BLACK STUDENTS' VOICES: EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

AROUND ATTENDING AN AFFLUENT MAJORITY WHITE

SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL

by

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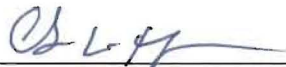
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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the dissertation of Paula M. Heariold-Kinney for the degree of Doctor
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Title: Black Students' Voices: Experiences and Perspectives around Attending an

Affluent Majority White Suburban High School

The structure and environment in majority White suburban school works well
for most White students; however, much of the research showed many Black students
did not flourish academically, socially, or emotionally while attending an affluent
majority White suburban high school. This occurs even when Black students come
from similar socioeconomic and professional family backgrounds as their White peers.
This ethnographic study examined factors which had both adverse and positive
influences on Black students' school success while attending a majority White
suburban school.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was used as a guide to investigate the impact of
race and racism for understanding Black students' perceptions and experiences while
attending the suburban school where the study was conducted. The premise of CRT is
minority dominated cultures are adversely impacted by dominate White culture.

The conceptual framework for this research identified three essential support systems necessary for Black students to succeed while attending an affluent White majority suburban high school. These essential support systems were: Valuing of Respect for Black Student Cultural Identity; Supporting and Promoting Educational Aspirations and Goals, and Developing Social and Emotional Growth.

The participants in this study were 11 Black students, both American Black students and African students, who are attending or have attended a large majority White suburban high school where the study was conducted. The purpose of the study was to learn from Black students, in their own words, what works and does not work for them at this suburban school based on their own realities, experiences, and perceptions.

The author of this study, who is an African American woman, felt compelled to conduct this research because of her own personal experience while attending a primarily White suburban school when she attended high school, and her daughters' experiences when they attended high school in White suburban school districts. In addition, the researcher's professional knowledge and observations as a school administrator in White suburban school districts where Black students were in the minority, gave her firsthand knowledge regarding this topic.

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First I want to give thanks and praise to Christ for giving me the wisdom and guidance to fulfill what I believe is His purpose for my life; the gift of serving, especially young people. I have learned this life is not about me, but about serving others. If I have had the privilege of touching even one student's life in a positive and productive manner, even without knowing it, then I feel more than blessed.

Secondly, I want to thank my husband, Dan, and my daughters Erica and Ali for being my cheerleaders. They encouraged me to fulfill my dream of receiving my doctorate and cheered me on, every step of the way, never allowing me to give up when I thought it may be too lofty of a goal to reach with having my plate so full with other challenges.

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more articles pertaining to my topic than I was able to read; Dr. Charles Hopson, a

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The researcher was inspired by this topic because of her own personal

experience of having attended an affluent White majority high school and from

hearing her two daughters' similar experiences almost 40 years later when they both

attended affluent White majority suburban high schools.

The researcher attended high school in the 1960s, the height of the Civil Rights

movement. The United States had leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and

President John F. Kennedy who were inspirations of hope and justice. It was a time

when people of all ages and colors were singing "If I Had a Hammer," a song about

"love between my brother and my sister." Yet, this researcher did not experience love

and justice while attending her high school in Des Moines, Iowa. Her reflections were

feelings of isolation and insecurity in this big beautiful new high school where the

majority of students were White and wealthy. The school district, while in the

planning stages of the new high school, enlarged the boundaries to ensure integration.

Her neighborhood was inside the expanded boundary of where the new high school

was being built, requiring her to enroll in the new school. Her parents were ecstatic!

She would not be attending a dilapidated school just blocks from her home with other

poor Black and White students, and where the quality of education was considered inadequate.

At the new high school, she recalls sitting in her classes being the only Black student and how embarrassed she was when teachers either ignored her or called on her to ask her opinion about a racial issue or her thoughts about a radical man who changed his name to Malcolm X. She still remembers Miss Lyons, the Dean of Women, repeatedly requesting Black students, who were all friends, to "spread themselves around during lunch" rather than sit together as White friends were able to do. One of the most hurtful situations the researcher most vividly recalls is when Mrs. Lyons told her and her friends they could not sit together during the Senior Banquet. She and her girlfriends challenged Miss Lyons by telling Miss Lyons they would not honor this request. They were all suspended from school for being "disrespectful" and told they would not be able to attend the banquet. She was never as proud of her mother as she was when her mother marched to the school board and insisted the district reverse Miss Lyon's decision! Another hurtful memory was not being allowed to try out for cheerleading because she was told tryouts were closed and then finding out two other White girls were still able to try out. The most heart wrenching hurt was being told she was not "college material" by her favorite biology teacher. He told her she would make a wonderful telephone operator because she "spoke with such good grammar." Her aspirations were to attend college and become a teacher. She is still sorry the biology teacher retired before he was able to witness her teaching high

school English at the same high school where he taught biology after she graduated from college.

Although the reflections of her high school are bittersweet, somehow she did not expect her two daughters would encounter many of the same painful experiences in the 1980s and 1990s as she did in the late 1960s. The older of her two daughters, Erica, seemed to be the most impacted by her experience of attending a majority White suburban school. She expressed her viewpoint most poignantly in an essay she wrote for one her master's degree courses. In this essay she described the embarrassment she felt while in high school. Whenever slavery or the civil war was discussed in her history class, she described her embarrassment of sitting through the class. She stated she felt as though all the students would turn to look directly at her during the discussion. She wrote the teacher often would call on her to ask her opinion about any topic about race. The researcher's daughter reported, on many occasions, she wanted to run out of the room and hide in the bathroom. Her recall of high school was most uncomfortable when her White friends would tell racial jokes. She stated she would laugh with them, nervously, because she did not know how else to respond. The researcher's daughter continued to share that she even practiced laughing and talking like her White friends so she would feel accepted. She wrote she avoided being around the other few Black students who, in her words, "acted too Black." She feared she would be labeled as one of "them." Erica expressed on most days she hated school and had to prepare mentally each day to attend. The loneliest part, she wrote, was not having an adult who looked like her whom she could talk with and who would

understand her feelings. While reading her daughter's essay, the researcher began to relive her own high school experiences.

These high school experiences guided the researcher toward a career in education as a classroom teacher and school administrator, in both urban and suburban school districts. Based on her personal experiences, she began to develop a keen interest in wanting to explore the experiences and perceptions of today's Black youth attending high school in a suburban school district. She was inspired to investigate the perceptions and experiences of today's Black youth who are attending or have attended an affluent White majority suburban high school and capture the voices of Black students in their own words.

Purpose of the Study

The researcher chose an ethnographic approach for her study. Ethnographic research identifies and examines social issues where human interactions occur (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore how Black students'[1] experiences and perspectives are informed and shaped while attending an affluent White majority suburban high school. Specifically, this study examines the issues Black youth encounter which have an adverse or positive impact on their academic and social successes; particularly, their perceptions about the

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[1] The term "Black" students will be used rather than the common term "African American" to identify this specific group of students since skin color or race has been more prevalent in identifying students who share cultural values and norms, including history and ancestry that distinguishes them from other ethnic minorities. The term "white" students will be used rather than "European American" since the term is commonly used to identify people of European descent who do not identify themselves with a "racially mixed heritage" (Hitchcock, 1999).

culture of the school and how it did or did not support their cultural identity, academic success, or social emotional development.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 exhibits the conceptual framework which places student voice at the center of this research. The conceptual framework identifies three essential support systems necessary for Black students to succeed academically, emotionally, and socially while attending an affluent White majority suburban high school. The following three domains were examined as Black students reported their perceptions and experiences to the researcher while being interviewed:

1. Valuing of respect for Black student cultural identity;
2. Supporting and promoting educational aspirations/ goals, and
3. Developing social and emotional support.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study and the conceptual framework prompted the following four research questions:

1. In what ways do Black students describe their experiences at a majority White suburban high school?
2. What are the perceptions of Black students of how a White majority suburban high school is supporting their academic goals?

3. What are the perceptions of Black students of how a White majority suburban high school addresses their social and emotional development?

4. What do Black students believe about what White teachers think about Black students' ability to flourish academically?

Figure 1. Conceptual framework: Essential support systems necessary for Black students to succeed while attending an affluent White majority suburban high school

From the Voices of Black Students

Black students' culture is valued and respected because:

- Pedagogy and curricula are culturally inclusive
- Skin color differences are valued, appreciated, and respected
- Students are rewarded for their cultural attributes
- Students bring their cultural expertise as learning experiences into the classroom
- Interactive, hands on, and field experiences are integrated into delivery of instruction
- Successful mentors and/ or/internships from the student's community are established and welcomed
- The "system" rather than Black students' abilities to learn is the problem that created the achievement gap
- An antiracist/non-bias school climate is established
- Parents and families are seen as supporters and partners with the school and need to feel authentically engaged and welcomed

Black students are able to attain their aspirations and goals because:

- School principal/leaders challenge and disrupt inequitable policies and practices
- Teachers have high expectations and rigorous classes that align instruction with student interests and learning styles
- Counselors and mentors encourage and recruit students to enroll in Honors and AP classes
- Counselors and teachers inspire students to investigate postsecondary opportunities and inform students about college requirements
- Counselor/adult mentors provide intentional access to knowledge of requirements for graduation and college

Black Students' Social and Emotional Growth are Strengthened because:

- Linguistic and cultural diversity in classroom is appreciated and valued
- Relationships with teachers and other adults mentors are imperative and necessary
- Students are not made to feel that they must assimilate to be accepted or to be perceived as successful if they assimilate into the White culture
- Students are appreciated and valued for their intrinsic cultural identities
- Students are recruited to participate in school leadership role other school activities
- Students have a voice in decision-making policies and practices

Problem Statement

Much of the research around school structure and environment in affluent majority White suburban schools indicates these schools work well for middle and upper class White populations; however, not for Black students. Many Black students are not succeeding at the same level as their White peers in high performing schools (Ogbu, 2003). Noguera and Wing (2006) stated "in many affluent White suburban school districts where varying degrees of diversity have been embraced and where there is no lack of resources, all of these districts have struggled to elevate the academic achievement level of students of color" (p. 8).

While mainstream schools provide culturally and linguistically compatible education for White students, this same Eurocentric education may be an affront to Black students in multiple ways (Yosso, 2005). For example, many Black students' education is a mix of racist attitudes, stereotypical images, and low expectations by White educators. In some cases the remedial academic services that are provided more often lead to pushing students of color out of school rather than ensuring an equitable education to all students (Noguera & Wing, 2006).

Critical Race Theory and Education

It is important to investigate the role of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in the context of looking at the impact of race relations and racism for understanding Black students' experiences and perceptions while attending a majority White suburban school.

CRT began within the legal profession as an outgrowth from the early works of legal professor Derrick Bell (Delgado, 2001). Bell began his work in CRT as he realized how slowly racial reform was moving in the United States and how traditional approaches, such as marches and protests were not moving racial reform forward as quickly as it should. In many cases, Bell believed the early victories of the civil rights movement were being eroded (Delgado, 2001). Bell (1992) deconstructed racial issues within the context of economic, social and political structures in his examination of racial patterns in the U.S. legal system. Bell argued race and racism are central, endemic, permanent and a fundamental part of defining and explaining how society functions.

Critical Race Theorists Russell, Yosso, Roithmayr, and Delgado, followed Bell's theory and enlarged their research beyond critical legal studies (CLS) to include critical issues around race and education (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Each of these Critical Race Theorists argued dominated cultures are adversely impacted by the power of the dominant culture based on race (Ladson-Billings, 1999). They believed the power of voice from dominated cultures provided a means of communicating to the dominate culture about the realities, perceptions, and experiences shared by the dominated cultures. Voice brings alive the inequities that encroach on the basic human rights of the oppressed (Ladson-Billings, 1999). As a result of the work of Bell, CRT became the new vocabulary to describe race-related issues not addressed in critical legal studies (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT theorizes there is a direct relationship between race, racism and power. This is particularly evident regarding

how racial structures and racism influence social institutions such as education and justice systems (Delgado, 2001).

Yosso (2005) argued CRT in education is a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses. Legal cases arguing racial injustices often take place in the context of education (Ladson-Billings, 1999). An example is the landmark Brown decision (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). Legal and educational scholars alike examined social injustices based on Matsuda's (1995) six unifying CRT factors and challenge what has not been equitable in respect to race and social power (Bell, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Tate, 1997).

Matsuda (1995), who can be credited as one of the developers of CRT, and other CRT colleagues believed in order to address and expose inequitable practices and policies, it is necessary to recognize the following CRT factors which have implications for race in education:

1. CRT recognizes that racism is endemic to American life;

2. CRT expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy;

3. CRT challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law;

4. CRT insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and their communities of origin in analyzing law and society;

5. CRT is interdisciplinary, and

6. CRT works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the goal of ending all forms of oppression (p. 6).

Bell (1992) and Matsuda (1995) were the two major critical race theorists to recognize the above factors as having the most profound implications for race in education; however, other major critical race theorists also perceived some of the same CRT factors as being essential to addressing race in education as exhibited in Table 1.

Table 1

Components of CRT

Major CRT Theorists	Primary CRT Factors					
	Recognize Racism is Endemic to American Life	Builds Frame-work on Legal Studies	Insists on Contextual/ Historical Analysis of the Law	Insists on Recognition of Experiential Knowledge in Analyzing Law and Society	Utilizes "Voice" as Understanding One's Reality, Experiences & Perceptions	Works Toward Eliminating Racial Oppression as Goal of Ending All Oppression
Bell	×	×	×	×	×	×
Matsuda	×	×	×	×	×	×
Crenshaw		×	×	×	×	×
Ladson-Billings		×	×	×	×	×
Delgado		×	×		×	×
Yosso		×		×	×	×
Soloranzo	×	×			×	×

For many researchers and practitioners, the usefulness of CRT is it can both effectively analyze and challenge the impact of race and racism in U.S. society. This is critically important to shifting the ideology from the view that the achievement gap is due to the deficits of Black children and families, to seeing inequitable practices

and polices as the cause which limits educational opportunities (Villenas, Deyhle, & Parker, 1999).

Roithmayr (1999) affirmed CRT provided "theoretical justification for taking seriously oppositional accounts" (p. 5) of phenomena such as the achievement gap and dropout rate based on Black students' descriptions about remedial educational services, high stakes testing, and teachers' low expectations. Villenas et al. (1999) asserted making the connection between CRT inequities in education can help bring about social justice for Black students. They continued to assert that CRT is one of the most important tools in analyzing issues related to race and racism in education.

CRT scholars used voice of the oppressed as a means of interjecting minority cultural viewpoints (Bell, 1993; Delgado, 2001; Roithmayr, 1999). Dixson and Rousseau (2005) believed voice is instrumental in focusing on perceptions and experiences of students of color as evidenced by teacher's low expectations, by lack of rigor in classes, and lack of access to challenging courses needed to succeed in college. Critical race theorists believed voice helped one name one's own reality (Ladson-Billings, 1999). The oppressed are able to communicate experiences and realities by using their voices. For the purpose of this dissertation voice is used to describe how Black students responded to interview questions in expressing their personal experiences and perceptions about attending a White suburban high school.

CRT is essential to this study by bringing an understanding about how race, racism, power, and education interact with each other. The rationale for utilizing CRT in this study was to shift the discourse from Black student failure as the cause of the

achievement gap to what systems and policies are adversely affecting academic, social, and emotional development outcomes for Black students. CRT provided the framework for understanding and examining what gaps exist in systems rather than placing the burden of failure on Black students and their families.

<div align="center">Disparities between Black and White Students'
Academic Experiences</div>

Noguera and Wing (2006) proclaimed there is a persistent achievement gap which continues to widen between Black students and their White counterparts, regardless if students attend school in an affluent suburban school district. Gay (2004) wrote about the disparities in educational opportunities among ethnic groups as a result of the widening achievement gap. She emphasized the gap may be at crisis proportions.

Prince (2004) stated researchers who continue to study the causes of the achievement gap still have not arrived at an answer. Gordon (2000) noted the gap between White students and Black students continue regardless of socioeconomic levels and may be the widest at the upper end of the income distribution. What is unfortunate, according to Hodgkinson (2003), is "before many children enter kindergarten, forces have already been put in place encouraging some children to shine and fulfill their potential in school and life while other forces stunt the growth and development of children who have just as much potential" (p. 1).

Intangible reasons may be more of a cause for why there is an achievement gap among Black students and their White counterparts than clearly identifiable causes.

Singleton and Linton (2006) wrote "statistically even when students are from the same economic strata, there are achievements gaps based on race" (p. 4). Black students are identified by their race before their economic status.

Low Achievement Track—Same Economics

Singham (1998) described an affluent school district in Ohio that prided itself on the excellence of its school system. The district sends more than 85% of its graduating seniors to 4-year colleges and has a high number of its students receiving National Merit Scholarships. He stated the success rate is not true for the Black students attending school in this district. The district's ethnic/racial enrollment is balanced in terms of White students and Black students. However, Singham added what one might observe when walking into an AP classroom, is to find only about 10% of Black students in Advanced Placement classes while the lowest academic classes are filled with almost 95% Black students. Singham challenged educators to inquire, "Why, given all the resources and educational opportunities available to the affluent district, the academic performance of Black students in this affluent district lags significantly behind their White peers?" (p. 14).

Ogbu (2003), anthropologist and professor at the University of Berkeley, was invited in by Black parents to examine the disparity between White and Black students in grade-point averages and test scores, and to investigate why more Black students were not enrolled in Advance Placement classes. The district is equally divided between Black and White students with similar economic backgrounds. Ogbu conducted an 8-month study of field work at this affluent suburban high school. In his

study, Ogbu found it did not make a difference if Black students came from similar

socioeconomic levels and come from homes of professionals such as teachers,

attorneys, or doctors. He concluded Black students were still not performing at the

same level as their White counterparts. Ogbu suggested being a minority affects

motivation and achievement, including depressing IQ scores (pp. 33-34).

NCLB Impact on Education for Black Students: The Bittersweet of NCLB

According to Prince (2004), many districts struggle with narrowing the

achievement gap between Black students and White students; however, the No Child

Left Behind Act known as NCLB (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, HR 1,

2002) marked the first time the federal government enacted legislation mandating

districts be made accountable for closing the achievement gap. With this legislation,

districts were required by the federal government to:

- Disaggregate student performance and publicize student results for all
  subgroups of students;

- Make sure all students were making annual yearly progress;

- Attach federal funds to improvement in student test scores, and

- Meet the deadline of 100% student proficiency by 2014.

Prince (2004) reported, although the rationale for the law has much merit, there

is concern many school leaders may not have the ability to implement all of the

requirements. A probing question Singleton and Linton (2006) queried is, "If it had

not been for the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, would educators be talking

about the achievement gap at all?"(p. 17). They suggested the willingness for educators to address race, beliefs, and assumptions may not be occurring at this time.

Achievement Gap: Test Scores

Singleton and Linton (2006) studied the achievement of Black students in an affluent school in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Chapel Hill High School is one of the highest performing high schools in Chapel Hill. The school was recognized for having the highest academic scores in the area. However, when disaggregated, the data showed many Black students were not performing as high as Black students who were attending schools from other districts that lacked the extensive resources or the exemplary reputation held by Chapel Hill High School. The White students were academically ranked at the top as compared to Black students who scored well below the average of all students statewide. This study revealed Black students who were privy to many resources at an affluent White majority suburban school did not excel academically. In fact, they may not have performed any better than Black students attending a school without the same level of resources.

Banchero and Little's (2002) research findings revealed a wide disparity between White and Black students at some of the most affluent high achieving suburban schools in Illinois. Further, at one of the top affluent suburban high schools, 88% of the Whites students passed the state mathematics test in 2002, while only 36% of the Black students attending the same affluent suburban high school passed the test (Banchero & Little, 2002).

CRT scholars argued the systemic problems in education are historical and political. In order to transform education into a more equitable system, research demands a more critical analysis and approach to resolving complex issues, particularly in exposing dominant ideology and building critical consciousness around privilege and power to better understand how racism is inherent in hegemonic structures.

<div align="center">Significance of Study for this Field of Research</div>

This study expanded the field of secondary education by utilizing the scholarship of critical race theorists and other scholars. The study investigated how Black students' experiences were shaped by attending affluent White majority suburban high schools. The research examined support systems critical for Black youth's academic, social/emotional development and cultural identities. Voice of Black students was imperative in order to listen to what Black students said regarding their perceptions about what teachers' beliefs are in regard to Black students' ability to academically achieve at high levels. In order for Black students to academically achieve at high levels and attain their goals and aspirations, Black students must know teachers believe they are capable of learning at high levels. Black student voices also described their perceptions about positive or negative influences the school cultural environment had on their ability to flourish emotionally and socially.

