating in this study. Their careers ranged from statuses of currently hired and teaching, to retired with varying years of experience. The ages of the participants ranged from mid-twenties to seventies. The participants resided and worked, or currently work, in Beaver, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties of Western Pennsylvania. Their school districts were located in rural, urban, and suburban areas.

Due to the shortage of African American teachers in the tri-county area of western Pennsylvania, the sample population was limited. The goal was a sample of approximately 15 participants. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) noted the researcher can use his or her previous experiences, as well as personal knowledge and judgment in selecting participants. African American colleagues were enlisted to help identify other African American teachers in the tri-county area. Through phone calls, letters, and emails, individuals were contacted. Finally, contacts were made and commitment letters were signed along with the informed consent packets (see Appendix A).

Schram (2006) suggested that the researcher must consider the ethical issues of approaching and working with participants prior to the actual fieldwork. Included in his suggested framework of ethical issues is the question of how gender, ethnicity, or social position will affect the researcher's relationship with the participants. In this study, what effect will being perceived as a White privileged administrator have on building trust with African American teachers who may have no prior relationship with the researcher?

Maxwell (2005) encouraged the reader to identify his or her awareness of potential problems at the beginning of the process and provide an "air tight" plan for solving the problems. The issue of developing trust with participants was discussed at the outset of this study. Contact was made with the President of a local NAACP chapter for support and suggestions concerning this issue. A letter of support was written for the researcher to provide to the participants prior to asking for a commitment (See Appendix B). The letter would not have been written, nor would it have been requested, if a strong relationship had not been previously established. Hence, credibility and trust must be established both prior to and post-collection of data.

Limitations and Delimitations

Narrative does not come pre-packaged, and ready-made, as a novel. As the author and researcher of this study, I have only what has transcribed and presented. The oral record of the narrative will provide clues to the meaning of the teller's story.

Narrative analysis is not useful for large numbers of participants. Sample size is generally small, however, cases are often drawn from an unrepresented pool, and theories have been concluded on the basis of close observation of a small group. Sample size

depends on what the researcher "wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (Patton, 2002, p. 244).

The Personal Narrative Group (1989) wrote,

> When people talk about their lives, they often forget, exaggerate, get confused, even lie. Yet they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past "'as it actually was'. They give us, instead, the truths of our experiences. The truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. The truths we see in personal narratives jar us from our complacent security as interpreters 'outside' the story and make us aware that our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation of what we see in them. (Personal Narrative Group, (Eds.) 1989)

Narrative analysis is one approach to methodology of research. It is not the solution to the perfect research, and although suitable for some, it is not suitable for others.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Purpose of Data

Over 60 years have passed since *Brown v. Board* and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 have monumentally changed education by tearing down the walls of segregation and opening the doors to equal opportunities for all Black students and educators so they may experience the same benefits as their White counterparts. However, over 60 years later, the questions still exists as to whether the experience of African American educators has been one of enjoying the fruits of those mandates.

This study has examined, through personal interviews, a collection of stories from African American educators. Fourteen African American educators shared their experiences and perceptions of what was expected from their career, as well as expectations of their educational leaders and colleagues. These discussions also revealed their thoughts on why there still remains a disparity of African American teachers not only in western Pennsylvania, but in this country, which leads to an important question, "Does having minority teachers in the classroom make a difference for minority students?"

Demographics of Participants

Fourteen African American educators were interviewed and video-taped. They were given complete anonymity as their answers were candid and directed toward the schools and communities where they worked. These experiences spanned from the mid-

1960s of the Civil Rights Movement to the present time; participants were either retirees or currently employed. Their names have been changed in this study to maintain confidentiality.

Participant names:

Jenai- Retired high school administrator. 35 plus years in education;

Sophia- Current guidance counselor. 19 years in education;

Olivia- Retired elementary teacher. 35 plus years in education;

Danielle- Special education teacher. 25 years in education;

Carla- Elementary education teacher. 3 years in education;

Harold- Current administrator. 18 years in education;

Carol- Music teacher. 20 years in education;

Vince- Elementary teacher. 10 years in education;

Georgia- Retired secondary education teacher. 35 plus years in education;

Garrett- Retired administrator. 35 plus years in education;

Austin- Current administrator. 15 years in education;

Andrea- Currently seeking first full-time teaching position;

Jeri- Art teacher. 23 years in education;

Jannette- Elementary teacher- 35 plus years in education.

Intent of Interview Questions

Author's Note: The statements to follow are the exact words of the participants. The author has made no edits or corrections to their original responses to the interview questions.

1. **How did your family view education**?

Sophia- Education for my family was very, very important and as far as my parents were concerned neither of them went to college but they were always learning. My mother loved to read. She was even on the library committee for the town library. Always reading, always learning. So her love of books and reading, I guess transcended to quite a few of us. There wasn't a call that you had to go to college. Uh, but you definitely had to graduate high school and you definitely had to get a job which in most cases meant that you had to do some type of on-the-job training or some other schooling. That was definitely, uh, definitely had to do that as far as my parents were concerned. Coming from a family of nine, financially, everyone going to school, that was, you know, that was a prayer. You know, how would we pay for it, and all of those things because you can't talk about education in these times without finance. So, definitely you needed to have an opportunity to complete high school and have something lined up because you definitely were not going to sit around and do absolutely nothing. You were going to have a job. And so that's how it was I guess.

Jenai- Well, as a young child, as a young girl, my mom and dad always encouraged us to go to college. For my dad, there wasn't any choice. It was not are you going to college, it's what college are you going to. My father, even though he was raised in the South,

father would be a hundred years old if he was still alive today. He picked tobacco. He picked cotton in North Carolina. His sisters were allowed to go to college but the boys weren't. So they went to a church school there. My dad actually was able to attend college for a year. He was a French Major. So college was always in our view. There was never a choice. We had to do something more than they did.

Harold- My mother was valedictorian of her high school. So education is very relevant, very important, and it was almost, well, it was a given that I would go to college. She supported me, she helped me, she did everything she can to help me become successful. I think she laid the foundation that education is important; education is power; education is a means of advancement. My father, who only had an eighth grade education, supported her as well as supporting me. He was on the road a lot so basically I was raised by my mother and I think she instilled in me, you know, the values, the attributes that I need to be successful, in any endeavor that I choose to take.

Georgia- My mother was a major advocate for education. In her young days, she had married early and hadn't completed education she was determined that her children were going to. So she was a strong, strong advocate for education.

Garrett- My parents were very eager for me to, especially my mother, to finish, to go to college in the first place. So I was the first college graduate of my family. Especially with my mother, she was the one that pushed, as far as wanting me to go. My, dad, he went to the 6th grade so as long as I came out of high school, and I went to work, he thought I was doing well. My mom just begged me to go to college, just try, she said,

and I did. And after one summer down underneath the checkers in the mill, I decided that that wasn't the place for me and I thought I better stay in college.

Danielle- It's funny you should even ask that question because this morning I was talking to a guy about how my dad used to lie to us so that we thought Walter Cronkite was our uncle. All of us. We grew up thinking that because we had to watch the evening news every night at six o'clock and also, every night we had to read the newspaper. Every single one of us had to read, there were five of us, and then after we read the newspaper we were quizzed on it, not intensively, but we were quizzed on it after we read the paper. We all had to do that from a very young age. My mother brought this SRA reading kit, when we were kids. We all learned to read before we went to school because my mother would turn on the SRA reading kit, as it was on an LP, and we would listen to it, and we would read along with it, and they had little phonic things that you would have to do with it. So my family, neither one of my parents went to college, my dad actually, and I didn't know this until years later, quit high school in the 12th grade, I don't know why, but he quit in the 12th grade, and so neither one of them went to college, but they knew from very early on that all five of us would get college degrees. All five of us do have a college degree. So, I guess it was pretty important.

Carol-Well, my, my father never graduated. I think he went to the first or second grade. My mother finished the tenth grade. I was an only child. My mother and father were married 16.5 years before they had me.

Olivia -My family viewed education as a very important step to complete in our lives. Our mother did day work cleaning homes for twenty five dollars a day and our father was

a janitor for a trucking company. We lived on our grandparent's farm in rural North Carolina. We were poor but didn't know it. My siblings and I went to segregated schools. We attended the Presbyterian Church where our principal and many teachers attended. They [parents] visited school when needed and had great relationships with our educators. Having teachers as role models in my family and church made it clear that is what I wanted to be.

Jeri -They placed a high importance in education. My father's father placed a high importance on his and his siblings. He pushed me and my siblings to pursue our Master's degrees.

Carla I believed since I was a child I was going to college. Most of my siblings received their degree, but only after I received mine.

J**anette-**There was no option, school was the thing. There were the extracurricular, but school was our main focus. Six of us had the opportunity to go to college. Three of us did. Education was very important. My dad graduated from high school. My mom had to quit in the eighth grade to take care of the other kids.

Austin-I came from a single [parent] family. My mom was very passionate about education. She didn't go to college. She took a few courses here and there. She never got a degree. She always told me, "Make sure that you have plans to go to college. If you come up with a plan to do something that you want to do, then you move forward and go to college." She always instilled it in me to go to college. That's the only thing that as a young person you have full control over and you need to take seriously. She was a big proponent of education.

Andrea-education was very important in my family. It was never an option as to whether or not you were going to do your best. From the time you were in kindergarten you were expected to continue your education upon graduation from high school. Extremely, extremely important! You were expected to do your best. They [parents] didn't accept mediocrity. The question wasn't, "Are you going to college?" It was, "What college are you going to." A lot of times, my grandfather, who was from the south, would say, "You know, because you are Black, you need to be better, better than the next person. You need to be the top, the best." My mother and her sister are in education. Many relatives are in education. Just about everybody became an educator. Education is extremely important.

Author's Note: It was evident by the participants' responses that parental support for education is/was very strong. Whether coming from a two-parent or single-parent household, as Austin did, education was strongly valued. Regardless of the extent of education completed by either parent, post-secondary education was advocated. It is interesting that money was never mentioned as a reason to continue their education, i.e., to improve one's financial position. Education was advocated for advancement, and to have the power of choice for one's life, and as Andrea's grandfather encouraged, to complete a step in her life, to be better than the other person because she was Black.

2. **What kind of relationship did they have with the school?**

Sophia- Oh, very integral part of the school. Growing up, when my oldest sister was younger and started school, my mother became a crossing guard. Anything that she could do, again with nine children she wasn't working outside of the home, so, anything

that she could do to be around the school she did. She was a substitute janitor. I remember being in the fourth grade after school was over all the kids would go on the bus, whatever; I waited, because I knew my mom was there and I would carry the water and wipe the Blackboards and play teacher a little bit while I was there with my mom. And, so she was a big part of that, being around the school. They were integral in meetings and teacher meetings and if there was something that they needed to find out about their child you knew how important we were to them. And, not just when things were wrong. A lot of times you see that where the community will show up when they're disgruntled about something. But, my parents were just kind of there, they were there and they made it known. They would introduce us to our teachers, letting them know this is my child, sort of that type thing. You had a legacy. You hoped that your sibling before you was good. Um, because if not, um, that was one of the things that I hated is that I wasn't my sister, she wasn't me, and, I think as far as teaching that was one of the first things I would tell my students. I will not compare you to your sibling. You are your own person. So, that was kind of their view and our view as a family.

Jenai- Well, I think at that time they looked upon the schools as kind of an authority figure. You have to remember that both of them came from the south so they were never going to challenge the school district, or school teachers or those kinds of things. Basically they never received calls from the school because we were fairly well behaved. They did not feel that if the teacher would say something, then it was probably correct. So they believed pretty much what the school district said as far as whatever you did they held you accountable for.

Harold- My mother supported me in all my athletic activities. She attended the games. I was never a trouble maker so she really didn't have to really come in and meet the principal or anything like that. I think she was more in the background. She would help me with homework or if there was a problem that would arise, she would be there for me. I remember one time my senior year, I was away at a track meet, and a teacher didn't give me enough time to make up certain quizzes and I received an F on my report card my senior year. My mother wasn't too pleased with that. She went in and got it all straightened up. So I thought then what more could a parent do for you. The teacher wasn't giving me anything. She took care of it, got my grade changed.

Georgia- My mom, again, was the one that usually would go to school for anything we were involved in. She had a good relationship with the school. My mom was known pretty much in the community. She was a social advocate for a lot of change and a lot of things going on, so they knew her. She had no problem going in and, if she was there to praise the school that was one thing, but if she was there to discuss something that maybe wasn't quite right, she would do that and not have any problem doing it.

Garrett- Whatever the school said was right. They [the school] could be 10 times or 100 times wrong, but the school was right. My mother, for a short time, she worked in the high school cafeteria. The school was always right, and I was always wrong. So, the school had their complete backing.

Danielle- My mom, my dad worked all of the time, but my mother was at every PTA meeting, and I think at one point when we were in elementary school, she was actually on one of the committees for the PTA. They never missed an open house, or if they missed

a PTA meeting, one of my parents, at least one of them, would be there. From elementary through high school, they always made sure they knew who the principal of the high school was. They would actually go into the principal's office and sit down and speak with the principal to let them know that these are my kids, this is what I expect from my kids and they just, they always had a rapport with whoever was in charge of our education. From our teachers, principal, they knew the superintendent everything and everyone, so, it was really important.

Carol- My mother was very visible during my elementary years and throughout the school, PTA, things like that, come to check on me. Of all my relatives, I was the youngest of the first cousins. The first cousins were older than I was and they were educated. They went to college. But, my parents, as I said, didn't finish so it was very important to them to make sure that I was on point as much as possible because of their background.

Olivia- We attended the Presbyterian Church where our principal and many teachers attended. They [parents] visited school when needed and had great relationships with our educators.

Jeri-My parents were very involved. My mother made every parent teacher conference. She walked us to school every day. She was very involved. All through middle school and high school, my parents helped me get into art school.

Carla-My mother was highly active. Always attended every event at my school. It was like a family reunion at every event as my whole family would show up. I continue to be very involved with my own children.

Janette-My dad was coach of the pony league (baseball) team, not in the school, but in the community. Plus he was the Sunday school leader of the church. He was very involved.

Austin-My mom was working all the time, so she wasn't a PTO mom, but anything the school needed she was always there. She made it her business to be present. So, anything she could do, she would do to help support the school. If there was trouble at school or with me, or if a teacher had a problem with me, then she would contact the school. She was always trying to make sure that I was on the right path. That was difficult for a single woman, trying to teach a boy to be a man. She did the best she could and I thank her for it all the time.

Andrea-They [parents] had a very close relationship with my school. They expected us to be on our best behavior. They didn't have time for clowning around or foolishness in the classroom. If there was ever a problem, the school could call them or my grandparents. And they would come right up to the school. There was never a question of the teachers as to the teacher being wrong or making things up about us. If the teacher said you did it, you did it and got disciplined when you got home.

Author's Note: All of the participants had strong parental support towards the school. It appears that it is the mother who was most active with school functions. School did not appear to be an intimidating or overtly authoritative entity in the lives of the participants and their families.

3. **What was your expectation of being a teacher, and how did your teaching experience live up to that?**

Sophia- Honestly, I did not think I would go into education. Uh, I always thought if nothing else I would teach. And I always looked at people who taught, like, what's the big deal. Um, because actually, uh, it was a God given talent and like most young people you don't want to do that. Because it came easy I think to me and it was like so, why do you have to be trained. Uh, and it's funny as I was taking, I went to Grove City and the classes that I took as electives were all in education and so whenever it came time for me to, my, uh my major's biology, so whenever it came time for me to start thinking okay what realistic job was I going to have with a biology major other than going into research and labs or continuing on, uh, and I looked and I had taken all these education courses so I said maybe I'll try and I just fell in love. It was, it was a, it was a no brainer once I got in there. Uh, so yes I loved the teaching, the preparation, the uh, I enjoy young people. I still, after almost what 18, 19 years, get up in the morning so that I get to see the kids. So that's um, it was a no brainer as far as that was concerned.

