

**AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS  
OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES**

By

**KIM ELIZABETH PENNYFEATHER BOYD**

Bachelor of Arts  
Oral Roberts University  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
1978

Master of Education  
Northeastern State University  
Tahlequah, Oklahoma  
1987

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
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**Kim Elizabeth Pennyfeather Boyd**

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Thesis Approved:

*Kathryn Castle*

Thesis Adviser

*Fally Carter*

*wen-song*

*[Signature]*

*Thomas C. Collins*

Dean of the Graduate College

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### *"A Typical Urban School: A Typical School Day"*

*It was a typical school morning at an inner city school where more than 90% of the children attending were African American. As I approached the entrance to the school, going to observe an entry year teacher, I was met and warmly greeted by the principal. The entry year teacher and her students were in another classroom participating in a presentation with a guest speaker from the zoo, so the principal escorted me to the room where the presentation was taking place. As we walked down the corridor a little African American boy about five or six years of age was standing in the hallway. The principal began berating the little boy right in front of me for being out in the hall rather than in the classroom. He spoke with him regarding how much time he had spent out in the hall and how he was always in trouble. He told the little boy that if he got into trouble again, he would have to bring him to his office and call his parents. The little boy never got to tell his side of the story. The principal walked away leaving a bewildered little boy to deal with the treatment he had received from his principal.*

*The principal and I proceeded down the hall. Just as we were turning the corner, we walked by a classroom with the door closed. You could hear the teacher yelling at the top of her lungs from the other side of the door telling the students to sit down and shut-up. She went on to say that the children all knew what was expected of them and she was tired of telling them over and over again.*

*When we arrived at our destination, I found approximately 30 first graders sitting at tables listening to a presentation by their guest speaker. The guest speaker then decided to do an activity to demonstrate to the children the importance of their thumbs having the ability to function properly. We taped each child's thumb and pointer finger together with masking tape, which took quite a long time. The children became restless and began talking, laughing, and playing with their tape. Some of the children broke the tape to loosen their fingers. It was apparent that the guest speaker was getting very angry and frustrated as she began yelling at the children and telling them that if they did not settle down she was going to leave. After all, she was doing a service for them by being there and she did not have to put up with their misbehavior.*

*At the completion of the presentation I followed the entry year teacher and her students back to their classroom where I continued my observation. For the next thirty to forty-five minutes I witnessed children being yelled at across the classroom by the teacher. They were threatened with having to call their moms and were told this would result in a spanking when they arrived home from school. At one point the teacher got down in a child's face in front of the entire class and chided him for bothering one of his peers.*

*This teacher was a former student of mine. Her behavior in her undergraduate classes when she was a student was the opposite of what I had just witnessed. She had been very quiet and soft spoken as a student. She seemed very gentle and composed. During our first meeting, she expressed a great deal of frustration with her present*

*teaching situation. She said that the only way to get her students to understand and to respond to her was to yell and scream and get angry at them.*

*I left the school that day experiencing a combination of feelings, but the most prevalent feeling was one of sadness. I did not understand why African American children, or any children, had to be treated in this manner. Everyone's actions from the administrator to the teachers, and even the visitor suggested approval of this sort of treatment toward these children. The impression was given by the children's reactions that this was a normal occurrence. While their initial reaction was one of hurt or feelings of anger, they went on with business as usual after a considerably short period of time. It seemed to be what the children were used to at that school. Furthermore, it seemed to be what the children expected.*

The focus of this scenario is on the treatment of African American students. However, it could be viewed as a class issue rather than a racial issue. In the literature I have examined I have found that researchers rarely treat racial issues in isolation. Rather, race is usually studied together with class and gender issues (Levine & Havighurst, 1992; Hornsby, 1973; Comer and Hayes, 1990; Freeman, 1974; Payne, 1994; Hacker, 1992). Martusewicz & Reynolds (1994) stated:

"Most scholars in the critical educational community would agree that multicultural issues are not limited to notions of race. Current discussion of multiculturalism includes interest in issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality: the broad and intersecting spectrum of diversity as it weaves together to shape the lives of real people" (p. 10).

Therefore, while the goal of this study is to focus only on racial issues, it will be impossible to exclude issues related to class, gender and sexuality.

This scenario is demoralizing, yet this type of behavior may be typical in schools attended by many African American children. Reynolds (1995) suggested that schools are supposed to be a place where children are secure and know education personnel have compassion for them and provide a compassionate environment which allows students to be filled with hope, to feel support, and believe in themselves. Compassion is defined as: "sympathetic consciousness of other's distress together with a desire to alleviate it" (Webster, 1986, p. 462). Essentially, this compassionate environment should provide children with a feeling of interconnectedness (Reynolds, 1995), and yet, for many students this may not be the case. Instead, as a result of their school experiences, they could possibly become people capable of accepting racism, sexism, and classism which are characteristics that permeate our society (Reynolds, 1995).

### **Background of the Problem**

In the 1990 General Social Survey in which people were rated on the basis of their ethnicity in areas that included wealth, industry, nonviolence, intelligence, self-support and patriotism, African Americans were ranked last or next to last in almost every characteristic (Garcia, 1994). According to the survey, most members of the majority population in the United States see most minority groups, in particular African Americans, in a decidedly negative light. Garcia (1994) reported that the image or general belief that the majority population has of African Americans is that they are



poor, lazy, violent, ignorant, and nonpatriotic. Research studies reported in Black Students and School Failures: Policies, Practices, and Prescriptions (Irvine, 1990), suggest school practices such as a hidden curriculum, tracking, and discipline reinforce society's view of African Americans.

Irvine (1990), indicated that while the curriculum for schools is standard and varies little in relationship to the school's location, social class, race of the student body, or student abilities, there is a hidden curriculum. She defined the hidden curriculum as "the unstated but influential knowledge, attitudes, norms, rules, rituals, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through structure, policies, processes, formal content, and the social relationships of school" (p. 5). McLaren (1989) suggested that the hidden curriculum deals with the tacit ways in which knowledge and behavior get constructed, outside the usual course materials and formally scheduled lessons. According to Apple (1979), the hidden curriculum in schools posits a network of assumptions that when internalized by the students, establishes the boundaries for legitimacy. These assumptions are seen as obligatory for students since at no time are they articulated or questioned. What this hidden curriculum teaches the majority of Black children, according to Apple (1983), is obedience and deference to authority, docility, subordination, extrinsic motivation, external control, dependence, and fatalism. Taking on these behaviors ultimately predestines African American children to low-paying, low-status jobs, diminished self-concepts, and feelings of inferiority (Apple, 1983). In citing research done by Ray Rist, Irvine (1990) claimed there is a relationship between the hidden curriculum and its negative impact on the Black students'

achievement. In the Rist study which focused on kindergarten to second grade, by the eighth day of school the teachers had decided that the Black students could not learn (Irvine, 1990). They were virtually written off as failures at age five.

The hidden curriculum may not be the only thing that affects African American children in schools. Tracking is another practice of many schools which has negative effects. Tracking, or ability grouping, is the placement of children in a high, average, or low group according to their academic capabilities. According to Irvine (1990), the number of Black students in the low group is disproportionately high. She reported that the preponderance of Black students in low-ability groups and White children in high-ability groups reinforces beliefs and stereotypes among adults and children that Blacks are intellectually inferior to Whites. Placement of students in low ability groups often leads to increased disciplinary problems (Irvine, 1990).

Irvine (1990) discussed the findings of the Carnegie study which concluded that a disproportional number of Black students are the recipients of severe disciplinary actions in schools. This study also reported that Black students, compared to other students, are two to five times as likely to be suspended at a younger age (Irvine, 1990). In addition, Black students are more likely to receive lengthier repeated suspensions. This study also reported that while minority students represent 25% of the national population, they constitute 40% of all suspended and expelled students (Irvine, 1990). These studies indicated that there are major differences in the treatment of African Americans compared to other racial groups. McCarthy and Crichlow (1993), stated that these treatment differences are not biological. In other words, according to Omi and

Winant (1986), as stated in McCarthy and Crichlow (1993), "it is not necessarily a stable, permanent, united center that gives consistent meaning to our lives" (p. vii). Therefore, these treatment differences are the product of human work. They are the product of encounters between and among differently-located human groups which possess diverse interests, needs, desires, strategies, capacities, and forms of organizations, and which are deeply etched and written into the historical and contemporary formation of society's racial identities (McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993). Consequently, according to literature, the image portrayed of African Americans has been constructed by social and historical contingencies and this image is assumed to be negative and assumed to have many implications for African Americans. However, while there was evidence in the literature which supported that African American students are the recipients of harsh treatment from education personnel, none of the research included information from the students' perspective.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Educational policies and practices, as they relate to the treatment of students, should be conducive to an environment that values all children (van Manen, 1991; Garcia, 1994; Spring, 1994; Schubert and Ayers, 1992). However, research indicates that educational policies and practices sometimes lead to harsh and unfair treatment of African American students (Irvine, 1990; Spring, 1994; Apple and King, 1983; Helms, 1990; McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993). The two opposing notions seem to exist because educational practices and policies are a reflection of society, which often portrays African

Americans in a mediocre stereotypical image. Researchers suggest that the treatment of African American students is the result of the image portrayed of them and leads to a lifestyle which is in fulfillment of this image. An immediate consequence is the perpetuation of the stereotypical image society projects of African Americans (Wells and Crain, 1994; Spring, 1994; Irvine, 1990; McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to present African American students' perceptions of the image they believe society portrays of African Americans, and how they perceive they and their peers are treated by education personnel. While the intent of this study is not to focus on "image" because it is such a broad issue and could distract from the purpose of the study, it is important to determine the source of image or self-identification. Do African American students believe society portrays an image of them? If so, what are their perceptions of those images and how are they related to the treatment the students receive from education personnel?