Empirical research was important to illustrate the unintended consequences of inequitable policies and practices Black students faced on a daily basis. The study

researched and examined best practices which effectively worked for Black students, regardless of where they attended school. Another significant outcome for this study was to bring to light the assumptions and beliefs about Black students' ability to flourish academically, socially, and emotionally.

Lastly, and most important, the primary focus was to address the following aforementioned research questions:

1. In what ways do Black students describe their experiences at school?

2. What are the perceptions of Black students of how an affluent majority White suburban school is supporting their academic goals?

3. What are the perceptions of Black students of how an affluent White majority suburban school addresses their social and emotional development?

4. What do Black students believe about what White teachers think about Black students' ability to flourish academically?

The above research questions were addressed by interviewing students face to face and learning from Black students firsthand about their personal experiences and perceptions of what is working and not working for them while attending a majority White affluent suburban high school. Their voice gave credibility and power to understanding what school leaders need to know and do in order to establish an environment void of inequitable practices, polices, and behaviors which impede Black students' success academically, emotionally, and socially.

Limitations in the Research

The limitations and/or gaps in the research may be the complexities of identifying similarities and differences in the conditions necessary for all students to succeed in affluent suburban schools, regardless of their ethnicity, race, or culture. Another missing element in the research was the lack of knowledge about effective strategies for changing assumptions and beliefs administrators and teachers hold to be true about Black students' ability to succeed academically, as well as teachers' beliefs about their own skills in teaching Black students (Prince, 2004).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historical and Political Context of Education
for Black Students

The disparity between Black students and their White counterparts is not a new

phenomenon. Since integration, Black students have had to struggle in classrooms

across the country. Brown v. Board of Education (1954) struck down the "separate but

equal" doctrine of Plessey v. Ferguson (1896) U.S. Supreme Court for public

education and required desegregation of schools across America (U.S. Commission on

Civil Rights, 1986). Washington, DC's Board of education was one of the first school

districts to move quickly to desegregate their schools. Although schools became

desegregated, many affluent White families moved from urban districts to outlying

areas of the city where suburban schools began to flourish, providing more resources

and better teachers than in urban districts. It did not take long for Black students to

reap the adverse results of the desegregation decision. After decades of attending

inferior schools, Black students were substantially behind academically than their

White peers (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1986).

Racism in Schools: Antithesis of Equity in Education

Institutionalized racism continues today in schools as demonstrated by many

cases of inequitable treatment toward Black students in classrooms (Noguera & Wing,

2006; Singleton & Linton, 2006; Tatum, 1997; West, 2001). Racism prevents Black students from receiving the same educational entitlement and support as White students (West, 2001). Noguera and Wing (2006) addressed the disparities in the achievement gap in their study at Berkeley High School where they investigated the dynamics of race and the achievement gap at a very diverse and integrated high school. This 6-year research project, which included students, parents, teachers and administrators, concluded the disparities in achievement gap between White students and Black students are tightly linked to race based on racist attitudes, low expectations, lack of access to advanced classes, and lack of access to college information (Noguera & Wing, 2006).

West (2001) maintained, along with others, that Black students are marginalized because of the color of their skin. This becomes apparent, according to West, by observing Black students not given the support needed to succeed in school. West argued this is based on racial inequities in policies and practices, as well as Black students being faced with harassment and hostility. He asserted these reasons may be the cause of why many Black students experience such low self-esteem and the contributing factor for why some Black students hate school (Noguera & Wing, 2006).

Blacks Viewed as the Problem

>We confine discussions about race in America to the problems Black people pose for Whites rather than consider what this way of viewing Black people reveals about us as a nation. (West, 2001, p. 2)

West (2001) wrote, "As long as Black people are viewed as 'them,' the charge will fall on Blacks to do all the cultural and moral work necessary for healthy relations" (p. 6). Black students, walking through the doors of suburban schools, face this dilemma on a daily basis. These students shed their Black culture when they enter into the dominant environment and attempt to change into what is considered to be the norm (Delpit, 1995). The burden of adapting or assimilating in order to be accepted by the dominate culture rests on the Black student. According to Singleton and Linton (2006), White educators consider it normal for Black students to conform to the White culture. If Black students do not adhere to White norms, they become the problem and may be judged by such adjectives as, unmotivated, disrespectful, lazy, or lacking skills (West, 2001).

Black males are more likely to be stereotyped than Black females (Noguera, 2008). Cunningham (1976) noted many Whites have images of Black males as super athletes, criminals, or being hyper-sexed. He concluded, these images defining Black males have a negative impact in all aspects of their lives, including how well they do in school. Noguera (2008) concluded it is not surprising Black males have more challenges in school given the stereotypes they have both in school and in the White community.

In many cases, White educators believe the achievement gap between Black students and White students is inevitable (Singleton & Linton, 2006). In some instances when White educators examined the issues regarding the achievement gap, the discussion generally was about Black students being the cause for the achievement

gap. Hitchcock (1999) contended intellectually there are no real reasons for why skin color should have such an adverse impact on how White teachers look at Black students. He pointed out a limiting factor is many Whites, who are of the dominant culture, do not see their power and privilege in contrast to others and how these social constructs of race and power affect Black people's lives. Hitchcock wrote:

> Living in the big White cocoon as we do, White people don't have to care. It's not our problem, at least in the sense that we can do more or less what we want without having our race being a limiting factor. (p. 51)

According to Singleton and Linton (2006), it is difficult for most White educators to discuss the issue of race as a key factor creating the achievement gap. It is much easier for White educators to place the problem on unalterable factors such as family, the community, and/ or poverty rather than looking at their own biases toward Black students based on race. It is difficult for White educators to look at White privilege and power as contributing factors for why so many Black students struggle to succeed in school. Many White people have either chosen not to or have not taken the responsibility to own up to their responsibility of challenging the role privilege has contributed to racial inequality (West, 2001).

Influence of Social and Cultural Capital

Black students face what Delpit (l995, p. 25) described as "the culture of power," meaning the majority White ethnic group holds most of the financial and political power in the United States. She noted how this dominant power resonates in every aspect of a Black student's school day. It is demonstrated in the power White

teachers have in determining Black students' intelligence and what curriculum will be taught in classes; the power the school system has in deciding the rules in respect to the way Black students should speak, dress, or interact among themselves and with their White peers. This power, held by the dominant culture, has the autonomy to decide which students will have access to classes or have information transmitted to them which will prepare Black students for future successes. Most Black students operate well within their own culture, but struggle within the dominate culture holding the power (Delpit, 1995).

Franklin (2002) defined cultural capital as a group collective identity that serves as a resource to advance the entire group. For Black students, White cultural capital contributes to the inequities of what Black students face while attending school. The school structure is an example of cultural capital which creates a clash between underrepresented Black students and their White peers by promoting a Eurocentric system, perpetuating disparities in educational opportunities between Black students and White students (Yosso, 2005). Black students who do not possess social, economic, and cultural capital are subject to the impersonal and inadequate school structure they face every day. As long as Blacks remain the dominated culture in society, it will be difficult for Black students to acquire cultural capital (Noguera & Wing, 2006).

White privilege is the result of economic, social, and cultural capital. Privilege gives White students exclusive power to access Advanced Placement and Honors classes, access to most qualified teachers, and access to academic support needed to be

prepared for postsecondary school (Noguera & Wing, 2006). In some instances, having cultural capital may mean bending policies and practices to help White students, who hold economic and social capital, to bypass attendance and graduation requirements without adverse consequences. These privileges are seldom extended to Black students (Noguera & Wing, 2006).

Cultural, economic, and social capital also offer a network of friends and families who work together to ensure their students are getting into the right classes and receive the support needed to access college preparatory resources, such as private SAT preparatory classes which provide multiple opportunities to take practice tests. Many of these students are also guided through the admission process for college. Most Black students attending suburban schools bear the consequence of not receiving access to networks of information sorely needed to get into college (Noguera & Wing, 2006).

Eurocentric Educational System

A Eurocentric educational system is one that is based on White culture and standards. Euro-American belief systems are so ingrained in schools that White teachers and administrators are unaware of or ignore the degree to the disempowering effect on Black students (Kuykendall, 1992). This unawareness perpetuates inequitable classroom practice. White educators expect Black students to adapt to the White culture in order for Black students to succeed (Kuykendall, 1992). Tatum (1997) noted Black students feel oppressed and isolated when attending schools where

White students and teachers come from the dominant culture, and where there is a lack of knowledge and understanding by White teachers of Black culture and histories.

Tatum (1997) argued the combination of cultural dissonance and the systemic failure of an inequitable system led many Black students to have negative school experiences. Tatum continued "the dominant access to information about the subordinate is often limited to stereotypical depictions" (p. 25). Many Black students face obstacles daily as they try to navigate the Eurocentric system in order to be perceived successful by the dominate culture (Ogbu, 2003).

Impact of Stereotyping Black Students

Stereotyping Black students hinders them from reaching their aspirations and goals which contributes to Black students feeling inferior (Delpit, 1995). Delpit gave an illustration about a Black student who was rewarded for her nurturing behavior while the White girls were rewarded for their academic high achievement. She stated Black students are "penalized by the nurturing 'mammy' stereotype when they are not given the same encouragement as White girls toward academic endeavors" (p. 171). Covert stereotyping directed at Black students gives Black students images and messages by telling them they are inferior and affirms the perceived superiority of White students (Tatum, 1997). Tatum declared cultural stereotypes cause many Black students to associate doing well in school with wanting to be White.

One of the influencing factors for White teachers stereotyping Black students is teacher education programs which promote the myth about students in poverty and

Black students should not be expected to be high academic achievers (Delpit, 1995).

Stereotypes teachers have about the potential of Black students and Black students'

inability to achieve can be reasons teachers react with low expectations for Black

students rather than responding to the unique gifts and potential of each individual

student (Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbelljones, 2005).

According to West (2001), the physical attributes attached to race such as skin

color, hair texture, and bone structure attach negative meanings for Whites toward

people who possess these characteristics. In most cases, these characteristics define

beliefs and assumptions about a group of people implying those with who possess

these characteristics are inferior to the dominant culture, This may play a major role in

why many Black students are under-prepared in school (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

Most educators have not begun to change beliefs and understanding around the

implications of race and how, based on the color of a student's skin, he or she may not

be receiving the support in school needed to succeed (Singham, 1998).

<div align="center">Lack of Support for Black Students' Cultural Identities</div>

Failure of Relevancy and Relationships

Black students often experience affective dissonance because of their view of

school culture, curricula, and negative experiences in receiving the message they are

inferior to White people (Ogbu, 2003). Black students may resist the curricula and

school rules because they feel they are forced to adapt to the White culture rather than

having the privilege of embracing their own culture (Ogbu, 2003).

Many White teachers in suburban schools do not see the importance of creating a relationship with their Black students as a motivating factor for Black youth. Black youth value relationships and are more influenced by a teacher's encouragement than achievement (Delpit, 1995). It is difficult for teachers to know how to support a student if they do not know much about the student. Many teachers are teaching Black students every day without knowing about their culture or developing a relationship with them (Delpit, 1995).

Disregard for Cultural Knowledge and Expertise

Black students are not generally encouraged to bring their own cultural knowledge into the classroom. Delpit (1995) commented about how students are denied the opportunity to provide their own cultural experiences into class discussions. Delpit wrote, "To deny students their own expert knowledge is disempowering" (pp. 32-33). Delpit's statement is consistent with the researcher's personal experience while observing a history teacher in a suburban school. She recalled a class discussion about traditional European foods celebrated during holidays. A Black student excitedly wanted to tell the class about the similarities of foods his family traditionally shared during the holidays. The teacher rather than affirming this student's enthusiasm about sharing his knowledge and traditions as well as taking advantage of a "teachable moment," simply nodded at the Black student and continued her discussion about European holiday traditions. What the researcher observed from the look on the Black student's face was one of rejection and embarrassment.

In many cases, White teachers are not knowledgeable enough about Black cultural practices to use Black students' experiences to educate, not just for the purpose of including Black students' expertise in the curriculum, but to educate non-Black students about Black culture. Instead, in most cases, only the Eurocentric way of teaching and using curriculum is imposed on Black students (Ogbu, 2003).

Few White teachers know enough about the culture and traditions of Black students to implement a culturally responsive curriculum which honors the contributions of Black people (Peters, 2006). Ogbu (2003) revealed in his study that when Black students do not see school as relevant and meaningful, it causes some Black students to become academically disengaged. He claimed teachers taught the same subject and assessed both Black and White students the same way. He concluded there was no inclusion of the Black experience in the curriculum.

<div align="center">Social Emotional Toll of Assimilating into White Culture</div>

According to Kuykendall (1992), many White teachers in suburban schools continue to see Black students as underachievers and send subliminal messages to Black students that their contributions are not valued as indicated by teachers' lack of response of acknowledging them or not calling on them during class discussions. The same message is sent when teachers are not challenging Black students by isolating them, suspending them, and failing to deliver instruction in a culturally inclusive manner (Kuykendall, 1992).

Most Black students feel they must compromise the innate way of being in order to be accepted into the White school culture. Kuykendall (1992) stated, "Many Black students are naturally enthusiastic and assertive in schools when what is required for them in White schools is to be passive and non-expressive" (p. 5). She determined students who have to adapt their natural way of behaving "limits the mobility, action, exuberance and motivation for students who thrive on movement and excitement" (p. 5).

Singleton (1997) shared his experience about what it was like to attend an affluent suburban school. He wrote:

> In the classroom, mastering the advanced curriculum mirrored the theatrical requirement that I think and act White. Park was quite impressed with my ability to imitate their culture so precisely in such a short time. I received the highest award for my contribution on campus. My award in family and neighborhood was a feeling of alienation and internalized White supremacy creating long-lasting self-hate. (p. 103)

Being in a White dominant school culture can be very stressful for Black students. Black students who are academically successful can be viewed as trying to be White (Tatum, 1997). Tatum (1997) explained Black students, who are academically successful, make a deliberate effort to find different strategies to fit into the White school culture. She described one strategy for the academically high achieving Black student to cope is to distance herself or himself from Black peers and to discard his or her own Blackness. The student does this by showing White classmates he or she is more like them by speaking and acting like White students, even to the point of avoiding activities considered more Black, such as basketball, and

choosing sports more popular with White students such as tennis or golf. Black students, who achieve at high academic levels, reported their success has not been without a cost, emotionally or socially (Delpit, 1995).

Cultural Differences Not Seen as Assets

One of the reasons why White educators may not be able to develop essential cross-cultural skills is because cultural differences are not seen as an asset to the curricula and school environment, but are seen as weakening the curriculum and creating more classroom work (Howard, 2006). The Eurocentric attitudes many White teachers possess in suburban schools, tend to view what they are teaching as right with disregard to the rich experiences Black students bring into the classroom (Howard, 2006). According to Howard (2006), schooling has been aligned with what White teachers see as the official knowledge teachers are able to control and teach to their students. When Black students attempt to bring in their own cultural knowledge into the curriculum, White teachers' biases may cause distain or disapproval (Lindsey et al., 2005).

Failure to Provide Social Emotional Support

Allen (1992) surveyed more than 2,500 Black college students attending a total of 16 public universities. In his study, Allen noted Black students who attended Black universities received more support, academically achieved higher, and aspired to become professionals in fields of higher levels than Black students who attended predominately White colleges. He suggested students who attended predominately

White colleges experienced feelings of alienation, sensed hostility, racial discrimination and lack of integration.

Tatum (1997) observed students bussed from Boston to suburban high schools achieved at disappointing low levels of academic success. Similar to Allen's (1992) study Tatum revealed, students who attended mostly White suburban schools encountered the same racial hostilities, such as, feelings of isolation, and other anxieties as the Black college students experienced while attending White colleges. For students encountering these negative experiences, it is important for them to have a support system or a mentor available to them. Most suburban schools do not provide a mentoring program or adult advocates inside and outside school for Black students, leaving many of these youth feeling alienated and isolated. In addition, there are few support systems to encourage students to participate in school leadership roles so they are able to feel a sense of belonging to their school (Noguera &Wing, 2006).

Essential Support Systems

The review of this literature examined and further investigated the three key theoretical domains as shown in the conceptual framework which are:

1. Valuing of Respect for Black Student Cultural Identify;

2. Supporting and Promoting Educational Aspirations and Goals, and

3. Developing Social and Emotional Growth.

These three essential supports are crucial in interpreting the schooling experiences and perceptions of Black students. Applying these rights and privileges as essential

supports provided the same dignity and educational equity as Black students' White counterparts. Each of these three predictors included individual subcomponents within each of the variable predictors.

CRT was used as a lens to research the literature, addressing the three essential supports required of educational systems for Black students to develop academically, socially and emotionally, while at the same time embracing their black cultural identity. According to Villenas et al. (1999), the prevailing tendency is to believe all students have a fair and equitable opportunity to be successful in school because public education is open to all students. Schools are allocated the same average daily membership (ADM) and student-teacher ratios are officially equal from school to school. However, even with state and federal educational requirements placed upon public schools, there remains a discrepancy for students of color to have equitable access to higher level classes and other school programs such as student government and Honors Society. For this reason, Villenas et al. negated the notion that there is fair and equitable treatment for all students by exposing inequitable practices and policies.

Utilizing CRT principles in this study was twofold; first, CRT principles were applied to examine Black youth's perceptions of how White privilege and power shaped their educational experiences and aspirations; and, second, the utilization of CRT may have provided a better understanding to educational leaders about how race and racism play out in schools.

The voice or opinions of Black students described the perceptions and experiences of Black students attending a majority White suburban school. It is through Black student voices school leaders will have the opportunity to learn what is important and essential for Black students to succeed and have positive experiences while attending school. Dixson and Rousseau (2005) emphasized the voices of Black students "reveal the micro and macro systems of inequity in education" (p. 36). The voices of Black students were imperative for this study in receiving a clear message of their perceptions and experiences of attending school in a Eurocentric educational system.

Another element of this study was to illustrate to educational leaders the importance of examining their own privilege and power in society and how these social dynamics impact Black students' educational experiences. According to Glass (2001),

> ...education as a practice of freedom must include a kind of historico-cultural, political psychoanalysis that reveals the *formation* of the *self* and its *situation* in all their dynamic and dialectical relations. People then become critically conscious of themselves as the very sorts of creatures that produce (and are produced by) their culture and history, and to realize their freedom they become engaged in liberators acts that challenge the limits (internal and external) of particular situations that maintain oppression or injustice. (p. 18)

Critical consciousness is a process of dialogue, critical reflection, and examination through questioning the dynamics of power and privilege and the oppression existing within a hegemonic system or the power of one group over another. Hegemonic structures include how economic, socio-cultural, and political power is organized and ruled within a socio-cultural structure representing White

privilege and cultural capital (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Examining self and the system is the work of educational leaders in their charge for equity in education and social justice. This critical consciousness work involves the uncovering and dismantling of one's own race and racism, one's power and privilege, and one's own assumptions about gaining social status in society. Leaders in schools should participate in challenging rather than primarily identifying inequities in educational systems (Singleton & Linton, 2006). The educational leader who has internalized a critical consciousness about race and racism which authentically plays out in action is a leader capable of making systemic changes around inequitable policies and practices which inhibit educational successes for Black and other underrepresented students. Actions leaders reflect and align with values of the school and the community. Glass (2001) wrote:

> Caught in an illusion of its own independence and freedom, the oppressor class cannot make the required critique of and breach with the concrete economic, political, social, and ideological orders. These orders actually prevent both the oppressor and oppressed classes from achieving the deepest possibilities of humanization and freedom. (p. 18)

Challenging inequities and other action by leaders is predicated by internal shifts in their beliefs and assumptions about race and racism in the schools they administer (Brown, 2004). School administrators can have a decisive effect on racist and anti-racist practices in their respective schools. It is important for school leaders to both acknowledge the presence of racism in their schools and to understand it in a way that provides a basis for constructive responses to it (Glass, 2001).

The work of school leaders is critical to making sense of the three essential supports deemed necessary for Black students to experience success academically, socially, and emotionally as illustrated in the conceptual framework in Figure 1, and as it is evidenced in the review of the literature.