Jenai- Well, I think that in my early years I was given a large number of students. I was teaching in a vocational school and um, actually I had 55 to 60 kids in a class. We were supposed to be team teaching but I was doing the teaching and he was doing the teaming.

So I basically had control of the class the entire time and the later years I took more of the at risk kids because nobody could handle them and I feel very comfortable with students who have some problems or who have a discipline problem. So, I believe I did live up to the expectations that I set forth. I believe that every student could learn. I didn't take no for an answer. If I gave an assignment or if I told them something to do they had to do it and I also made all the kids, especially in the at-risk class, I made them responsible for each other. So if, for instance, everybody did the assignment at the end of the week they were given a treat. So if one person didn't, then they weren't. So everybody's responsibility was to make sure that everyone else did their assignment as it was stated.

Harold- Well, I think my expectation is right now, I learned under the philosophy that learning for all whatever it takes. You know, I want to know every child has a capability of learning, I want to make sure I, as a teacher, I want to share my knowledge, my experience. You know, I want them to make connections with them and I want them to go in there and do everything they can to learn. Become the best they can be through learning.

Georgia- I'm not sure what my expectation was. I knew I always wanted to be a teacher because I had good teachers. I enjoyed school. I guess my expectation was, my teaching career would be like my high school or my school career, I enjoyed it, and I was going to play school I guess as the teacher. Having to live up to it, it did. It actually, it exceeded probably what I would have thought because some of the things that ended up happening down the road that I never anticipated. It was, as far as the things that I was able to do in teaching.

Garrett- I never really thought I was going to be a teacher. I never really wanted to be a teacher. My classmates were surprised I became a teacher. I stayed in college because my mother wanted me to and this one summer I took driver's education. The instructor at the university said, boy, he says, you'd make a good driver's training teacher. I said really. So I took all the courses that you needed to take driver's training and when I did my student teaching I did half of it in Spanish and the other half I did in driver's training. And at that point a high school was looking for a half of Spanish teacher and a half of driver's training teacher and so I fit the bill. That's how I became a teacher.

Danielle- Well, you know what, I became a teacher because I had quit college for two years and I was working at a local restaurant and every kid that came in there wanted to be with me. I do not particularly care for elementary kids but every kid wanted to be with me. So my supervisor said to me one day, he says you know you're wasting your time, you're wasting your time here, you need to go and be a teacher. Please, not me, no way, ever. So I went into education with the fact, just thinking that I'm going to do this because I've already got 2 years down and I'm going to get this education in and be done with it. I really didn't have any big expectations until after I had graduated and actually got into the classroom. And then that was one of my first jobs, my first, I did full -time substituting at a couple of the local schools and a school in Ohio. But then my first full time job was in another state and I probably was the darkest thing in that town, really, and I taught at the high school, which is on an Indian Reservation, and so I was different for them and they were different for me all the way around. So, my expectations then became letting people know that there was a world bigger than where they came from. And then that's what I pretty much still carry, because the school district I'm at now, it's

not a very big school district and a lot of the kids don't even know there's a world past where they're at. So there still, that's my expectation, it's just to expand someone's world and let them know they're more than what they appear to be.

Jeri-I had a little Blackboard and played school with my friends. Teaching seemed a natural path for me. I always enjoyed teaching and interfacing with others. I enjoyed seeing the light in people's eyes when they get it.

Carol- Well, I kind of really, in a sense, got thrown into teaching. I went to the university for, well let me give you a little background on that. I was a teacher's aide and I was having difficulty hearing and I thought it was because I had some type of wax build up. Or to make a long story short I found out that I had psoriasis of the ear bone and because of that I had to have surgery. And so, I had to be rehabilitated. So, through that experience, they asked me what I wanted to do. Though I said music was my love, so they encouraged me to go back to school. I did go and my voice teacher at that time really encouraged me instead of taking performance to really dive into education, so that's what I did. And it was a good experience for me, I was raising a single child, I was a single parent, and it became very important to graduate no matter how long it took me, and it took me quite a few years.

Carla-I never wanted to be a teacher. I wanted to be an attorney. I ended up getting married early and getting pregnant. I found I had a good rapport with children and decided to go into elementary education. While I was in school, I had a very good relationship with my teachers.

Janette-To a degree, not as much in the last 10 years as before, I just wanted to make a difference in a child's life.

Austin-To be honest with you, I started out when I first went to college as a business and economics major. I had some experiences working with kids in clubs and I liked that. In college I involved myself with things in the community center in my neighborhood [in Baltimore] like basketball and things that were connected to little kids, and I liked that. I always had a love for helping kids. I always said to myself, if I didn't want to work in the corporate America, then education was going to be something that I was going to do. It kept circling in my mind, maybe that's what I should do. I finally decided to do that. I didn't do that because I thought that teaching was a glamorous job or that it was even something that I was extremely interested in doing. I did it because I thought this was a good opportunity for me to work with kids and be a positive male role model. That's the reason I got into teaching. Not because I always wanted to be a teacher, but that was an avenue to do what I wanted to do.

Author's Note: I questioned Austin about the trade-off of corporate salary compared to a teacher's salary. Was this an issue in his decision to change his career choice to education?

Austin: Absolutely. I really liked working with kids. I really wanted to be a role model and help kids move beyond the situation they were in, particularly inner [Baltimore] city. I know that teachers don't get paid a whole lot. So, to me, that was an issue. It was like an

internal battle. I struggled with that. I battled back and forth. What's more important to me? Is it important for me to work with these kids, or make money? I decided that working with the kids was more important. That's the reason I went in that direction. That's why I selected elementary. I thought, let's get the kids early. If I can make an impact, or make a difference early then I could make a difference before the kids get into high school, where it's more of a challenge with adolescent kids. For me, I was making the decision based on the larger picture, which was working with kids and being a positive role model, being able to be with them on a daily basis for six, seven hours a day. That was the number one reason why I got into it [education] in the first place and why I chose elementary [education.]

Author's Note: Austin was one of three administrators. We spoke of why he chose to leave the classroom for an administrative position and how difficult the choice was to do so when he was having such a positive influence on the children in his classroom.

Austin: It was [difficult], but if you really want to have an impact on the whole, you can have more influence as an administrator. I had become very comfortable being a teacher. I said I would never want to get into administration and have all those headaches. A couple of people chirped in my ear, and said maybe it would be a good idea. I spoke to a couple of administrators. I started to think about it a little more and made the decision to go into administration.

Andrea-I expected it to be me making a difference in students' lives. Making sure that they are comprehending material and me making sure that I'm presenting the material so that they can comprehend it, use it in other areas of academics. To make sure they are literate, able to read, able to write effectively, able to communicate effectively. I believe I have met 80 percent of my expectations. But, I let them know from the beginning that these are my expectations and I won't accept anything less.

Author's Note: Several of the participants had never intended to become teachers. Only through the encouragement of others who saw something special inside of them did they pursue a teaching career. A teacher's salary was never mentioned with exception of Austin who made the comparison to corporate salaries, and in his belief, a teaching salary would be much less than what he believed was available to him outside of education. The expectations of teaching for all participants was to improve the lives of children, to be a positive role model for their students.

4. What obstacles had to be overcome to pursue your career in education?

Sophia- Okay. There are always short term and long term challenges I think. My family foremost, God definitely, prayer, that was definitely my support and still is my support. My father was a great counselor and, even in going through college and trying to figure out what I wanted to do and my freshman year the grades were nowhere near what I had experienced in high school and even though he was supposed to be doing pastor type things he would stop and not do them and sit down and counsel me. And, so that for me still puts a lump in my throat. That for me, was important, just knowing that he was there

during the hard times or the unsure times. As a teenager those crossroads that you know, life comes, just offers up to you and you have to make those decisions so definitely God, family, prayer really because I can't handle everything and anything so I talk to the One who knows the answers and that's you know, that's what has, is, always helped me.

Jenai- I think it began at my first job. When I had seen in the News, a vacancy existed at the school, I went out, it was a history job, I went out, I tried to apply. They [district] wouldn't give me an application. They said there was no opening. I came back a second time and they still wouldn't give me an application. So at the third time I told them I would be contacting the EEOC (Equal Opportunity Employment Center) and I was able to get an application for the teaching job. I did secure that job but for every job that I've ever had it's always been a hop, and a skip, and a leap. You always knew that you had to work harder than everybody else. You had to get in earlier, stay later, be seen doing something. It wasn't as though you could sit down at your desk because somebody was always popping into the room. You had to make sure that the kids were motivated, stayed on tasks and that they didn't have any discipline issues. Because, a lot of times the administration views those teachers who have discipline issues as problem teachers. So you want to make sure that your classroom ran smoothly. I made sure that learning was fun, everybody was able to achieve, and as I said I was teaching at risk students at the end of my teaching career and they seemed to be the forgotten generation. So, for me to just give them some attention or for me to compliment them, or to give them a treat, or for me to give them a certificate on Friday if they all came to school for the week was, is, as though I had presented them with a $1,000.00. That's how excited they were. And so, it became a kind of a mission. Now, when I speak about teaching, teaching wasn't just a

vocation, teaching was a mission. It was a call on your life. So what happens is, you can't leave the mission until the mission is done. It's an assignment that you have and I always felt that spiritually that I was led to be where I was. And so even though we weren't allowed to talk about God, and, but the way your values come through, your morals come through, those things touch the lives of those young people.

Harold- I don't know. My mother instilled in me education is key and through hard work, I never looked at myself as one of the smartest or the brightest people in the world. It seems like I haven't had a lot of obstacles to overcome. You know I had a plan early in life and it seems like everything has fallen in place. I know, uh, that I come from a predominantly White area or background and you know I just don't have that perspective or I don't see the negative. I focus on the positive. And by focusing on the positive I don't, you know my wife may see somebody being negative to me I don't really see it as that. You understand what I'm saying, I really don't have any obstacles, you know it's just what I did. I put in the time, the effort, and you get this, you get your masters, and I'm going to do the same once I get my doctorate. I think what's key is that my wife supports me in everything I do and she's there to push, tell me when I'm doing something wrong and encourages me when I do something right. I'm close knit, I have a close knit family I have a nice group of friends. I know a lot of people through my personality, I'm personable, I'm not afraid to ask questions, I'm not afraid to ask for help if I do need it. Most of the time it's just a matter of me refocusing getting the job done. If I can't' get a job done I ask people who have done it and who had experience and have been successful.

Georgia- The obstacles I guess would have been the path that I took to become a teacher. I started out graduating high school. My parents had to struggle to pay for college. I graduated in ’64 and there weren’t all the federal loans and things that kids are able to get now. It was a struggle to pay for it but they were doing that but then I decided, or I guess we decided, to get married while we were in college. So, then the tables kind of turned. Now it’s a struggle, really a struggle to pay for college because Garrett wasn’t finished with college yet. I was there as a sophomore, I think you were a junior or a senior, junior, and he wouldn’t let my parents pay for college. He was paying for his college and he said we’re getting married, I’ll pay for it. So we struggled to pay for that. In between time, kids started coming along. I had two kids before I finished college. So it was, having babies, and being a wife, and working, I did some working part time at K-Mart’s, Gaylord’s, until, then went back to school taking so many hours at a time because I couldn’t go full time having the kids. Then finally, it was like, okay, I got to go full time and get this done. So I think that last year I went full time, then he started teaching, so we got a sitter and I went full time. Then I finally graduated in ’71 and started working, yeah, it was. I always knew I would finish. That was never an issue, but we took the hard way to do it. Looking back, it would have been much easier to do it like my mother wanted me to do it. Go to school. Get married after you finish.

Garrett- Any obstacles I had were the ones that I brought on myself. Trying to get serious about college as opposed to racing cars. Getting married was the best thing that happened to me. I don’t mean for her because it gave me a direction and I needed that direction. Or I could have very easily flunked out of school, didn’t keep my grades up, or

whatever, get drafted whatever, but once I had the first job it gave me direction and I knew what I had to do to make life better for my family.

Danielle- I guess there were no obstacles thrown at me, I guess my obstacles all came in my head. I never thought I was good enough to do, I always thought I was a slower learner than everyone else. I always thought everyone else was getting the material and I'm like sitting back. You know, what the heck is going on kind of thing. So, I guess all my obstacles were in myself to know that I could do exactly what I'm trying to tell the kids that they could do. Overcome whatever it is that's in their head that's holding them down. So my obstacles were never my family or anyone telling me I couldn't do anything. They were all me telling me I couldn't do anything. So, my biggest obstacle was myself. I guess the biggest challenge was after I had graduated, just knowing exactly where I fit in or where I wanted to be, is this really even what I wanted to do. So, that got to be like a real thorn in my side. It's like do I want to do this? Oh my God, is there going to be enough money to do this? Can I raise my daughter and still be able to be in education? So, the money thing was the big challenge you know. Should I get into something else, or should I stay in this area? I don't know if those are the challenges that you're looking for, but those were challenges for me. Just wondering if I could do this and wondering if I took enough courses. I tell you one that used to bother me, are my kids going to be smarter than I am? So, that was a big one and that used to like, bother me. Especially, because I'm not the best math person in the world but we all got through it together.

Carol- I was older, a non-traditional student going back to school. It had been a long time since I had gone to school and to get back into the rigor of learning and studying and

all of that and I did also work. It was difficult. Also, because I was a music major there were a lot of different expectations that were required of me that I wasn't used to, my music background was a little bit different. I had played in a church for years and I had to take the classical voice and that was a challenge for me. Really a challenge.

Jeri-I had learning disabilities when I was young. This was blown off when I was a child. It was not diagnosed and I am thankful as it was never an issue. My family always encouraged me to succeed. It was a blessing in disguise.

Carla- The only obstacle I had was that we were so poor. Our socio-economic status was the largest obstacle I faced. I had to work my entire time even throughout high school. I had to work 2 or 3 jobs and had to balance that with my studying and activities so I could be a well-balanced student.

Janette-I went to high school in the late 60s. I was a cheerleader. There was controversy there as there were 15 who tried out and they could only have eight or whatever. There weren't many African Americans there and two of us had tried out and ended up making it. So that was a whole big thing and the head of the NAACP had to get involved with it. Then when I applied for college, I took only business courses and academics because going to college you needed business courses and typing skills. The guidance counselor at the time, I will never forget, told me I wouldn't need all these academic courses. I looked at him dead in the face and said, "Maybe you don't, but I do. I'm going to college." He said, "You know, not very many African Americans go to college." I said, "Oh well, I will be one of them." I ended up earning a scholarship to [local college].

Couldn't wait to go back and see him after I graduated. I said thank you and walked out. And there were other obstacles like that.

Author's Note: The college that Janette attended was a predominantly White, Presbyterian college. Her professors at that time are still her favorites.

I grew up with Italians. We were all friends. In college, my roommate had never seen a "real live" Black person except on TV. She wanted to touch me, feel me. I went to the Dean, I said, "We have to do something about this." It was a different experience. That's when I did experience racism. Not from a majority but from some. That's when I thought, ok, this is life outside of my home town. This is how it's going to be, which was a great lesson, because you are going to find that not only from Whites, but from Blacks too. I found out that wherever you go, people are people and kids are kids. Same attitudes, same mannerisms. Wherever you go, you are going to find it [racism].