The literature review did disclose the emergence of a stereotypical image portrayed of African Americans. It also revealed that African Americans themselves play an important role in the formation and perpetuation of this image, and that society affects schools which in turn perpetuates harsh treatment of African American students from education personnel. With the exception of Kozol and Kotlowitz, researchers tend to talk *about* African American students but not *to* them. Few researchers tell the stories from the students' perspective. Therefore, it was my goal to talk *with* students and allow

*them* to describe and interpret the experiences they have had as it relates to the treatment they receive from education personnel. I was particularly interested in finding out if the experiences the students had were synonymous with what was found in the research literature and what the implications of these experiences were for African American students, education, and society in general. Hermeneutic phenomenological methodology was used to conduct this human science research study.

In his book Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy (1990), Max van Manen described human science research as "the study of 'persons,' or beings that have 'consciousness' and that 'act purposefully' in and on the world by creating objects of 'meaning' that are 'expressions' of how human beings exist in the world" (p. 4). van Manen (1990) defines phenomenology as: "the pure description of lived experience" and hermeneutics as: "the interpretation of that experience via some 'text' or via some symbolic form" (p. 25). Therefore it was my aim to transform into a textual expression, the interpretive description of these students' lived experiences. The driving force for the collection and analysis of data for this research project were the following questions:

### ***Grand Tour Question***

- \* From the African American students' perspective, how are African American students treated by educators and how do they respond to this treatment?

### ***Mini Tour Questions***

- \* What, if any, image or images do African American students perceive society has of them and how do they feel about this?

- \* What part do African American students feel they play in perpetuating the image society has of them?
- \* If African American students determine that society *does* portray an image of them, do they feel the need to change the image? If so, what suggestions do they have concerning how to change the image?

### **Assumptions within the Study**

It is an assumption that the image portrayed of African Americans is constructed by man rather than biologically (McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993). Spring (1990) suggested that what is a myth, or what is believed to be true about people, eventually becomes reality. Evidence of this statement can be found in the self-fulfilling prophecy of many African Americans.

Another assumption is that whatever happens in society has a direct effect on the educational system (Kliebard, 1995). Consequently, educational practices and policies have demonstrated an assimilation of the beliefs society has constructed concerning African Americans (Irvine, 1990; Payne, 1994).

It is assumed that in order to further this research study, time must be spent with adolescent students, including interviews with them and close observations of them.

The purpose of close observation is to try to break through the distance often created by more experimental or behavioral observational research techniques. When doing close observations, the human science researcher tries to enter the life world of the persons whose experiences are relevant study material for the research project.

According to van Manen (1990), "close observation involves an attitude of assuming a relation that is as close as possible while retaining a hermeneutic alertness to situations that allows us to constantly step back and reflect on the meaning of those situations" (p. 69). Therefore close observations must pass through the researcher's mind and interact with the researcher's own knowledge, experiences, biases, concerns, and beliefs. The conclusions of the investigation then are the result of this filtration process (Steeley, 1992).

### **Rationale for the Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Hutchinson (1992) stated: "the reality for many Black families is that men desert their homes. They make babies that they do not take care of. They fill the jails and prisons. They die young from drugs, alcohol and diseases" (pp. 16-17). Both the image and the fulfillment of this image are repeated from one generation to the next generation and is very hard to overcome. Wells and Crain (1994) offered the perpetuation theory as a rationale for what appears to be an endless cycle. McPartland and Braddock (1981), defined perpetuation as: "the tendency for a person to repeat what other people he identifies with have done across the stages of the life cycle if the individual has not had sustained experiences contrary to those of the people with whom he identifies" (p. 149). They defined a theoretical construct as: "an imaginary entity used to explain observable behaviors" (McPartland and Braddock, 1981, p. 149). Therefore, the perpetuation theory is a way of explaining the process of a person repeating what other people he identifies with have done across the stages of the life cycle.

Wells and Crain (1994) described the perpetuation theory as a micro - macro sociological theory of racial segregation originally developed by J. H. Braddock. Braddock's (1980) research used this theory to explain how segregation tends to repeat itself across institutions when individuals have not had sustained experiences in desegregated settings earlier in life. Braddock (1980) arrived at the perpetuation theory by focusing on the tendency of African Americans to perpetuate racial segregation. He noted that "minority students who have not regularly experienced the realities of desegregation may overestimate the degree of overt hostility they will encounter or underestimate their skill at coping with strains in interracial situations" (p. 181). Therefore, these segregated students will, in most instances, maintain or perpetuate physical segregation when they become adults because they have never tested their racial beliefs (Wells & Crain, 1994).

Wells and Crain (1994) expanded Braddock's theory of perpetual segregation by considering it alongside network analysis, or the more structural argument that segregation is perpetuated across generations because African Americans lack access to informal networks that provide information about, and entrance to, desegregated institutions and employment. Wells and Crain (1994) suggested that the perpetuation theory can also be positive for African Americans where school desegregation is concerned. They concluded that Black students can overcome perpetual segregation as a result of their experiences in desegregated schools. Wells and Crain (1994) cited three major conclusions from their studies:



"(a) desegregated Black students are more likely to have desegregated social and professional networks in later life, (b) desegregated Blacks are more likely to find themselves in desegregated employment, and (c) desegregated Blacks are more likely to be working in white-collar and professional jobs in the private sector than Blacks from segregated schools" (p. 552).

It is important to note that a term closely related to the perpetuation theory which is used in curriculum studies is "hegemony". Martusewicz & Reynolds (1994) defined hegemony as: "domination without force, but such domination occurs through the complex day-to-day experience of practice, beliefs, and relations through which particular interests get expressed" (p. 172). Hegemony deals with how we think and that we cannot articulate what we think because it is embodied in our rituals. In other words, we do things without thinking about it because it is so embedded in our conscious.

Gramsci (1975) suggested that hegemony reflects the Marxist theory of maintaining relations between the dominant and subordinate classes in the capitalist societies. This concept of hegemony is supported by the radical educationists (Apple, 1979; Sharp, 1980; Giroux, 1981) who use it to point either toward the exclusion of the culture of dominated groups from the schools, or to the depth and intensity of the transmission of class cultures as school knowledge, or even to how dominant ideologies are imposed. Gramsci (1971) made a connection between hegemony and the perpetuation theory by suggesting that hegemony is used as a tool by the superstructure to perpetuate class divisions and prevent the development of class consciousness in two senses. First, hegemony is referred to as the process of domination whereby the ruling class is said to

exercise political control through its intellectual and moral leadership over subordinate classes and secondly, it is referred to as the use of force and ideology in the reproduction of class relations (Gramsci, 1975; Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985). Because there is a connection between the perpetuation theory and hegemony, both were used as the framework in the explanation of the maintenance of the mediocre stereotypical image of African Americans.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I provides a background of the study, statement of the problem, assumptions within the study, rationale for the theoretical framework used in the study, purpose of the study, the organization of the study, and definitions of the terms used in the study. Chapter II consists of a review of the literature as it pertains to historical, Biblical, and societal contingencies which contribute to the evolution and maintenance of the mediocre stereotypical image portrayed of African Americans, how educational practices and policies perpetuate this image, and how African Americans contribute to the perpetuation of this image. Chapter III will delineate the method and procedures used to research the problem. Chapter IV consists of a discussion of the findings, while Chapter V offers reflections of the study which includes implications and recommendations for further study.

### Definition of Terms

**MEDIOCRITY:** The definition stated in Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Merriam - Webster, 1986) is "average capacity or worth regarded as dull, uninspired, or poor: limited or less than ample (p. 1403). To be qualified as mediocre is to be considered less than the average.