Figure 2 represents educators' work to understand and take action in ensuring social justice and the development of critical consciousness through a process of reflection and action. The figure indicates the organic and fluid movement between and among the processes and actions of equitable educational organizations and systems to better support Black youth.
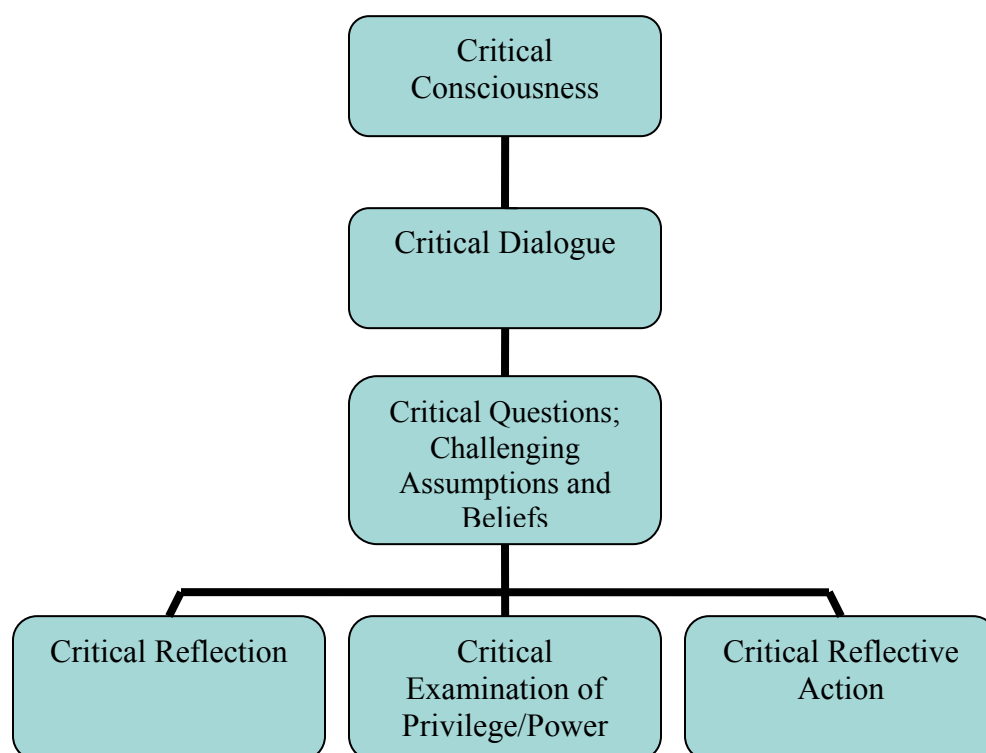
Figure 2. Organizational and systemic educational support for Black youth.

Essential Support I: Valuing of Respect for Black Student Cultural Identity

The first essential framework of support is the *valuing and respecting Black cultural identity*. Singleton and Linton (2006) identified culture in terms of ones' language, ancestry, religion, traditions and values (p. 169). When Black students' cultural identities are respected and valued, it is demonstrated through the curricula, through open class discussions about race and racism, and through seeing other staff and teachers who look like them and share their values and traditions.

Black students' expertise integrated into the curriculum. In the opinion of many writers, studies show students who experience their culture being integrated within and throughout the curricula are most likely to be engaged and motivated to learn (Kuykendall, 1992). Formal education school curriculum is designed to maintain a Eurocentric dominant focus (Ladson-Billings, 1999) and those support systems essential for Black students' culture to be valued and respected include meaningful student input from Black youth during class discussions. Teachers, who reinforce and appreciate Black students' diverse learning styles as exhibited in both written and verbal expression, show they value and respect the Black students' perspectives as an asset to the class and to the curriculum (Ogbu, 2003). Encouraging linguistic diversity in the curriculum, when placed into context, can be helpful in providing opportunities for White students and teachers to learn more about Black students and to help Black youth feel their linguistic style of communicating is valued and notable. Teachers who are willing to interact, without stereotyping, can learn from Black students. Diversity

in language, style and traditions is an opportunity to provide for a rich educational experience for both Black and White students (Delpit, 1995).

Delpit (1995) argued most Black youth have an incandescent use of metaphoric expression and come to school with a wealth of diverse linguistic knowledge. She believed teachers who value oral expression, which is so prevalent among Black youth, inspire Black youth to be open and comfortable with expressing themselves in class.

Black students are very receptive and loyal to teachers who show acceptance and appreciation of their strengths, uniqueness, gifts, and talents. Students who have an opportunity to express who they are as unique individuals and who have a voice in their education, feel their culture and identity is valued and respected (Kuykendall, 1992).

Ogbu (2003) found Black students yearn for their experiences to be included in the curriculum. He gave an example of how Black high school students demanded the drama department produce a play about their Black experience. This example exemplified what Ladson-Billings (1999) referred to when she stated the importance of voice providing students the opportunity to communicate their experiences and realities (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Historically, Black people have been story tellers which have served as a release to heal wounds and feelings caused by oppression (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Delpit (1995) noted it is important to make the curriculum authentically relevant by including student input. She gave an example of having Black students

write about their own lives, with a clear purpose, ensuring students knew they had an important voice in their learning process as well as contributing to the learning process of other students in the classroom. Delpit continued by speaking about a Black teacher who explained how Black youth are much more likely to grasp a concept successfully when they could relate their own experiences based on their everyday lives with the concept of the instruction presented in class.

Culturally inclusive pedagogy and curriculum.

> The key here is not the kind of instruction but the attitude underlying it. When teachers do not understand the potential of the students they teach, they will under teach them no matter what the methodology. (Delpit, 1995, p. 175)

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) maintained one of the manifestations of property value of whiteness in education can be observed in a school's curriculum. They noted there is a relationship between the number of White students in a school and the rigor in the school's curriculum. They postulated the greater the number of White students, the more rich and rigorous the curriculum, which for Black students attending a suburban high school can be an advantage if a culturally rigorous and inclusive curriculum is offered in the school.

CRTs argued instructional strategies most White teachers use assume African American students are academically deficient. Therefore, teachers are constantly searching for strategies to meet the academic needs of Black students, most likely through remediation or the implementation of a generic set of teaching skills. When these strategies fail to work, the Black students' abilities presumed to be lacking not the instructional techniques (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 22).

Kuykendall (1992) contended a culturally inclusive curriculum aligned with effective pedagogy enhanced dignity, pride, and self-respect. She concluded a culturally inclusive curriculum motivated Black youth to do well in school. She believed schools must foster an appreciation of a student's heritage and a positive portrayal of the history of Black people. She emphasized the importance of paying attention to how instruction is delivered so it meets the needs of the learning styles of Black youth. Kuykendall (1992) maintained Black youth are more people-oriented and have more difficulty than White students in a setting where there is little interaction with their teachers and other students. She made the claim Black students are field-dependent, meaning they flourish best when curriculum is relevant and related to their own experiences outside of the classroom. She believed active learning is much more beneficial than passive learning for Black students.

Peters (2006), an African American teacher and administrator, reflected on his own experiences that shaped his life while attending school. Based on this reflection, he inquired about today's Black students' experiences and what their viewpoint is regarding their school and teachers. Peters interviewed many students throughout the country; however, he shared four case studies (p. 6). The purpose of his study was twofold; to hear student perspectives and to share "What Every Teacher Needs to Know" about what students are saying (p. 7). Peters persisted students should have an opportunity to share their insights with teachers and administrators about what strategies work best for Black students in helping them academically achieve. Peters stated, "I am a firm believer that the answers to many of the problems or issues rest

within the hearts and minds of our young people and that everyone loses when we silence or ignore their voices" (p. 2). He heard from students about teachers who made learning relevant, meaningful and fun. They were teachers from whom students learned and retained the most. An exemplary example of constructivist teaching and learning in Peters' study comes from one student describing her favorite teacher, Mrs. Livingston, "As one who made learning fun, and made students understand what she was trying to teach them." The student continued to say, "Mrs. Livingston exposed us to what she was trying to teach us before she tried to teach it" (p. 23). This is a consistent response with nearly every student Peters interviewed. What many of the students reported is not only culturally responsive teaching, but examples of good teaching.

Delpit (1995) commented that Black students bring their culture and language into the classroom. While Black youth are acquiring Standard English, speaking what Whites would consider as the grammatically correct usage of the English language, it is still important for students to embrace their cultural dialect. Maintaining their cultural dialect and mastering "Standard English" is a masterful way for Black students to demonstrate their ability to be bilingual. Delpit emphasized effective teachers who teach diverse populations of students provide numerous opportunities for Black students to gain experience in practicing the new language in a safe environment, without being interrupted or being corrected. Delpit stated, "Those that are most skillful at teaching Black students do not allow themselves to be placed in

skills or process boxes, they understand the need to help students establish their own voices" (p. 46).

Culture of family/community seen as attributes to school. Kuykendall (1992) expressed the partnership between the home and school is an important aspect of having Black students feel the school not only values them as students but also sees their home and community as an extension of who they are as people outside of school. Donnor (2006) expressed African American parental involvement in education is directly linked with preventing inequities their students may face, as well as, improve the political and economic future for their children. He continued that when parents stay connected with the school, the parents are able to monitor the progress of their student, monitor the effectiveness of teachers, and assess the school in meeting the academic, emotional, and social needs of their student.

In 2000, the United States Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement charged the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's National Center for Family and Community Connections with schools to conduct a study about family and community connections and investigate if there was a correlation between high student achievement and family and community involvement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Henderson and Mapp (2002), lead researchers, reviewed more than 80 studies covering early childhood through high school; all regions of the country; diverse populations and communities, and different sources of data which included surveys, case studies, experimental and quasi-experimental studies, and research reviews (pp. 13-14). Henderson and Mapp's study

revealed when teachers made significant efforts to make contacts with parents, test scores grew at a rate 40% higher than in schools where teachers reported low levels of outreach to parents. The study also reported the more involved the school engaged the home, the higher the families' feeling of efficacy (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

In a study previously described, Ogbu (2003) concluded Black parents had a strong and positive influence on their children's education. He also noted Black parents wanted their students to do well in high school. Students in the study reported their parents were supportive of the school where they attended, even if the parents were not able to be actively involved in the school because of work and family obligations. Ogbu's study revealed students worked hard to do well because of the high expectations their parents had for them.

Delpit (1995) acknowledged well-intentioned schools try to provide parenting training for parents of low-income and minority parents. She emphasized the importance of middle class school professionals having the training and ability to understand the cultural context and realities of the Black community so a cultural bridge is built rather than a cultural barrier.

Critical race theorist, Yosso (2005), believed partnering with the communities where Black students live, strengthens the bond between the school and their families. Not only are there valuable resources to enhance the education for Black students, but learning can occur for teachers about the culture of their Black students. Yosso supported CRT's view in knowing and learning about the Black community helps call

into question whether the White middle-class is the only standard by which all others are to be measured.

Kuykendall (1992) expressed there are residents from the community who can be outstanding role models for Black youth. Schools taking the initiative to reach out to community mentors have seen the benefits mentors provide as leaders to youth. These leaders help Black youth see themselves in a positive image. She believed having role models of color involved in the lives of students can offset negative realities or myths regarding Blacks and the Black community. School leaders can learn from and receive guidance from community leaders (Kuykendall, 1992).

Ethnic physical characteristics valued and appreciated. Leonardo (2002) stressed Whiteness can be viewed as a sense of privilege and entitlement. He asserted Whiteness gives inequitable distribution of power. Whites generally do not think of themselves in terms of race. Both Black students and White students, however, always identify Blacks in terms of race based on skin color.

Delpit (1995) argued one of the biggest insults to Black students is when White teachers say they do not see color or they are color blind. The message this sends to Black youth is there is something wrong with the color of their skin. The importance of skin color for Black people has its roots back to the time of slavery when Blacks were treated differently based on their skin tone, hair texture, and physical features. Delpit believed fighting the insecurity of being Black is still a very sensitive issue for many Black people. She insisted students want to be recognized for who they are and want to feel good about their physical attributes. Delpit commented when teachers say

they do not see "color" this makes students feel they do not see them, the student, as a valuable person. She continued by stating, "If students are made to feel invisible, than they become hard-pressed to see themselves as worthy of notice" (p. 177).

Hitchcock (1999) stated:

Defined simply, colorblindness says that our racial and ethnic group memberships are irrelevant to our treatment. Consequently, we should not take race and ethnicity into account when forming impressions and making decisions. (p. 55)

Kuykendall (1992) regarded teachers who recognize students for their differences make Black youth feel valued and proud of their heritage. She added by stating the ability for White teachers to see the beauty in Black students' characteristics prevents Black youth from seeing themselves as unattractive. She pointed out that a student's positive self-image, especially high school age students, gave Black youth more confidence and had positive implications for motivation in school. Although a positive self-image is important for both male and female Black youth, when young Black women do not possess this positive self-image, in some cases, they turn to unhealthy relationships to find someone who will make them feel good about themselves. Black males may turn to other destructive behaviors. Kuykendall commented that "educators can augment student self-worth, dignity, and self love by making students feel that they are beautiful—inside and out" (p. 11).

Anti-racist/non-biased school climate established. "This place makes me hurt." This statement was said to the researcher by a 15-year-old high school student who was interviewed for "Youth at Risk," a resource publication for counselors,

teachers, and parents (Kushman & Heariold-Kinney, 1988). A number of Black youth

may experience this feeling as they experience isolation in attending a majority White

school. Most students who enter school or certain classrooms are able to read the

climate of that environment to decipher whether it feels good or bad. They may either

feel they are in an inclusive, warm and genuine environment or they may feel it is cold

and ingenious. Black students may feel their culture is highlighted only out of a sense

of duty during certain times of the year. Multicultural education may be reduced to

trivial cultural samplings of Black culture, such as celebrating Black leaders only

during Black History Month by offering soul food in the school cafeteria, or bringing

in African dancers and other activities for the purpose of attempting to establish an

anti-racist/non-biased school climate (Banks, 1973). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995)

argued multiculturalism in education, as it is today, functions similarly to the civil

rights law; instead of creating drastic changes in anti-racist/non-biased reform, it is

masked in liberal ideology doing little to change attitudes, behaviors and beliefs.

Students, especially Black youth, respond to their surroundings. Students are

inspired when they feel nurtured and supported. Kuykendall (1992) made the claim a

school climate void of an anti-racist/non-biased environment generates enthusiasm,

builds confidence, and respects and values all students. She attested everyone in the

school, including cafeteria workers and custodians, must be clear about the impact of

their behaviors and biases on a student's self-image. This positive behavior will

verbally communicate their respect, appreciation, and belief in students with a

message of hope. She continued to confirm it is imperative for schools to implement

programs showing an appreciation for diversity and the gifts and talents of its Black youth.

Essential Support II: Helping Students Attain Aspirations and Goals

The second essential support is *promoting Black students' educational and personal aspirations and goals.* This support targets opportunities to encourage and recruit students to be engaged in higher level classes, internships, and activities which are relevant and inspirational, preparing Black students for postsecondary education and careers. This essential support means taking genuine interests in students by developing a personal and meaningful relationship. By doing so, teachers know students well enough to encourage and guide them toward their aspirations and goals, helping them succeed in school and life (Kuykendall, 1992).

School leaders challenge inequitable polices and practices. Principals and administrators create the environment for making sure the school structure provides for equitable conditions for all students. The principal and leadership team are responsible for providing the structure and vision in which policies and practices are implemented (National Association of Secondary Principals, 2004).

School leaders committed to equity for all students acknowledge the relationships among the related entities such as personal relationships, school structure, and cultural awareness to ensure students receive equitable treatment. A leader who advocates for the rights of all students believes it is morally just to do right for all students (Lindsey et al., 2005).

A study entitled *Effective Leadership in Multi-Ethnic Schools* (Walker, 2004) conducted in England, explored issues relating to the positive impact of effective leadership of English schools on academic achievement for minority students. Ethnic diversity has existed in England for many years, especially in urban areas. England has been host to diverse ethnic/racial groups due to the long colonial period. England, like the United States, has been concerned about meeting the academic and social needs of their minority students. This study focuses on the impact leadership plays in providing a quality education to minority youth. In this study, Walker (2004) examined issues around effective leadership in primarily minority schools. The research captured five school-based case studies. Each of these schools is identified as having a high number of minority students. The schools chosen were ones which demonstrated high quality and effective leadership skills (Walker, 2004).

Walker (2004) observed principals and other leaders in the school who demonstrated their leadership and expectations by leading a non-racist and non-biased school. He noted leaders who exhibited cultural proficiency skills had the biggest impact on challenging and disrupting inequitable polices and practices. Walker alleged it is the leaders who will define the commitment to equitable policies and practices central to ensuring the school environment is one based on social justice. He argued it is especially important school leaders lead the charge to abate institutional barriers to school success for Black students. Kuykendall (1992) agreed by claiming school leaders can play a unique role in helping to eradicate institutional racism because of

their power to change polices and practices which have harmful effects on Black

students.

The Walker (2004) study identified three important findings:

1. Leaders Articulate and Communicate Values: Successful school leadership

   is based on the articulation and implementation of explicit values

   promoting an agenda of equality, fairness and respect. A values-driven

   leadership was imperative. There is clarity of shared values provided by the

   leaders of the school with a moral compass that shaped their leadership

   role.

2. Leaders are Involved in the Community: School leaders project their

   leadership beyond the school and into the community. School leaders make

   themselves well-known within and throughout the minority communities

   and respond to the needs of the community. Leaders do not see themselves

   confined to working with the minority students only within the school and

   minority parents are encouraged to participate in the school.

3. Leaders View Minority Students as Shaping the Context of the School:

   School leadership is shaped by the demographics of its school population

   and how the multiethnic school population plays an important role of

   shaping the context of the school (p. 3).

These three findings aligned with Singleton and Linton's (2006) belief in order

to have a systemic anti-racist school environment there must be an anti-racist school

leader who is willing to be proactive and assertive in challenging and disrupting

inequitable policies and practices. They also agreed a school leader must be able to challenge the entitlement White students are given at the expense of Black students. They believed leaders must have the courage to challenge policies and practices which will help change and disrupt inequitable instructional practices and improve academic achievement for underrepresented students.

Noguera and Wing (2006) endorsed the findings of Walker (2004), Singleton and Linton (2006) and declared stability in leadership promoted equity and social justice by ensuring schools stay with the commitment and effort to address equity issues. Both believed when there is constant change in leadership, many times it is difficult to keep the school focused on the issues of equity because staff morale can change with the disruption of changed leadership (Noguera & Wing, 2006).

Students also are positively affected by having a good relationship with school leaders. The four students, whom Peters (2006) interviewed, all reported they would have not only liked to have known their principal, but would have liked knowing who their principal was.

Teachers have high expectation for all students. Teachers with high expectations for all students and who teach challenging classes is paramount to Black students' success. Students thrive when teachers do not accept failure. Students work harder because they feel as though teachers care about their learning (Peters, 2006). Teachers who consciously and intentionally have high expectations for Black youth and interact with Black youth equally as much as they do with White students, have

more success with Black youth achieving at higher rates than teachers who have low

expectations or do not interact with Black students (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

Students also want to have challenging teachers. Students interviewed by

Peter's (2006) overwhelmingly commented they excelled better in the classes where

teachers challenged them and had high expectations for success. Tyrone, one of the

students who was interviewed in Peter's study was asked, "Which teacher would you

want your younger/brother or sister to have?" He responded by saying:

> I would want Ms. Burke and Mr. Wiggins to teach my sisters and brothers.
> They teach you stuff that's hard, but in a way that you understand it. All the
> students who had these teachers seem to do well because they made you learn.
> They teach you all you need to know to do well in other classes. Most of the
> students in our school really respect these two teachers. (p. 30)

The significance of this statement indicated the importance for Black students

to believe teachers have high expectations for them to succeed in school by

challenging them to reach high standards and by being explicit and clear about what it

is they want and expect for students to learn and be able to demonstrate. Many Black

students reported, in Peter's study, the teachers for whom they have the most respect

and the classes they like the most are the ones they describe as their most difficult

classes with teachers being the "hardest" teachers. In many cases, these classes and

teachers gave Black students a great sense of pride by knowing they were challenged

by teachers who believed they were capable of doing the work in the most challenging

classes.