Austin-Honestly, there were no obstacles for me. I didn't have any obstacles. My mom was very supportive. She instilled in me that you can do whatever you want to do as long as you put in the hard work and effort. You can get whatever you want and be whatever you want to be.

Andrea- The only obstacle has been that I am a single parent. I had to balance being an undergraduate in school, being a parent. I had a son in school, who played basketball, maintaining a household and work, trying to keep your house going financially. My only obstacle was being a parent and that took me longer [finish undergraduate degree]. I had

to sacrifice and at times, my grades would suffer, but I graduated about a week before my son graduated from high school.

Author's Note: Obstacles to teaching were varied among participants. Raising a family and being a single parent presented difficult, but not impossible circumstances to obtaining a teaching degree. It was notable that marriage for Georgia presented difficulties of raising a family, whereas, for Garrett, marriage gave him direction and purpose. For both Jannette and Jenai, racism clearly placed obstacles for them to obtain their degrees. For others, obstacles were the pressures to succeed that were self-imposed.

5. **What support systems existed to help you overcome both short and long-term challenges as a teacher?**

Georgia- Family. My mom, my parents were always there. Family, I guess would be the biggest thing.

Garrett- Family. That was the biggest support we had. I was fortunate to get hired in a manufacturing in town, where I'm from. They were looking for a Safety Supervisor for the afternoon shift. After I got all my courses in safety education, I went and applied for the job. Of course, everyone else that applied there were guys working in the mill and they didn't have that degree and so that helped me and so I got the job. also helped change my life.

Carol- I had a great support system when I started college at a small campus. They were very supportive. After I finished my two years there I went to a bigger university and there were a lot of teachers there that really saw something in me that I didn't see in

myself. I think maybe because I was an older student and because I was a minority also I think that they really, a couple, well maybe about four that really encouraged me. When I would get discouraged I could go in and talk to them and discuss some of the studying habits having to take classes over. But they were very encouraging. So it got me through.

Jeri-My family was first. My counselor and art teacher were my support in school. My counselor sparked that interest for art in me. She was my inspiration.

Carla-The church was my support. There were a lot of well known, well educated African American educators in the church. Their support and mentorship aided me tremendously.

Janette-My parents are number one [support]. My first cousin and his sister were both educators. There were educators on both sides of my family.

Austin- In addition to my mom, I had an aunt and uncle who were very supportive. My uncle had a military background and was very supportive and a male figure for me. I also leaned on a couple of other people here and there.

Author's Note: Austin mentioned two African American administrators from his home town. When I was in school, I gravitated toward male teachers a little more so than female teachers, naturally. I found connections to people here and there outside of my family.

Andrea-My support system was my mother. She's in education, so a lot of times if I had any hindrances or questions or problems, I would go to her because she is experienced in that. My dad would help me financially, spiritually, emotionally. They helped me with my son. My grandmother, if I needed her to babysit my son. My friends helped me if I needed someone to babysit my son. My support system was very strong.

Jenai- [**Author's Note:** Jenai commented regarding the support of her union representation] Not a lot. Not a lot. You couldn't depend on your union because you could be laid off and the union would say to take the lay off, so there really wasn't any of that. I had, of course, my family to support me and I had to use the legal system as support.

Author's Note: Family was the main support system for all participants. Family includes parents, grandparents, siblings, and friends. For some, the church also played a role in giving support with specificity given to those in the church who were educated. It is interesting to note that Jenai stated that she received no support from her union, or local association. Jenai stated in question four that she was forced to obtain support through the legal system to fight through her obstacles.

6. **Describe any inequities that you feel existed between your experience and those of your White colleagues.**

Sophia- I have, I did experience an inequality in teaching where I teach, there are so many different facets. I always said coming here was healing to me knowing the makeup

of the city where I went to college and where I teach. So I would say coming here was healing to me because the people touch you physically and emotionally. So that was a whole new dynamic that was actually healing. I've already said that. I was just thankful to work because I enjoyed the students. I enjoy the process of learning. I enjoy seeing the light bulb go off in a student's eye, I enjoy that. I never realized that there were so many other political or whatever dynamics that are going on behind the scene. I've never been one to be a part of that conversation, never been one to want to be a part of that, but came to find out that those conversations did affect me and, sometimes I feel kind of devastating because you're, you're in a position where you're doing what you're supposed to do, you're doing what is right to do, you're being complimented on that but yet someone else can come right in, because of whatever reason, and take a place that should rightfully have been yours. So yeah, there, there's some healing then that needed to take place where you have to refocus on why am I here and what is my place and what should I be doing here so. So, yeah it does affect you and like I said, I'm not one to want to be in a political discussion, I know this type, that's just not me, that's just not my makeup, I'm here to work, I feel like I'm on a God given mission and I never know how much time I have. So I feel like I have to get in and help as many as I can while I can. And so, all of that other stuff that is really not my business, I come to find out that it does affect me. So, well it makes it a learning process definitely, definitely. And you have two choices to become bigger or better based on that. And, you would be lying if you didn't say it took a minute to get your footing again. But, you do and you become better for it.

Jenai- I don't think that they had to, let's say, work as hard. I made sure that I was competent in whatever I did. I continued to go to school. I continued to get more

degrees, get a superintendent's letter, all of the things that supposedly would lead you along the path where you would be rewarded. But at every turn when I was attempting to move forward in my career, even the fact that I had perfect grades, I had a great teaching experience, the fact that I had done all the things that I thought was supposed to happen, there was always a negative, there was always a fight in order to get to the next step.

Harold- Mm, that's a good question. Inequities, huh? What do you mean by Inequities? I have a good idea but tell me. Inequalities? When I first started at this position, I've always questioned why they hired me. I wasn't sure it was because I was the best candidate or did they hire me because the superintendent wanted to get back at the teachers. I still don't, I still don't really know. I never asked that question. I've always prayed and hoped that it was because I was the best candidate. But I know as I reflect on it I cannot see, there's no, really anything to gain to hire me. Maybe, because I was Black. The only thing I can think of is, you know my life, I've been in opportunities, I've served myself, I can only hope that people look at me for me not me being a Black male. I have not seen a lot of [racism], I know they're there, but I have seemed to overcome them through my persistence, hard work, making connections with people and change their persona or change the perception of people. You know, once they get to know you, I think race can be overcome because I'm an example of that. I don't know. Maybe I'm living in painted glasses or something, I don't know. I don't see, I've never really been exposed to a lot of hatred, a lot of racism, I know it's there. But when you think about it, well maybe it was there, you know, I just didn't know about it, I just kept my eye on the prize. There was this one time, when I first got back into education. I was in my home town. And I got hired as a long-term sub as a physical educator. And you know, politics

came into play, and you know, I didn't get the full time position. I probably could have pulled that race card. I felt that kind of was taken away from me getting the job. So what I did was I got hired out-of-state, got my experience there, then I made it back home and some way or another they hired me. I think that's, that's probably, I don't know if it's a miracle that everything came into place, my father was home, my mother had passed away, I got to move back home. Now I'm starting my seventh year at my current position.

Garrett- When I started teaching, I just happened to have the right degrees they were looking for. I was fortunate to have at a the school district, a superintendent, at the time, and a high school principal, who were there and they saw all the signs of how I was changing then. They, at the time, had I think two Black teachers, one was a home economics teacher and the other was a science teacher. Schools were starting to look for some Black educators. You know, because of the government wants you to hire more Black educators. I happened to be at the right place at the right time. I was treated, by those two men, super, that's all I can say with those two. I think that's what helped me to not have any problems when I first started. The other side of the coin was a football coach in the high school. I had a big problem with him when I first started. It was mainly jealousy because of the department head, who at the time was there, and this fellow and I didn't get along too well. They sort of took it out on me. That all changed once he became department head. They needed me to go and pick up football films, and he needed me to pick them up and all of a sudden we became friends and he liked me then.

Author's Note: I asked Garrett if he was aware of other African American teachers who were colleagues of his at the time, who may have had a different experience than he had?

Garrett- Yeah, there were a few. Most of the ones I had at the university at the time were teaching in predominantly Black school districts in the Pittsburgh area. Most of them went back to their home towns and got jobs back then.

Georgia- I had similar experience when I was in the classroom teaching and I had gotten my masters in guidance. But again, there was a female administrator. She had said to me you ought to consider going and getting your Principalship. She says you did a good job in the classroom. She had been a guidance counselor previous to that. There weren't many women at that point going back to get their Principalship. I said I don't even know if I have a classroom. When I went to guidance in the beginning I fought that. We were fortunate, we had people there that saw the job we did and encouraged us to go further.

Garrett- I taught for seven years before I became principal. But I was encouraged, like I said, by the superintendent and the principal to go back and get it. They told me when there'd be an opening. He came there during a time when we didn't really have to have a degree to get certain jobs like [administration]. He was the assistant principal but he never had the degree to be a principal. The state came up with this. They give you this one year that anyone who was not in your certified area had to be either certified by that time or they had to go back into a certified area. That was their job. Mr. M was at the age where he was old enough to retire. He turned 65 and I had my degree at that time and was waiting. The timing was perfect.

Georgia- Timing, I guess, played a big part in my situation because I was hired in '71, January of '71 to fill in for a teacher that was leaving because she had to have some medical, surgery done. She came back and I was furloughed naturally because she came

back to her job. But at the same time that's when this district was having some racial problems. They had a riot there. One of the demands of the kids was to try some Black history. Well my degree was in Social Studies. At that time they didn't have a Black history degree. It was all very new, even the course, the Black history course at the university. I had one course in Black history that was open I guess to all students at the university. It was packed every semester they offered it. Then I took four more classes of independent study with that teacher. My Social Studies degree allowed me to go back into history because I was double certified, social studies and Spanish. There weren't any openings for Spanish. Being furloughed, they called me back after that incident and said we understand that you have Black history credentials. "Can you develop a course?" So I developed a class for that high school and they eventually had me teach and the course still continues through this day. I think it's one of the few schools still teaching Black history.

Danielle- You know, again I knew that this is what the interview was going to be about, and I was thinking about that. Unless I'm completely naïve to a lot of things in the world, no, I didn't see a lot. I never saw a lot. But people, White [people], would be sitting in with a lot of my Black colleagues and they would say this happened, or that happened. I just never saw them because I went to a predominantly all White high school and I was never treated unfairly there. So I never saw unfairness with different people I was around so I really didn't focus on any of that. So, no. My answer to that question is no, I didn't see a whole lot of inequities with anyone that I was around, but I heard a lot of different stories of people. For me personally, no, but I heard stories of other people that would be treated unfairly such as a promotion for a coaching job would come up and

the Black teacher would be qualified for it and had done it for it awhile and then they would bring in someone completely out of the district for, and give the job to the White teacher. And you know, since it didn't happen to me directly, I would live through her experience and you know, that's happened a couple of times at the school that I'm at right now, that's happened a few times. So yeah, just unfair things like that, but other than that, I've seen things with older and younger teachers but never with me personally with the race thing.

Carol- Mmm. I think the fact that I felt like I had to change my view of the importance of the music that I had been raised with. I felt like what I had learned up and to that particular point seemed as though it wasn't as important as what I was learning at college. So I had some difficulty in as far as, for instance my vocal, as far as I was singing, the techniques that I was being taught at school were a little bit different than what I was used to. And, that was a challenge in itself. But I had an understanding voice teacher that understood where I was at that point in my life and we would always tease and say, you know, if he would have had me when I first got out of school maybe I could have been able to do a lot more in my college vocal career. So I think that was the challenge that I had.

Jeri-For me personally, I am not too aware because I'm stuck in my room and don't have time to deal with what other people are getting. The same people get the class coverage and others may complain as they don't get the money for doing that. That isn't a concern for me.

Carla-They may have existed, but I was probably trained to not notice them. One piece of advice I was given was that my race may always be looked upon as a handicap and I must always, always be better than my White counterparts. Being better meant push yourself grade wise and experience wise. Take every job that I may be overqualified and learn from that experience and build upon it [the experience]. From my part, I don't know whether anything existed, as I choose to be an introvert and dive into my studies and research and focus on that. I continue to get that same advice from my mentors. One African American professor in grad school pulled me off to the side and mentored me. She told me not to let being a single parent be an excuse. I graduated Magna Cum Laude. I knew what I had to do to always be a cut above the rest.

Janette-I bonded with the people that I could learn from. I looked at the results of the kids of those teachers and bonded with them.

Austin-I honestly can't say that I have and I don't know if it was because I was very, very determined to not allow those things to influence me or impact me. I kind of decided that I'm not going to allow that kind of stuff to impact me. I'm going to move forward. If there's an opportunity that arises and I don't get it. Then I'm going to work harder and make it be something that pushes me forward and makes me work harder.

Author's Note: I followed up with Austin on what "those things" might mean. Were they preconceived ideas through other people's experiences of things that he may have anticipated to expect?

Austin: You would hear things, like if there is ever an opportunity for a promotion, that because you are an African American you're not going to get the consideration that your White counterparts are going to get. This information would come from those mentors or other people who would have those preconceived notions or past experiences. Or just what people think is the truth. And, I do believe that those kinds of things do happen. Some other people may have experienced those things more so than I have. I just think, maybe some of that's true, but I'm just going to move forward and do what I need to do and try to better myself and if things happen that's because they were supposed to happen and if they don't they don't. I never connected any shortcomings to that. I refused to do that. One of my mentors would tell me that you just have to expect that those things may happen. But you can't let those things bring you down. If they bring you down, then you're going to be no good. I just try to ignore those things and move forward and act like whatever I felt was necessary to get myself to where I needed to be, then I just tried to work a little harder to get there.

Vince-The racism I faced through my pre-service years shocked me. Part of it was in the early years. It wasn't from all my teachers. I believe they had to weed people out [of the education program]. But, don't make it harder for some and not others. In one of my methods classes, I had an instructor who taught in a k-12 setting. She was not a professor [doctorate]. She made it hard, hard for all of us, but tougher for me and my African American friend. I felt that they made our unit plans harder than what they needed to be. She made it harder for us. One day we put it [racism] to the test. Me and a White girl did

the same exact unit plan. She got an A and I got a B+. Then my grade had to be changed. She claimed she didn't see something and changed the grade. I did everything she wanted to see. I was going to the Dean of Students about her. I got an A. Even in math methods class, they targeted my African American friend. They [classmates] had the same book and the same concept. He got an F in his unit plan and had to repeat the class. His girlfriend passed and they had two different instructors. He got held back as he had to retake the class and he didn't finish.

Author's Note: I followed up with Vince to elaborate on other ways that he believed that he and his African American classmates were treated differently that his peers.

Vince: It was always little subtle things, not out in the open. I had a teacher who made us realize that race may have played a role in treating us [African Americans] unfairly. She showed us subtle ways for people to be racist. My advisor quit and emailed me. I kept a folder to show how many times I emailed her and she never returned my emails. It was two weeks before graduation. I had done all my certification tests, but had still failed my research. I went to the Dean. Before I went to Dean, however, I got a new advisor. The Dean had emailed me one morning when I was a substitute teacher. I was told I needed to return to the university. She [Dean] had my research waiting and told me what I had to fix. I stayed and finished the research and received a passing, but lower grade. I was told it was because it was technically late, but that was not my fault. She didn't hold it against me, but said I should have come in to see my advisor earlier. I couldn't meet earlier because she had left the university and I could not meet with her.

Author's Note: Whether racism was personally experienced or heard second-hand, each participant had expressed some form throughout their careers, which may have contributed to the existences of some inequities. A consistent theme from the participant responses was also witnessing, first-hand, the inability to advance or observing other African American teachers not chosen for a position for which he or she was qualified.