**STEREOTYPICAL:** Stereotyping is the result of the generalization of and assumption made about a group of people. According to Sleeter (1993), it is "the generalizations about groups to individuals, in a way that biases one's treatment of them" (p. 162). Irvine (1990) reported that "for Black children, their race, class, and culture often act as the normative criteria by which they are initially evaluated by their teacher - not as individuals but as members of their referent group" (p. xx). Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Merriam - Webster, 1986) defined it as: "something conforming to a fixed or general pattern and lacking individual distinguishing marks or qualities" (p. 2238).

**IMAGE:** Merriam - Webster (1986) defined this as: "the production of a person or thing, or to create a representation" (p. 1128). Representation is defined as: "a statement or an account made to convey a particular view or impression of something with the intention of influencing the opinion or action of a thing or a person" (p. 1926).

**RACIAL IDENTITY:** Helms (1990), defined the term racial identity as: "referring to a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular group" (p. 3).

**AFRICAN AMERICAN:** The terms "African American" and "Black" are used interchangeably by various authors whose sources are cited in this paper. In Helm's book, Black and White Racial Identity (1990), she stated, "one needs only to have one-sixteenth Black African ancestry or some physical features deemed typical of such ancestry in order to be classified as Black" (p. 3). Another definition she gave was "a sub-group of people possessing a definite combination of physical characters, of genetic origin, the combination of which to varying degrees distinguishes the sub-group from other sub-groups of mankind" (p. 3).

**SOCIETY:** Society is a "community made up of an aggregate of persons: those responsible for the prevailing social order: a part of a community that is a unit distinguishable by particular aims or standards of living or conduct" (Merriam - Webster, 1986, p. 2162). For research purposes, society shall include all groups of American people, including African Americans. Trend (1994) implied that the major source of social identity is delivered through media such as newspapers, magazines, catalogues, television, movies, instructional material, and billboards (p. 225).

**PERPETUATION THEORY:** McPartland and Braddock (1981) defined perpetuation as: "the tendency for a person to repeat what other people he identifies with have done across the stages of the life cycle if the individual has not had sustained experiences contrary to those of the people with whom he identifies" (p. 149). They defined a theoretical construct as: "an imaginary entity used to explain observable behaviors" (McPartland and Braddock, 1981, p. 149).

**HEGEMONY:** Martusewicz & Reynolds (1994) defined hegemony as: "domination without force, but such domination occurs through the complex day-to-day experience of practice, beliefs, and relations through which particular interests get expressed" (p. 172).

**PERCEPTION:** Merriam - Webster (1986) defined perception as: "a mental image" (p. 1675).

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

As an African American educator, I feel a sense of obligation to determine if the findings in current research literature, as it relates to how the representation or the image of African Americans has emerged and how it is perpetuated, from a historical, biblical, and sociological perspective, and if what it says regarding educational practices and policies, as it relates to the treatment of African American students, which lead to the perpetuation of this image, is consistent with African American students' lived experiences. To understand the representation and the treatment of African American students several questions must be addressed:

1. Historically, how have African Americans been treated?
2. What biblical rationale has been used for the justification of this type of treatment?
3. What societal contingencies have contributed to the formation and the perpetuation of the image portrayed of African Americans?
4. What educational policies and practices, as it relates to the treatment of African American students, have led to the perpetuation of this image?

#### **Historical Review**

*Historically, how have African Americans been treated?* While Africans have a very rich and rewarding history which tells of ancestors who were kings and queens, our history as African Americans have also been filled with pain and misery. More than any

group in the United States, Blacks historically have experienced unusually severe restraints and harsh treatment (Merelman, 1992). Rooted in injustices, the narrative of Blacks is one that tells from the historical perspective of the cruelties of slavery, the humiliation of segregation, and the imprisonment of modern day urban ghettos Merelman, (1992) stated:

"Taking the form of multiple legal exclusions; limited and highly unequal economic well-being; minimal political power; little social respect; restricted social mobility; customarily accepted invidious social discrimination; and in particular submission to the authority of Whites in the most important spheres of life, such as occupation, residence, schooling and politics, Blacks continue to be at a greater disadvantage than other groups" (p. 317).

### *Slavery*

As our ancestors were forced to leave the shores of their native land, Africa, their first encounter with White Americans would be an experience of massive suffering and oppression. According to Fulks (1969), countless millions of human beings were dragged out of Africa, however only about half of them lived to become able workers as a result of the horrendous conditions they were made to endure during the captivity and the voyage to the "New World"; a world they never asked to become part of, but were forced to become a part of. Healthy African men, women, and large children were hunted like wild animals, often by local rulers, and traded at big slave-trading companies for guns and ammunition, liquor, pots and pans, cotton, and other goods (Fulks, 1969).

The men were shackled with iron collars around their necks and chains of cuffs that bound and linked their feet and hands together (Fulks, 1969). Once captured, a physician would conduct an uninhibited public examination to determine if they were physically fit and ready for embarkation (Fulks, 1969). Fulk (1969) stated: "people were packed into ships like livestock - even worse. It was impossible to find adequate room to lie down, sit, or even stand comfortably" (p. 16). Not only were the slaves overcrowded, they were usually chained together in twos, foot to foot, and hand to hand (Fulks, 1969).

The growing demand for slaves led to the practices of "slave breeding". This practice involved slave girls as young as thirteen in sexual intercourse for the purpose of producing babies (Fulks, 1969). In the course of a breeding life-span, some women bore as many as 15 babies and if a woman could be classified as a good breeder, she was certain to bring a high price (Fulks, 1969). Strong, physically fit slave men were often selected as "stud men", used to get several women pregnant at a time (Fulks, 1969). In essence slave breeding became a highly profitable business. This treatment of Blacks continued up to the time of the Civil War.

Although, the Civil War, which took place from 1861 to 1865 was a war between the federal government of the United States and 11 Southern states that asserted their right to secede from the Union (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990), many Blacks viewed the conflict as a war for freedom and rushed to join the army (Hornsby, 1973). While serving in the army, many of them held the same ranks as the White soldiers, however, they were not treated the same. Hornsby (1973) recorded that "the Blacks received less



pay than the White soldiers. A White private was paid \$13.00 a month and \$3.50 for clothing, but Blacks of the same rank received \$7.00 and \$3.00 respectively" (p. 25). Over 38,000 Blacks of the 186,000 who served in the Union army died, not from combat confrontations, but due to being overworked and to the poor medical treatment they received (Hornsby, 1973).

### Segregation

The end of the Civil War was to bring about freedom for Black slaves, however, the end of slavery did not mean the end of oppression. Ward (1995) stated that "Black people were still considered inferior, and continued to be denied equality in education, housing, employment, health care, and social services" (p. 176). In addition, the end of the Civil War brought about a new kind of legalized bondage - "segregation". According to Baldwin (1995), Blacks were placed at the bottom of the labor market which was symbolic of the concept of segregation. Segregation is defined by Fulks (1969) as: "the systematic method used by Whites to push all Blacks down to a position of subordination and degradation; the best possible substitute for slavery" (p. 190). Fulks (1969) stated that "during the early part of the century, segregation laws multiplied rapidly and spread all over the South" (p. 200). As a result of these laws, signs reading "Whites Only" or "Colored" were used to establish separate drinking fountains, restrooms, hotels, theaters, taxpaying windows, and in some Atlanta courts, even a Jim Crow Bible was required for Black witnesses (Fulks, 1969). A series of anti-Black laws were passed that endorsed segregation by ruling a state *could not prohibit* segregation and

in fact *could require* it, even in schools (Fulks, 1969). The Civil Rights Movement, a mass movement starting in the 1950s that, through the application of nonviolent protest action, broke the pattern of racially segregated public facilities and achieved the most important breakthrough in equal rights legislation for Blacks since the Reconstruction period (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990). However, this movement did not completely succeed in breaking the pattern of harsh treatment toward Blacks.

Despite these gains, the problems of the 70s remained acute and desperate. There was still a wide gap in incomes and the incidence of poverty. Freedman (1974) recorded that a large percentage of Black people lived below the poverty line. The average income of Blacks was well below the national average, and Blacks were twice as likely as Whites to be unemployed, and much more likely to be employed only part-time and to hold low-paying jobs (Freedman, 1974). Blacks completed fewer years of schooling and had more health problems than Whites and the living conditions of Blacks were still substantially worse than those of Whites (Freedman, 1974).

During the 1970's Blacks gained more power in cities. However, Freedman (1974) recorded Julian Bond as saying, "the city is no longer a healthy animal any more, so we are taking over at a time when no one wants it" (quoted in Freedman, 1974, p. 374). Freedman (1974) validated this statement by stating: "The very fact that Blacks were gaining power in so many cities was a consequence of the most insidious aspects of the race problem today - the desertion of the cities by the Whites, their occupation by the Blacks, and the growing separation of the races ensues their gaining power" (p. 374). When Blacks tried to leave the ghetto, few were successful because they were not

allowed to settle in predominantly White communities. When they did, their families paid a heavy psychic cost for moving into these neighborhoods (Freedman, 1974). Moreover, real estate practices, zoning laws, and the entire system was rigged to keep them out of these neighborhoods (Freedman, 1974). Therefore, according to Fulks (1969), Blacks found themselves virtually imprisoned in the slum ghettos; the urban traps for Black people, surrounded by a invisible wall, which presently remains the same.