Counselors/adult mentors provide intentional access to higher level.

Kuykendall (1992) believed most Black youth respond and do well in class when they

have positive relationships with adult advocates who support them and help them know how to navigate the school system by guiding them to take high level classes, keeping them informed of the classes they need to get into college and helping them keep track of their credits in order to graduate. She continued by adding students need to be empowered and have time provided for them to talk about their own goals and aspirations so they are able to lay out their own personal plans for achieving their goals.

Noguera and Wing (2006) indicated Black students need to be provided the same information advanced placement students are receiving from the college advisor. At Berkeley, the college advisor provided daily bulletins with a calendar indicating when college recruiters would be at the school, SAT dates, and scholarship information from various college, universities and organizations (p. 107). Many times this information was repeated in AP and Honors classes. Noguera and Wing reported it is imperative for counselors and school advisors to recruit and encourage Black students to enroll in high level classes and to provide the support necessary for students to succeed.

Noguera and Wing (2006) impressed upon the importance of school counselors and advisors staying current with information published in Black magazines and newspapers to help Black youth know about resources available to them. The researcher recalled reading in *Ebony*, a magazine published primarily for Black consumers, more than 800 scholarships were not applied for by Black students. Her belief was many Black students may not been made aware of the information.

Noguera and Wing (2006) supported this assertion, stating many Black families do not

have the same network bridges from high school to college that middle and upper

class White families have who are from third and fourth generations of college

backgrounds.

Ogbu (2003) emphasized it is necessary for schools to provide postsecondary

transition or bridge classes and programs where diverse students and their families

could learn important information about higher education and scholarship

opportunities.

Another critical element to support Black youth's college aspirations is having

school counselors and/or adult mentors provide the skills and knowledge for Black

youth to learn how to create and attain short- and long-term educational and personal

goals. Black students, especially, need to believe goals are attainable and their efforts

will be rewarded (Kuykendall, 1992).

Essential Support III: Developing Social and Emotional Growth

The third essential support is *developing social and emotional growth*. This

support is demonstrated when Black students experience appreciation for their

Blackness and culture based on their own merits, and they do not feel diminished as a

result of their cultural identity. This support is also demonstrated by not expecting

Black students to be required to sacrifice their own cultural identity by relinquishing

their cultural traits for the purpose of assimilating into the White culture (Tatum,

1997). As students approach adolescent age, race can become quite significant. Tatum

wrote that awareness of Blackness becomes more apparent during the high school

years and Black students may want to make others aware of their Blackness by exhibiting an "in your face" attitude which often is threatening to White teachers (pp. 61-62).

Strong relationships with teachers and adults as advocates. Peters (2006) acknowledged students thrive when there is a special relationship established between students and adults with whom they see as their advocates. The common theme Peters heard as he interviewed Black youth from across the country was they needed and felt secure in knowing there was at least one teacher or adult mentor at their school whom they felt knew them as a person and knew this person wanted to see them succeed.

Kuykendall (1992) reiterated this point by adding Black students, like all students, want to be accepted by their teachers. They are very receptive and loyal to teachers who show an acceptance of them if they make a mistake while at the same time guiding them to understand concepts and lessons. Kuykendall emphasized students bond with teachers who appreciate them for their strengths, uniqueness, gifts, and talents.

Students maintain ethnic/cultural identity without the need to assimilate. Ogbu (2003) stressed the psychological and emotional toll for Black students who feel they have to assimilate to be accepted at school. In some cases, students totally reject their Black identity by having only White friends and emulating White culture as a means of survival. He continued to say such acculturation may cause students to lose their racial identity and relationships with their Black peers.

The researcher experienced this emotional toll when her daughter tried, with great effort, to navigate her way through a majority White school as a minority student. The researcher's daughter worked at emulating the traits of her White friends by taking on mannerisms and choosing the "right" choice of words when speaking to her White friends. Yet, her daughter realized she was not treated with the same degree of privilege or acceptance as her White peers, as indicated by her not being invited to certain social events, not being encouraged to take high academic classes, and by experiencing low expectations from classroom teachers.

Delpit (1995) impressed upon the importance of teachers honoring, understanding and encouraging Black students to maintain their sense of identity. She believed teachers can help students by opening up conversations. She stated to do so "teachers must saturate the dominant discourse with new meaning" (p. 164). What this will require is having what Singleton and Linton (2006) described as having courageous conversations about race, and having the courage to communicate and understand students and families of color (p. 242).

<div align="center">Student Voice</div>

The term voice as used in this study is not a singular voice, but a common way of expressing oppression and experiences of racism conveying the stories of people of color (Delgado, 2001).

The voice of Black students was paramount to this study. Their sharing of their perspectives and experiences gave credence to shifting the blame from Black students

being responsible for the achievement gap to looking at a society's impact on Black student achievement due to social capital and racial hegemony (Ladson-Billings, 1999). CRT scholars professed having an opportunity to use voice are an important aspect of providing a way to communicate experiences and realities of the oppressed (Ladson-Billings, 1999). A central tenet of CRT was the assertion of personal expression utilized as a way for Black students to think critically and convey their knowledge in a way that empowers them and empowers others (Matsuda, 1995).

Although Brazilian educator and scholar Paulo Freire (1970) was not a critical race theorist, he was one of the most prominent educational philosophers in the 20th century who most likely influenced 21st Century critical race theorists. He, as current critical race theorists, believed voice serves as a necessary tool to provide imperative context for interpreting minority cultural viewpoints. In his most well known book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* one the most prevalent concepts was that dominated cultures be empowered to critically respond to the inequities placed upon them by the dominate culture. Glass (2001) reported, through Freirean projects, lives were enriched by the voices of the oppressed.

In Glass' (2001) interpretation of Freirean concept for critical consciousness, he wrote:

> For the oppressed, as individuals and as a class, to discern the truth of their nature, identities, and situation requires the achievement of a kind of knowledge that reaches behind the way things are to grasp the way things came to be. (p. 18)

Much can be learned from listening to what Black youth communicate in expressing their views and perceptions. Delpit (1995) mentioned that in academic middle-class culture, the relationship between what is spoken and what is heard can be underestimated and the primary message is of extreme importance.

Stovall (2005) wrote about a course he taught centered in CRT. He shared how giving the students of color the opportunity to share their stories enabled the students to share their first-hand experiences. He emphasized the importance for schools to be open to having opportunities for students to discuss the realities of race and racism. This occurs when the experiences students share provide a context for students to have a voice which may equip them with the tools to become engaged in school and to challenge the status quo.

Figure 3 displays the essential components for Black student voice to be used to describe realities and insights, as well as honor and respect for Black culture and identity. Voice provides Black students to be valued and respected, without having to compromise their cultural identity. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) insisted authentic voice is important for giving recognition and validation to the experiences and perceptions of Black students.

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┌─────────────────┐
│  Black Youth    │
│    Voice:       │
│ Engagement and  │
│ Racial Identity │
└────────┬────────┘
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| Active Voice in Selection of Inclusive Curricula | Active Voice in Sharing Perspectives about School Experiences | Active Voice in Decision-making Leadership Roles |
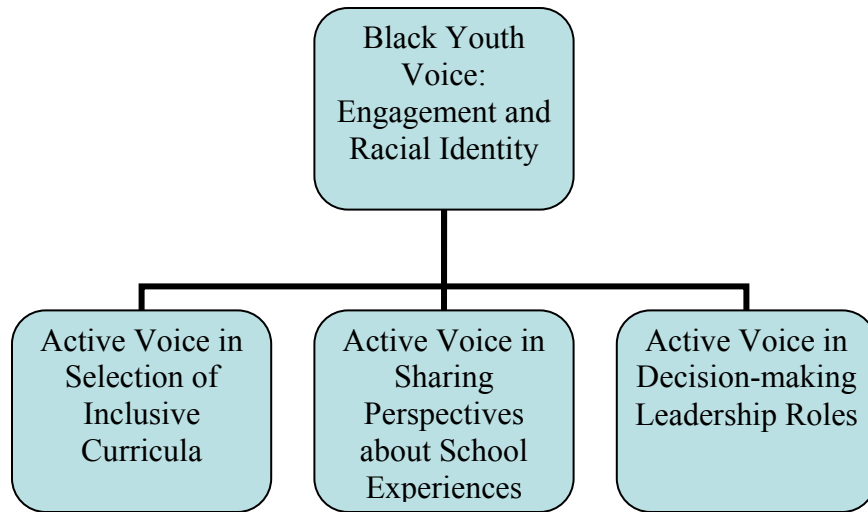
Figure 3. Essential components for Black student voice.

Need for the Study

The intent of this study was to examine and explore innovative strategies so suburban schools are able to provide effective and essential support systems to Black students, resulting in narrowing the achievement gap between Black students and their White peers; providing a positive school experience for Black students to feel valued and respected, without having to compromise their cultural identity while attending primarily White suburban schools; supporting Black students in attaining their aspirations and goals; providing and challenging them with a rigorous curriculum with support systems, and providing interventions to ensure their success. Most importantly this study was to provide opportunities for Black students to use their voice in sharing their perspectives and experiences.

Summary

This study expanded on scholarly research on topics about the academic, social, and emotional impact on Black students who attend majority White suburban high school. Although this chapter provided the review for the study, limited research had been conducted on the topic*:* Black Students' Voices: Experiences and Perspectives around Attending an Affluent Majority White Suburban High School. The study provided documented research, both from the review of the literature as well as anecdotal evidence from student interviews. School leaders will gain a better understanding of the experiences and perceptions of Black students who attend a suburban school where the majority of students are White. The research will prompt school leaders to exam practices and policies which have both positive and adverse effects on Black student success. In addition, the study will give teachers and staff strategies and tools essential for supporting Black students so they will experience positive academic, social, and emotional success in school.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction of Research Design

The researcher selected to use an ethnographic research method because the principal data base is accumulated in the course of human interactions (Schensul et al., 1999). The researcher's profound interest was in investigating and examining the nuances of school culture and its impact regarding Black youth who attend an affluent suburban high school, particularly, how their shared values and traditions were shaped by their culture and experiences. Ethnographic methods were utilized as the approach for collection and analysis of data, most of which were face-to-face interviews, and observations.

Based on CRT, voice as a methodological framework for naming one's reality, is a fundamentally important way to prioritize Black youth's realities and give an opportunity for Black students to express their perceptions of their own personal realities and experiences (Delgado, 2001; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Utilizing a critical ethnographer perspective supports CRT principles for research with oppressed youth. CRT principles assist the researcher in gaining knowledge about the complexities of racism and oppression as expressed through the voices of the Black youth (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Duncan, 2005). The ethnographic design was also selected as a way of understanding the experiences of the Black youth *away* from the typical deficit model to one emphasizing and

acknowledging the impact of social cultural capital, and race, and racism affecting

Black youth's educational experiences (Yosso, 2005).

Research Questions

The following research questions are crafted to explore and examine the

perceptions, realities, and experiences Black students express through their own words

while being interviewed:

1. In what ways do Black students describe their experiences at school?

2. What are the perceptions of Black students of how a White majority

    suburban school is supporting their academic goals?

3. What are the perceptions of Black students of how a White majority

    suburban school addresses their social and emotional development?

4. What do Black students believe about what White teachers think about

    Black students' ability to flourish academically?

The Community Context

The suburban school is located seven miles from a large metropolitan city. The

suburb is the state's sixth largest city, with a population of approximately 85,000

residents. Records show this suburb consists of a community of primarily White

residents. However between 1990 and 2000, it became one of the fastest growing

suburbs in the metropolitan area (Population Research Center, 2003; U.S. Census

Bureau, 2002). During the past decade, the suburb has also experienced rapidly

changing demographics represented by a growing number of families of color, especially Hispanic and Asian populations. This demographic shift creates challenges for both the existing White community and the culturally diverse newcomers making efforts to acculturate into the larger mainstream society while maintaining their cultural, linguistic and extended family ties. While the overall Black population has also increased in this suburb, most Blacks reside in the nearby urban center.

The District and School Context

There are more than 36,000 students in 46 schools in this K-12 school district, the 3rd largest district in the state. The district is nationally acclaimed for students achieving high ACT and SAT scores. Students continue to outscore other students in the state and the nation (The College Board, 2007). However, the lowest percentage of students meeting ACT's college readiness standards in 9th through 11th grades in math, science, and reading in this district are Blacks and Hispanics. Twenty percent of 9th grade Black students were meeting ACT college readiness standards. But by the 10th and 11th graders this number decreases to 10% and 7% respectively (see Figure 4). This indicated as Black students are progressing through the high school curriculum they are falling further behind their White and Asian counterparts who continue to meet ACT college readiness standards at more than 50% (Oregon Department of Education, 2007).

**Percentage of 11th Grade Students Meeting All ACT College
Readiness Standards by Ethnic Group**

Figure 4
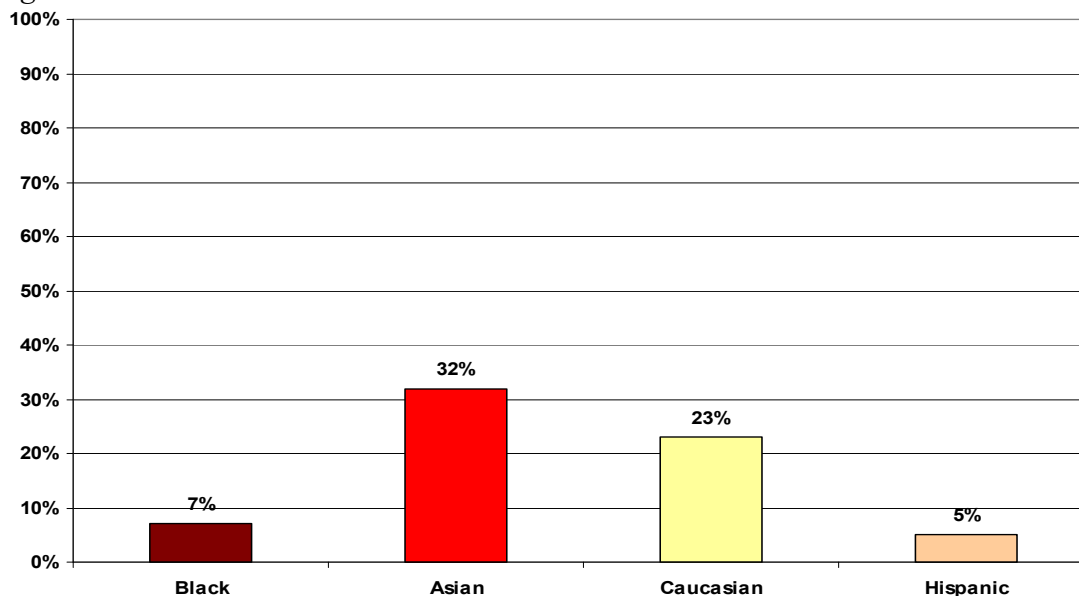
The School

The high school for this study is the largest high school in the school district

with an enrollment of 2,798 students. Out of these students, 65% are White; 20% are

Asian/Pacific Islander; 10% are Hispanic; 5% are Multi-Ethnic, 4% are Black; 1% is

American Indian/Alaska Native; and 3% are unspecified students (Oregon Department

of Education, 2007). The school offers an array of social clubs and sports activities,

including leadership and advocacy programs for Black students and other minority

students. Honors classes are offered to freshman and sophomores. Juniors and seniors

have the opportunity to enroll in more than 30 Advanced Placement classes.

Parents are given opportunities to keep abreast of homework and school

activities via the school website and are encouraged to make appointments to speak

directly with teachers and administrators.

Selection and Recruitment of Participants

The participants in the study are Black students who are attending or have attended the high school chosen as the site for the study. The participants are recruited and selected from the current and former Reaching and Empowering All People (REAP) program. REAP is a state program serving students from different ethnic groups, varying in academic and socioeconomic levels. The REAP program offers leadership development activities to several schools in the metropolitan area. The program is an outgrowth of a school-based mentoring effort between students and community volunteers. At this high school study site, the program redefined REAP's mission to become an exclusive program for Black students in response to a small number of Black student activists who wanted to ensure their voice is included in the leadership of a formalized program. The Black students added "African/African American" in front of the REAP name (African/African American REAP Cadre) as a way of demonstrating their unique identity. This changed the original mission of reaching and empowering "All People" to focus on empowering Black students at this high school. Both the administration and the organization approved of the new mission based on what they believed is an opportunity for Black students at this suburban school to be supported in their efforts to be empowered by having their voices heard. These particular groups of students were chosen to participate in the study because of their passion and commitment to have their voices included in decision-making processes at school.

The director of REAP and a school counselor, who oversees the program, assisted the researcher in recruiting Black students by disseminating letters of invitations at an informational meeting regarding the study. For students who expressed an interest in participating, a follow-up phone call was made as well as an email sent to arrange for a time, day, and location. Consent and parental permission forms were provided at the informational meeting or sent by postal service. Every effort was made to maintain gender and academic balance among the participants. Eleven Black students, both American Black and African, participated in the study. Six of the students were female and five were male.

Data Collection

The method of this study is qualitative. Black youth participants, both current and former attendees of the school, were interviewed face-to-face. Each interview took approximately 1 hour. Pseudonyms are used in this study for all participants, the school, and the district. For consistency, each student was asked the same questions:

- How would you describe your school?

- What has been your overall experience at this school? What do you like about your school?

- What things would you change at your school?

- In what ways do you feel that the school meets your academic needs?

- What support would you say would help you do better in school?

- What AP or Honors classes have you taken at school?

- How would you describe your relationship with your administrators?

- In what ways do your teachers support you?

- What opportunities does your school provide for Black students to participate in student leadership roles?

- What organizations and/or sports are you involved in at your school?

- What are your goals and aspirations?

- How would you describe the relationship between Black and White students?

- What other information do you think is important to this study that you would like to share with me regarding this study?

Qualitative Data

Individual 1-hour student interviews were conducted, with follow-up interviews as needed lasting no longer than 30 minutes. The interviews were designed to document and gather information for the purpose of exploring, examining, and investigating all facets of the research topic (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The purpose of open-ended interviews with students was to capture the voices of the participants as they shared their stories, perceptions, and realities (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1999). All interview responses were destroyed once

the study was completed. The researcher stored all data relevant to this study in a locked file cabinet.

Quantitative Data

Achievement data, such as the Annual School Report Card, school demographics, and rates of graduation, attendance, and disaggregated information of students enrolled in high level classes and participating in school activities were used only for the purpose of supporting and verifying school data.

Member Checking

All participants received a copy of the written interviews to review and were given opportunity to change responses to the researcher for any clarifications or edits. This also provided an opportunity for participants to expand on their topic after they had more time to think about the interview questions. Three students made edits by either asking that a quote be added or deleted.

Procedures

School district test scores and external student success indicator information was accessed from the state, district, and school accountability reports. These are all public records available to the general public from the state's Department of Education and the school district databases.

Data Analysis Design

It was important to set up methods for analyzing and interpreting ethnographic data as a first step (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In order to support analysis and interpretations, data were organized around the four research questions:

1. In what ways do Black students describe their experience at school?

2. What are the perceptions of Black students of how a White majority suburban school is supporting their academic goals?

3. What are the perceptions of Black students of how a White majority suburban school addresses their social and emotional development?

4. What do Black students believe about what White teachers think about Black students' ability to flourish academically?

LeCompte and Schensul (1999) referred to the use of inductive analysis as a method of starting with a research question or problems and continue to investigate the hypothesis until a pattern or conclusion is confirmed. The method of inductive analysis for this study draws from the literature review through the perspective of CRT principles looking at race and racism in society as reflected in schools. CRT principles were used as a method to challenge White privilege, power, and oppression by embracing a commitment to social justice, instilling the importance of culturally responsive education with an effective pedagogy, and examining critical perspectives integrated with action research. The inductive data analysis methodology also drew from examining students' perspectives and experiences based on the three essential supports in educational systems which are deemed necessary for Black students to

succeed academically, socially and emotionally while attending an affluent suburban high school (Kuykendall, 1992; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Ogbu, 2003; Peters, 2006; Tatum, 1997). The three essential supports are: Valuing and Respecting Black Cultural Identity, Supporting and Promoting Educational Aspirations and Goals, and Developing supports for Social and Emotional Growth.