7. **Does/did a culture of authority exist in your school district? If so, was it dominated by White administration? If yes, what must an African American teacher learn to navigate through this, get hired, or advance?**

Sophia- That's almost an unfair question only because we're in transition. Had that have been a few years back I would say definitely yes. [Sophia's district is in the early stages of a transition of administrative changes from an African American principal to a White principal.]

Yes. Right, right. Right. I can definitely say, and the only reason why I'm not saying now because it's still transitioning. But yes, definitely. Yes there was definitely that authoritative figure and it was so different because it was a Black female. And there was no question about any student that that person was definitely in authority and that person definitely did use that authority for the student's benefit and their protection and, definitely for their, their safety. I honestly feel that as a whole the teaching staff felt that way also. So I would definitely say, definitely say yes to that. It's like double edge because it was a Black female. So, carrying that role, and I had been under previous administrations where it was a White male who definitely carried an administrative and

an authoritative role. It was nice and great to see that a female could do it, a Black person could do it and a female also, so I think that was, that just proved doubly that it could be done and that she was totally capable of the job. As far as the hiring process that I couldn't, I could not answer. Because again, that's a whole other area that I, I can't even begin to wonder about. As far as being approachable, that person was approachable. I would have to say I definitely had conversation concerning this, that, or the other so I cannot say that they were not approachable. Did I see favorable outcomes from our discussions? Not necessarily. Definitely approachable, but uh, sometimes I felt like there was a behind the scenes and I didn't have enough power or clout for my opinion to matter, so uh, it was definitely my information was viewed a little different.

Jenai- Yes. I was the only administrator for a long time. There was previously another principal. I can remember when my sister went to school she left her teaching job to go to Ohio to get her principal certificate so forth and so on and she was told by an administrator in this district there was no need for you to get it because we already have a Black principal. So there was that kind of closed society that you're not going to get passed this. I remember another administrator telling me when I was principal at another school, this is as high as you're going to get. Because that's what they believe, you couldn't do any more, you can't go through that ceiling. But again, no matter how much education, no matter what you did, how hard you work, attend all the functions, do all the right things, you're still that section, that's, there's a ceiling there that you can't break through. So it was, for me, not as difficult because I have faith and I believe what God has for me is for me and if I'm supposed to have a certain position, I'm going to get it and if I didn't get it, it wasn't meant for me to have it. I believe though that you can't

apply for jobs that you're not qualified for. I don't want anybody to say that well she got that job because she was Black or because she is a female. I want them to see because I was accomplished. And so, as it turned out, actually I had a teacher say to me at the high school what did they need the Black person or female and I said no, they need somebody with sense because you don't have any. So, it turned out that as you go through all of the hoops, and you do have to go through hoops, and you have to do more, and you have to work harder, and I'm a hard worker. That's never been a problem. But as you do those things a less spiritual person might have become discouraged and left the area or left the field because they could go somewhere else they might have been appreciated. Well, I've only really worked in this county but I know there are other places that will hire you not based on who you are or who you're related to or, there are other places you can go in town and get some skills and be hired on your own merit. But when you have a closed society, and this is no secret because it's been spoken about in the paper and you know, various things, it's hard to break through. So that's why we don't have a lot of African American teachers who are from this town who come back because they feel they don't have a chance to come here and to get a job and so they go off to other places and so what they must do in order, they have to stay strong. They have to stay strong in the faith. If they are determined, and they are capable and qualified, you know, stand on that and use whatever it is that you have to use in order to break through that sealing. Because there is, uh, it's difficult. It's difficult to get a job in this district, it's difficult to maintain. You're in a lonesome situation. You don't have other educated, educators to, you know, to even socialize with because there are so very few. So it makes it a very lonesome situation then when you begin to move up in your positions then you have no

one. You don't have anyone who looks like you that you can socialize with and so it makes it very difficult for one person who's by themselves, you know, to fight the masses.

Harold- Well you know, African Americans are capable of being excellent teachers, just like their White counterpart. I think the biggest obstacle was, you know, do they have a reason to try to apply to those predominately White districts. The second obstacle is getting in the door, getting your foot in the door. The school board is going to see a Black candidate or an administrator is going to say, you know, is this something, a good fit, or are they the best candidate. Can they overcome? Actually it depends on the policy of the district. I believe this district was maybe, probably a pretty good fit for me because there is a mixture of many different types of cultures. They are open-minded. I don't see them, you know, that's the type of district that predominantly, you know, a Black teacher would have to go to, to work into a predominantly White district. They need, you know, that culture has to be overcome.

Georgia- It did and it was. Yes. Yes. There weren't that many Blacks even when I was teaching. The maximum number at one time in the high school would have maybe been three. What was the most we ever had? Four? I forgot.

Garrett- No. Because again, it was because of the time. The time with the Civil Rights and all that. It happened around the time we got hired there in the '60's and early '70's, that actually made it easier because they were looking for, just like in my hometown. The superintendent from my home town was talking to, telling my dad to get me back. We

want him back here in his home town. I fell in love with this school district and never went back to my home town.

Author's Note: Garrett and Georgia were both hired on the tail of the Civil Rights Act movement. We spoke of the impact this Act had on the social and educational system in African American communities. What do they believe was gained or lost, as was referenced in the Parsons, Kansas story detailed earlier in this study?

Garrett- No. I didn't see that. In this town you got to look at the school district. Now if you ask me about some other schools, I'll give you an example, where my father was from. He was from Martinsville, Virginia. They had their own Black school. It was an outstanding school. Well, when that came through, of course, they closed the Black school down, okay, and all those kids had to go to the White school. They lost a culture that existed in their school that will never be replaced. At the time, the high school really didn't have that, as long as when I was there.

Georgia- Well, basically the culture that we had was through the church. There weren't any separate schools. We always went to school with White students. The church was the hub of the Black culture there. No, I don't think the church lost anything because of desegregation. It helped. I think it helped a small town like this. It wasn't an easy help though because at the time, even though we went to school with White kids, pools were segregated and I remember with my mom, she was very involved with NAACP, there was a pool that we went and picketed and it finally closed down rather than open it up to Blacks. There was a roller skating place in town where we skated one day a week. There was a certain day the Black kids could skate. The other days you couldn't. We

picketed that and it finally got changed but desegregation helped in those incidences even though it still was a fight because they didn't do it graciously. They finally had to do it because they were losing money, even though we went only one day a week. For example, one day a week, that was still one day a week they weren't getting any money if we just decided not to come at all.

Garrett- In the school, we never had Black cheerleaders. You went to school but there were no Black cheerleaders. They played in the bands but they were never the head majorette or on the prom courts. None of that. That changed after I started there and it was open to anyone.

Georgia- It opened somewhat. I can remember one of my big accomplishments. I was on the executive council, student council. You could count on one hand the number of Black students on student council. Even some of the things I got involved in are because of a Black teacher who was there that pushed me. She was a guidance counselor, a home economics teacher first. I had her as a home economics teacher. She would always say, you need to get involved in this and you need to do that and you need to do that. Then she became counselor later but it was that teacher pushing me.

Danielle- We had an incident, we had, we got a superintendent back a few years ago and he was a little Black man. Before that everyone in our school, the teachers and all the students felt that everyone got along. No one, thought race was ever an issue at the school until this guy came in. And I believe what he said, what they said to him when they hired him was that the kids were out of control, these Black teachers need a Black administrator to tell them what to do and that the White person is going to resent you.

And so, when he came, he came with like his guns loaded and basically changed the whole atmosphere of the school. Where teachers that used to get along real well, because there's not very many Black teachers there, but the two, the Black and the White teacher that used to get along really well now all of a sudden there was a riff because this. You didn't know if he was playing favorites to you because you were Black and you were being treated unfairly, in your mind, because you were White. And so right there, that was a big riff. It also, this Black, White riff, also went through the entire student body too where we never had any kind of name calling in the hallways or anything like that and then all of a sudden it was just constantly. You know, at one point there was a chant that was going through the school. It was, I even hate to say this, it was kill the White man, kill the White man and it was going through the school and it never happened before this guy got here so I don't know if it was because of him or it was the changing of the times, whatever but the only problem I've ever seen in this particular school district that I'm in is from that one particular man who happened to be Black. But on the other hand, when I was up in that high school, I was the only Black. I mean out of the student body, teachers and everything I was the only Black so I was like, like this, so everyone wanted to see what the Black teacher looked like, you know, and all of that different stuff. There were a few teachers up there that resented me. I felt they resented me because I was Black. Because one time, in New York, someone told me that I needed to be with my own kind, and I'm like, well, I'm a female, you're a female, what the heck's my own kind. I knew exactly what she meant but you know I had to [say something]. She threw it out there so I had to go with it. But yeah, so, I've seen it, I guess I've seen it real directly at the school I'm at now and then at the school in New York, I think I did see

it really. I think, I honestly, honestly think that I got hired at that town through the University Consortium, teachers' consortium thing, and I honestly believe that I was hired because I was Black. I think that's why when I was like 19, it was 1990 or something I was going through that and I think as I was going through that consortium and everything, I think that's what they were all looking for, was a Black teacher. You know, Black and good looking always helps. So, I was going through it and I know the district hired me partly because of that reason. When I got there, I felt in a lot of ways that I couldn't completely be myself because I would tell a joke and they would all look at me, as if, and it wouldn't be a racist joke or anything like that, it would be a joke, it would be my joke, and then they would look at me like can we laugh now and I just always felt like I had to be on guard as to what I said, how I dressed, how I ate my lunch, not even how I ate my lunch, what I bought for lunch. You know, because at Thanksgiving time and different holidays, of course, we would all have our ethnic foods, whatever, you know, it might be, and if I would bring, let's say, Black eyed peas or something in my lunch, oh what's that? But so yeah, just different things that they weren't used to and people, and the biggest one was I would come back from a summer break and of course, I would tan. Oh, well I didn't know you guys tan. It was asking, answering questions that they had about my race. And I remember one incident with a student. He said, "Oh, I'd never go there." I'm like where? He says, "You know." And I'm like where? "The city", I would never go to that city." We lived about an hour and 15 minutes from there. And I asked why wouldn't you go to the city? He goes "That's where they're all at." And I asked all who? Who's in the city? He said, "All the niggers." And I'm like oh my God. He says, "But not you, because you're not one of

them, you're different." And that's where I had to, that's what kind of bothered me because you knew I just happened to be a good Black person that you knew or in a lot of cases, the only Black person that you knew. So, that kind of bothered me because you allowed your world to be that small that you didn't know anyone else Black so therefore, I was like the good hope person for all the Black people that these people may have ever met. I had to take away all the stereotypes of everyone that they had already seen on TV or what they had in their mind or everything like that so I just felt like there was a lot of pressure on me to be, not better than who I am, but to be who I am and to show them that it's okay to be Black. It's okay. I'm okay to be Black. I don't want to be you. And so therefore at that school district I felt like that's what I had to do a lot of time. Not just for the teachers, but for the entire student body.

Carol- At, at the beginning of my career, yes, because at one time they were saying that there weren't a lot of African Americans that were qualified at that particular time that I was hired. And I can remember a lot of the community went to the school board, had a school board meeting when it was time to hire and I know that that had a great influence on me being hired. I know it did. I didn't even go to that board meeting at that time. But it was viewed that there should be more African Americans hired. And I was one of the ones that [got hired] in the music department especially, so.

Olivia I feel that having the right credentials to advance meant little when working in a district that relied on nepotism for advancement. Other teachers advanced in their jobs and position quickly, many without credentials. The superintendent and administrators had all the authority. Hiring a legal advisor seemed to be the only way to navigate the

system as an African American. It seems you can have the proper credentials but always are overlooked or last considered for a position.

Author's Note: Looking back at the Maupin Case in Indiana in 2003, and the Bonds Case in Boston, 2006, it is evident that for some African American educators, justice was awarded only through the courts' system.

Jeri-A school system is like life. For an AfricanAmerican student you must learn to assimilate. Pull your pants up and shirt down. You have to go along to get along. You have to know your audience. Whatever road you choose to go along, you have to look and see what the norm is. This includes dialogue and speech.

Carla-I have never worked in a culture that wasn't dominated by Whites. I feel a White applicant is raised in a culture where their culture is the acceptable culture. We [African Americans] have to infiltrate that culture and mimic and study that culture and see how these people behave. See how they deal with aggression. If you go to a typical African American neighborhood, the way that things are dealt with compared to a professional environment you will see things are dealt with differently. If you were raised in that environment, you will have to study the way that people speak, their body language, all those different things, you will have to navigate your way to communicate efficiently with those folks.

Janette-Right now it is an all Black administration where before it was an all White administration. It is now reversed. Where it was hard for Black teachers with White administration, it's hard now for White teachers in a Black administration.

Author's Note: Janette stated she would not give an African American student any different advice than what she would give a White student when it came to working in a school district. She believed that patience was the key to being a good teacher and it didn't matter who you were.

Austin- With the exception of my teaching experience, in a middle school, all of my administrative experience has been in all White administration, predominantly White males. Regarding having to navigate through a White administration, the answer would be standard across the board, not just in education, but in any kind of profession. Is there a difference between White and Blacks in terms of getting a job? I would say that there probably is across the United States. I would say to all young people, you have to make sure that you work hard, make sure you have all the credentials you need, make sure you are able to communicate with people, make sure that you are able to build relationships with people, and do it well. That's what my advice is always. You have to be good. At college, which was a historically Black university, most African American professors told us on regular basis that you are going to have to be better. You are going to have to give them [White employer] a little more, a little bit extra than that of your White counter parts. I believe to some extent that is true. And that's why I have worked as hard as I can, do as much as I can, and obtained as much education as I can and move forward.

Know that you are going to be judged on your skin color from time to time, and accept that as part of who you are and just work hard and push through.

Andrea-The first experience I had, I really didn't feel like there was this whole dominance or presence of authority. I was treated as an equal to my White counterparts. I felt like I could openly go to the administration. The other experience I had was an African American female that was in charge of the school. That was a little more dominant because her personality was stronger. But, I never felt like I was being watched, or that she expected more out of me than the other teachers. I felt that there was an equality. She expected the same of me. She expected me to be the same as the other African American females or other substitutes. She expected me to do my job. Rules were never bent for me because we were both African American females. I was supposed to do my job and that's what I tried to do.

I think that when I'm trying to get a job, I need to know more than my White counterparts. I need to speak the right way. I need to dress professionally. If I'm going to get a job, I need to be more professional. I feel that I'm held to a higher standard. This is something passed down from friends, family, colleagues. They would say, because you are Black you have to be better. You're Black so you have to dress better. Make sure you speak better. Make sure you take your resume in a folder. Make sure you make eye contact. You have to be better because there will be White people applying for the job and you have to shine. I would like to feel if I am going to apply for the job, if I'm going to get the job, then it should be based on my knowledge, my experience, what I know, what I can do and not because I'm better than or as good as my White counterparts.

Author's Note: Question #7 exposes the most detail of how a dominant White culture of authority has impacted the careers of African American teachers in this study. Words like "closed society," "behind the scenes decision-making," "Ceiling", and "hoops," indicate the need for African American teachers to navigate through this culture. However, throughout the stories of Garrett and Georgia, it appears that integration, for them, had opened, not closed, opportunities for teaching. For Danielle, it was the community or lack of diversity that was a challenge to her career. In contrast to Danielle trying to maintain her own persona, Carla spoke of assimilating the culture to learn from it in order to navigate through it. She spoke of the need for people outside of the dominant culture to learn the language, both spoken and non-verbal body language. She encouraged outsiders to study the way people think and act. Austin and Andrea both spoke of the need to be better because of being African Americans. Their advice for others was that in order to navigate successfully through a culture of authority, African Americans must be better prepared than their White counter parts, not just in education but throughout life in general.