### *Education*

The history of education for African Americans is no less painful than other aspects of African American history. The case of Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 US 537 sct 1138, 41 L.Ed 256 (1896), which ruled that segregation *was* constitutional was quickly transferred to education (Tovar & Harris, 1995). This separation doctrine dominated thoughts and practices until 1954 when the United States Supreme Court ruled on the Brown v. Board of Education, 347 US 143 (1954) case. The court ruled that school segregation was unconstitutional and that separate but equal had no place in education (Tovar & Harris, 1995). Hacker (1992), commented: " the crucial fact, as the court saw it, was that segregation sent a message to Black children that Whites did not want them in their schools, and this exclusion generated a feeling of inferiority that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to ever be undone" (p. 166). However, there is still an ongoing debate as to whether this well intended decision had positive results for African American children. According to Hacker (1992), some scholars argued: "Children who have attended desegregated schools tend to have more friends who are of

another race, to work in higher-status jobs, to attend and graduate from multiracial colleges and universities, and to live in integrated neighborhoods" (p. 166). Other scholars, according to Hacker (1992) concluded: "Thrusting the Black child into a predominantly White status-oriented classroom does nothing to enhance the Black child's self-esteem. Instead, we find that self-esteem diminishes after desegregation" (p. 166).

In her book Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom (1994), bell hooks has vivid descriptions of her school experiences before and after desegregation. She stated the following:

Almost all our teachers at Booker T. Washington were Black women, they were committed to nurturing intellect so that we could become scholars, thinkers, and cultural workers - Black folks who used our "minds". Within these segregated schools, Black children who were deemed exceptional gifted, were given special care. Teachers worked with and for us to ensure that we would fulfill our intellectual destiny and by so doing uplift the race. My teachers were on a mission. To fulfill that mission my teachers made sure they "knew" us. They knew our parents, our economic status, where we worshipped, what our homes were like, and how we were treated in the family.

School changed utterly with racial integration. Gone was the messianic zeal to transform our minds and beings that had characterized teachers and their pedagogical practices in our all-Black schools. Knowledge was suddenly about information only. It had no relation to how one lived or behaved. Bussed to White schools, we soon learned that obedience, and not a zealous will to learn,

was what was expected of us. Too much eagerness to learn could easily be seen as a threat to White authority. When we entered racist, desegregated, White schools we left a world where teachers believed that to educate Black children rightly would require a political commitment. Now, we were mainly taught by White teachers whose lessons reinforced racist stereotypes. For Black children, education was no longer about the practice of freedom. The classroom was no longer a place of pleasure or ecstasy. We were always having to counter White racist assumptions that we were genetically inferior, never as capable as our White peers, even unable to learn. We were always and only responding and reacting to White folks (pp. 2-4).

Kozol (1991) supported hooks' experiences by suggesting that in the name of desegregation African American students were always made to go to White schools, not Whites to Black schools, where they were made to feel inferior and were usually placed in the low ability groups or in special classes. They usually remained segregated because very few of the students would have anything to do with them and often teachers preferred to completely ignore them (Kozol, 1991). In fact, Hacker (1992) reported "there is little meaningful contact let alone contact that would permit learning about each other as individuals" (p. 166). Levine and Havighurst (1992) reported that in spite of the efforts made to reduce segregation, the proportions of African American pupils in schools that were all Black or nearly all Black, remain high because of the massive migration of White families to the edges of the cities and to the suburbs. According to studies by the National School Boards Association, two thirds of all Black students

(63.3%) still attend segregated schools (Hacker, 1992).

From a historical perspective, Blacks have been the recipients of severe and harsh treatment from the inception of slavery. What is apparent is though this treatment has taken on new dimensions, it still exists. Surprisingly, this treatment is not only administered by White people, but later research supports evidence that substantiates the fact that many times, Blacks are the recipients of harsh treatment administered by their own race (Kotlowitz, 1991; Spring, 1994; Ward, 1995; McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993; Wells and Crain, 1994; Braddock, 1980). The obvious question is why are African Americans treated in this manner? Researchers concluded that the treatment African Americans receive is, in part, due to the image society projects of them (Garcia, 1994; McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993; Sleeter, 1993; Helms, 1990; Hayes, 1995).

Society, which is defined according to the Webster's Third New International Dictionary as: "a community made up of an aggregate of persons: those responsible for prevailing social order: a part of a community that is a unit distinguishable by particular aims or standards of living or conduct" (p. 2162), has projected an image or representation of African-Americans as poor, lazy, violent, ignorant, and nonpatriotic (Garcia, 1994). Image is defined as: "the production of a person or thing; to create a representation of; to represent symbolically, while representation is defined as a statement or an account especially made to convey a particular view or impression of something with the intention of influencing the opinion or action of someone" (Webster, 1986, pp. 1126, 1926). The words "image" and "representation" are closely related in meaning, therefore, they will be used interchangeably to mean the conveying of a

particular view or impression of African Americans which is portrayed by society with the intention of influencing the opinion or actions of a person (Webster, 1986).

McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) confirmed that the image portrayed of African Americans is not based on innate, biological, or cultural characteristics, rather, it is produced by human work. In other words, the image portrayed of African Americans is " the result of encounters between and among differently located human groups which possess diverse interests, needs, desires, strategies, capacities, and forms of organizations, and which are deeply etched and written into the historical and contemporary formation of society's racial identities" (McCarthy and Crichlow 1993, p. xv). An important consideration, then must be the origin of this image. Surprisingly, the image society portrays of African Americans is rooted in the interpretation theological scholars have of scripture references in the Bible. It is interesting to note, Blacks are known to be spiritual people as Jonathan Kozol (1995) testifies to in Amazing Grace, yet the very "Book" they rely on to get them through the obstacles they face daily is the "Book" used to justify the dehumanizing treatment they are subjected to.

### **Biblical Rationale**

*What Biblical rationale has been used for the justification of the dehumanizing treatment African Americans receive?* As previously stated, it is evident in our society today that Blacks suffer from a generalized or stereotyped imagery that has continued for some time. Biblical interpretations have had a devastating affect on the perception society holds towards Blacks and may be a major contributor to this image.

One's belief systems are said to be deeply rooted and is based directly or indirectly from a Biblical perspective. Dr. Wayne Perryman (1994), in his book, The 1993 Trail on the Curse of Ham, eluded to the revelation that many Americans, both Christians and non Christians used the alleged 'curse' as legal grounds to outlaw marriages between Blacks and Whites and to justify using Blacks as slaves. He went on to say that the so called 'Curse of Ham' was the inspiration and justification for the mistreatment of Blacks in America (Perryman, 1994). The scripture Perryman is referring to is Genesis 9:18-27 which is stated in the King James version of the Holy Bible as follows:

And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread. And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant (p. 9).



This scripture reference is one of the major factors in our nation's history which led to the stereotyped and generalized attitude toward Blacks and was permitted to become entrenched in the minds of society as a whole (Perryman, 1994). "It was through the interpretation of this scripture that the 'Curse Theory' was allowed to become rooted. This theory was used to inspire new laws limiting a variety of opportunities to Blacks and justify city, state, and federal governments to create laws that permitted separate restrooms, restaurants, schools and drinking fountains" (Perryman, 1994, pp. 6-7). Bible scholars' interpretation of this Bible passage has had a great impact, on the mental imagery that pervades our society of Blacks, and has been used throughout history as the justification for slavery and other injustices induced on Blacks (Perryman, 1994). For example, in the Matthew Henry Commentary (1961), it is stated:

Ham saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren. He pleased himself with the sight. Perhaps Ham had sometimes been himself drunk. It is common for those who walk in false ways themselves to rejoice at the false steps which they sometimes see others make....He [Noah] pronounces a curse on Canaan the son of Ham, in whom Ham is himself cursed. The particular curse is, a servant of servants (that is, the meanest and most despicable servant) shall he be, even to his brethren. God often visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, when the children inherit the father's wicked dispositions and imitate the father's wicked practices, and do nothing to cut off the entail of the curse....

(p. 23).