Deductive data analysis or grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, l967) is utilized to analyze the findings in this study to understand the perceptions and experiences of Black students attending a majority White suburban school. Grounded theory begins with a perceptive hunch or theory of why something is occurring. Once the theory begins to emerge, data are collected and compared for the purpose of identifying patterns or categories. Researchers then begin to code patterns or links to start writing their research which results in findings of the study. Researchers use this theory to understand why a situation may be happening.

The researcher of this study was able to draw conclusions based on responses from Black students attending the suburban school, reading their responses, and systemizing patterns aligned with the research questions. The findings from the data were aligned and coded by common themes around the key research questions, literature review, and essential supports for the purpose of drawing an analysis that supported the research questions. Comparisons and emergent themes were looked at as a way of finding common links.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher served as an administrator in high achieving suburban school districts for more than 15 years. She witnessed firsthand Black students not doing well academically, socially, or emotionally in affluent suburban schools. This is evident by school data, annual State Report Cards, a high number of Black students not attending classes, high percentage of Black students enrolled in low track classes, and conversations with Black students who report they are bored and do not like school.

In addition to the researcher's own professional experience as a teacher and administrator, she is a Black woman, who has also experienced oppression and racism throughout her life, while attending public schools, in college, and, as well as, in her professional career. During all of her personal and professional life, she has been a stalwart advocate for unrepresented groups, especially diverse and economically disadvantaged students.

This study is an outgrowth of her inquiry to study the systemic supports and action plans needed to disrupt inequitable policies and practices for Black students. The researcher believed by disrupting inequitable practices and polices, avenues were opened for Black students to succeed academically, develop emotionally and socially, be prepared for postsecondary education, and become positive leaders and role models in their communities.

What is most compelling about this study is the ability to learn from Black students, in their own words, what works or does not work for them based on their perceptions and experiences. What is found to be most troublesome is, with all the

excellent resources such as good teachers, college preparatory classes, and a wide

range of school activities, there remains a significant achievement gap between Black

students and their White peers in this affluent White suburban school. As a result of

the responses from Black students who revealed what works best for them to succeed

in school, this study leads educational leaders to be compelled to try innovative

strategies to improve Black students' academic, social, and emotional school success.

Limitations to the Study

The limitations to this study include**:** the limited number of students who

interview; the qualitative data analysis centers on Black students' perspectives and

experiences from only one suburban high school, and, the study participants are

selected through a convenient sample based on their membership or association with

the REAP organization. This limited the voices not heard from all Black students in a

broader context. All of the subjects felt very uncomfortable being audio taped,

indicating they did not feel comfortable and open about sharing their perceptions and

experiences. This lead the researcher to believe the subjects may have a trust issue

with having their interviews audio taped even though it was clearly written in parent

permission and consent forms all responses would be strictly confidential.

Confidentiality was also reiterated by the researcher to each of the subjects prior to the

interviews.

In addition to the above limitations, the researcher is Black which may

question the validity of the research by some who may believe she is biased in favor of

the interviewees. However, in defense of this argument, the personal experience of the researcher as a Black student may support the research given her own perceptions and experiences shared by the subjects.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This study reported Black students' perceptions of their experiences while attending an affluent White majority suburban school. The study examined the issues these students perceived having either a positive or negative impact on their academic, social, and emotional growth while attending a majority White suburban school. A review of the literature in chapter 2 identified three essential supports proven to have a positive effect on Black students' academic, social and emotional successes in school:

1. Valuing of Respect for Black Cultural Identity (Delpit, l995; Kuykendall, 1992; Ogbu, 2003).

2. Supporting and Promoting Educational Aspirations and Goals (Kuykendall, l992; Lindsey et al., 2005; Peters, 2006; Walker, 2004)

3. Developing Social and Emotional Growth (Kuykendall, 1992; Ogbu, 2003; Peters, 2006; Stovall, 2005).

The findings in this chapter are organized to address the four specific research questions:

1. In what ways do Black students describe their experiences at school?

2. What are the perceptions of Black students of how a White majority suburban school is supporting their academic goals?

3. What are the perceptions of Black students of how a White majority suburban school addresses their social and emotional development?

4. What do Black students believe about what White teachers and administrators think about Black students' ability to flourish academically?

Eleven Black students were interviewed in the data collection process of this study. All students were asked the same 13 questions:

1. How would you describe your school?

2. What has been your overall experience at this school? What do you like about your school?

3. What things would you change at your school?

4. In What ways do you feel that the school meets your academic needs?

5. What support would you say would help you do better at school?

6. What AP or Honors classes have you taken at school?

7. How would you describe your relationship with your administrators?

8. In what ways do your teachers support you?

9. What opportunities does your school provide for Black students to participate in student leadership roles?

10. What organizations and/or sports are you involved in at your school?

11. What are your goals and aspirations?

12. How would you describe the relationship between Black and White students?

13. What other information do you think is important to this study that you

feel is important to share with me regarding this study?

The responses were color coded under the four research questions. The majority of the students are or were members of the Reaching and Empowering All People (REAP) program, an exclusively Black organization in the school. At this suburban school, members of REAP are solely African and African American students; other schools in the metropolitan have REAP programs more ethnically diverse. The REAP program at this suburban school was implemented and approved by the administration in response to Black students' request to be included in a leadership role at the school. Black students who participated in the study were recruited by the only African American counselor in the school.

Out of the 11 participants, 7 of the students interviewed described themselves as African American and four described themselves as African. The students describing themselves as African American are children born in America and grew up in a traditional Black American culture. Three of the students identified themselves as African and were born in Africa; the fourth self-described African student was born in America to parents who were born in Africa. Ten of the students ranged in grades from 9 to 12. One of the participants was a freshman in college who recently graduated from the school where the study was conducted. The gender mix was five females and six males. The distinction between African and African American students became an important aspect of this study.

The following findings were a result of the interviews from the 11 student participants aligned with the four research questions. Case studies read later in this chapter support the findings based on direct student responses and quotations.

Research Question 1

How do Black students describe their experience at school?

- African female students reported a more positive experience than the African male students as based on liking their classes and participating in more activities.

- African males' and American Black males' first and immediate response to the first question was they were awed by the wealth of the White students. This response was not made by females of either group.

- African students reported teachers had higher expectations for African students; American Black students reported teachers had lower expectations for them.

- Many of the American Black male students' perceptions were interactions with teachers were mostly negative.

- All Black students reported racial groups were self-segregated; African students segregated themselves from American Black students.

- African and American Blacks reported each of the two groups were critical of the other group.

- African students expressed they did not believe American Black students were serious about school and exhibited negative behavior.

- Black American students expressed African students were "uppity," meaning African students act White and view themselves as superior to American Black students.

- African students expressed more success pursuing academic pursuits than American Black students.

- All Black students expressed their perception about White students having more entitlement, even to the point of being comfortable making inappropriate racial comments to and toward Black students.

- Students from both groups reported they believed they were receiving a better education and felt safer attending this suburban school than they would feel if they attended a school in the inner city.

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions of Black students of how the affluent White suburban school supports their academic goals?

- All Black students emphatically emphasized the importance of having a good relationship with their teachers as essential in helping them academically succeed and like their classes.

- All Black students expressed they wanted their teachers to be more clear about classroom expectations.

- Many of the Black students expressed the importance of "demonstrating" their learning as being more productive than doing homework.

- All Black students expressed the need to be encouraged and recruited to take Honors and AP classes. Many expressed they did not perceive White teachers believed Black students would do well in higher level classes and many students shared they did not have the confidence they would do well even if they enrolled in higher level classes.

- All Black males reported sports as a motivation for doing well in their classes.

- Both Black male and female students cited sports as a key to social acceptance by White students.

Research Question 3

What are the perceptions of Black students of how White majority schools address their social and emotional development?

- All Black students spoke often about how their teachers who knew them well were the teachers who made them feel good about being in their classes and made students feel their teachers liked them as people and not just as students. They also expressed the need to know their teachers as more than just teachers, but also as individual people.

- All Black students expressed the importance of having more minority students attend the school so they did not feel isolated by being in the minority.

- All Black students reported the need to have more minority teachers hired so Black students would have role models and have teachers who would understand their shared cultures.

- All Black students reported they would like to see a more culturally inclusive curricula, including having Black students' opinions and expertise respected and valued during classroom discussions.

- The majority of Black students commented about the need to work harder than White students in order to be accepted by White teachers.

- Black students expressed the emotional toll of not wanting to fail for fear they would carry out the low expectations they believed were predicted by White teachers.

- Many American Black students expressed concern about their parents not being as valued as White parents. Black students perceived White parents had more influence and better relationships with teachers and administrators.

Research Question 4

What do Black students believe about what White teachers think about Black students' ability to flourish academically?

- All Black students perceived White teachers had lower academic expectations for Black students, especially for American Black students.

- The majority of all Black students perceived they had to work much harder than White students to prove to White teachers they were capable to do classroom work; otherwise, Black students perceived that White teachers would not think Black students were intelligent.

- Several Black students commented they believed White teachers were quick to blame Black students or made assumptions and were suspicious that Black students would do something wrong.

The first response from American Black males and African males, when asked to describe their school, described their school as "rich" or "very wealthy." Neither the Black American females nor African females mentioned the economic status of the school. The females, from both subgroups, first responses were they had "good experiences" and liked the school. Unlike Black females who do not face the same negative images and stereotypes as Black males, it was not surprising for Black males to seem somewhat intimidated in an environment of socioeconomic divide which may make Black males feel they are unable to compete with or able to attain the same high socioeconomic status as their White peers.

Noguera (2008) noted that Black males are seen as novelties in many White suburban schools because of their perceived giftedness as athletes rather than their giftedness as intellects. He continued by affirming this superstar cool athletic status does not negate the other stereotypes that burden Black males and shape the images that many Whites hold to be true (Introduction, p. xiii). Whether Black male students are from affluent or non-affluent families, they do not feel they have the same opportunities as their White peers (Ogbu, 2003).

There were common and dissimilar perceptions and experiences which emerged in this study. In some cases, Black males born in the Unites States had different perceptions and experiences than Black males born in Africa. The same was true of Black females. Table 2 disaggregated these perceptions and experiences by student subgroups.

Table 2

Common Perceptions and Experiences Disaggregated by Ethnicity and Gender

Black African Males	Black African Females
• Described the school as wealthy and diverse, but not much mixing between the ethnic groups • Felt White students thought they were better than Black students and had more privileges • Expressed that having a good relationship with teachers made a difference in whether they did well in class • Indicated that sports helped them keep focused on their grades • Expressed they were accepted more by White kids if they were in sports • Expressed they would like to see more minority role models besides coaches and the security guard • Expressed there were not many opportunities to participate in a leadership role, with the exception of REAP • Expressed they liked the principal and thought he was really nice, but did not know the other administrators • Indicated they were not encouraged to enroll in Honors or AP classes	• Expressed that they had good experiences in school, really like school • Felt teachers encouraged them to do well in school and provided support to them • Encouraged to enroll in AP classes • Had aspirations to go to college and knew what careers they wanted to pursue • Expressed that they did not have a good relationship with American Black students and wanted others to know that they are proud of their African heritage and do not want to be described as African American • Expressed they did not like the behaviors of most American Black students and felt teachers had lower expectations for American Black students • Would like to have had more minority teachers who could relate to their culture • Liked the principal, but did not know the other administrators • Expressed that they liked school • Expressed they would like to see more Black teachers

Table 2 (continued)

Black American Males	Black American Females
• Described the school as rich and that Black students felt that White students thought Black students were inferior • Expressed that Black kids and White kids do not "hang out" together unless they are in sports • Expressed that White kids get away with things and that Black kids get punished when they do the same things as White kids • Expressed that Black kids have to work harder than White kids to succeed at this school • Expressed that having a good relationship with their teacher helped them do better in their classes • Expressed that they liked their school principal and felt that he was accessible • Expressed that they would have liked to have had more minority teachers • Expressed that teachers had low expectations for them	• Expressed they had a close relationship with the principal, but did not know the other administrators • Expressed that teachers had lower expectations for Black students • Expressed that Black students can do well if they are motivated • Expressed that they were not encouraged to enroll in Honors or AP classes, and did not see many other Black students enrolled in AP classes

Certain patterns emerged as data were sorted, categorized, and coded. Table 3 reflects the common themes which emerged in the study by the responses from student interviews.

Table 3

Common Themes Disaggregated by Student Participants

	Student										
Common Themes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Positive Experience in School	√			√	√		√				
Better education at suburban school			√		√	√		√	√		
School is Safe	√						√				
White students are very rich							√			√	√
Negative interaction with teachers						√			√	√	√
Students self-segregated themselves		√	√	√	√	√					
More accepted by Whites if in activities together		√			√		√				
African/American Blacks critical of each other	√		√			√		√			
White students have more privileges		√	√		√		√	√			
Need encouragement to enroll in honors/AP classes			√			√	√		√		√
Student government is not open to everyone		√			√	√	√		√	√	√
Sports seen as key to social acceptance		√	√	√	√		√				
positive relationship with teachers is important	√		√	√		√			√	√	
Has good relationship with principal	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Did not know other administrators			√	√	√			√			
Need to have more minority teachers	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Would like to have more Black students enrolled		√				√			√		
Poor relationships between White and Black students		√	√			√		√	√	√	√
Teachers have low expectation for Black students	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
It is important to work harder than white students to be accepted	√		√	√	√		√	√			√
White teachers are quick to suspect black students of wrong doings		√		√	√				√		
Difficult grading system	√					√			√	√	
Need consequences for racist behaviors toward Black students		√	√					√			
School does not provide academic support		√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	
Teacher(s) inspired me in one or more classes	√						√			√	

Student Portraits

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) in her book *The Good High School* used "portraits" as a metaphor for describing six high schools which she believed merited being described as good schools based on the culture, features, curriculum, and institutional structure of each school. She reported creating a written portrait of subjects is "a process of human interactions" (p. 6). She stated in her written portraits of each school she was able to capture the values and the culture that shaped each school. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) used a social scientist inquiry approach to study her subjects for the purpose of uncovering truths and the search for redressing the wrongs (p. 10).

The subjects in this study were referred to as portraits as Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) described the subjects of her study. The interviews with the students provided a picture of the insights, perceptions, and experiences of the students. By utilizing the grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, l967) the researcher listened and recorded student responses and was able to sketch a visual picture of their shared experiences.

Nasrin

Nasrin is a senior who will be graduating in June and attending college in the fall. She has earned a 4-year Diversity Enrichment Scholarship. Nasrin is a very graceful young woman who spoke very eloquently in a very gentle soft voice. She has a beautiful broad smile and a very warm demeanor. Nasrin is one of the students who was selected by the director of Reaching and Empowering All People (REAP) to be

interviewed because of her participation in the African/African-American Cadre

which is under the umbrella of the REAP program. The researcher explained the study

to her and inquired if she would be interested in participating. She replied that she

would. Nasrin, who is 18 years old, was requested to sign the consent form since she

was not required having parent consent. She was given the 13 interview questions to

read over and asked if she had any questions or needed any clarification. She was

asked if she would give permission to audiotape the interview. She smiled very shyly

and, wanting to be respectful, asked if she could respond to the questions without

being recorded on the audiotape. Since the other subjects felt very uncomfortable

speaking into a tape recorder, Nasrin was told she had the option of not being audio

taped. Her face brightened and she said she would prefer just answering the questions

"more openly."

Nasrin was born in Somalia; however, she grew up in Egypt. She speaks both

Arabic and Somalian. Neither of her parents are college educated, but have instilled in

her the importance of going to college.

When Nasrin was asked how she would describe her school, she described it

as "kinda diverse and very nice." She went on to say she has had a "great experience"

while attending the school because of the positive support she received from her

teachers and the wonderful friendships she has developed. The two things she said she

would change at the school are "having more diverse teachers and having teachers be

required to take diversity classes." She expressed having teachers take diversity

classes, would help teachers understand "different students from different

backgrounds." She gave an example of one student who felt embarrassed because a teacher continued to encourage one of her classmates to attend the prom. Nasrin explained the student could not attend dances because of her Muslim religion. The teacher continued to "press the issue" as the student became more and more uncomfortable and embarrassed.

In response to the question about ways the school met her academic needs, Nasrin responded her English as a Second Language Class (ESL) helped her immensely. She said it helped her develop the skills she needed to do well in her other classes. She commented about how the grading system varied from class to class "so it's hard to figure out sometimes what is expected." Nasrin stated what would have helped her do better in school would "to have had tutors in the classroom." Overall, Nasrin voiced most of her teachers encouraged her in doing well in her classes. She commented, "The ones who knew me well, gave me the most help." Nasrin glowingly spoke about knowing and really liking the principal. In fact, Nasrin said one of the reasons she worked so hard in school was she wanted to show her principal she was "different" from the other Black students and wanted to make him proud of her. She stated besides her parents, the principal had a huge influence on her wanting to succeed and be prepared for college. She was asked what she meant by showing the principal she was "different" from other Black students and she said most of the other Black students did not try very hard and she wanted the principal to know many Black kids were smart and worked really hard.

Nasrin is very dedicated and self-directed. She participated in many school activities, both academic and sports. She shared she had taken AP Environmental and Health Careers. She said she is interested in learning more about health careers. When asked how she knew about what Advanced Placement classes to take, she smiled proudly and said, "I asked about them and asked my counselor how to enroll." She also mentioned she participated in Student Government, again stating, "No one comes to you to ask you to be in it. You have to find out about it yourself." Nasrin's goals and aspirations are to attend college "to train to become a nurse, biology teacher and eventually (with a big smile) become a school principal." Nasrin participated in track and field, the science research club, and the diversity club. She received a full engineering scholarship to a college out of her state but decided to accept the Diversity Enrichment Scholarship so she could go to school in her hometown. She stated, "Parents from Somalia are very protective of their daughters leaving home when they are still single."

When asked to describe the relationship between Black and White students, she became more somber and said:

> Personally, I talk to all the groups. The American Black students are not as close to the African students or the other groups of students. They (American Black Students) don't seem as serious about school. Sometimes they are loud and their behavior is not that good. The way they behave can be rude. Some Black students don't respect themselves and they know, by the way the teachers treat them, the teachers don't respect them either.

Nasrin continued to say, almost with resignation:

However, I can tell by teacher's actions that they expect less from Black students born in America. There are good things Black students do that some Whites teachers don't see.

When inquired about what she meant by "she could tell by teacher's actions" and she looked up shyly and said, "You know what I mean." It appears Nasrin knew the researcher had experienced what Nasrin is expressing. The researcher placed her hand on her shoulder and thanked her for being interviewed.

Marcus

Marcus was born in the United States of Ethiopian parents. He considers himself to be Black, not wanting to be described as African American or African. However his family's customs and traditions are Ethiopian and most of his friends are of Ethiopian descent. He lives with his mother and has had little contact with his father since he was in grade school. Marcus stated when he spent weekends with his father, his father seldom did fun things with him but spent most of the time admonishing Marcus if he did not understand his school work. As Marcus got older, he realized his father expected for Marcus to initiate contact if he wanted to see his father. Marcus eventually saw less and less of his father until he stopped seeing him at all. He feels his father "let him down" since he is an only child and because it is so important in the Ethiopian culture to be family oriented. Although Marcus has some resentment from his father in "pushing" him to excel in school, it seems as though Marcus has been influenced by his father's autocratic ruling. It seems to be almost an obsession for Marcus to strive hard to do well in school, not just for himself but to prove to his father he will be successful. Marcus' mother also wants Marcus to have a

good education, which was the reason she moved to Beaverton with him. His mother felt he would do better in a suburban school than where most of their friends live in the urban city only 15 miles away. Marcus' mother works long hours and Marcus is home alone most of the time. He said he spends most of his time studying at night and gets up to take the bus at 5:00 a.m. so that he can make it to his zero period class.

Marcus is a 4.0 freshman student who has aspirations and goals to be successful in college and major in mechanical engineering. He plans to enroll in AP biology his junior year. When he was selected to be interviewed, he was very open to sharing his perspective and experiences about attending a mostly White and affluent suburban high school. When he was asked to describe his school, he responded by stating, "It is really diverse." He continued to say, "The school has a lot of drama and a lot of cocky people, mainly from the Whites." When Marcus was asked to describe what he meant by "lot of drama and a lot of cocky people by mostly Whites," he said that Black kids always have to deal with White kids who feel that they can say and do what they want and Black kids do not have the same privileges and need to "hold back" from getting angry. He said his overall experience has been "an okay experience" and that there's "lots of different groups and cliques" so "there is not a lot of interaction between people of different cliques." The researcher probed a little more by asking Marcus why he thought there were so many cliques. He commented, "I believe it's because people feel more comfortable being in their own groups.