8. **What are your thoughts on why there are so few African American teachers in public education?**

Author's Note: As recently as 2010, the national percentage of African American teachers continues to be less than 10% of the teaching population, only 2% being African American males. Low pay, classroom stress, and standardized teacher certification tests

have been identified in literature reviews to account for some of the reasons given for African Americans not pursuing education as a career.

Sophia- I discussed that quite often in my little mind, because now, a lot of my colleagues are students that I've taught and it's amazing to me that none of them are Black and I've taught quite a few Black students, African American students. So, sometimes I worry about the area, and then I know of others who have tried to come back to the area and who were not hired. So, you know, it makes you wonder about other things. What is the reason that some others who were perfect for positions, especially the Black males whose role model would be so effective? Whenever we see a Black kid dying, at least in Pittsburgh every night, statistically, you know, it's, it's so saddening and if you have the power to place a positive one where they would see at least 180 days, knowing their character and what they could bring and it's not looked upon as being important. So that's, that's just disheartening.

Jenai- Well because first of all, and my thought is, that if you're a man and you can get a college degree, you're going to go somewhere where you can make money. First of all. Okay. Secondly, as you see in this situation it's hard to get a job. I have gone to the university, I have gone and tried to recruit people at the local college, across the state at the bordering university, to come and just to apply [for a teaching position]. But they basically say to me I won't have a shot at it, I won't be able to get that job so why waste my time. And actually, when I had my first interview as an administrator there were six people I believe that were being interviewed and I had been told earlier that day that somebody else was already going to get the job. They already seemed to know that. So I

was amazed when they actually called me and said you have the job. But in other areas of life you don't have to fight that fight. They're very glad to have people of color come in to these positions. A lot of White people think that because you're Black, and because you're female, and because you're this, you're going to be welcomed in. That is not, is not the case. That is absolutely not the case. You have a difficult struggle. I've interviewed for the superintendent's positions. I knew that I was better qualified. I even lived in the district that I was interviewing for, but yet, they didn't want me. Now I could have been discouraged and said well you know, I'm never going to do that, I'll never interview again but you know it was a learning experience, it was a tool. I'll go somewhere else when I get ready and, and, interview and there are other places that would love to have somebody with my background and my experience. You know, I've taught college classes, I've taught in the dissertation program at the doctorate program at the university, I've taught for a University in Pennsylvania in their Principal's program, people would take that and say that's great. We can use that. But in your local communities, and they have their local values, it's, it's very difficult. So, the question as to why? Why? Because they don't think it's going to happen. Secondly, It's not the best paying job in the world. Okay. I think when I started I was making $8,000.00. Now the young people coming in today, you know, have a better pay scale. But it took a long time to get to that point. So a person who's qualified and goes into a science or some other field, math, accounting, they're going to make money. Fast. They don't have to wait 12 years to get to a jump step. So those things, I think, play a major role in why people don't go in education. My point is that you don't have to keep all of these hoops going. The this, the that, you got to do this, you got to do that, you got to take some more

classes, you know, most places you get a job, you're in the job. They respect what you know. I'm not saying it's wrong but a lot of people aren't able to take those standardized tests which I believe are biased and so they get discouraged because they have to take the Praxis test, not once but twice, but three times and still that's the number they're going to get. You can be an excellent teacher. You could relate to your students. You could have all of this background. But if you can't get those numbers, people won't take you as a teacher.

Harold- Opportunity. You know, the first five years the foundation wasn't made. You know, there were a lot African Americans who, you know, don't know what education is about. They don't have the desire to, you know, go into education. They're looking for that quick fix where they can make any money. You are not going to get rich in education. I think a lot of it is opportunity. They don't have the opportunity or desire to become an educator and they have other places to go.

Georgia- I think because, number one, I think there are many African American teachers. There are teachers out there. I don't think recruiting is done. If you really want something and you feel it's important and you really want it, you're going to go after that. So, my thing always was, because we always had so few at my high school, go [recruit] into the South. Do some kind of partnerships with the Black colleges. Show those students what the opportunities are here. They didn't want to come to this town because they could go into Pittsburgh and make much stronger salaries, which was true. But if you go into Georgia, Virginia, into those areas where they are from small towns, what this school district paid would have been big money to them. Then you tie in with the churches where they make them feel welcome in those communities. Those kids don't

have to stay. They might come and decide no, they did want this little town. I think a lot of them, or many would have and, started building families and everything here. But we never did that because to me, they want Black teachers, but only if they come and they have all the credentials they want, they'll say, yeah, we'll take them. But, they didn't go out of their way to push for Black teachers. I think that's still true in a lot of the small towns. That they don't push. I think they could have Black teachers if they wanted them.

Garrett- I agree to a certain point. I had a social studies opening and I wanted a Black teacher. But you just can't go out and hire a Black teacher regardless of anything else, you can't do that. In fact, during my tenure there, every Black person that applied there got hired. I didn't have that many that applied there and some of them that did apply there that I wouldn't hire if they were two shades of White, ten shades of White, okay. I wouldn't hire them, either. So if you came there and you were qualified, and you showed excellence in your teaching and everything in your interview, I would find some way to try and get you hired. We had a couple girls from the local college, and I never forgot that, I wanted to hire so badly. They took jobs In Pittsburgh, like that, and we're talking $20,000 more that this girl was offered there than this district could pay**.** Another student, a young man, who did his student teaching at our school. We loved him, loved him. Of course another school grabbed him real quick with the city's salary and that's what hurts a town like this. If you can get these towns, and churches, and a commitment from the schools to maybe go down to some of your southern universities and so forth, and look for teachers down there. We tried, and I was involved in this, we tried in some of the southern schools and could not get a Black applicant to want to come to here. They were being gobbled up in Philadelphia. They were getting married and moving to

Atlanta, they were getting married and moving to this place and that place but to actually come back to a place like this town, this whole area, no. I came down here and fell in love with the place and decided I wasn't going anywhere.

Author's Note: I asked both Garrett and Georgia what they felt it would take to attract teachers from the south to move to cities and work in school districts in Western Pennsylvania.

Georgia- I think there should be programs just like we do in guidance or what colleges do. You have to take students off [campus], from the high schools, put them on the campus and let them see what college life is like. There could be some kind of program where you tie in with the college and you bring them there for a day or whatever the specified time is. You could even work with the churches and have them there for a weekend so they could see what the community is like, plus the school. I think it takes active recruiting. And again, people from around the area, yeah, they are not going to come to this town if they know there is a Pittsburgh that they can get into right away. But there are a lot of people out there who have the degrees. So you take some of those people who are working on their degree and say, this is what's available and this is what our county is like, this is what we pay.

Garrett- We can go out and we can get applicants. It's not as if, you can go down south and you go to a couple of colleges and if you find a couple of nice Black teachers that you would like to have in your school system, and hire them. But guess what? That 5-4 vote. It has to be a vision the Board has, the district has. It can't be just the one person who you want to hire. The Board has to put the trust in you, as superintendent, that who

you bring to them by going out and finding a couple of applicants that they would like to see on their staff that they would get hired. But if they don't give you that trust to do that, I wouldn't come up here and spend all kinds of time, to come up here for what? I got to worry about a 5-4 vote. Then in your community, you probably have a Board member whose daughter is getting ready to graduate and needs a job, so therefore, the heck with that Black kid from down south somewhere. My daughter needs a job. So there are a lot of other things you have to realize, we're talking the perfect situation.

Georgia- It has to be a vision of everyone. It can't just be your vision. It has to be a vision of the district, of the community. People have to say this is what we need.

Garrett- Okay, in other words, it has to be, especially with the board now, that you're dealing with now. You don't know from year to year what openings you're going to have. But let's say that you know there is going to be a social studies teacher, an opening that's definitely going to be there next year that you know you're going to have to fill. You say the word, I want to hire, I want to be able to hire a Black individual for this job. If I go down south and get this individual, if I feel good about this individual and bring him to you, yes you will hire him. Without that, it's a waste of time.

Danielle- I don't know. It kills me. A couple of years back at the school that I'm at now because like I said it is predominantly Black students, we were looking to hire a history teacher, and a math teacher, a history and math teacher and we did get a Black math teacher. He's a really smart, educated young man, and very well spoken. So we were looking to hire these teachers and we couldn't find any. The pool of Black teachers here are so small. In this small town that we live in, a lot of times when a Black gets a degree,

they don't believe you're successful. I hear this a lot, you're not successful until you get out of this town, or the towns near us. You have to leave this area to become successful and that's what a lot of them believe. So, the ones that we do get or the ones who go to school to become educated, secondary or elementary or so be it, early childhood, they leave the area and they don't want to stay here. But that being said, so few of them actually go to school for education. Because they've already had it in their mind that they don't make enough money, teachers don't make enough money, and there are no jobs in education. Someone has already told them that there are no jobs in education. And someone also has heard, and I've heard this, is that the risk in education is too high. Oh, I don't want to be sued. I'm like what the heck are you talking about. But I've heard that also from kids that are going to school to become teachers or not to become teachers, just going to college. So you know, they get into different things but also there's so many Black people in this area that have the potential to go to college but just choose not to for whatever reason. Or, get there and it's not as easy as they thought it was going to be or as, I don't know, it just, it's just, they have to put in more work than they thought that they had to. They just start and then stop. I was looking at the nursing program from the hospital and who just graduated and there was not one Black female or male that had graduated in that nursing program and that's really sad. That hurts my heart. It truly does.

Carol- There were at my time but now it's different. I think from 19 years, you learn the difference. There are a lot more that are qualified. Back when I was hired there were just a few. A lot of people that had degrees, they were in other places. I believe, you know, that our community is more of a retirement community and a lot of young people were

looking at other work, elsewhere for jobs. But now, there's a lot more opportunities for African Americans to be hired.

Olivia – I believe that African American students who come from families that do well do not see education as a viable career. Students are not choosing education as a field of study because many families are incomplete, struggling financially, and see little hope, and White counselors that neglect to keep track of poor students and help them. Once in teaching, the children are not polite, or trained to behave in public places causing early burnout for a lot of young teachers. Colleges add on long teacher training hours extending and causing financial problems for [education] students.

Jeri-I try to encourage African American students when I see that spark in their eye. I would love to invest money in that student if I could. For some students, passing the Praxis test is difficult. You can get through college successfully, but still fail the Praxis. Whether fair or not, it's reality.

Carla-Because it's a political position. You have to be hired by a political board. Most people running for office are not African Americans. Just as the discrepancy exists [for teachers] so does it exist in the amount of African Americans who show up at the polls. If we want change, we are going to have to start voting. It's hard to get a position by people who are elected who don't know enough about your culture, or even your children. I think a lot of African Americans from my generation are very tainted by politics. They are not going to lean towards pursuing a degree that they are going to have

to pay for when they come from a lower socio-economic background and waste money knowing they are not going to be able to get through the doors.

Austin-I think locally this part of western Pennsylvania is not generally heavily populated African American areas. More densely populated areas, such as Pittsburgh, get people who go into education and end up coming back home to the city where they are from and get into education to give back. If they don't do that, they go someplace else. I think this area is not attractive for African Americans. I think it's as simple as that. I think nationally the African American community isn't pushing education. Partly it's because a lot of African Americans have never seen African American teachers, ever! Until I went to college, I never saw one. You don't see them in that role. African Americans just don't think education is a viable career.

Andrea-When I first started out in my undergraduate studies, there were numerous African American students in the classroom. As I got higher up into my higher level classes in college, in just about every instance, I was the only African American student in the class. I don't know if it's the workload or the higher expectation or higher level content that's involved. I think it's a lack of drive. People drop out because teaching is a very rigorous major. But in my experience, you don't see African American students. When I grew up, you thought of a teacher as a White male or White woman.

Author's Note: The stories from the participants represent the data from the Literature Review. Low salary, classroom burnout, difficulty passing standardized tests, and lack of

recognition for teaching as a worthwhile profession are dissuading African Americans from pursuing a career in education. There was also sentiment expressed in the belief of the lack of opportunities due to the political nature of the hiring process, as well as the lack of recruitment efforts from the administration and school board, to hire qualified African American teachers. Austin had spoken of the lack of role models for African American students as a reason for the lack of interest in high school students to pursue teaching. He stated that he had never seen an African American teacher in his classroom until college.

9. **How do African American students view you as a teacher? What advise do/would you give these students to succeed?**

Author's Note: Lynn (2002) poses a critical question, "Does having minority teachers in the classroom make a difference?" He is asking specifically if it makes a difference to minority students. Does having African American teachers make a significant difference in the educational experience of minority students?

Danielle-Depending on the family dynamics of the student, you can have several different views of the teachers. Some African American students think that the Black teacher acts too White because they have an education. Those students believe they [teachers] talk "too White" and they must be rich because they drive nice cars and believe they live in nice neighborhoods and houses. They are more verbally abusive to this type

of Black teacher. Those students believe that the Black teacher should allow them to behave however they want because after all, "we are all Black." They think that there should be no punishments to their behavior. There are many students who see the teacher as a parent figure [and are] extremely clingy. Black students do not see many Black adults in their neighborhood with jobs, and therefore it's hard for them to relate to the Black teacher. Black teachers approach the Black student a tad bit different than they do the White student. Many times they know the family through the neighborhoods, church, family relations. They seem to talk differently to them. They expect more from them and push them harder. The Black student pushes back because for whatever reason they don't believe they deserve more. Most of the Black teachers I work with remind the students daily, "that it's hard to be Black in this world and you have got to work hard and have respect for yourself." "You gotta be more than what you are expected to be."

Sophia- You get a mixture. Sometimes there's the e-l-a-t-i-o-n, they're so elated to come in, and they're like WOW, and they're so excited, and they're proud of you because you're there. And that just makes your heart skip a beat. Because it did for me whenever I walked in a room and saw a Black teacher. There's also that, most Black students, they're going to gauge and calculate you whether you're Black or White. This may not be found as much in other ethnic groups but I know in the Black group they're going to gauge you to see what they can get away with and that's going to be a five, ten minute thing and they're set for the year. So there's that going on where they are speculating what I can get away with or what I'm not able to get away with. So, you have that going on also. You have a group that sometimes say you let the Black kids get away with anything. And, you like all the White kids. And, or you let the Black kids get

away with everything and you don't, you know, and I would always tell them I only like, how would I say it, I only like Asian students with freckles and red hair. And so that was sort of my, my way of saying I treat you all the same, and I get the surprise look, and it's amazing, because it's 2012 and they're not used to seeing us still in education. That is, that's amazing to me. Whereas you know every child's first teacher is a parent, or you know that care-taker, and so they've been surrounded by that teacher and then for some of them they're never going see another Black teacher. Because of our upbringing, there are different things that we bring into a classroom that that child has probably had during those formative years that they may never see again. So, it's interesting but usually there's always that, at least those few moments of elation and just like wow, and so, it, it still makes you proud. Definitely.

Jenai- Well, they didn't see very many, and they still won't. I came from the community, I live here, I knew people. I taught, especially as a principal, I taught most of the students, parents, some of their grandparents, so, there's a connection. When you look at Black teachers that live in a small community such as this, you see these people in different areas. You see them at church. You see them at weddings. You see them at funerals. So these kids know. You could call their pastor if they act up. You can call their parents and the parents are going to believe what you say. And so, it was really for those kids, I think it was a great moment that they had someone who actually noticed them walking down the hall or said how nice they looked or I like your hair or you have great shoes on. It was great for them and for their ego that somebody was taking the time to recognize them. And also, I made sure that, as a principal, I made sure that the minority students were included. If there were awards and things that were going to be

presented, I made sure that they were included in that selection process. Because, many times they are overlooked. If we had students that were chosen to go I made sure there was a minority representation as well as special education representation. So, I didn't want anyone to feel as though they went to school and nobody cared about them.