Perryman (1994), gave another interpretation of this scripture which is found in the Layman's Bible Encyclopedia. He quoted, it as saying: "As a result of Ham's disrespect for his father, his descendants were cursed by Noah to the effect that they would be slaves and servants of the descendants of Shem and Japheth, Ham's two brothers" (quoted in Perryman, 1994, p. 12). However, one of the most incriminating interpretation of this scripture is given by the Broadman Bible Commentary (1969). In reference to Genesis 9:18-27, the following interpretation was given:

There is hardly an Old Testament passage more difficult to interpret. This scripture was the favorite text of Southern preachers during the Civil War as they asserted the right of White men to enslave the Negro. Often used in recent times to defend segregation, the passage is the unrecognized source of the common saying, "A Negro is all right in his place", by which is meant that his proper position is secondary to that of the White man.... What was the sin of Ham? Some would suggest that verse 24 implies that he had committed a homosexual act with his father (Lev. 18:7). This interpretation is quite unfounded.... What did Ham do to his father? He disgraced him by exposing his shame to the world.... What his brothers did he should have done. He should have covered his father and said nothing about it.... The most perplexing task confronting the traditional interpretation of the passage is to give adequate explanation for the curse having fallen upon Canaan rather than upon Ham..... Noah, given insight into the future of nations, sees the consequences of Ham's sin issuing in the fate of his son. With a father like Ham, the son is doomed (p. 25).

Perryman (1994) quoted the Self-Interpreting Bibles' interpretation of Genesis 9:18-27 by stating:

The mind of the writer [Moses] being specially directed to that incident, he naturally connects Canaan with Ham. It would seem, too, from the tenor of the whole narrative, that Canaan must have been in some way implicated. Probably he was the first who discovered Noah, and then told his father.... The descendants of Ham, by his sons Cush, Mizraim, Phut, and Canaan, peopled Africa and Western Asia. For about four thousand years past, the bulk of the Africans have been abandoned of Heaven to the most gross ignorance, rigid slavery, stupid idolatry, and savage barbarity.... (quoted by Perryman, 1994, p. 13)

"Experts" from the Wesleyan Bible Commentary (1975) stated:

In his drunken state he immodestly exposed himself. Ham, his son saw him thus exposed and reported the incident to his brothers. They, with greater respect for their father's dignity, took a garment, walked backwards into the tent, and covered him without gazing upon him. When Noah awakened, he cursed Ham's son, Canaan, and blessed Shem and Japheth. Why he cursed Canaan instead of Ham is not clear. One suggestion is that Ham had a natural tendency to the unclean, a tendency which led him to enjoy thus gazing upon his father and to delight in telling his brothers about what he saw - a tendency which Noah had already observed in an enlarged sense in Ham's son, Canaan, in whose

descendants the tendency led to their extreme depravity, their enslavement to immorality, and eventual destruction.... (p. 53).

Scholars from the Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary (1986) gave a brief commentary of this scripture stating: "Ham found his father naked and drunk, asleep in his tent. Ham told his brothers, Shem and Japheth, who covered their father without looking on his nakedness. Noah was furious because Ham had seen him naked, and he placed a curse on Ham and his descendants" (p. 454). Finally, there is a relatively short interpretation of this scripture in the Encyclopedia Britannica (1990): "Noah's drunkenness and the disrespect it provokes in his son Ham, (or Canaan) resulted in Noah's laying of a curse on Ham and his descendants" (p. 737).

Perryman (1994) concluded "the sad commentary to all of this was the fact that the "Curse Theory" was started by White Bible - believing Christians, who in turn introduced this theory to the rest of society" (p. 7). He summarized that even though they had no evidence to support the so-called curse, their interpretations of the scripture were persuasive enough to convince Blacks themselves that they were indeed the descendants of a cursed people (Perryman, 1994). No one can actually determine the literal damage that has been done as a result of this theory, however, Perryman (1994) stated, "they spent millions of dollars and used scholars from the major Christian publishers to interpret, twist, and stretch the meaning of this scripture. The theory of the curse became so mainstream that many of the top encyclopedias adopted the "Curse Theory" (p. 7). It must be understood that the acceptance of this stereotyped position from a scholarly or academic perspective further impresses upon the mind of the reader

the validity of this position. Even the individual who has no religious convictions would still be affected by the position taken by scholars because of his own assumptions regarding academia. The fact is, however, that while society as a whole has been subjected to the Biblical perspective presented by these religious and scholarly leaders, which has caused major devastation for African Americans, it is only one perspective from which the image and the justification for treatment of African Americans is drawn from. A prerequisite to the discussion of other perspectives is to determine what is meant by "image" and where our self-image comes from.

### **The Development of the "Self-Image"**

Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines self-image as "one's conception of oneself or of one's role" (p. 2060). How do we arrive at the conception or role we have of ourselves? Graham (1991) suggested in the book Reading and Writing the Self: Autobiography in Education and the Curriculum, that the essence of knowing "self" is to draw from past experiences and attempt to connect yourself to the object of attention. He continued by suggesting that "self" is considered as an individualistic concept, however, self is interconnected with nature and society (Graham, 1991). In other words, everything that affects society affects "self" and vice versa. Therefore when you learn about "self" you learn about society, and the opposite is true as well, when you learn about society, you learn about "self" and this process has a great impact on the development of a person's self-image. It is therefore safe to conclude that the concept we have of ourselves, or our "self-image" is the result of negative and

positive encounters we have between and among differently located human groups (McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993, p. xv).

Martusewicz & Reynolds (1994) suggested that the process of schooling can lead us away from ourselves. Pinar (1976) indicated that schooling can have grave psychological effects and can even destroy the self. Edgerton in McCarthy & Crichlow's Race Identity and Representation in Education is quoted as saying:

The ways in which groups, individuals, and ideas come to be marginalized is a given culture, society, and/or place has much to do with what is considered to be knowledge and who is considered to possess it. Clearly education is deeply implicated in these processes, which are themselves deeply implicated in the formation of identities (quoted in McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993, p. 222).

Peter McLaren and Michael Dautley (1990) implied: "the image portrayed of African-Americans has been constructed by a set of structured social practices which reproduce themselves through individuals who are imprisoned by historically conditioned regimes of discourse, by market-logic interests, and by the interests of dominant groups" (p. 37). Therefore, society has many contingencies from which the image of African Americans has been drawn and perpetuated. An examination of these societal contingencies will help to further determine the formation and perpetuation of this image.

### **Societal Contingencies**

*What societal contingencies have contributed to the formation and the perpetuation of the image portrayed of African Americans?* An examination of societal contingencies which have contributed to the formation and the perpetuation of the image portrayed of African Americans includes societal issues in which current research claim the newly formed underclass is comprised mainly of African Americans; the isolation of African Americans in inner city slums; the mediocre stereotypical image the media strategically portrays of African Americans; the strategies created by the dominant culture to keep Blacks in a subordinate position; and the self-induced image African Americans themselves portray and perpetuate.

#### ***Social class***

Andrew Hacker, makes a very bold proclamation giving White people the credit for the production and the sustaining of the image society portrays of African Americans in an interview with Dreyfuss (1994) concerning the location of African Americans in social classes. He stated, "we have a Black middle class, but it only exists at the sufferance of White America. We, [White Americans] decide how many of you [Blacks] will be allowed into which positions, and how many of you is too many. And we pick Cosby, we pick Powell. We do that. And we are very careful about the numbers" (Dreyfuss, 1994, p. 126). Hacker said in response to Blacks acquiring power and wealth: "How can you [Blacks] acquire power when we [Whites] decided how many of

you get to which places? We even decide that there will only be one Cosby Show and not five Cosby Shows on during the week. We decide that" (Dreyfuss, 1994, p. 128).

According to Levine and Havighurst (1992), "a social class consists of people who have similar social habits and values" (p. 1). Traditional descriptions of social classes include five categories ranging from lower working class to upper class. However, in recent years social scientists have begun to identify a group of individuals at the bottom of the class structure which they have labeled as the underclass which implies that this group can be considered as the lowest status and most depressed segment of the lower working class (Levine and Havighurst, 1992). Levine and Havighurst (1992) quoted Wilson (1987, 1990) and Whitman (1989, 1990) as saying: "the term underclass is used to connote a degree of permanency greater than is implied in referring simply to a lower class. People in the underclass are stuck at the bottom of the social structure and perceive themselves as having little chance of ever escaping from a pervasively poverty-ridden environment" (quote in Levine and Havighurst, 1992, p. 2). They make the proclamation that "people classified as underclass live in concentrated poverty neighborhoods and tend to be minorities who generally rank high on indicators of social problems associated with unemployment, drug use, delinquency, and violent crimes" (Levine and Havighurst, 1992, p. 15). Levine and Havighurst (1992) quoted research from Magnet (1987) as saying, "The underclass includes members of White ethnic groups, but the majority of its members *probably* are from racial and ethnic minority groups that have been confined and piled up in the older deteriorating, inner core of big cities (quoted in Levine & Havighurst, 1992, p. 19). They supported this



statement by stating "in Los Angeles, Houston, New York, and some other cities, a high proportion of the underclass is Hispanic; but in other cities the underclass is predominantly African American" (p. 19). However, these statements are somewhat confusing. There are more poor White people in American than there are poor Black people, even though a higher percentage of African Americans are poor and classified as underclass but Whites are scattered throughout the rural areas. Levine and Havighurst (1992), confirmed this information by stating, "Whites comprise nearly 50 percent of U.S. children and youth whose families live in poverty" (p. 30). It is through this type of information which goes unchallenged that we are misinformed and the image of African Americans is perpetuated. Whether it is intentionally or unintentionally, the damage is done and is not easily corrected. Hacker (1992) suggested that perhaps the isolation of African Americans into concentrated inner-city "slums" make it easier to highlight and capitalize their problems and thus perpetuate the image society has of them.