As Marcus responded to the question, "What things would you change at your school?" sadness came over his face which seemed to transform to anger when he

responded emphatically, "There needs to be boundaries about what people can say to people, even if they are joking around." He went on to say, "White kids joke around about what Black kids do, eat, say, and act. Whites and other races say the 'N' word like it's nothing and don't think anything about it." The researcher inquired further by asking Marcus what he meant about needing to have boundaries and who should be responsible for setting the boundaries. He put his head down and took a few seconds to answer. He then replied, "I think the principal should make sure that there are rules and consequences when kids say hurtful and racist things." When asked if he had reported any of these incidences to the principal. He said he had not. The researcher asked him why he had not and he said, "I don't know if it would change anything."

The researcher congratulated Marcus on being a 4.0 student which segued into the next question about what ways the school met his academic needs. He commented the school did not support him academically. He stressed he has excelled because he "wanted to show all the people that did not believe in him that they were wrong." The researcher did not pursue questioning Marcus who "all the people" were because she sensed he might be talking about his father. Marcus again turned the conversation back to the unfair treatment that he felt was happening toward the Black students who attended the school. He said, "There needs to be more equal opportunities. It seems like I am not being helped at times." He continued to say, "It's not always fair. One time a White student was talking out loud in class and nothing happened. But when I talked out loud after him, the teacher told me to be quiet because I was disrupting class."

The researcher asked Marcus about what supports would help him do better in school, even though he was excelling academically. He answered by saying, "There needs to be smaller classes and more teachers of color." He continued by saying, "I would learn even better if the Spanish teacher wasn't White but Hispanic." He resumed by saying, "It would help if we had more Black teachers or teachers with different ethnic backgrounds."

It appeared curious Marcus did not report to the principal what he shared about the inappropriate comments made by White students and what he viewed as unfair treatment in the classroom since he reported that his relationship with the principal appeared to be positive. He commented, "The principal is really nice, and he takes a lot of steps toward improving Black education." The researcher asked him what ways the principal took a lot of steps toward improving Black education. He responded by saying the principal encouraged Black students to talk about their concerns in different forums. He shared with the researcher a whole day was given to Black students to not attend school so they could express their concerns. This response lead the researcher to ask the next question about what opportunities did the school provide for Black students to participate in leadership roles. Marcus responded by saying. "There's REAP, a Black leadership group." He went on to say, "I don't want to be in student government and no one asked me to be in it." He said despondently, "I probably wouldn't anyway. There's too much responsibility. Getting in it isn't easy; you have to get certain signatures to get approved to be in it and do some other things. It's mostly a popularity contest"

When asked to further describe the relationship between Black and White students, he said overall they get along pretty well. Then he proceeded to make the comment with almost resignation, "Blacks are just a period at the end of the sentence at this school." He explained, "The White people let you become part of them if you are like in a sport with them, otherwise you are just one of those Black kids, and even then there is no guarantee that you will be accepted by them."

Chris

The researcher met Chris for the interview at the Cheesefactory restaurant rather than the school. Chris had already graduated and had been attending college. The researcher was interested in hearing Chris' perspective about his experiences as a former student since Chris might have had time for more reflections after being away from high school for a year.

Chris was very enthusiastic to meet for the interview. He had driven a very long distance for the interview and had arrived at the restaurant before it opened. He was full of energy and quite gregarious. He announced right away that he had about 2 hours before he had to leave because he needed to return the car he was driving to his sister so she could take him to work. He was told the interview would last less than 2 hours and he responded by saying with a smile, "I have a lot to tell you." After the two small talked for a few minutes about what they liked on the menu, the researcher asked him if he would mind if the interview could be audio taped. He said he did not mind. He was given a few minutes to re-look at the questions he received prior to the interview.

The interviewer turned on the audio recorder and began by asking him the first question which was about how he would describe his high school. He began to answer by saying, "Not really together." He was asked if he could be more specific about what he meant by saying, "Not really together." His whole disposition began to change. Chris was asked if everything was okay since it was evident his demeanor changed. He nodded his head and said adamantly, "I am not comfortable talking into that thing." It was reiterated to him the interview would be strictly confidential and no one else would have access to his interview and only his pseudonym would be used in the dissertation. He apologetically responded by saying if the audio recorder had to be used, he would try to answer as honestly as possible, however, continued to say he really did not like speaking with the audio recorder on. As the audio recorder continued to record, Chris was asked again to explain what he meant when he said, "Not really together." He seemed to struggle to respond to the question. He finally answered by saying, "I don't know." This gregarious and enthusiastic young man who greeted the researcher with such enthusiasm and a big smile had changed into almost a shy and insecure teenager, including slumping his shoulders in the booth. The researcher turned off the recorder and said, "Chris, let's just talk informally and not use the audio recorder." He instantly sat up straight and responded by saying, "I can talk more freely without it (audio recorder) being on." He rapidly began sharing what he meant was, "Everyone hangs out with their own race." He continued speaking very intensely:

> Most kids stay in their own group. There are many cliques. Each group stays in their own space; Black kids hang out by the widows; Hispanic kids hang out on the top floor; Goths stay under the south stairs. White kids are just everywhere they want to be and will crash any group's line. White kids want to hang out with Black kids because they think it's cool. But if it comes to having privileges, than the White kids don't want to be Black. They stick together and want to stay White. When it is no longer cool to be Black, the White kids will go back to being White.

Chris was asked to explain what he meant by saying, "When it comes time for White kids to have privileges than White kids don't want to be Black." He responded by saying, "For example, when there are school elections or homecoming selections for the royal court, White kids are the ones who are elected."

When Chris described his overall experience at the school, he explained he really resented coming to the school. His mother moved to the community to "get him away" from the kids in the "hood." He went on to say that in the first 2 years, he really wanted to leave the school. He said, "There was a lot of racism in my freshman year. There was racism everywhere, especially in sports." He became very anxious, almost as if for the first time he was able to really share what was pinned up inside of him as he continued to speak,

> I was always fighting to prove that I was not afraid of what the White kids thought of me. I did not let White people look down on me because I was Black. Black kids would get in trouble for things that White kids would not get in trouble for. If Black kids did something wrong the administrators would just act like "There's another Black kid that did something wrong again."

Chris was asked about the things that he did like about the school. He shared, "What I liked about the school were the few good teachers." He passionately stated, "I had a really good history teacher for all 4 years. She really got to know me. She was the best

teacher I ever had." He seemed to be proud of the fact that she really challenged him. He commented, "She was really hard! She told you what needed to be done, how it should be done, and what would happen if you didn't do it."

The researcher asked Chris what things he would change in the school. Before the researcher could hardly finish the question, he responded with force, "More diversity! Stricter laws for racism!" He continued with the same adamancy, "White kids think it is okay to say nigger just because Black kids call each other nigger as an expression of knowing each other. We can say it because we are Black, but they are not Black and should not say it." Chris was asked if he thought White kids received mixed messages by hearing Black kids call each other nigger and yet it made Black kids angry if the White kids said the same word. He admitted he could see where it could send mixed messages and it was a word that probably should not be acceptable for even Black kids to say.

The researcher inquired about what support did he feel would have helped him do better in school and in what ways did he feel that the school met his academic needs. He said for the first 2 years, he was rebellious and did not want support. He stated, "I didn't do my homework. I really didn't have personal relationships with my teachers, except for my history teacher. He seemed like he liked me." He continued by saying, "I think if my teachers would have cared more about me and knew me, which would have helped me more." When asked what AP or honors classes he took while in high school, Chris laughed and said, almost as if the researcher should have known the answer, "I took not one!" He continued, "Not many minorities take AP classes.

They are hard classes. No one really helps the minority kids get into these classes and if you do, you can't afford to take the test. It's like $75." He went on to say, "If you don't take the test, it doesn't make sense to take the class because then you can't get the credit." Chris was asked if he knew there were funds available for students to take the test. He answered, "No, no one told me." He then went on to say, "Uppity Black kids might take the classes. These kids are called 'White kids.'" Almost out of context, he commented, "These kinds of Black kids don't support other Black kids, especially the African kids." Chris was asked to clarify this comment. Chris responded by saying, "African kids are treated better than most of the other Black kids. They just have it better." As the researcher attempted to probe further, Chris commented, "You would just have to be there."

The next question Chris was asked was about his relationships with the administrators while he was in school. He retorted, "The administrators get to know the White kids and their families really well. I did not have a relationship with the administrators unless I got in trouble. That was the only time that Black families were called to the school and got to know the administrators." He then pondered a moment and said, "The principal could be kind of cool. However, he was not aware about how Black kids were really treated."

Chris was questioned about what ways his teachers did support him. He lit up and talked again about his history teacher whom he had for all 4 years. He also talked about an Asian teacher who seemed to understand racism and said he was responsible for starting a class for Black students call the Youth Leaders Program. He said it was

a class that provided an opportunity to talk about their issues and learn about their heritage.

He was proud to talk about a bowling team he started. He boasted about how the team went to State. He then sadly stated, "I received a lot of racism from the parents. One parent even said loud enough for me to hear, 'Why doesn't he go play basketball and leave this sport to us?'" This led him to describe another racist incident,

> When I was in band, the band teacher was really mean. The White kids made lots of racist jokes and nothing would happen. There was only one other Black kid in the band. We both played the drums. Neither of us felt accepted so we both ended up getting out of his class.

He said that most of the Black guys played it safe by "sticking to sports like football or basketball." He went on to say that he decided to run track. He said most of the Latino students played soccer.

Chris shared prior to his playing track, he did not have any particular goal or aspirations about what he wanted to do. He commented, "At first I just wanted to graduate from high school. Then I got a track scholarship so I ended up being able to go to college." He said that he now wants to be an accountant. He said his math teacher inspired him which was why wants to pursue the field of accounting.

At the end of the interview, the researcher asked him to describe the relationship between Black and White students while he was at the high school. He stated there were more fights between Blacks and Whites than between any other students and the relationship was not really good. He explained the reason for the fights generally was

because of the resentment Black students felt about White students being disrespectful toward Black students by making racist remarks and jokes about Blacks.

It was obvious it was time for Chris to leave because he started looking at his watch. Before he left, he was asked if there were any last minute thoughts he believed would be important to this study. He responded with a very serious look by saying,

> Here is my advice I would say to Black students who are coming to that school that it is really important that Black kids work harder than White kids at a school like this. I mean way above standards just to try and stay even. If you take lit classes really talk White people grammar so you can do well.

He ended pensively by commenting, "My friend dropped out of school because no one from the school supported him. At least he didn't feel like he had support. No one from the school helped him and he didn't have a supportive family to support him." Chris continued by saying, "He didn't have anyone and he was really poor."

The interview was finished in just a little less than 2 hours. Even before the researcher could thank Chris for taking the time for the interview, he thanked her for listening to him. As the researcher waited to pay for our meal, Chris jumped up and said he had to leave. He looked back at her and said, "Don't forget to send me a copy of the dissertation when it's finished." Before she could answer, she watched him running down the shopping center aisle toward the outside door.

Janelle

Janelle is a ninth grade student. She has lived in this suburban school district all of her life. She lives with both parents and a brother who is in seventh grade, attending middle school in the same school district. Both of her parents moved to this

mostly White affluent suburb many years ago because both were offered jobs with the same company. Although neither parent attended college, the expectation from Janelle's parents and from Janelle, is she will graduate and attend a 4-year college. Janelle's aspiration and goal is to become a medical doctor.

Janelle has attended all of the feeder schools from elementary through high school. She has known many of the students attending the high school since grade school. Janelle appears to be very confident and comfortable throughout the interview. Her demeanor is almost nonchalant. Most of her responses were short and to the point. When probed for more information, she would often make a statement such as, "That's pretty much it."

When Janelle was asked how she would describe her school, she responded by saying, "Calm. No drama." She continued, "Everyone smiles when you walk down the hall. It is a pretty laid back atmosphere." She commented, "Everyone is supportive and nice. All the teachers are nice and everyone is friendly." She added her teachers are very supportive and meet her academic needs. She continued, "Teachers take my weak suit and play it out." When she was asked to be more specific, she responded, "For instance, they help me with my writing because that is an area where I need help. They continue to push me harder so that I will become a better writer." She commented, "Some of my teachers have told me they see something special in me and tell me they want to see me succeed." She remarked, "My teachers will even work with me after school if I am having trouble or need help." She claimed, "If Black kids are not motivated they may not get the support." She remarked about a couple of her

friends who dropped out of school. She believes they "veered off the path because they didn't put in the effort or seek out help."

The researcher inquired if there were things she would change at her school. This was one of only two times during the interview that her calm and cool demeanor changed. She pensively answered, "I wish we had more Black staff. I think it would make Black kids feel more comfortable." She was asked in what ways she thought Black kids would feel more comfortable with more Black staff. Janelle gave me a quick response, "It is necessary for Black students to see others that look like them." The researcher wants to ask her why "it was necessary" but feels she has responded to the question and did not want to guide her answer.

Janelle almost looked relieved when the researcher went on to the next question about whether she had taken honors classes or had planned on taking AP courses her sophomore year. She said she had signed up for AP Biology and AP Science for the next school year. She reminded the researcher she was going to become a doctor and would need these courses when she attended a 4-year college. She put an emphasis on "4-year college." She shared not many of her Black friends were planning on taking AP courses and she did not see many Black students currently taking AP classes. She was questioned about why she thought many Black students were not in AP classes. She answered, "I don't think many Black kids are encouraged to take AP classes or maybe they are scared because they think the classes will be too hard."

The researcher inquired about how Janelle would describe her relationship with the administrators. She said that she did not really know the administrators. However, she said she had talked to her principal a few times and said she hoped things would not change at the school when he leaves (the principal is leaving to work in another school district in a nearby city).

Janelle enjoys participating in school activities. She is in three sports; volleyball, basketball, and track. She is applying to be in Student Government for the following year. She stated students, who want to be in Student Government, have to apply and are not recruited. She also is in Psychology of Achievement for minority students. She explained it is a class for students who show potential. Minority students are selected to be in this class. She added, "No one comes up to you and says 'Hey do you want to be in this or that?' You have to go for everything on your own."

She described the relationship between Black and White students as "Great!" She said she has a mix of friends. She emphasized, "I talk to everybody. If students don't get along, it has to do with different personalities or attitudes and not about race."

As the interview was growing to a close, Janelle was questioned what else she believed would be important to this study that she would like to share. This was the second time during the interview where her carefree manner changed to almost sadness as she replied,

> Occasionally, I will get a teacher who expects less from me because I am Black. This makes me work even harder to prove to them that I can do the work. If other Black kids are not like me, they have more problems. I work

hard and I am a good student and still have gotten in trouble. For instance, one time I got accused of stealing an IPod. I had to convince the teacher that I did not steal it. They found out who stole it and didn't even apologize to me. Another time, I was accused of cheating on a test and it was the person sitting next to me who was cheating off of me. When things like this happens, it really makes me mad, but mostly it really hurts.

After this last response, Janelle slowly stood up and commented she had only a few minutes to get to class. The researcher watched her confidently walk down the hall smiling at students as she navigated her way down the crowded hall.

T-Man

This young man walked up smiling as if he had met the researcher before. He had an abundance of energy. The researcher could tell from the beginning he was a real people person with a great personality and positive attitude. When asked if he had selected a pseudonym for the interview, he quickly responded, "T-Man!" When asked why he chose his pseudonym to be T-Man, he replied that he just thought it fit him. He lived in Florida before moving to this suburban city with his mother and three younger brothers. He shared with me that he is the "man of the house."

The researcher asked T-Man how he would describe his new school. He answered enthusiastically, "My experience has been great!" He continued, "Teachers here don't trip." He was told that it wasn't quite clear what he meant by saying, "Teachers don't trip." He explained "Teachers don't get angry at every little thing like they did in Florida." T-Man said he also likes the school because it is safe. He commented, "It's the coolest school I have ever been in. It's huge and diverse."

When asked what things he would change about the school, if anything, T-Man emphatically stated, "I definitely would change the librarian. She's always so upset!" He continued, "She won't let most Black kids in the library even if they have a pass. She always assumes that the Black kids are up to something or are going to do something wrong."

T-Man pointed out that he really likes sports and tries to keep up his grade point average so he can play football. He said he is getting mostly As and Bs but he is not enrolled in any honor's classes. He said none of his teachers or his counselor had encouraged him to take harder classes. He added, "I guess they assumed that I wasn't smart enough to take them right now." He continued by saying, "I am going to try to prove them wrong by maybe signing up for some next year."

T-Man said he did not know most of the administrators, but when he sees them in the hall they seem "pretty much down to earth." He quickly changed the topic and started talking about his math teacher. He noted, "Now, my math teacher has really supported me!" He continued, "She is really encouraging! She is always telling me that I can go far." He beamed, "That really makes me feel good!"

He reported he did not participate in Student Government or any other school activities, besides sports and the REAP program. He said he had never been approached to be in Student Government. He claimed, "You have to be popular to be in Student Government."

T-Man has aspirations to finish high school and play professional football or become a firefighter. He commented no one had talked to him about what

requirements were necessary to get into college. He stated, "I know I have to have 24 credits to graduate, but I am not sure about anything else."

T-Man described the relationship between Black and White students as good. He expressed, "Black and White students don't really hang out together." He continued, "The Black kids hang out by the windows in the cafeteria, and the White kids have their own area."

T-Man was asked what other information he thought was important to this study. He firmly stated,

> I would tell Black kids to work hard and to remember where we come from. It is not easy for Black students. We must set an example. We have to work harder than White students. We are stereotyped so we have to prove that we can be successful. White kids have had experiences that most Black kids have not had since they first learned to walk. White kids have traveled and done things that we have not been able to do. We cannot pay for college because our parents do not have good jobs like White parents. White teachers communicate with White parents about what their kids need. White parents have more time to talk to the teachers because Black parents are working too much and so hard.

T-Man added, "For these reasons, it's a motivation for me to work harder. I want to prove that I am going to be somebody!"

Jackie

Jackie is Black American; however, she insists that people not refer to her as African American even though she was born in the United States. Both of her parents are from Africa. Jackie said her culture and traditions are from Africa. She revealed that she did not even hang out with the other Black American students. She prefers to be with African students who were born in Africa. Jackie is a senior and has been

accepted and will attend a state college in the fall. She wants to major in Biology and go into the field of medicine. She stated, "I might become an anesthesiologist or a social worker." She continued by saying, "I like to help people."

Jackie described her school as, "Preppy and ethnically diverse, but not very socially mixed." She added, "The school is very cliquey because the ethnic groups stick together and don't mix with other groups." She stated there is not a relationship between Whites and Blacks. She said everyone minds their own business. She pointed out, "Most Blacks stay in their section and most Whites stay in their section." Jackie described her overall experience over the past 4 years as "an interesting place to me." She said, "I like it a lot." She continued, "There is a lot that students can learn from all the things that are offered. Many teachers are willing to help you if you take advantage of it."

Jackie said food would be one of the things that she would change. She then became more serious by asserting, "Some of the staff should not be here. They act like they want to help you, but they are hesitant." The researcher probed further by asking if she could be more specific. She paused and then added, "I don't think they should be in the school because they are negative and they have a negative effect on student learning." She went on to say, "Some teachers take more time with some students over others. They seem to want to help the ones who already know the work than the ones who really need the help."

Jackie acknowledged the school offered an opportunity for students to take an array of AP classes. She added, "You have to find out on your own which classes to

take and take advantage of what is offered." She took AP chemistry and AP psychology and reported proudly she received good grades in both classes. Jackie said that she took advantage of the tutorial sessions that the school offered. She stated she had a great counselor and described her principal as "cool with everyone, but did not get too close to anyone." Jackie mentioned a support that would have been helpful to her would have been if she had more help in math. She stated math was the only class she struggled in because she did not like the grading system. She commented, "The math teacher was more stuck on deadlines than helping the students understand and improve their math skills." Jackie really liked her literature teacher. She appreciated the way she supported her in a combination of ways. Jackie remarked, "She was young and seemed to relate to students on their level and understood what they needed and reinforced that she was there to help me in all different ways."