Harold- Well, from my experience in Cleveland I think Black students respect Black teachers. They look at them as role models. They certainly don't respect the White teachers but they are willing to respect them. It does depend on the type of student too, you know, students who, you know, or who come from the ghetto per se, you know, only think that selling drugs and what not, they might look at that as a sellout. You know, they [students] will say, "Why are you here or why are you working for the man," I've heard that so. You know it all goes back to making those connections and establishing those relationships with your students and If you can make those connections, those students know you care and give a dang. I think they will grow to respect you and grow to respond to you. You know barriers can be overcome.

Georgia- I think for the most part they were glad to see Black teachers. The thing I learned as a new teacher, though, was that I expected Black students to be just so eager to learn because I was there. They were just going to take to everything I said. That wasn't the case. They were typical students. It didn't matter that they were Black. Some of them were good students, and eager to learn and others just wanted to socialize and talk. So that was my education I got there. But I think on the whole, they were glad to see Black teachers. I think in some cases they performed better because they were there and saw that identity. I think that's true because as the years went by and some of those students graduated, some of the things that they told me, for example, when I had them,

and some of the comments I heard about other Black teachers that they had. I think it made a difference.

Garrett- I think probably my biggest experience was when I became assistant principal. I was viewed upon by the Black kids as being a "Tom" because I had to put the rules down, okay. It's like a Catch 22, at the time the White kids thought that I was a nigger lover by them, and an Uncle Tom by the Black kids, okay. It bothered me for all of about two seconds. I finally realized in that two seconds, I said, these are my rules, I see grey. Once the kids and the community learned that I saw grey, I got out of that very quickly. I knew those were my rules and I didn't care what color you were. But at first they thought that if they were Black that I was going to let them slide, okay. But they found out that I didn't let them slide. Now there were kids that I did let slide but it wasn't because of their color. I was trying to work with them, trying to help them, give them a break, and it didn't have anything to do with color. They found out that situation with me and after that it was great.

Carol- How do Black students view Black teachers? I think it depends on how old they are. My era is a little bit different than some of the younger ones that were in class with me at college. So, to identify with someone that was African American that was a lot, that was a lot different. High school? As far as me teaching? I teach K through 12 music. This is my first year, this past year in the high school. I've been elementary for the past 19 years. There is a difference. I knew most of the kids in my district. If I didn't know their mother, I knew their grandmother, if I didn't know their grandmother I knew their aunt, so family, familiarity with the school system made a difference. I think I had a different spin on it then maybe some of my White colleagues. We just, we were known.

Jeri-I think there is sometimes a lack of respect from Black students toward Black teachers. I feel that if a person doesn't feel good about themselves then when they see someone like themselves, they take it out on them. They [students] take it out on the teacher and expect the teacher to cut them a break. We [teachers] know what the road is going to be like and try to steer them in the right direction, which is resented instead of appreciated and that is sad. You have to have integrity and work. Nothing is going to be handed to you. Some people have to work harder than others, but if you want it more you have to work. There were no excuses for me. I still had to do my homework, but my parents were understanding and encouraged me to persevere.

Carla- I would probably pull the African American students to the side and say that you have to be better. People died for me to have the opportunity to become educated. I tell these students that people stood on front lines and marched a huge fight for me to have the opportunities that I have. I think one of the largest problems for the African American community is that we lost our pride. There is no unity amongst our race. It's sad that we have no culture. We had to assimilate into other people's cultures. We don't have a sense of pride to be Black. God chose you to stand out among people and to be able to witness to other people about what your race has been through, how it has impacted you. What it means to be Black is something a lot of people don't teach their children about. I tell them about people like Thurgood Marshall and Martin Luther King, Jr. All those people stood up for us to have the opportunity to be who we are and what we are.

Janette-My first teaching job was in a classroom with six aides. Three Black, three White. The Black students thought I was one of the aides, and that one of the White aides should have been the teacher. That was back in the 70s. The majority of the teachers were White and that was all they [students] saw. So, I had nothing against the kids. Before the year was over, they were ok with it. Today, I am very involved in the school and the community. I get many requests for students to be in my room. Now I'm having kids of kids I've had. It's all about doing what you should be doing for the kids, being fair.

Austin-I've had some pretty good experiences with the African American students as an elementary teacher. I've had a few conversations with students who said they felt proud because it was the first time that they had seen an African American in an administrative position. This elementary position was in an urban community.
[**Author's Note:** Austin's current position is in a predominantly White community.] At my current position, it is interesting because the previous principal was also an African American. I was asked by previous students if my being principal now was a culture shock to the students? I explained that the previous principal was also an African American. The African American kids at my current position have said it is pretty "cool" and they feel a sense of "I can do this too." I've never recalled having an issue with a White student because of me being an African American, or acted in any kind of negative way. This is not to say that there are students who have an issue with me being African American, but they've never been upfront with me about that. I've always had good relationships with them.

Author's Note: I asked Austin if African American students ever expect better treatment from him. Regarding expectations from African American parents, Austin replied by referring to a past discipline issue involving an African American student.

Austin: I've had that, but more so a joke, like "come on Mr. A, can you help out a brother." I've had that, but more so a joke. Kids are going to look for a way out. African American parents kind of insinuated that after you are being so tough on them, they [African American students] may not have that same view. I wasn't happy about that conversation and I let them [parents] know about that.

Andrea- Black students have told me I was sort of a hero, as I had my son when I was young. I finished high school. I finished college. If I can do that, you can do that. I expect nothing less from them. I expect nothing less than their best effort. In particular, the African American females view me as a role model. Once you build a rapport with your students, you can tell what they go through, what they experience and they will come to you. Black male students often come from a single parent home and view me as a mother figure or aunt figure. Some of them view me as a sister, as they don't know my age. They really connect with me. As soon as I got to my first teaching position, the Black students gravitated to me. When I got my first substitute position, an African American female student ran out telling the other students that they had a new substitute and she is Black. Unfortunately, it's a rarity that they don't get to see very often in this area. But, they gravitate toward you. They want to know about you. It's like they have a high expectation of you and they can trust you. It's like they have somebody in their corner.

Author's Note: I asked Andrea if African American students ever feel like you should give them special treatment?

Andrea: Absolutely. Absolutely. They thought that I should give them special treatment if I knew them or if they went to my church. It was not overtly stated, but they would come to my desk and ask me not to take the action I should take. I would tell them, to the side, listen you represent me. I have a higher expectation of you. I would ask them, would your mother appreciate it if you act like this? You have to get personal with them and let them know that just because we are the same race, just because I know you, doesn't mean that you are going to get special treatment. I'm going to treat you just like I'm going to treat your White counterparts and I expect more out of you because the world is going to expect more out of you.

Author's Note: Participants expressed their experience with African American students as hero-worship to resentment, and being tested by many in between. Some participants reported students expressing a great deal of pride at finding an African American teacher in their classroom, while others were accused of being a "sell-out" or "Uncle Tom." For older participants, whose careers may have spanned two or more generations of students, there was a familiarity with students that allowed closeness, and an expectation at times of leniency on the part of the teacher toward the students. Church and social events within the African American community also strengthened relationships with parents and students, as those teachers had built relationships with families outside of school.

10. What would a school district need to offer to attract you to a teaching position in that district?

Sophia- Me personally, kids. That's all I need. That's all I would need, but with that being said I feel I'm more effective in my school than other schools in this county. Not that I would not be able to teach those students but I think, I could share some life lessons that I've learned, and just to be able to have students who are minorities to look and say I want to be like you one day. I want them to see there's someone who looks like me in front of the classroom and I would like to do that. So, you know, definitely, it would definitely have to have minority students there, definitely. Honestly, if there are kids there I'm happy. Definitely.

Jenai- Now? An opportunity. That's all they needed to do, is give me an opportunity to show that I could do what I'm supposed to do. Now as a retired administrator, I may take that challenge back on one day. But back then I just needed a chance. Just a chance.

Harold- Just give me the same chance as my White counterpart. Give me the opportunity. If you think I'm the best candidate, give me the job and support me, guide me, tutor me, help me to grow each and every day. That's all that anybody can ask for. Don't try to beat me down, lift me up.

Danielle- Money, yeah. They have to offer me a good retirement plan because I'm getting up there. If I was coming out of high school, I mean out of college right now, what I would have to have is, I would have to have time to work with the school district to see if it fit me. I tell everyone right now, I couldn't go to another school district with

my personality and be able to make it. I have a sarcastic personality but it works for where I'm at right now. And so, therefore, I'd have to be able to meet with the teachers, and meet with the administrators, and meet with the student body to see what kind of people that I was going to be working with because it's more important for me to be happy in where I'm working than to know, oh God I got to go to this job, I'm going to be bringing home x amount of dollars but I'm miserable. So I have to know who I'm working with, and if my personality fits in with their personality or you know, their dynamics because I can't change who I am right now. You know, I spent too many years trying to do that to find out that it doesn't work. So at this point in my life, even now, if I if I knew what I know now, even now that's, that's what I would have to have is to know that I would be happy where I was at regardless of what you're offering me and all that other kind of stuff. And the other thing that I would have to look at is, is your student body or these kids that truly need or want me to be there. And that's why I work so well where I'm at right now, because these kids, they look for me, they can't wait for me to be there. You know, and I tell them all the time, didn't I tell you yesterday that I didn't want to see you but they're at my door every morning because they need me because, and I guess my personality, part of it is, needing to be needed. And so it works for me. So I would have to be at a school district where they truly worked with the kids and they were there for them. They didn't care what exactly the kid looks like, how the kid smells, because I have some kids with very bad hygiene problems right now. You know, if they would treat every single kid the same regardless of who their parents were, or how loud their parents yelled or how they dressed or what kind of car they drove to school or if they even drove a car, or how often they changed their clothes. I would have

to have a school that worked like that. I would have to have a school pretty much like the school I'm in right now because I guess that's because that is what I'm used to and that's kind of what I grew up with. Helping those who needed to be helped but wanted to help themselves.

Carol- I think a support system not only in the school, but in the community because I believe that helps a great deal. If you're an upcoming teacher and you want to be successful you've got to get in the community. You got to be visible in the community. Not students just see you at school, not just see you at football games, basketball games, but get to see you outside of that.

Jeri-Be fair. Give me a fair shot and allow me to maintain autonomy. Trusted by administration and community. My pay scale should be just like everyone else on my step.

Carla-My largest issue, honestly, if I were to choose an ideal career would be in an African American community. I feel that African Americans are hopeless [lacking in hope]. There hasn't been a real leader since Martin Luther King, Jr. The Black Panther organization, turned from being a neighborhood watch community that once educated that community on what was important for African Americans. Once things fell apart after the Civil Rights movement, we lost a lot of that education and educated people left those communities for suburban communities that are predominantly White or other minorities but not of their race. I would love to work with African Americans and re-educate them and let them know they can make it. God blessed me to see that there are

doors out there for me. They can be opened for other African Americans and they need to hear that so they don't lose hope.

Janette- I only want caring parents, parent involvement. It makes your job much easier. Diversity in a school or community makes no difference to me.

Austin-In the beginning of my career, I would ask whether that community would fit the bill. In college, I would come back to my community and look for opportunities to come back and get into a classroom to do those things I wanted to do with kids. I think for a lot of people, African American or not, salary is what would attract them. Salaries are a motivator. Communities are a motivator. I think it's different for each person.

Andrea-a community would have to have a little more diversity. I don't know how well students would receive me, if they thought I was beneath them. I would be less apprehensive if there was some type of diversity. There's more to it than just money.

Author's Note: Participant responses to question #10 were varied. Money was not an issue for some, but a factor for others, particularly for those with more experience. In addition to money was also the expectation to receive equality in salary to White colleagues. Participants also stated that what is most important in attracting them to a school district, was knowing that their students need them. They wanted to work with students where they [teachers] could be themselves and give of themselves to those who needed them most. For some, finding a community with diversity was very important.

While some participants looked for an African American community, others did not. Austin stated, “It’s different for each person.” Participant responses validated his statement.

11. **What conversations must take place, and with whom, to end negative racial attitudes in schools?**

Jenai- well, I think that the school boards need to be certainly more aware of their clientele. We have students, we have 40 some percent, 50 percent of kids that are in your school district that are minorities but yet they never see a person of color. Maybe a custodian, maybe somebody working in the kitchen. Those students would do better if they see role models, if they see people that they can be like them and they can emulate, that they can say to them she came from the west side. She wasn’t wealthy, she’s was poor growing up. Although we didn’t know we were poor and that’s the beauty of it. We didn’t know we didn’t have anything. Everybody else didn’t have anything either. So, it’s kind of like Nicki Giovanni says in her poem, *Nikki-Rosa*, “*You know, childhood remembrances are a drag if you’re Black. You remember things like living in Woodlawn with no inside toilet. I really hope no White person ever has cause to write about me because they never understand Black love is Black wealth and they'll probably talk about my hard childhood and never understand that all the while I was quite happy.*” I didn’t realize that I didn’t have because no one had. No one had anything. But as these young people grow up they need to see people that they can say, “Yes. I can do it.” I was blessed because I had a father who said you’re going to go college. I had people in my family who had education. People who had PhD’s and things like that. But they need to

see that. They need to be able to visit a college and not feel uncomfortable. They need to be able to stay in a hotel. A lot of our kids have never been outside the city limits. I had a student one time, we were going to Cedar Point, young girl, she had a child, she had quit school, I told her, if she wanted to come back, she had to come to school every day and she did and she finished. So we were having our senior class trip and we'd have a little program in the morning and then we'd get on the buses and go. And she's walking down the street and I asked her, "Where are you going?" and she said, "I don't have any money to go to Cedar Point." And I asked, "Well, do you have somebody to watch the baby?" And she said, "Yes." So, I told the lady who was in charge of buses that the buses are paid for. So that means every seat is already paid for, correct? And she acknowledged that. So I said [to the student], "You now have a seat." And the teachers that were standing around, and myself, gave her money to spend. The girl said that not only had she never been to Cedar Point, she had never been to the mall. Now I go to the mall to get my hair done, to get my nails done, but there are kids out there have never left the city limits. They don't have a car, they don't have anything. These kids need to be exposed to more. You need to be able to show them there is a better way. There's a way that you can find for yourself, a goal that you can set and that's why I have a big sign at the high school that says Failure Is Not an Option. There's too many times we tell our kids no, you can't do it, you're not smart enough, can't get in that college, can't go over there, can't do that. No, that's not what they need. What they need is somebody to say, yes you can, yeah, you can get in there. You want to go to Harvard? Let's work on it. When my son came out of high school he wanted to go to an Ivy League type school. We searched. We went. He was accepted, thank God. He was bright, and he was able to get