Fulks (1969) described the slum ghetto as a place that endangers decay, and is filled with disease and premature death. He further suggested that the buildings and businesses are owned by absentee White owners who are interested only in the profits, and that they rent dilapidated apartments which have higher rent than standard apartments in other parts of town, and sell low quality goods at relatively high prices (Fulks, 1969). This bares a close resemblance to New York city's South Bronx described in the book Amazing Grace (1995) by Jonathan Kozol.

### *Living Conditions*

Amazing Grace (1995), draws a vivid picture of the South Bronx area which is a dirty slum crowded with drug users, people dying of AIDS, and is roach and rat infested. Kozol (1995) found the following:

Crack-cocaine addiction and the intravenous use of heroin, which children I have met here call "the needle drug," are woven into the texture of existence in Mott Haven. Nearly 4,000 heroin injectors, many of whom are HIV- infected, live here. Virtually every child knows someone, a relative or neighbor, who has died of AIDS, and most children here know many others who are dying now of the disease. One quarter of the women of Mott Haven who are tested in obstetric wards are positive for HIV. Rates of pediatric AIDS, therefore, are high.

In humid summer weather, roaches crawl on virtually every surface of the houses in which many of the children live. Rats emerge from holes in bedroom walls, terrorizing infants in their cribs. You see them earlier than afternoon. These rats are fearless. Light don't scare them. Noise don't scare them. You can see them in the park at noon. Any time you see the rats at noon, it's time for people to move out. Mrs. Washington tells of a seven-month-old boy who was attacked three blocks away a month before by several rats that climbed into his crib. "Doctor said he hadn't seen bite marks like that in years. The baby's fingers were all bloody. I think it was the third time that this baby was attacked. His mother's terrified but can't move out. The city put her in this building and she don't have any money to move somewhere else" (pp. 4, 5).

At twelve-fifteen on St. Ann's Avenue, three people from the needle exchange are setting up boxes on three tables underneath a sheltered area at Children's Park. The box on one table contains condoms. On the second table there are written materials in English and Spanish. On the third table there are two kinds of needles. The needles wrapped in blue are longer and stronger and can be dismantled. These, according to a former user, are for cocaine injectors and for others who "inject deep in their bodies." The needles wrapped in orange, which are shorter and are known as "diabetic needles," are the needles of choice for skin-poppers....At one p.m., addicts begin to line up at the table with the needles....The needle exchange is over at three (pp. 57, 58, 59).

Kozol is no stranger to inner city life. In his book Savage Inequalities (1991) he described the slums of East St. Louis, Illinois:

East St. Louis- which the local press refers to as "an inner city without an outer city" - has some of the sickest children in America. Of 66 cities in Illinois, East St. Louis ranks first in fetal death, first in premature birth, and third in infant death. Among the negative factors listed by the city's health director are the sewage running in the streets, air that has been fouled by the local plants, the high lead levels noted in the soil, poverty, insufficient health care, unemployment, and deficient hospital care.

On the southern edge of East St. Louis, tiny shack- like houses stand along lightless dirt streets. Most of the houses are burnt out shells and lots between them are piled with garbage bags and thousands of abandoned auto tires. The

waste water emitted from the sewage plant, according to a recent study, "varies in color from yellow-orange to green". The toxic substances that it contains become embedded in the soil and the marshlands in which children play.

East St. Louis is the largest city south of Springfield in the state of Illinois but was left off the Illinois map four years ago. The telephone directory that serves the region does not list the phone numbers of the residents or businesses of East St. Louis even though the city lies right at the center of the service area that the directory is supposed to cover. Some of the biggest businesses are the drug trade, funerals, bars, and prostitution (pp. 15-20).

In his book, There Are No Children Here, Alex Kotlowitz (1991), described a housing project located in Chicago, Illinois:

The children called home the "Hornets", a highrise building located in South side Chicago, or, more frequently, "the projects" or simply, the "jects". Pharaoh called it "the graveyard". The two and three family tenements sag and lean like drunkards and many of the buildings are vacant, their contents lying on the sidewalk.

There are no banks, only currency exchanges which charged customers up to \$8.00 for every welfare checked cashed. There are no public libraries, movie theaters, skating rinks, or bowling alleys to entertain the neighborhood children. For the infirmed, there were two neighborhood clinics, the Mary Thompson Hospital, and the Miles Square Health Center, both of which teetered on the edge of bankruptcy and closed by the end of 1989. The death rate of newborns exceed

infant mortality rates in a number of Third World countries, including Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, and Turkey. And there is no rehabilitation center though drug abuse is rampant.

From the descriptions of Kozol and Kotlowitz it is clear to see that living conditions for many African Americans are unimaginable for most people. Levine and Havighurst (1992) quoted Culetta (1982), as describing inner city ghettos as a place where upward mobility is a lie, and organized society is the enemy; a place where the temporary crutch of welfare has turned into a straitjacket of permanent dependency" (p. 19). The harsh reality for many African American children that live there is that these slums are traps that they are caught in. It is the way of life. It is a permanent resident in which the occupants are engulfed with feelings of despair, hopelessness, hostility, and alienation. Jonathan Kozol, (1995) suggested that these living conditions (ghettos) are not a social accident but are created and sustained by greed, neglect, racism, and expedience. The evidence that leans toward this statement is very hard to dispute, and it appears that the media has willingly taken advantage of every opportunity to exploit these living conditions, even distorting them to feed on and perpetuate the image society has created.

### *Media*

Media is a powerful text, or source of information or authority, used to help create and perpetuate the image portrayed of African-Americans. When asked by Dreyfuss (1994) which part media plays in formulating the present-day image of Blacks,

Jonathan Van Meter, editor-in chief of VIBE, a hip-hop culture magazine, replied, "the media is incredibly irresponsible about the image of Black men" (p. 124). David Trend (1994) said this about media: "Without doubt, substantial ingredients in the process of national identifications are delivered through newspapers, magazines, television, and movies" (p. 225). Trend (1994) continued, "there is a growing sense that these media constitute the primary source of identity formation, supplanting roles formerly held by school, church, and the family" (p. 225). Due to the scale and technical sophistication of the American media industry, Hollywood films and television programs constitute the nation's second largest source of foreign income (Trend, 1994). It appears that media is a very powerful tool of influence not only nationally, but internationally. How then, has media managed to help paint a mediocre stereotypical image of African-American people?

In his book The Black Family: Past, Present, and Future, Lee June (1991) gave an example of how the media paints a dismal stereotypical image of African Americans. He summarized, that on March 1986, Bill Moyers hosted a controversial documentary on the Black family. Moyers interviewed a sampling of teenage mothers, as well as jobless males who had fathered multiple children. Although the documentary closed by soliciting the comments and prescriptions of Black experts, the overall impression many viewers received was the urban Black family was in a pathological crisis (June, 1991). In the years since that program, journalists, educators, religious leaders, opinion makers, and public officials have focused increasingly on problems of the Black family (June, 1991).

One could argue the point that there are positive images of African Americans on television which demonstrate celebrity success such as Michael Jordan and Sinbad. While this may be true, most of the images we see are in the content of sports or comedy. Hacker responded to an interview saying "You've always entertained us, you've always performed" (Essence, 1994, p. 124).

In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a sociologist, under White House tutelage created a report entitled "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." In the report quoted in Hutchinson (1992), in which Moynihan claimed was an exhaustive check of all facts and figures on the Black family structure, he pronounced this verdict: "the Black family was a tangle of pathology because there were too few fathers in the home" (quoted in Hutchinson, 1992, p. 16). Hutchinson (1992) stated that many politicians and much of the press believed Moynihan and as a result, the Black father became a perfect scapegoat for American's neglect of the Black poor (Hutchinson, 1992). He stated: "If Blacks were destitute, it was because Black men deserted the home. If Blacks committed crime, it was because Black men were ignorant and irresponsible. If Blacks took drugs and were abusive, it was because Black men had no sense of self-worth. If they failed, it was their own fault" (Hutchinson, 1992, p. 16). He continued to say that many Blacks challenged Moynihan's report. They accused him of juggling figures, using faulty research methods, and ignoring the three out of four Black men that were not absent fathers, but Moynihan prevailed. Black fathers were officially labeled "derelict" (Hutchinson, 1992).