Jackie enjoyed being involved in the African/African American Cadre. She said, "The program really encouraged Black students to get involved in the overall school so that Black students' voices could be heard." She lamented, "I was never encouraged by anyone to be in Student Government. Not at all!" She continued "The White teachers kind of put up a front that they want Black kids to get involved, but then you wouldn't hear anything again." She remarked, "To be elected you have to get signatures from students. It was based on popularity."

Jackie answered the last question about what other information she feels is important to include in this study by responding:

I would tell other Black students that just because we are in the minority. They should not let race be a factor to hinder their learning. Take advantage of what the suburbs offer. Don't say that I am failing because I am Black.

Jackie shared with the researcher, although this is the advice she would give; it still can be difficult emotionally being in a White wealthy school. She added,

The one time it really bothered me being a minority was in history class. Some of the discussions would bring up a lot of hurtful feelings. Some of the White kids are so closed minded. They just assumed that everyone from a certain race is like what they see on television. For instance, they think that all Africans live in huts. Both of my parents are from Africa and they don't live like that. I could feel the tension during these discussions when I knew race was going to be discussed. I would just know it was there. I could see the side glances, looking to see my reaction. Whenever there was a discussion around race or culture, there was always this tension.

The look in Jackie's eyes showed how her sharing this experience was very difficult and painful.

Jack

Jack is a 12th grade student who is looking forward to graduating in June. He described his experience at his school as "Diverse, full of wealthy students!" He also mentioned the school is diverse with lots of different students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. He commented the school is a real safe place, "much safer than other schools. It's a real good environment." The researcher asked Jack if he could change anything about the school what would he recommend. He responded happily, "I wouldn't change anything! I really like this school." Then he turned up his nose and added, "Except for the lunches. The lunches are awful."

Jack pointed out teachers and administrators want to see Black students succeed. He said, "I get most of my support from being in sports." He broadly grinned

and commented, "I am a pretty good basketball player so my teachers know me." The researcher inquired as to what other support he found was helpful to him. He believed smaller classes would be more helpful. He stated if there were smaller classes, "it would be easier for teachers to assist other students and give more individual attention." He commented, "It's hard to get help with so many students in class." Jack acknowledged he had been approached by teachers to take AP courses, but he said he thought they would be too hard and said he "I decided to take regular classes." He continued, "Teachers are very encouraging," and then added, "Some are more than others." Jack was asked why he thought some teachers are more supportive than others. He responded by saying, "I just think some teachers like kids better."

Jack claimed there are not many opportunities for Black students to participate in student leadership roles. He stated, "In order to get into student government, you have to get voted in."

Jack reported to the researcher his aspirations were to do well enough to finish high school and then enroll in a community college in the fall. He shared his counselor or teachers have not talked to him about the process or requirements to apply for colleges; however, he said he has an outside mentor who is helping him know what he needs to do to get into college.

When asked what other information he thought would be important to this study he would like to share, he responded

> I would tell Black students who come to this school to work really hard or even harder than White kids. The teachers don't think that we can do well at school. Most of the White kids have a mother and dad at home. For many of

us Black students we have a different lifestyle. Our life is different. It would help if we had the same things as White kids, but we don't. White kids have an advantage over Black kids over all. I mean all you have to do is look at the statistics. They definitely are more privileged than we are. That's just the way it is.

The researcher probed further by asking Jack what he thought it would take to change the situation. His response was, "It would mean a total overhaul, not just in the United States, but in the whole world."

Little Red

It was interesting this 10th grade student decided her pseudonym would be "Little Red." She told the researcher she just thought it was a cute name. Little Red has been attending the school since she started 9th grade. She shared with me that her mother moved to this suburb to get her out of the inner city. Little Red reported she spends most of her leisure time in the inner city because that is where her "real friends" live. She goes to the inner city every weekend to help her grandmother with chores. She admitted she would prefer to go to school with more Black friends, but believes she is getting a better education at this suburban school because of all the class choices and resources. She acknowledged, "It's the best school I have been to. It's a really good school." She added, "Teachers are really weak, but for the most part they try to help out and make Blacks feel comfortable." When inquired about what she meant by the comment "teachers are really weak." She responded, "I believe they are afraid of Black kids and they try to make it up by acting nice, but you can tell that they really are not comfortable with Black kids." When the question was further pursued by asking why she thought White teachers were not comfortable with Black

students, Little Red asserted "They really have not been around Black students and don't know what to expect from them." She continued by suggesting her overall experience had been positive. She commented, "My experience has been good. It's nice to know that it's one of the top high schools and has a good name for preparing students for college."

Little Red was asked if there was anything that she would like to see changed about the school. She quickly declared, "I if we had more Black teachers it would be really good. The school is diverse, but the teachers aren't. I would like to be able to talk to some Black teachers who understood my culture." However, Little Red expressed she believes the teachers are good teachers and know how to teach their content. She also added there are many class options to select. The researcher continued by inquiring if there are supports she feels would help her do better in school. She noted she needs more structure to meet the need of her learning style and to adapt to her learning disabilities, specifically Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). She exclaimed, "The teachers just say 'do these or that,' but don't really tell you how to do it." However, she stated, "The teachers let me know they are here for me." She then conceded, "Well not all of my teachers, but a couple of the teachers and my counselor." Little Red added, "I am going to push myself next year by enrolling in AP Psychology." She continued, "I didn't want to put too much pressure on myself this year to take really hard classes."

Little Red described her relationship with the principal as "really tight!" She said, "I love my principal. He is great!' She pointed out that the other administrators

are not easy to get to know. Little Red lit up when she talked about her aspirations and

goals by sharing with me:

> I definitely want to graduate from high school. I will be only the second one to graduate from high school. My aunt was the other person to graduate from high school. I want to graduate with a 2.8, go to college, and become a pediatrician because I love babies. My counselor is helping me know what classes will be important to help me to get into college.

The interview ended with the last question by asking Little Red if there was

other information she thought would be important for the researcher to include in the

study, Little Red noted:

> It is important that there is more diversity and that Black students are not treated unfairly. It doesn't happen a lot but there is always one teacher who trips on a Black student every once and a while. They want to do little undercover stuff. For instance, what they say or how they joke is different in the way they joke with Black kids than the way they would joke with White kids.

Little Red explained what she meant when she said the teachers joke differently with

White students than with Black students. She responded by emphatically stating,

"When some of the White teachers are joking with White kids, they are really joking.

When they so-call are joking with Black kids, it's a way of putting them down."

Queen Elizabeth

Queen Elizabeth, as this student prefers to be named for her pseudonym, has

attended the school for all 4 years. Her mother, like many other Black students'

families, moved to this suburban school district so her family would be located where

"good" schools are.

Queen Elizabeth is classified as a senior; however, she is 2 ½ credits behind. She said she was not aware of the shortage of her credits until this year. However, she spoke highly of her counselor. She affirmed "My counselor was always there for me. She always helped me if I was feeling bad." She continued, "My counselor did not talk to me about credits or my grades; she just supported me when I needed her."

Queen Elizabeth described the school as "Diverse with a lot of school spirit." She continued by stating, "I don't really like it. The people here are too judgmental toward Black students." She commented, "The teachers are always expecting that things are going to happen with Black kids." The researcher asked her to give examples of ways teachers expect things are going to happen with Black kids. She replied, "If a Black student is walking down the hall coming from an appointment or something, someone is always stopping us in the hall like we are skipping class. That's not the same for the White kids." She pointed out the relationship between the Black students and the White students are not very good. She argued, "If you were born in the suburbs, you can relate to White kids." She continued, "There's some communication if you had some past history with them, like if you went to middle school together." She commented, "Most of the kids communicate with whoever you associate with."

When inquired about what things, if anything, she would like to see changed in her school. Queen Elizabeth responded adamantly, "I would like to see more Black students rather than all White kids." She continued, "I don't feel comfortable sitting in a class feeling left out. Sometimes teachers have stereotypes; I can observe it the way

they act and look." She commented, "It's deeper than just what they say." I ask her if

she would explain her last point and she asserted, "The teachers smile phony and ask

you how you are, but you can tell they don't care because before you answer they are

already talking to one of the White kids who is walking in the door. It is just a front."

When asked what support would help her do better in school, she responded by

saying, "You have to feel comfortable to feel good about being in school; the teachers

don't make me feel comfortable." She continued, "If there were more Black kids and

Black teachers, you wouldn't feel picked on like when teachers are talking about

slavery in history class." She also believes that her teachers could support her "If

teachers would tell me about how my grades are rather than waiting to find out at the

last minute that I am failing." She also complimented three teachers whom she

believes really helped her. She added, "I had lots of problems with my family and

stuff and the teachers understood me and would keep helping me to try and keep up."

Queen Elizabeth stated she has never taken an AP course. She said she was

sure her teachers would not encourage her to take "one of those hard classes" because

they would think she is not smart enough. She spoke of having a close relationship

with the principal and her counselor, but stated she might have a disagreement with

the other administrators so she does not try to get close to them. She commented she

had never been involved in any school activities or sports, with the exception of the

REAP program. The researcher asked her why she was not involved in any other

school activities. She stated, "I just did not feel comfortable participating in any of

them, except REAP." After a few seconds, she commented, "I have never been asked

to be in student government. I don't even know how to get in. It didn't really matter."

Queen Elizabeth's goal is to get her high school diploma. She stated, "I want

to work and save money to go to a Black college in the South." The researcher asked

if she has a particular college in mind and if she has started looking at college

entrance requirements. She gave the researcher a quizzical look and responded, "Do

you know what I need to go to a Black college? No one has talked to me about what

requirements I need to go to college." The researcher explained different colleges

have different requirements and encouraged her to ask her counselor to help her find

the information she needs to know about the different Black colleges in the South. She

smiled and said, "I have to get out of high school first."

Elizabeth answered the final question about what she thinks is important to

share with the researcher for this study,

> There are higher standards in the suburbs. I don't feel comfortable here. I
> could look forward to getting help at my last school where there were more
> Black teachers and more Black kids. Here I am just struggling to graduate. I
> don't feel I am getting the support I need to succeed. I never passed my lit
> classes in all 4 years. I just found out my senior year that there is a lit lab in
> the school. If they (teachers) knew I was struggling, they should have told me
> about the lit lab. I was in geometry and didn't even need it. I had all of my
> math credits and they made me take it anyway. Now I am trying to make up
> what I failed. It was like they set me up for failure. I just have never felt
> comfortable here.

Princess

Princess is in the 10th grade. She said she chose the pseudonym "Princess"

because it makes her feel special. She like many of the other Black students moved to

the suburbs because their families believed they would have a better life than living in the inner city.

Princess described her school as a school "having lots of drama and big conflicts between the Black girls." She stated, "It has a lot to do with economics." The researcher asked her to clarify what she meant by "having a lot to do with economics." She responded by saying, "The Black girls who grew up in the suburb think they are better than the Black girls who grew up in the inner city and this is why there is always drama between the two groups." She continued to share her overall experience has not been good at the school because she does not like her teachers. She stated, "I don't like the teachers because if we aren't interested in what they are teaching they get mad." She continued, "One Black student got kicked out of class because the teacher didn't think he was paying attention." When Princess was asked what made classes interesting, she asserted, "I like classes that are about real life, not about things that have no meaning for me."

Princess pointed out what she believes needs to be changed at the school are the teachers. She affirmed, "The teachers have a bad grading system; they grade hard." She continued, "It would help if the teachers talked to the students about their work more." She complained, "One teacher in my lit and comp class told me that I was passing, and then I found out that I was getting a D and she did not even tell me until it was too late to do anything to make the grade better." She tells the researcher it would help if "teachers just would talk to her rather than at her." She acknowledged she likes math. She added, "The math is really good. I like the grading system because

you get graded on your work and your tests and not on your homework." Princess also stated she really likes her counselor. She commented, "When I have problems, my counselor has helped me solve conflicts." She also spoke highly about her French teacher, "She reminds me to turn in my work and gives me an opportunity to make my grade higher." Princess reasons that she will not enroll in AP courses because "they are hard and I am already having trouble with my regular classes."

Princess emphasized the difficulty it is to participate in Student Government by sharing an experience another student had who tried to join the class, "One Black student should have gotten in but she didn't get in because they told her that she did not have enough signatures." She explained that students had to have a certain number of signatures to be accepted in the Student Government class. She went on to say, "Actually, I don't know why I would try to get into Student Government because what's the point?"

Princess stated she was interested in becoming a psychologist. She added her counselor has talked to her about what classes she might take to help her be prepared for this profession. She said she has received her transcripts, but she did not know how to read them until her counselor taught her how this year.

She replied to the question about what other information she would like to share that would be important for this study by asserting, "Certain teachers say stuff to Black kids about how they are not going to graduate." She continued, "They'll put Black students on 'blast' in front of the whole class." She affirmed emphatically, "My biology teacher told me I wasn't going to pass so it made me work harder."

Mumia

Mumia started the interview by describing the school as "rich with a lot of White people." He stated, "Whites look at Blacks like leeches and I don't like that feeling." The researcher asked Mumia to explain what he means by "Whites look at Blacks like leeches." He responded by saying, "It is like the Black kids are at this school to suck off of White people." He continued, "I did not want to come to this school, but my mom did not want me going to a school with lots of Black kids." Mumia claimed the school he went to in Ohio was labeled the worse school just because it was mostly all Black. Mumia sadly compares himself to being a "black sheep" at this school. He stated, "With every controversy, Black kids just stick out; it's like we are the weakest link."

Mumia stated he would feel more support from the school if "more classes would speak to Black students more." He also stated "having classes that are more geared to Blacks that included more about our history and accomplishments rather than just teaching about slavery for 2 weeks in February would be nice." He added, "It would also help for teachers to know what I need." He continued, "Teachers think they know what I need rather than just asking me what I need."

When asked if he had enrolled in any AP or Honors classed, he confirmed adamantly, "None!" He declared, "I was put in Math Foundations even though I did well in math. I begged them not to put me in there but they did anyway." He added, "This is an example of teachers not listening to me but just doing what they thought I need." Mumia had great respect for his principal. He said the principal helped him out

a lot by overlooking some of the things he did wrong. He commented, "He is really a good person."

Mumia mentioned other than the REAP program, he has never been involved in school leadership class. He pointed out, "I was never involved because I thought it was out of my reach." He continued, "They don't tell Black students or encourage them to participate in school leadership. They expect you to go and look for it, and you still may not get in."

He described the relationship between Black students and White students as "fake." He claimed, "In the hallways the White kids say 'What's up nigga?' Like they try to be Black, but outside of school there is no relationship." He added, "Their smiles are empty." Mumia ended the interview by commenting,

> I want to make sure that my interview is not representing everybody else's point of view or thinking. This is just my viewpoint. I am only speaking from my own concerns and experiences. I hope a lot of people read this. I think school districts should mix Black and White teachers up so there are more of a mixture rather than all White teachers or all Black teachers. All schools should have diverse teachers.

Conclusion

Many of the Black students reported their families moved to this suburb so their students could attend the school where the study was conducted. According to the participants of this study, their families believed they would receive a better education than if they attended school in the inner city. Most of the students also believed they were getting a better education and perceived the school as having much more to offer than schools in the inner city. In spite of students' belief about the

school being a better school than schools in the inner city, the results presented from the interviews clearly indicated Black students perceived a sense of estrangement from White students and teachers. Students reported that the school is racially self-segregated among racial groups. Participants in the study believed teachers have lower expectations for Black students, especially Black students born in the United States. African students reported more favorable experiences as indicated by their involvement in organizations and advanced classes.

All 11 students placed emphasis on the importance of having a meaningful relationship with their teachers. Students remarked when teachers knew them well and teachers liked them, they worked harder to do well in their classes. One of the most revealing pieces of information recited by all 11 participants, was the close relationship students believed they had with the principal. All 11 of the participants reported how warm and friendly the principal was toward them, including the college student who said the principal even overlooked some of the things he should have gotten in trouble for doing. However, in spite of the reported close relationship with the principal, it did not appear from the responses of the participants, the principal articulated and implemented a school-wide plan shaped by the demographics of the school population.

It was clear from the responses in interviews Black students perceived White students had more entitlements. Students reported White students did not get into trouble as much as Black students and Black students were treated more harshly than White students for behavioral issues. By and large, the participants stated Black

students had to work much harder and do well in school to be regarded positively by White peers and teachers. Four out of the 11 students commented of having to set a good example for Black students to avoid being stereotyped. It was apparent from the interviews Black students perceived they were not welcome to belong to organizations or to enroll in advanced classes unless they were invited.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This final chapter summarizes the research problem and restates the research questions used to investigate the topic. This chapter discusses the findings of the research discovered in reviewing the literature by scholars who conducted similar studies. In addition, this chapter reviews the utilization of CRT factors as a lens for categorizing emerging themes which have implications for race in education. The students' voices resulted in affirming the findings of this study. This chapter also discusses the implications of the findings in providing a better understanding to educational leaders about how race and racism play out in schools. In addition, this chapter reveals unexpected findings the researcher did not anticipate in the study. Finally this chapter outlines student recommendations, in their own voice, to school leaders which the researcher aligns with the essential supports described in the Conception Framework (Figure 1).

Research Problem Summary

Researchers Ogbu (2003) and Noguera and Wing (2006) revealed from their studies that in most cases Black students who attend affluent Majority White suburban schools do not experience academic, emotional or social successes. They also confirmed there is an achievement gap between Black students and their White peers. The achievement gap exists regardless of socioeconomic levels among Blacks and

does not appear to matter that there are more resources or educational opportunities available to Black students at a White majority suburban high school (Gay, 2004; Ogbu, 2003; Singham, 1998; Singleton & Linton, 2006).

West (2001) reported Black students are marginalized because of skin color and based on pigmentation and are not given the support needed to succeed in school as evidenced by inequities in policies, practices, racist attitudes, and low expectations. West continued to assert cultural and moral work is placed on Blacks to make the necessary changes to build healthy relationships. Hitchcock (1999) pointed out Whites do not see their power and privilege having an adverse impact on how White teachers look at Black students.

Critical race theorists, who theorized there is a direct correlation between race and cultural power, believed this correlation has an impact on educational structures, practices, and discourse which lead to inequities for Black students. CRT scholars argued the disparities between Black and White students in education are historical and political (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Yosso, 2005).

Methodology Summary

This qualitative study relied on anecdotal interviews with Black students who attend or have attended the same affluent majority White suburban school. Information about the study was disseminated to the students by a Black counselor in the school and by the Director of Reaching and Empowering all People (REAP), a program exclusively for Black students who attend the school. Each student under the

age of 18 was required to have guardian permission to participate in the study. Students who were over the age of 18 were required to sign a consent form. Eleven students, evenly gender balanced, in grades 9-12 and one student currently attending college were interviewed over a 3-week period. The participants were a mix of Black students born in the United States and Black students born in Africa. Each interview was approximately 60 minutes. After the interviews, data were summarized and shared with the students to ensure their perceptions and experiences were fully captured. All students were given an opportunity to read and edit the transcript comments and change or add information. In some cases, students met with the researcher two or three more times upon their request if they felt they wanted to share more information or edit the comments were made during the initial interview. It was made clear to the students they could call or email the researcher at anytime and a time would be arranged to meet personally or by telephone. All participants in the interviews seemed eager to participate and seemed empowered by being able to share their perceptions and experiences.

<div align="center">Summary of Results</div>

As stated in chapter one, the purpose of the study was to examine the issues and investigate Black students' experiences and perceptions in order to identify for school teachers and administrators the essential supports needed to have a positive impact on Black students' academic, social and emotional successes in school.

As illustrated in Table 3, several major common themes emerged from the findings as a result of the individual interviews with the 11 subjects. The student interviews reported in chapter four support the following findings:

1. Black students believed they were receiving a better education by attending a White suburban high school. Four out of the 11 students expressed this belief.

2. Black males perceived all the White students attending the suburban school are very rich. This comment was expressed by all Black males, both American born and African. As noted in chapter 4, Noguera (2008) has contended that Black males notice wealth more because of their belief many Black males do not see themselves reaching the same socioeconomic level as their White peers.

3. Black students self-segregated themselves from students of other ethnic backgrounds. The majority of the students expressed students from the same ethnic groups congregated in separate areas of the school.