into any school that he wanted to. When it came down to it, he had a full scholarship that was offered at one university. They were going to pay for his books, everything. But he wanted to go to a more prestigious named college. So, he ended up at Johns Hopkins. I said to him you go to the best school that you can get into, the best one that offers what you want, he did and because he was able to do that he was recruited then to Baylor College of Medicine. But how many people wouldn't have pushed their children to do that. A lot of the parents don't have the knowledge. They don't know how to fill out the financial aid forms, they don't know how to fill the forms you need for college. They don't have the twenty-five, thirty-five, fifty dollars to even apply. That's where we have to step in as a community. We have to let them know whatever it is that you want to do we are behind you. We're here to do this. Sometimes it means you go into your own pocket and you pay for that application or you drive them to a college, or you walk around with them, or you show them these things. That was one of the things that I was very pleased with at the high school that they took some college tours and actually let the kids go to various types of colleges. Because for so many students, they've never done it. They have never been at a college football game or at a college setting so they feel very intimidated. When I was at my previous position, I had taken thirty-three students to Washington, D.C. and we did, not the usual tour, but we did an African American tour so that they could see some of the other kinds of things. But I told them the last thing that we're going to do is go to Howard. They need to see what a Black institution looks like, what it feels like and so we made them go there and I said you save. If you don't do anything else, you save five dollars so you could bring something back from Howard. Little did they know that was my first trip to a historically Black college, too. I was more

excited than they were. So I didn't know anything about it. So, I was not able to go to those kinds, but I was able to walk on that campus with those students and they were thrilled. When I see them, now, they tell me that was the best trip I ever had, the most memorable trip I ever had. They didn't realize when we walked down, when we went to see the Jefferson Memorial, we did all of those things, it was the most memorial thing I've had, too, because I was there sharing information with them. My history background came back when we went to Arlington National Cemetery and we walked around. I hadn't done that, I had not done that, and I mean I have the means to do it but I never did. So they gave me that inspiration and as I walked through the cemetery and we walked through the various sites, then we went to the African American sites. You know, these students were able to see something more. I was born and raised on the west side of the city and people didn't think that somebody who was going to be wonderful, or great, or talented or gifted could come from the west side. But we proved them wrong. My family proved them wrong and they made their accomplishments and they did, and not only my family but other families that were on that street and in that neighborhood and that's what we have to tell our kids. That's what we have to tell our churches. Instead of beating people down telling them, oh, you're kids are doing this, their selling drugs, yeah there's a few, there's a few selling drugs, there's a few doing things but there's more that aren't. Where're they at. Let's see them. Let's give them some inspiration, let's see if we can get them on the right track. Maybe if we spend a little more time with that kid and bring some of these other ones in we can change the world, one child at a time. Because you're not going to change the whole world all together, but one child at a time. You can make a difference in somebody's life. And, that's what my purpose was, to

make a difference. My high school experience wasn't that great. Because we were tracked. I was the only African American in my classes from ninth grade to 12th except for gym and lunch. And so, because I was, we're talking about 1969, 70, 71, because I was, the Black kids looked at me as though I was a traitor because I was never in class with them. And at that time the White students, they did not mingle. You didn't go to their house. You didn't have dinner with each other. So, I was pretty much alone. So I made it my purpose that when I went back to the high school that no child was going to walk through this building and feel like they are all alone and feel like no one cares. That's why I stood in the commons every day. That's why I greeted them. That's why I called them honey and baby and you know, and that's that.

I was at the ice cream stand just yesterday. I pulled up and saw a couple of kids from my previous school and I told the lady that was with me, oh, that's my baby. She asked where did I know him from. I said from high school. I got out of the car and the kid that I knew hugged me. He said he wanted to tell his friends, that's our principal. The girl was from California and she said she didn't know her principal. She said it was so great that his principal comes up to you and hugs you, and kisses you, and takes you out to lunch and does this kind of stuff. That's the difference, that's what makes a difference for kids. So if you can inspire one at a time, do what you can. They're going to make some mistakes, everybody does. Kids make mistakes. Parents make mistakes. Teachers make mistakes. Administrators make mistakes. But you look at it and say well okay, if I'm wrong lets change it and, you encourage them to do that. And, I know you think I talk too much, but that's okay.

Harold- That's got to start with the students, parents. Like I said, it takes a whole village to raise that child; you know the whole village is going to have to be on one page, to have that conversation. School boards, community members, leaders, politicians, parents, teachers, everybody, you know, has to be involved. That conversation needs to start right now. I'm hoping that what I'm doing is kind of changing the minds of some people. Don't look at a person's race. Look at that person for who they are and what attributes they can contribute to their school district. What can they do for your teachers, what can they do for your students.

Georgia- Everybody. It has to be parents, you got to get to parents. Okay, let's start at the top. It's got to start at the top. With your superintendent, and your board, they have to be on one accord. You're always going to have some agitation. I don't think it's ever going to end because we're all different. We're not just talking Black and White anymore now. We're talking Hispanic. We're talking Asian, and truly knowing each other's cultures. And as we actually have experiences with each other there's going to be problems. But to me, the way you alleviate those problems is, you have activities, you have dialogue with parents and teachers and students. You let them talk about the differences and interact with each other. You don't try to act like oh, we don't have problems here or racial issues. It wasn't a racial issue. If it's a racial issue, deal with it as a racial issue. Because the more you try to avoid it, you just cover things up. You don't really solve that. But I think it has to be everybody. If you're looking for a small way to start, I think starting with kids is always the best because the kids are the most open minded. When you start talking with kids, even when you get clashes there, everybody talks and expresses ideas. And, by bringing them together, hopefully they will

appreciate each other's cultures. But they're individuals too, just like every Black person doesn't like every Black person. Every White person doesn't like every White person. You're not going to get everybody liking everybody. But at least they can learn to respect each other and get along in that area. That's how I feel about it. I think it has to be everybody. And, you have to keep them engaged. But that's what you need to talk about.

Garrett- I agree with you there. When you deal with a school, everybody has to come there and everything has to be forgotten as far as the cultural, you know, the way you speak, for example. If you had to come for your interview and you going to speak with that dialogue, you're not getting hired, okay. If you start talking, Hey brother, words like that, you're not going to get hired. You have to learn the language that has to be spoken by everyone. Now when you get outside of that, back in your own area, you can do that. But when you're in a public place like the school, there is only one language. That's correct English and everyone uses that. You're never going to get away from people's fear of the other person's race. You're never going to get away from that. And just because of experience, if I ever had a bad experience with an Asian, you know, in my right mind I should know that all Asians aren't like that but you have a tendency to say, well you know, I don't like Asians, there sort of funny people or whatever group you have. I just think with a school district it comes back to all the same. We have a set [way of doing things]. There is a set way we talk, we act or speak, that everyone has to follow and I don't think you can bring your culture into that.

Georgia- See I disagree. I think the more you exposed the other culture the more you can…

Garrett- I think you can expose it but I think there's a way you have to go about doing it. Okay, I'm sorry but I can't see because you see fifty kids running down the road with their pants below their butt, and I'm going expose them to the brothers wearing their pants down showing their underwear. I'm sorry, I can't, I can't buy that, okay. That's not exposing, that's exposing your underwear, not your culture to the other people.

Georgia- I agree. I wouldn't allow that but I could possibly discuss that. If someone said I don't like Black kids because they wear their pants down. You discuss that. Now you tell me in my school that's not going to happen. But you still talk about it. You set the rules.

Garrett- There's a difference between setting the rules and these are my rules, okay. Then we're going to talk about what's so wrong with wearing my underwear showing and all that, with my pants down below my butt? No, I don't have time to talk about, showing my butt, where in my culture, oh, all Black people wear their pants down below their butts. I'm sorry. That's not what that's for. Not everybody talks with their hands like-a-this [mimicking Italian gestures], okay. Not everybody does that, okay. So I'm not going to sit down and have a culture exchange about talking with my hands, okay. I'm sorry, when we get to know people as friends, not just as friends, but on an individual basis, we start to learn. If we have an open mind, we start to learn about people, okay. How do I say this? Too democratic? Right? Yes. When it's too democratic you're opening up for, why can't we, why can't we wear our pants half way down instead of down below our cheeks you know. No. there is none, okay. I'm sorry. It's not a democratic society here when it comes to my rules in school.

There are certain things I'm democratic about. There are just certain things in school, no I'm sorry, this is the rule and that's it, okay. Now, where the racial thing comes in, if I ask certain groups to do it and not others, then I'm the problem. But when everything is for everyone and everybody must abide by it, then that's not race. That's only a set of rules and regulations we have to follow. That's like having, raising kids. If you have a boy and a girl, alright. Daddy's little girl gets away with things but the guy gets pounded you know. Okay. You see the difference. It's one rule. You have to be in by 10:00 o'clock, not 10:30 you know.

Danielle- Well I think anywhere. I think all the conversations have to start at the beginning, I mean the core. Where is the racial tension happening? And then I think from there it should expand out to anybody it might affect. Racial tension is at the core of, for example, I'm afraid, I don't know you, so I'm afraid. So, in order for all racial tension to be, no matter where it's at, to alleviate itself or to get better, you're going to have to teach people about who you are. But then in the same sense you're going to have to be willing to know who they are. And then, you're going to have to stay in your own lane and accept people for who they are and so all tension, all talk has to start from very young. We have to start in the elementary grades or in the home. It's just talking to your kids, start with your family, the people in your family, you all look alike but you're all a little different. So, you can start as small as that and just keep building out and let people know that you're going to meet different people and it's okay to be different. It doesn't matter. They're not wrong and you're not wrong. You're just different. And so I think talks about race and any kind of differences are just going to have to start from very young and then once it gets to the school, parents are going to have to be involved.

Parents and administration and teachers and everyone are going to have to be open enough to be able to continue the talk. And give life experiences. I give life experiences to my students all the time, I mean, within reason and it helps with getting to know who they are, getting to know how people are different because I'm different from my students and they're different from me. But, I just think that the talk is just going to have to start early on and have to continue. It's going to have to be an acceptance thing. It's going to have to be, it's okay to be who you are whether you're Black or White or gay. My high school has a lot of gay kids in it, a lot. They accept it because we allow you to be who you are at the school I'm at. We talk about it a lot because the answer to that is if someone would come into my room and say something about someone being White, I would say and…..and, so what, and what, you know, so and, that's my answer to a lot of the questions because they are White, you're not or they're Black and you're not. So, how are they going to get passed that if you can't get along? Because guess what, we're here. I'm not going anywhere. They're not going anywhere. And you're not going anywhere. So I just think that the talk has to be a continuous talk. It has to be a continuous talk from open-minded people you know. How do we find them? I don't know, because you may think you're open-minded but, I might think that you a complete close minded bigot. So, I think the talk has to come from there.

Carol- Parents' involvement. Parents. Being able to allow parents to know what's going on at the school. Besides hearing it from just the administrators, teachers need to be able have a voice as to where and what is being done in the school system.

Author's Note - Jeri initially questioned why White teachers weren't being interviewed. Her thoughts were that African American participants were being targeted as needing to play a key role in leading the conversations regarding racial attitudes in schools that may create stumbling blocks for African Americans in school.

Carla- I think those attitudes exist because my children don't look like your children. They are going to use street language because their family uses that language. I'm going to smile at children who look like my children. When people go into education, if their goal is to really inspire and educate, the conversations need to ask, "Why did you choose this career path, why are you here?" When people don't see children who look closer to them, they really aren't going to acknowledge those children who tan much quicker than them. Conversations need to take place about the kids who come from homes where they are hungry, where they are seeing people in their homes doing crack. These conversations need to take place but not just for African American kids, but all kids who are going through that. Do I want my kids to see African American teachers? Yes. I want them to see those examples. But, I also want them to go to the hospital and see African American doctors. My Godmother sparked education in me. She was an attorney. I visited her in Connecticut and would visit the University of Connecticut. That sparked hope in me. I still visit my friends in the projects, but they are still there. They didn't have the same hope that I had. I want my kids to be able to go into their community and see hope. It doesn't have to be dominated by African Americans, but I want them to see that every race should have that opportunity and intermingle.

Janette- It must start from the top. I don't look at the superintendent being the top, but the school board. When you look at what the school board is made up of, come on now, it's like they are making decisions for the educational system, but you [school board] don't know what they are doing. It is so frustrating. But, if I had to do it all over again, I still would. I would still be a teacher.

Austin- I think first, administrators need to start the conversation, starting with the superintendent. I think when you have leadership that pushes cultural diversity, leadership that really makes a strong effort to support cultural diversity and educates everyone from employees to students to parents that can really make a difference.

Andrea- the conversation must first take place between administration and students and doing things such as African American awareness, Hispanic awareness, Asian American awareness. It depends on what type of students you have within your school district, of course. Just raise the awareness of Black educators in your school district. Even have it trickle down in the classroom. Have them compare and contrast. Have them talk about their difference. Have them embrace their difference. I think it should start with the administration, trickle down from the teachers to the classroom where the students can embrace diversity.

Sophia- Conversations have to take place with everyone. Everyone. I mean administrators. I mean teachers, definitely. I mean parents. It has to take place with parents. Also, it has to take place with the students themselves. I definitely think that

those conversations have to happen. The other thing is, and I don't know if a lot of administrators realize this, that if you want to talk to minority parents, at the school is not always the place to do it. You know we have things scheduled that minority parents hear, they didn't show up and say it's just dropped. And as a community, a lot of times what they've experienced there is not a place that they want to go. So a lot of times those conversations for the family need to take place in more of their community settings. So a lot of times they're written off as non-caring and that's not the truth. The conversations have to begin administratively because so much is lost in body language from administrators. Parents come in and it's not what you say but how it's being stated and so there's training that needs to take place. I think for the most part that what you are trying to convey is actually not what's been heard. I think that needs to happen first and foremost from other administrators who are minorities who can say listen, this is what you're trying to say but you can't say it like this because this is not what's going to be taken home. There's a dialogue, that is lost, lost in translation and I think a lot of times well meaning administrators, quote and unquote, have the power to do these things. They may want to make these changes. They sincerely want for things to happen but, how they go about it or how they speak and their body language doesn't convey the message that they're trying to say. A lot of times the audience they're trying to reach is turned off, very quickly and that can happen very quickly. They say there's an assessment that takes place within that first five or ten minutes, very quickly. You can lose your audience because of how something is said so there's re-training. It's funny, I was thinking about this morning. I had the same roommate for four years at college. She was from New Jersey. In college, there were times when I was the only minority there and she said to

me, “You talk differently to your parents, your family, than you talk to me.” I asked her what she meant. She said, “You speak differently whenever you’re around the family with them compared to how you talk to me.” So I asked her what did she mean? I talk differently, I’m still myself. She said, “No, you use less words.” “You use different words.” It’s something that, in my position, and being fully immersed in that college town, it’s just like another language. It was the best way. Rosetta Stone would tell you the best way to learn a new language is to be fully immersed. And for that college experience I was totally fully immersed there because that’s all I was surrounded by was a whole totally different culture twenty four hours. So, with that going on and that being said I didn’t realize that my daily lingo that I was normally used to speaking was shut off. So I had created a transition that I don’t even know about. And I remember saying this too, having this conversation with an English teacher and she looked at me and I said whenever I write it’s another language. I have to transition what I am used to writing or used to, the way I’m used to speaking. I have to do a transition. We as minorities, we do it all the time to the point until we’re called on, we don’t even realize it. But coming from the administrative view, which is normally a White male dominating view, they never had to do that. They never had to do that transitioning. So, for you to say oh, you’re not understanding. Yes I am. Yes I do know what I said. This is what I said but, they never had to do that transitioning in dialect in order for the message to be brought across. So, whereas, even in education I have a dialect that I can speak to my Black students and my White students because of my full emersion in college compared to someone who has never had that, had to do that transition. So, the message has to start administratively. You have to have people who are fully willing to do a full emersion. Has to. Into the

culture and why things are the way they are and understanding. I had a conversation one time with a woman and I said to her why would someone want to live in a communal setting like the projects? Why wouldn't you want to own your house, why wouldn't you? Because, you know, that was something my parents always stressed, homeownership, owning property that was something. It was interesting to me and she said it was because of the community living. That communal living style, we'd miss that. And, you know, whenever properties were taken away from us as a people, we lost so much. Whenever you have a place that is a communal style living, she said, it may not even be the best place but there is something being met emotionally. So these are different conversations that most administrators never even thought to go down that path or thought to, to consider. And so without going down that path of why you [administration] just have all the answers, you think you're talking to a group of people and coming from that mindset of that group of people, they are going to feel that in that first ten minutes that you're talking down to them. And that they are privileged to have you in their company. And so everything that you [administration] want to do is shot down right there. And so I think a lot of times, instead of going through all of that, it's easier not to do it and, you know, that's what I see quite often. It just doesn't get done. It just doesn't happen.