Films are another tool used by media to portray African Americans in a negative light. Wallace (1994) said of the film, "Privileges", which is a film that attempts to deal with racial issues, Rainer, the filmmaker, shows no concrete interest in having the women of color, themselves theorize race. The position from which women of color speak in the film are qualitatively different from, and inferior to, the position of others (quoted in Giroux, 1994, p. 187). In addition, Carl Husemaller is quoted as saying in Family Voice magazine, "To counter their feeling of powerlessness, inner-city kids have filled their imaginations with the sanitized mayhem and heavily armed heroics of 'The Terminator' and 'Die Hard'" (quoted by Bush, 1995, p. 7). "This mainstream imagery film has become one of the most important sources of legitimacy for masculine identity based on sexual conquest and violence". Conclusively, not only do African American children get their images from how Blacks are depicted in movies but also from how Whites are depicted (Bush, 1995, p. 7).

As with all of the other forms of media used to depict images of African Americans, art is not excluded. Wallace (1994) said, it is interesting to note how related ideological conflicts are played out in the programming and attitudes of the art world (p. 181). Wallace (1994) extracted quotes from Bernstein's article in the New York Times entitled "The Arts Catch up with Society in Disarray". Wallace wrote that "Bernstein admits there is a necessary connection between artistic matters and the harsh world of the streets. Then he follows this statement with a litany of recent racial cases which have rocked New York--the rape and assault of the Central Park jogger, the incident of the Blacks picketing Korean grocers, and Washington D.C. Mayor Barry's



drug trail" (p. 182). Through such a listing Bernstein is said to have created an unspoken association in the reader's mind which is: minority artists find their sources in the violence of the streets; this is the main difference, he implies, between minority artists and mainstream tradition. He further implicates that minority art pieces represent the anger and violence of the barbarians at the gate, figures of chaos and dissolution (Wallace, 1994).

Wallace (1994) addressed how newspapers portray African Americans, noting that the New York City newspapers first portrayed a Central Park rape incident as "wilding", a term apparently relevant only to the gang violence of Black male youths. Wallace (1994) continued: "As for the Black boycott of the Korean fruit market in Flatbush held in response to high prices and the alleged ill treatment of a Haitian woman, he noted that the New York City press handled it as though it were a transparent case of Black-on-Asian racism (p. 181). Martindale (1986) noted that newspapers play a tremendous role in shaping and influencing the opinion of this country. She noted that several Black leaders charged that the press perpetuated racism and stereotypes in its coverage of Blacks (Martindale, 1986). She quoted Clinton Cox as saying the same thing concerning the New York press, "Blacks and Hispanics commit crimes, their role as victims is slight. The victims are White" (quoted in Martindale, 1986, p, 13). However, the statistics of the New York City Police Department revealed a radically different picture. Martindale quoted Cox's writing:

According to the department's figures, half of the city's homicide victims were Black and 30 percent were Hispanic; half of the victims lived in Harlem, East

Harlem, or Bedford-Stuyvesant. In the real homicide world, the average victim is a male who is Black or Hispanic; two and one-half times as many Black and Hispanic women are murdered as White women; White women comprise only one-half of one percent of all victims. The three New York papers' constant presentation of quite a different picture is just one way the papers carefully structure (or rather, restructure) reality along racial lines comfortable to them. (quoted in Martindale, 1986, p. 132)

In Martindale's book The White Press and Black America (1986), Cox presented a detailed analysis of how the papers gave considerable play to the murders of White youths from upper-class suburbs but ignored the equally brutal deaths of Black children in poor sections of the city. He stated:

The discrepancy in coverage was even more pronounced when the victims were killed by police. Coverage of a middle-class White youth shot by police focused heavily on witnesses' accounts of the killing and the boy's parents claims against the police. But several months earlier, when a Black man was killed by police with nine shots, five of them in the back, the papers barely mentioned bystanders' versions of the incident and consistently presented the events in the words and viewpoint of the police. The papers also covered scantily, and only from police sources, Black citizens' subsequent protests of this and similar incidents, and they failed to follow up on the citizens' charges. Newspapers constantly remind me, in myriad ways that some lives are worth caring about and some are not. (quoted in Martindale, 1986, pp. 132-134).

Martindale (1986) concluded that the press is a major link between Black and White communities. It can either reinforce prejudices, and social stereotyping, or it can take on the role of broadening the horizons of its readers.

Martindale (1986) quoted Moritz (1992) as saying that "American journalism has a long history of ignoring or marginalizing Blacks while privileging the world of the White, professional and economically advantaged male" (p. 135). Martindale (1986) added that "those working in the field of media have and are continuing to use the racial stereotypical images which they have formulated of African Americans to form a grid through which news about Blacks is being filtered" (p. 135).

It is obvious that the media, along with other social contingencies, play a major role in producing, maintaining, and perpetuating the stereotypical image of African Americans. However, the issue which continues to resurface is whether or not these acts are indeed planned strategies by the dominant culture to keep Blacks in a place of subordination. Martusewicz and Reynolds (1994) used the Marxist theory as a possible explanation for this strategy.

### ***Dominant Culture***

The Marxist theory is defined as the possibility of a subordinate racial group's, usually referring to Blacks, relationship to a mainstream American culture that is constructed largely by dominant Whites (Merelman, 1992). According to Block (1994), "Marxism proposes that there is a "superstructure" and a "base" that make up the capitalistic society. The base is the economic structure of society and the superstructure

refers to the political, social, cultural, and philosophical forms that sit atop the economic base" (p. 66). According to the Marxist theory, the superstructure is operated so that those who are in control can maintain their position. This superstructure, also referred to as the dominant culture, or the "power bloc", has one objective: to maintain the status quo (Block, 1994). Antonio Gramsci, in his research on cultural imagery, which is cited in Richard Merelman's (1992) article, *Cultural Imagery and Racial Conflict in the United States: The Case of African Americans*, stretched and tested the limits of marxism. In his study, which focused on dominant and subordinate groups, Gramsci argues that "the Marxist Theory contends that the dominant culture effectively protects itself by presenting only those subordinate personalities, achievements and expressions which echo their dominant group beliefs, and they depict subordinate groups as deviants" (quoted in Merelman, 1992, p. 320). In her novel Beloved (1987), Toni Morrison described the image Whites have of African Americans: "White people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle, swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet White blood" (p. 71). Ichheiser (1970) noted that individuals consciously and unconsciously anticipate and adjust their behavior to some degree to match the expectations and stereotypical images they hold in mind. One behavioral adjustment to this stereotypical image of African Americans is the escalation of racially - motivated violence as described by Wornie Reed (1990) in his article, *The Role of the University in Racial Violence on Campus*. He stated:

A study of the data reveals an upsurge of racism and racist violence, with the most deadly attacks coming against the African American community. There has been an increase in the number of incidents of White mobs wielding baseball bats, threatening and even attacking Blacks if they are caught stopping in segregated residential areas. There has been a steady increase in the fire bombing of homes purchased by Black families in predominately White neighborhoods. A study of violence in residential neighborhoods conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Center indicates that between 1985 and 1986 there were at least 45 cases of vigilante activity directed at Black families who were moving into predominantly White communities.

The incident in Howard Beach, New York, that led to the death of 23-year-old Michael Griffith reflects a long-standing problem of racist violence in White communities in Brooklyn. Another example is the incident in 1982 where a gang of young White men beat three Black transit workers who stopped in Brooklyn for pizza on their way home from work; one of the Black workers was killed on the spot. Black youths working in or traveling through White communities have been attacked and beaten regularly in New York City. By the summer of 1987 racially motivated assaults had increased to at least one a week in New York City. The Chicago Police Department reported a 58% increase in racial attacks for the first six months of 1986 over the same period in 1985. The New York City Police Department reported an increase in racially-motivated violence over the last eight years. These attacks go mostly unreported in the news media.

The Community Relations Service of The Justice Department and the Center for Democratic Renewal provide data that demonstrate a sharp upturn in violent racial attacks nationally. The increase of 42% between 1985 and 1986 was largely fueled by the boldness of White terrorist groups in the United States. Nationally, the Community Relations Services of the Justice Department reports an increase in all cases of racial confrontations from 953 in 1977 to 1,996 in 1982. The Justice Department also reported a 460% increase in cases of racial violence involving the Ku Klux Klan between 1978 and 1979 and a startling 550% in the period 1978 to 1980.

These studies validate that the image society portrays of African Americans which is as people who are poor, violent, lazy, ignorant, and nonpatriotic is constructed by the dominate culture and has a direct effect on how African Americans are treated by the dominant culture. However true it may be that the dominate culture has a major influence in the formation and the perpetuation of the image portrayed of African Americans, and no matter how bad things seem to be stacked up against Blacks, they still maintain "some" control over their lives. Therefore an assessment of societal contingencies is not valid without an assessment of how African Americans themselves contribute to the perpetuation of the stereotypical image society has of them.