4. American students and African students were critical of each other. Black students from both groups, expressed Black students born in Africa do not have a close relationship with Black students born in the United States. African students made comments about Black students from the United States as not working hard in school and being loud and boisterous. The Black students born in the United States described African students as being "uppity" and "acting White." Noguera and Wing (2006), and Ogbu

(2003) in their studies wrote about Black students using these expressions when Black students believed other Black students were not adhering to Black culture.

5. The African born students in this study appeared to do better academically and to be challenged much more than the Black students born in America. Both groups acknowledged teachers treated the Black students born in Africa with more respect and had higher expectations than students born in America. Ogbu (2003) confirmed there is a difference between immigrants who chose to come to the United States. He believed Blacks born in the United States often adapt an oppositional identity because of racism placed on American Blacks by White society.

6. Black students reported they need encouragement to enroll in AP or Honors classes. More than half of the students interviewed expressed they would have taken AP classes had teachers or counselors encouraged or recruited them to take these classes.

7. Black students perceived student government was not open to everyone. The majority of students reported they did not feel welcome to be in student government. They reported that in order to be in student government, students were required to have a certain number of signatures. Black students viewed this as needing to be popular in order to receive enough signatures.

8. Students reported sports are viewed as a key to be socially accepted. The majority of Black students reported that Black students were more accepted by White students if they played a sport.

9. All students reported a positive relationship with teachers is very important in order to academically achieve. In each case where students talk about the classes which they did academically well, all 11 students reported it was classes where they had a good relationship with the teacher. Students made comments in their interviews such as "My math teacher really liked me, which made me want to do well in his/her class."

10. All 11 participants emphasized the need to have more minority teachers and staff hired. All 11 participants voiced their concern about the lack of minority teachers and staff at the school. Each stated they believed teachers who looked like them would have a better understanding of the Black culture and be able to relate to Black students' issues than most White teachers.

11. All 11 Black students perceived White teachers have low expectations for Black students' to academically achieve at high levels. The participants stated they did not believe teachers expected for Black students to do well academically. They expressed they must work harder than White students to prove to White teachers they are able to do the work.

12. Students reported they perceived the school did not provide academic support to Black students. Several students reported counselors and

teachers did not help Black students select challenging courses or chose

classes for Black students that were not challenging rather than have

students select their own classes. Many students reported they did not

receive assistance in knowing what courses they needed to take in order to

be accepted into college. Some students voiced having culturally

responsive curricula would make learning more relevant and connected.

Conclusion

For liberals, Black people are to be "included" and "integrated" into our
society and culture, while for conservatives they are to be "well behaved" and
"worthy of acceptance" by "our" way of life. Both fail to see that the presence
and predicaments of Black people are neither additions to nor defections from
American life, but rather constitutive of that life. (West, 2001, p. 2)

 Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) stated the way we respond or react to

conversations or encounters is shaped by our own perceptions and experiences. She

continued to speak about how deeply penetrating these reflections can be and how

readily these reflections can come to life. Lawrence-Lightfoot described these

reflections as "Generational Echoes" (p. 3). The purpose of the researcher writing this

dissertation, as stated in chapter 1, is to examine the issues Black youth encounter

while attending a majority White affluent suburban high school. The inspiration of the

researcher to investigate this topic was her personal experience as a high school

student who attended a majority White suburban high school and the experiences

shared by her two daughters while they attended a majority White affluent suburban

high school. The researcher did not realize how much she identified with Lawrence-

Lightfoot's (2003) description of "Generational Echoes" she described as the perceptions and experiences of our past and how they shape our own stories about our lives.

It was intriguing yet somewhat painful; to hear Black students give their account of their experiences and perceptions around attending a primarily White affluent suburban high school. Each of the high school students interviewed seemed liberated by having the opportunity to share their experiences based on their own realities. In some cases, students expressed sadness and anger as they reflected on the isolation and hurt, almost as though they did not realize the feelings were hidden deep within them until they had an opportunity to unveil their voices, which is what Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) has referred to as "unconscious replays of experiences" (p. 3).

As the researcher reflected on this study and the findings from the interviews with the students, her question became broader than investigating the four compelling research questions which were:

1. In what ways do Black students describe their experiences at school?

2. What are the perceptions of Black students of how a White majority suburban school is supporting their academic goals?

3. What are the perceptions of Black students of how a White majority suburban school addresses their social and emotional development?

4. What do Black students believe about what White teachers think about Black students' ability to flourish academically?

The answers to these questions as reported by the responses of the Black students attending this affluent White majority high school are experiences that were not positive. Academic goals are perceived as not being supported and emotional and social needs not being met. The majority of the Black students did not feel their teachers believed in their ability to flourish academically at the same rate as their White peers. The broader question which the researcher pondered, as a result of the findings from this study, was why the responses seemed to have not changed in four decades? We live in a diverse and global society. Technology has given us more opportunities to be connected and to learn about, share and appreciate each other's differences. However, society appears to continue to grapple with the achievement gap between Black and White students. The question remains why all students do not have equal opportunities to succeed in school. As evidenced by the students' responses in the interviews, school systems continue policies and practices not equitable for all students, especially Black students who attend White majority suburban high schools, where resources are more plentiful and seemingly more opportunities for all students to succeed.

As the researcher reflects back on her own experiences attending a White majority high school 40 years ago, not much has changed for Black students in the quest to experience the same successes in school as their White counterparts.

Singleton and Linton (2006) believed racism from individuals as well as from institutions was the primary reason why Black students struggle so hard to do well in school. The Black students interviewed for this study reported having positive

relationships with their teachers played an important role for them to succeed. They also expressed being respected was paramount. They acknowledged the contributions their race played in our society as important for instilling a sense of pride in Black students. They emphatically stated having high expectations and support for Black students to succeed in schools helped students attain their goals and aspirations.

Singleton and Linton (2006) confirmed Black student success will only change when White individuals take personal responsibility and have the commitment to engage and be willing to have frank and honest conversations about race and racism (p. xvii). Until both Blacks and Whites sit at the same table to discuss the negative reaction race and racism has on Black student success in high school, four decades from now the research questions posed for this study will elicit the same responses from Black students attending White majority suburban high schools. Thankfully, we have Black student voices to help reveal negative beliefs, perceptions, and assumptions. Their voices will provide educators with an understanding of essential supports necessary for Black students to succeed.

Unexpected Findings

The following findings emerged which were not expected during this study. Additional research would need to be conducted to understand the phenomenon for each of the unexpected findings:

- District and school data revealed Black students had a high attendance rate at this school. In addition, the majority of Black students, who participated

in the study, reported they really liked this school. Most commented it was one of the best schools in the district. This seemed to be in contrast with what the participants reported to the researcher. The participants reported they did not feel they had personal or positive relationships with the majority of their teachers. The participants also believed teachers had low expectations for Black students, and they perceived White teachers did not provide a culturally inclusive curriculum.

- All 11 of the participants reported they had a very positive relationship with the principal and remarked the principal supported Black students. Yet, the school environment, as perceived by Black students who participated in the study, did not indicate that the principal's leadership encouraged or established a school-wide anti-racist/non-biased school environment.

- Black American students as well as African students reported there is a discrepancy between how the two groups of students are regarded by White teachers. African students, as reported by both American Black and African students believed White teachers have higher expectations for African students. Both American Black students and African students indicated neither group socialized with the other group or had positive feelings toward each other.

Recommendations to School Leaders from the Voices of Black Students

1. Recommendation: Build personal relationships with Black students, know them as people, not just as students and know about their community (i.e., church, and family traditions).

   - Essential Support III: Developing Social and Emotional Growth

2. Recommendation: Find opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds to interact and be engaged in school, besides just in sports (i.e., social committees, and school decision-making committees).

   - Essential Support I: Valuing of Respect for Black Cultural Identity

3. Recommendation: Recruit Black students to be in student government rather than requiring signatures or voting. All students have leadership skills in different areas.

   - Essential Support III: Developing Social and Emotional Growth

4. Recommendation: Provide opportunities and time for students and staff to have open and safe dialogues about race and culture.

   - Essential Support I: Valuing Respect for Black Cultural Identity and Essential Support III: Developing Social and Emotional Growth

5. Recommendation: Encourage and recruit Black students to be in Honors and AP classes and provide support and interventions to help struggling students.

   - Essential Support II: Supporting and Promoting Educational Aspirations and Goals and Essential Support III: Developing Social and Emotional Growth

6. Recommendation: Recruit and hire minority teachers.

   - Essential Support I: Valuing of Respect for Black Cultural Identity

7. Recommendation: Establish relationships with Black parents and guardians by involving them in school activities and school decisions so they feel needed and appreciated and viewed as partners within the school.

   - Essential Support I: Valuing of Respect for Black Cultural Identity and Essential Support III; Developing Social and Emotional Growth

8. Recommendation: Integrate culturally inclusive curricula across all subjects. Ensure that Black students' expertise is integrated into curricula.

   - Essential Support I: Valuing of Respect for Black Cultural Identity: Essential Support II: Supporting and Promoting Educational Aspirations and Goals, and Essential Support III: Developing Social and Emotional Growth

9. Recommendation: Have high expectations for all Black students. Be consistent and be fair.

   - Essential Support I: Valuing of Respect for Black Cultural Identity and Essential Support III: Developing Social and Emotional Growth

10. Recommendation: Require teachers to have professional development in teaching lessons congruent with the learning styles and interests of Black students.

    - Essential Support I: Valuing of Respect for Black Cultural Identity; Essential Support II: Supporting and Promoting Educational Aspirations

and Goals, and Essential Support III: Developing Social and Emotional

Growth

11. Recommendation: Recognize students for their racial differences as an asset to

the school and to the classroom.

- Essential Support I: Valuing of Respect for Black Cultural Identity and

Essential Support III: Developing Social and Emotional Growth

12. Recommendation: Ensure school leaders establish an anti-racist/non-biased

school climate.

- Essential Support I: Valuing of Respect for Black Cultural Identity and

Essential Support III: Developing Social and Emotional Growth

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INVITATION TO MEMBERS OF THE AFRICAN/AFRICAN
AMERICAN REAP LEADERSHIP CADRE

March, 2008

Dear Members of REAP:

I am looking forward to meeting you at the next REAP meeting on April 10th, 2008. At your last meeting, Mr. Abraham, your REAP advisor, shared with you that I am a doctoral student at Lewis and Clark College who is in the process of developing my dissertation research. When I became aware of the African/African American REAP Leadership Cadre at Westview High School, I was so impressed with the leadership of this group that I knew that this would be the perfect place for me to recruit students for my project.

The title of my study is "Black Students' Perspectives: Voices around School Experiences in Affluent Suburban Schools." The purpose of my study is to explore what Black students' personally want to say about what their educational experiences have been while attending a suburban high school. I am solely interested in hearing the "voices" from the students' perspectives of what has worked for them and what has not.

Your participation in my study is strictly voluntary. Those who are interested in participating will be asked to meet with me for approximately 90 minutes for a face-to-face interview. An additional 30 minutes may be needed for follow-up information. No more than 120 minutes will be needed to complete the interviews for this study. The interviews will be tape recorded. All information shared with me during these interviews will be *confidential* and each participant will have a pseudonym; which means your real name will not be used in published documents. In fact, participants can choose their own names to be used in my dissertation.

Your question might be, "Why would I want to participate?" Your participation will help the researcher investigate what support systems are needed in schools to help enhance cultural identities and academic support for Black students. The study will examine issues that Black youth encounter in schools, particularly those that may have a positive or an adverse impact on their academic aspirations and social emotional development. Most important, it is essential to hear from Black youth, like yourselves, what has worked for you, rather than adults making assumptions about what is working or not working for you regarding your educational experiences. Your voice is very important!

I would like to stress again that your participation in this study is voluntary! If at any time you decide that you no longer want to participate in this study, you can discontinue without any penalty. Please let me know if you are interested in participating by calling me, 503-730-1588 or emailing me at paula@parkacademy.org. Once I hear from you, I will set up an interview which will

be scheduled outside of your class time. Enclosed with this letter are additional forms for you to review with your parents. One is the Parent/ Guardian Permission Form for your parent or guardian to sign, giving their permission for you to participate in the study. The other is the Assent Form for you to sign. If you 18 years or older, you only need to sign the Participant Consent Form.

It is my hope that you will choose to participate because your "voice" is important and will be valued in this study. I look forward to seeing you at the informational meeting and will be able to answer any questions you may have about the study to help you decide about participating. You may also contact my dissertation Chair, Dr. Dorothy Aguilera, (503-768-6086 or Aguilera@lclark.edu).

Sincerely,

Paula Kinney
Doctoral Candidate, Lewis & Clark College
E-mail paula@parkacademy.org
Phone: 503 730-1588

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your school?

2. What about your experiences at this school? What are the things that you really like about your school?

3. What things would you change at your school?

4. Are you academically challenged?

5. What AP or Honors courses have you taken?

6. In what ways do you feel supported by your administrators?

7. In what ways do your teachers support you?

8. What opportunities does your school provide for Black students to participate in student leadership roles?

9. What organizations and/or sports are you involved in at your school?

10. What are your goals and aspirations ?

11. How have your teachers helped you attain your goals and aspirations? What about your counselors?

12. How do Black and White students interact at your school?

13. What other information do you think is important to this study that you would like to share?

APPENDIX C

LITTLE MIXED GIRL: A CULTURAL PROFILE OF ERICA KINNEY;
ESSAY BY ERICA KINNEY

Little Mixed Girl: A Cultural Profile of Erica Kinney
By Erica Kinney

From Whence I came:

My mother is Paula Marie Heariold born November of 1945 in Des Moines, Iowa to Deacon Frasier and Dorothea Brown. Both of their exact ethnicities are unknown although by societal measures, were considered African American. Dorothea was adopted at birth by Ezra and Cordelia Brown, an older African American couple. Neither her birth parents nor their ethnicities are known. Dorothea was very fair skinned so it is thought that she had quite a bit of Anglo blood, though she identified herself as an African American woman. Over the years, one of my mother's sisters has tried to uncover more about Dorothea's heritage. Each year it seems to change. It was once thought she was Syrian, then it changed to Sicilian and the latest is that she was half Jewish and half African American. My mother claimed George Heariold, African American and Black Foot Indian, as her father since early childhood as Dorothea and Deacon divorced when she was 6 months old. She had no contact with Deacon growing up. Mom grew up in a three bedroom home with eight sisters; some full, some half and others step. She is the only one to attend college and is currently working on her doctorate.

My father is Dan Larry Kinney born in July of 1941 in La Crosse, Wisconsin to Don and Carol Kinney. As opposed to my mother's side, I can track my father's heritage as far back as the 1500s. His father is Norwegian and his mother is Norwegian and Swedish. My grandfather's grandfather, Niels Opsahl was the first to come to the states in 1846. Supposedly he worked for man by the name of Kinney and was often referred to as "Kinney's man" because people had difficulty with the correct pronunciation of his last name. Therefore, he changed his surname, and our name has been Kinney ever since. My grandmother's grandfather, Martin Gisvold was the first to come to the states in 1865. About 6 years ago, my uncle Jim contacted his distant cousins in Norway who still live on the Gisvold estate that has been in the family since at least 1790. Three years ago, my father and his siblings went over to Norway to reunite with their cousins and stayed on the Gisvold farm. All of my father's siblings attended a four year college. His father was a high school principal for over 40 years and his mother, a housewife.

Childhood; The Formative Years:

My parents and I moved from the Midwest to Lake Oswego, Oregon in 1977 when I was 2 years old. Lake Oswego at this time, if not now, was about 98% white. I really had no idea that I was different from the other kids until first grade. It was on the playground when one of the popular third grade boys pointed out in front of everyone that I looked like a "hamburger." I laughed it off with all the others but felt a thud sink inside of me. That night I went home and told my Mom who then explained to me that yes, I was different from the kids who I attended school with but reinforced that it was something to be proud of. However, no matter what she said to me that

night, from there forward, I was mindful and self conscious of my difference. Other than my skin color, I was the same as these kids. We liked the same music, movies, toys and activities. I wasn't aware at this time that I was listening to "white" music and that I was talking "white." This came later. Therefore, it was difficult because I would for a moment feel the same as everyone and not be cognizant of my difference, when that invisible asterisk would pop up over my head again reminding me that I was. Black history month was the worst for me. Thank goodness February is the shortest month of the year! What was even better for me was that we usually only spent one or two weeks "celebrating" it. Anyhow, I would get stomach aches and hot flashes when we would read about or discuss topics such as slavery and Martin Luther King Jr. Anything that had to do with black people. I felt that the moment the textbook mentioned the word "black" or "African" the entire class would stop and look over at me. Of course this wasn't the case, but it sure felt that way. After all, wasn't I the minority delegate? It got to the point around fourth grade that I hated my Mom to come to the school. It again brought to attention that I wasn't like everyone else; kids with Moms who had fair skin and straight hair that smelled like fresh shampoo.

Many times throughout my childhood, I employed the laugh that I developed when that boy called me a hamburger. There were countless times in junior high and high school when racist jokes were told while I was present. There were the people that laughed, and then those that looked uncomfortable and would give a quick side glance to see my reaction. It was for this group I believe I used the laugh for most. It was almost as if *I* felt bad that *they* were feeling uncomfortable. Therefore, to ease their discomfort, "the laugh." The laugh that simultaneously came with the thud inside.

Off to College:

After graduating from high school in Portland, I attended the University of Washington in Seattle. I befriended three young women in the dorms with whom I later moved into an apartment. One was white, one Jewish and one African American. It was the most diverse group of friends I ever had up until that point in my life! For the first time, I was not the different one as we were all different from one another. I felt safe and welcomed in this group of friends. My race nor skin color was at the forefront of my identity any longer, but rather who I was as a person. This group grew to include more people of various ethnicities, sexualities and cultures. Unfortunately, this newfound social comfort put my academics on the backburner and needless to say, I did not excel by any means that year. Although I regret this, I do not regret the confidence that grew within me and my own growing self acceptance. I took some time off from school around my sophomore year and went on an excursion to Ecuador with a student group through UW; afterwards, I transferred to the University of Oregon to finish up my last 2 years of college. I couldn't quite figure out which direction in school I was going so decided to save my parents some money and attend one of the state schools. Being in Eugene was interesting for me. I had a lot of friends

from high school who attended U of O and I lived with a few of them. It was an awkward adjustment for me returning to the same people who knew me one way, and yet I felt like a different person. I didn't know how to be that same person they remembered while still maintaining my new acceptance and adoption of my developing "black side"… even apprehensive to play hip hop music that I now had an appreciation for while they were still listening to the "white music" we once enjoyed together. It never crossed my mind that nobody really cared and would even be open to new music as well as seeing me for the same core person that I was. I underestimated my friends.

…And Beyond:

After college, I moved to Brooklyn where I remained for seven and a half years. I'm not sure how it really happened, but the majority of my social circle was African American. I believe it was to satiate my subconscious yearning to continue to connect with the other half of me. This is who I identified and felt most comfortable with. It was also my first time being surrounded by successful people of all colors. Most of my friends were lawyers, bankers, teachers, singers - the whole gamut. In New York, there was diversity within diversity! This was something I wasn't really exposed to in the Northwest.

As a child, I didn't want people to notice the added pigment in my skin; in New York, I became frustrated when people identified me as white. Ironically, I felt I didn't have *enough* pigmentation, I wanted to be darker! With age and experience, I finally started to come into my own, happy with my mixture of races. I feel that I can relate well to two races and identify with both.

I believe this to be a blessing for me as a teacher. The first school I worked in was predominately African American, most born and raised in Brooklyn. At the beginning of each school year, I think many of the students didn't quite know what to make of me. They couldn't figure out what race I was, I didn't have a Brooklyn accent or any accent for that matter and I was from Oregon (where's that?). I was able to relate to them as an African American; privy to the latest lingo, musicians and styles - but it was just as important to me that they knew I was white as well. That this person they grew to love (at times!), respect and trust was both like them (African American) and different from them (white.) In the latter case, I wanted them to see how they could still relate to and like someone different from themselves. In addition, I feel that being biracial is responsible for my very diverse interests and tastes. I enjoyed sharing these interests with my students and expanding on them whenever possible. The world we live in is becoming more and more of a "fruit salad," making it more colorful and rich. As a teacher, one of our sole responsibilities is to embrace and learn about these differences and teach children how to do the same. What was once an immense internal and external struggle, now being an "oreo," as it was once put to me, is one of my favorite attributes.