Author's Note: Eliminating racial issues in school takes input from everyone: school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. It takes the community and the school to work together. Clearly, all the participants had a personal belief in what must take place to build better relationships within schools to address negativity towards race. Parents need to feel that the school is willing to hear the voices of families and communities when racial concerns exist. School boards need to make hiring decisions

that include adding diversity to the schools so that minority students see people of color, not just professional employees, but custodians, cafeteria workers, etc. The majority of participants felt that the conversations must start with the administration and school boards, those individuals or groups who are the decision-makers in the schools districts.

The dialogue between Georgia and Garrett was most interesting to watch. They were both hired approximately at the same time in the same school district, during the Civil Rights days. While they shared a working career that spanned similar years in education within the same school district, their experiences came from different positions as educators. Garrett was able to give insight from an administrator's view, one built upon working within a set of rules for everyone. His position involved working much closer with a school board than most classroom teachers and counselors. His daily work also dealt with making decisions that were judged by a building staff and community. While both Georgia and Garrett spoke of the need to understand the differences in people, they disagreed on how far to take into account the differences in culture. While Georgia believed in discussing the differences in an individual's culture, Garrett strongly believed that in the end, there is a right way and a wrong way for people to act. You cannot allow culture to interfere with what is right and wrong. It was a delight to be able to witness their personal and professional working relationship throughout this study.

Understanding the differences in people came through very strongly in others' responses to question #11. As Danielle stated, "They're not wrong and you're not wrong. You're just different." Carla's statement was more specific. She believes that racial attitudes exist because, "My children don't look like your children." This statement is so

powerful. I believe it immediately forces you to see the faces of children, African American children and White children.

Sophia's comments were most interesting to me as she spoke of the need for administrators to understand how their lack of communication skills with African American families has often hindered, not helped, building relationships. Not only are their conversations ineffective, but the location of these conversations was not fostering good relationships with these families. School is often not the best setting for African American families to meet with administration. As said in previous responses, church and other community settings may often be more comfortable venues at which to hold meetings, as schools are not always looked upon as welcoming sites. According to Sophia, administrators may be well-meaning, but, not only is the message conveyed in the wrong place, but often, with the wrong words and wrong body language. According to Sophia, "There's a dialogue that is lost, lost in translation." Sophia believes that administrators must go through a full emersion of training to learn how to better communicate with African American families if they hope to build relationships between the school and community.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Each day as I walk the halls of my school as the educational leader of my building, I check the hallways, the classrooms, the restrooms, the physical plant, to be confident that my building is safe and secure; that students and staff can perform confidently in a safe and secure environment conducive to learning and teaching. From the moment our students enter the building until the last student leaves I try to look into the faces of our students and staff to see if all is good in our world. Unless something is out of place, or broken, or angry or upset, my perception of the school climate is that we are doing well. We are all doing our jobs to the expectations of our school, families, and community.

"Perception is reality," is a phrase that we hear often. As an educational leader, I cannot afford to rest on perception if I know that what I perceive to be acceptable is different from that of others who entrust the fulfillment of their careers to my hands. What I see, what I think, may not give me an accurate sense of the school. What may be missing is what I am not hearing or that to which I am refusing to listen. These missing pieces are the voices of those who share in my working environment. These voices belong to my colleagues, my staff, my students, all those who walk the halls and fill the spaces of my school.

Listening to the voices of African American teachers in Beaver, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties of Western Pennsylvania has given me insight into the experiences and perspectives of careers that have spanned decades of teaching and administration in public education. Listening to the stories of these professional men and women should

give educational leaders reason to give more thought to what their perceptions of their buildings may or may not be.

In his writing, Dancing *between Two Worlds*, Lynn (2002) uses "portraiture" as his writing style. Portraiture is research done through the perception of the subject. Lynn calls this the "third eye." Portraiture requires the subject's story be told in the subject's own narrative. This study was designed around several questions. This study focused on the first person narrative of African American teachers to gain an understanding of how the past has influenced the present and what issues educational leaders may or may not be aware of.

While, not the primary focus of this study, I do believe that this is one question that materialized as a theme to continue to research. I believe that a critical question which Lynn attempts to ask in his story is, "Does having minority teachers in the classroom make a difference?" I believe that Lynn's answer is yes; having minority teachers, who care, can make a significant difference in the educational experience of minority students. Was I biased regarding this question or issue prior to conducting the interviews? We are all biased in some way prior to doing any research.

While this study focuses on the disproportion of African American teachers in Western Pennsylvania, the issue is not unique to this region as statistics have shown throughout this study. A conversation I had some years ago with Jan, an elementary teacher from Georgia, led to the discussion of minority teachers in her district. After a few moments of thought and calculation, she realized that there were very few minority teachers in her district, maybe one African American teacher who was also a coach. Following up on her comment, I asked how many minority students attended her school

and her answer disclosed there were several African American and Mexican American students. Jan admitted honestly that she had never really noticed, or given it much thought.

Jan and I continued to discuss the issue of the lack of minority teachers not only in her school, but also the question as to why there continues to be a disparity. Ultimately we discussed the question, "Does having a minority teacher in the classroom make a significant difference in the lives of minority students." Jan told me that she had noticed that the African American students who were athletes stayed together as a group. They also tended to spend more time with the African American teacher who was also a coach. If the students required transportation home, it would be that coach who would drive them home. Jan admitted to now being more aware of something to which she had never given thought.

Jan is White, as I am. While we cannot see the world through the eyes of African American teachers, we are both more aware of the need to see beyond our lens of perception. My purpose for conducting this study, for choosing to focus on the experiences of African American teachers, is to create awareness for educational leaders, administrators, people in authority, and decision-makers in public schools, to be more aware of what goes on in the lives of the professionals they serve.

I have been an educator for over 25 years. I have been an English teacher, Guidance Counselor, Assistant Principal, Principal, and Vocational Director. I have been a substitute teacher, nurse, and athletic director. I've had my hand in plugged toilets, mopped vomit, caught bats and snakes in classrooms and hallways. I've been a coach, mentor, and chauffer. I have walked in many shoes, a valuable quality for an educational

leader to have for empathy with his or her staff. However, I can never walk in the shoes of an African American teacher who has been told that he or she must find a way to navigate through the culture of White authority to not just walk through the door, but to get a chance to knock on the door of a career that they spent a great deal of time and money to pursue.

As I began to take my first steps along this journey to explore the personal experiences of African American teachers, I asked myself, "Why would these educators open their lives to a stranger?" Would they be offended that I would be exploring their lives to fill these sheets of paper for my personal glory? If I was interested in research that would expose the existence of racism in our schools, why didn't I ask the White teachers and White administrators? Trust in me was something that must be a priority for me to gain entrance into their lives.

To help address my concern of trust, I contacted the local President of the NAACP, with whom I had previously established not only mutual respect, but a friendship. She had often been a visitor to my school where I had hoped she gained trust and respect that we had the best interest of all students and staff regardless of race, religion, or gender. I asked her if she would assist my study by writing a letter for me that would be mailed to each prospective participant along with the Informed Consent form. I have read this letter (Attachment A) several times and hope that I can always live up to the kind words written by this woman. I will forever be in debt to her for assisting me in helping to open doors that may have otherwise been closed. It is certainly fitting irony, considering this study, for a White educator to be in need of an African American to open a door for my own advancement.

Each personal narrative from the fourteen African American educators was a unique story. Referring to Foster (1993) from Chapter 3 of this study, it is essential that the stories of African American teachers be told. While my goal in this study was to capture the personal stories of African American educators, I was uncertain as to how to quantify the information gathered from these personal interviews. For a long while, I felt as if I had been driving around in circles, not really knowing where I was going. The dissertation process is a long and arduous one that takes many turns and often has the student changing direction, not necessarily changing the destination, but often the roadmap to get there. After several meetings with my dissertation committee, the consensus was not to try and quantify my data, but to leave it up to the reader to find meaning to the research and, ultimately, these personal stories.

The intent of this study was not to research the specific areas indicated for recommendation, but to explore the lives of African American teachers whose work experiences have included those who have retired after 35 plus years to those just beginning their career. Throughout my experience of research for this study, as well as listening to the stories as told through the voices of those African American participants, I found several areas requiring further study.

Recommendations for Further Research

- Why are minority undergraduates not pursuing education as major? What alternative paths can be taken to obtain a teaching certificate to increase the number of minority teacher candidates? National statistics show that fewer than 10% of teachers are African American. Approximately 2% of

African-American teachers are males. Participants in this study acknowledged that teaching is not perceived as an attractive career for African-American youth for a variety of reasons. As this study focused on adult participants, further research with undergraduate African-American students enrolled in fields of study outside of education may provide additional information as why African-American students are not pursing education as a career.

- Does gender play a role in the advancement of minority educators? The population contacted in this study was not large enough to make any determinations regarding this question. However, it did appear that female participants experienced more limitations or frustrations in pursuing or witnessing advancement than experiences of the male participants. Jenai's experience indicated the need to rely on the legal system to help open the doors for advancement. Olivia also acknowledged her belief that other African-American educators needed legal support to advance in their career.
- Continue research to determine bias of the Praxis exam for teacher certification. Do minority teachers help minority students perform better on standardized testing, i.e., Praxis? Participants expressed their belief that the Praxis presents a difficult and biased challenge for African-American youth, adding to the reasons for the lack of African-Americans pursing education as a career.

- Diversity training for administrators; Sophia presented an interesting perspective of working with minority families and communities that White administrators may not consider when building bridges of communication African-American and/or other minority communities. For those administrators interesting in developing a Multi-Cultural educational system in their building, they need to strongly consider establishing Diversity training for not just administrators, but entire staff, professionals as well as support.
- Does having a minority teacher in the classroom make a difference to minority students? All students? This study presented research supporting the fact that student achievement gains are much more influenced by a student's assigned teacher than other factors such as size and class composition. Is it also reasonable to believe that all students may experience more success in a classroom taught by teachers who can best reflect their own diversity, culture and life experience, as was expressed on page 22 of this study?

At the time of this writing, I will have been an administrator for eighteen years. As an educational leader, the researcher's purpose of this study is to help other administrators, other educational leaders to gain a different perspective of how others see the culture of their school. This culture is not only the environment inside the walls of their buildings, but the culture of authority that controls the decision-making process for the school district (i.e., boards of education, superintendents, principals, committees,

etc.). Garrett and Jenai have had many years of experience as administrators. They were very outspoken in their opinion of how school boards can take the hiring process out of the hands of administrators and hire teachers to satisfy their own compulsions. As Garrett stated, "It's 5-4." Without the majority vote of nine-member boards, it doesn't matter how much recruitment an administrator does. Gaining the support of school boards, when recruiting minority teachers is certainly a recommendation for educational leaders, who are truly concerned with changing the culture of their building or district. A goal of this study is to identify other areas for administrators to develop policy and practice that will create a healthy school environment that recognizes and celebrates the differences of those who teach and learn inside its walls.

Recommendations for Administrative Practice

- Develop recruitment policy for minority teacher candidates. This policy should involve not only school personnel, but members from the African American community, churches, and key members of the social capitol of that community;
- Develop a recruitment practice of identifying "future" teachers among the minority students in the building. The participants in this study have given the reader a possible profile of what to look for in minority students interested in education as a career;
- Build board support for hiring minorities. Administrators must have the majority support of the board to seek out qualified candidates for hiring;
- Build upon community outreach for meetings (i.e., board meetings, parent teacher conferences, etc.). Parent/teacher/administrator meetings may at

times be most effective when scheduled at off-campus sites. School boards may consider holding one meeting a year off-campus, as is often practiced by local County Commissioner meetings;

- Examine in-depth and ongoing school culture (posters, murals, artwork, etc.). It is critical that administrators become more aware of the message that their school is sending. Administrators must, at times, try to view their school from the eyes of others. What is the perception of their building from the viewpoint of someone who does not resemble the culture of authority in that building or district?

While working as a building principal in a high school, I shared cafeteria duty with Steve, a very popular teacher and coach. Steve is White. We were watching the camaraderie of his son, Bill, and his friend, Dave, who is African American. Steve was commenting on how strong their friendship had been since elementary school and that Dave is just like another son. I knew the boys to be best friends. I wanted to "poke" Steve a little into just how far he saw acceptance of "others" into his family circle. I asked, Steve, "What would you do if your daughter started dating an African American boy." He was immediately surprised and at a loss for words. He admitted, then, that he had never considered that thought. He said, "I honestly cannot answer that question."

My goal in questioning Steve was to just get him to think. This study was designed to get readers to think about differences; to see their schools through the lenses of African American teachers. I want administrators to begin to seriously think about the experiences of African American teachers in their schools. Are their experiences

positive? Are there elements in their buildings that may create obstacles to promoting a healthy environment? Does the school welcome African American families or their communities to the table to work with students or the school district goals and commitments? As Harold said, "It's about making connections and establishing relationship. We are all in this together and it does take a whole village to raise a child."

Littkey (2002) writes, "Everything I believe about the real goals of education is not possible if the kids in the school do not care about and cannot get along with each other or with the people they meet outside of school" (p. 2). I believe this is also true of the adults in the building. Littkey further writes that celebrating and respecting diversity is at the heart of what makes a school and society work.

I believe Delpit's (1995) comment at the end of Chapter 2 merits repeating to conclude this study. She writes, "Until we can see the world as others see it, all the educational reforms in the world will come to naught." Sometimes, we need to let others drive and see the world from the passenger seat in order to gain a different perspective of the journey. Yes, there have been many changes since *Brown v. Board* and the Civil Rights Movement, but for some, the scenery hasn't changed much.

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(Appendix A)

Informed Consent

Dear _____:

I am conducting a study to conduct an analysis of African-American teachers' perceptions, perspectives and experiences of their teaching career.

There is reason to question whether or not African-American teachers are enjoying the same fruits of their labor throughout their career in education as their white colleagues. Do African- American teachers in public education share the same experiences in their teaching career as their white colleagues? Is there equality in opportunity for African-American teachers and white teachers? Does an undercurrent of white authority still exist, one that must be navigated differently for African-American teachers than for white teachers? Your participation in this study will provide valuable information for educational leaders willing to make a difference in the careers of all current and future educators.

In this study, you will be asked to answer questions related to this purpose. Your participation may take **thirty to sixty minutes. A second interview may be scheduled if answers to previous questions provide information that may give merit for further questioning. If participant's answers to first questions require more time be granted, it would be left to their permission to grant a second interview for elaboration. The second interview may also require another thirty to sixty minutes to complete.**

No risks are anticipated through this interview process.

All information will be handled in a strictly confidential manner. You will have an opportunity to review your responses before final study is concluded. **You may request sections of the transcription of your responses to be removed if you are not satisfied with the transcription. As the interview will be videotaped, you may also ask for sections of the videotape to be erased if you are not pleased with the results of the interview.**

Your participation in this study is totally voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research or research subjects' rights, you can contact:

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I understand the study described above and have been given a copy of the description as outlined above. I am 18 years of age or older and I agree to participate.

_____

Signature of Participant Date