### *Self-Perpetuation*

The way society portrays your culture through media, for example, contributes to the way you see yourself. In the book American Education, the author stated that

"research findings suggest the problem with stereotyping is that if students are expected to do poorly, they do poorly; if they are expected to be violent, they become violent. This is referred to as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'" (Spring, 1994, p. 87). It is believed that many African Americans are living the prophetic images that have been placed before them, in part, by media. However, all members of a social environment are active participants, therefore, individual choices play a major role in the perpetuation of the stereotypical image of African Americans. What choices are African Americans making that contribute to this mediocre stereotypical image? Irvine (1990), suggested that while society and the educational profession must bear the responsibility for the portrayal of African Americans and the harsh treatment of Black students, and while the odds are stacked up against them, African Americans must take responsibility for their own behavior and attitudes as well as the behavior and attitudes of their children. Hutchinson (1992) stated, "the reality for many Black families is that Black men do desert their homes. They make babies that they don't take care of. They fill the jails and prisons. They join gangs and commit acts of violence. They die young from drugs, alcohol, and disease" (p. 17). Alex Kotlowitz (1991) described the harsh treatments Blacks inflict upon other Blacks in his book There are No Children Here. He stated: "The child caught in such a social environment is living almost in a concentration camp from which he has little chance of escape" (p. 259). This statement captures the essence of what children's lives are like that live in Henry Horner Homes.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines a concentration camp as "a camp where persons as prisoners of war, political prisoners, refugees, or foreign

nationals are detained or confined and sometimes subjected to physical and mental abuse and indignity" (p. 469). These children mentioned in Kotlowitz's book are certainly "prisoners of war"; a war among and against African Americans. Kotlowitz (1991) described the constant wars between rival gang members and children have little chance of escaping the war zones. The children learn to hit the ground when they hear gun shots fired. Kotlowitz (1991) further explained how children must take cover in the inner walls of their apartments to escape the stray bullets that often come through their windows. Many parents do not let their children leave the apartment without them. According to Kotlowitz (1991), they rearrange the furniture in their homes to make a play area for their children. In other words, children are "confined" to their quarters. The children that live in these housing projects are always faced with the fear of death, not by an outsider, but by a neighbor (Kotlowitz, 1991). Death is as common as life and even more common to these children. The title of the book, There Are No Children Here (1991), leads one to believe that children are forced to grow up quickly in these neighborhoods. They have to deal with adult situations constantly. They do not have the luxury of living a carefree life in the safe environment adults are supposed to provide for them. These children see their friends and family members shot down right next to them. Too few of these children actually make it to adulthood (Kotlowitz, 1991). It is evident by Kotlowitz's description of inner city Chicago, Blacks do help to perpetuate the stereotypical image society portrays of them by often becoming what society portrays them as, and it seems that for the right "price" they will gladly portray this image on screen. An example of this can be seen in the movie Boyz in the Hood (1991).



In the movie Boyz in the Hood (1991) African American actors and actresses portray a "typical" inner city neighborhood. The movie starts with a group of African American elementary students, who live in South Central Los Angeles, walking to school. As they walk they are having what appears to be a typical conversation which includes a lot of vulgar language about gun shots going off during the night and how one of the boys hid under the bed. Another boy said that he was not afraid of getting shot because both of his brothers had been shot and they were still alive. As they walked to school they pass by a spot where someone had been murdered the night before. Death was portrayed as a common part of these children's lives.

The movie is filled with numerous violent acts of Blacks killing Blacks and going to prison. There is a scene when a young Black male is harassed by a Black police officer. The producers of the movie did however portray one couple contrary to the stereotypical image. Although they are not living together, Tai's mother was portrayed as a hard working women in the midst of furthering her career by pursuing an education, and his father was portrayed as an intelligent, street-wise, hard working, caring father.

This movie has a dichotomy of messages in it. It demonstrates how people are "making do" with what they have and at the same time, it demonstrates how people resist the repression from the superstructure (Fiske, 1990). One could argue that the purpose of the movie is to expose cultural myths so that they may be used as discourse, or that the movie uses African Americans to perpetuate the negative image society already has of them (Fiske, 1990). What is the real motive for the production of this movie? Is it to demonstrate how the African American culture is making do with the system they have

become a part of, or is it to achieve capital gain by taking advantage of the negative image and thus perpetuating it? (Fiske, 1990).

While Blacks are guilty of contributing to the formation and perpetuation of the manner in which they are represented, it is apparent that society in general has done a more than adequate job of formulating, maintaining, and perpetuating this image as well. Therefore the stereotypical image of Blacks is the result of conglomerate efforts by many societal contingencies. Sleeter (1993) concurred, suggesting that stereotyping is the result of the generalizations and assumptions made about a group of people. According to Sleeter, it is the generalizations about groups to individuals, in a way that biases one's treatment of them (Sleeter, 1993). For instance, Helms (1990) stated that "Blacks are stereotyped as dirty, shiftless, and ignorant while Whites are seen as clean, industrious, and intelligent" (p. 6). Helms (1990) also stated that "Whites portray Blacks as assertive with aggression which contributes to general impressions that Blacks are not predictable and that this unpredictability might manifest itself in violence and hostility in cross-racial interactions and in society in general" (p. 10). In his article, *Lisa Delpit Offers Solutions for Connecting with a Global Classroom*, Hayes (1995) quoted Lisa Delpit, author of Other People's Children as saying, "we live in a place where stereotypes are nurtured. Young Black males are portrayed as monsters. When we see them, we have a tendency to lock our doors, grab our purses, or move to the other side of the street" (quoted in Hayes, 1995, p. 23).

What takes place in society eventually manifests in the school. Therefore it is imperative first to understand society's role as it relates to education, and then to

understand how it effects how African American children are treated by education personnel.

### **Educational Policies and Practices**

*What educational policies and practices as it relates to the treatment of African-American students have lead to the perpetuation of this image?* A review of Kliebard's (1995) book, The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958 confirmed that most societal events do have an impact on schools. In his book, Kliebard (1995) cited many examples of how several curriculum reform movements were the result of societal events. One example, he gave is when the United States officially became an active belligerent in World War II, the course that the American school curriculum had been taking was significantly accelerated (Kliebard, 1995). Leaders in education insisted that American schools help to create and maintain a democratic moral (Kliebard, 1995). In addition, vocational training and the subject matter of such courses as physics and mathematics were reoriented to place greater stress upon aeromechanics, aeronautics, automechanics, navigation, gunnery, and other aspects of modern warfare (Kliebard, 1995). According to Kliebard, subjects like biology and home economics were also redirected to include training in nursing and first aid (Kliebard, 1995).

A second example of how a major historical event affected school reform is the launching of Sputnik by Russia in 1957. Kliebard (1995) wrote: "The United States blamed education for allowing the Russians to get ahead of them. Within a year after Sputnik was launched, Congress reacted by passing the National Defense Education Act"

(p. 205-206). The main body of this act was concerned with curriculum revision in mathematics, science, and foreign languages (Kliebard, 1995).

McCarthy and Crichlow (1993), implied that schools are deeply infiltrated by society. A review of Kliebard's The Struggle for the American Curriculum solidifies this. In other words, what happens in schools is a direct result of what takes place in society, and an examination of one can not exist apart from an examination of the other. Martusewicz and Reynolds (1994) stated, "Students are forced to ignore or deny what they know in order to learn what the school offers as knowledge. In this way, society produces what it considers an educated person and thereby reproduces itself. If the student resists education, the schools still reproduce the society by imposing a structure that demands either conformity or exile" (p. 67). They continued by saying that the reproduction theorists see schools and education as derived from the economic base which it serves to reproduce (Martusewicz and Reynolds, 1994). Hence, not only are schools influenced by societal conditions, but they are also responsible for maintaining these conditions by the very manner in which they treat children (Martusewicz and Reynolds, 1994).

### *Schools*

A school's physical characteristics, academic curriculum and environmental atmosphere is suppose to be a reflection of society's care and concern for children. According to Reynolds (1995), schools should be made up of environments filled with compassion. He quoted van Manen (1990) as saying, "schools should be places where

we will care for our children - places where and when I meet the other person in his or her weakness, vulnerability or innocence, I experience the undeniable presence of loving responsibility: a child who calls upon me may claim me in a way that leaves me no choice" (quoted in Reynolds, 1995, p. 15). Additionally, Reynolds (1995) suggested that a companionate environment should be manifested in the physical conditions of the school as well as in the curriculum. Yet Jonathan Kozol's description of many inner city schools, populated largely by African American students, presented a completely different picture.

In his book, Kozol (1991) described the conditions of inner city schools in which the schools are literally falling apart. He described schools in East St. Louis where sewage backing up into the kitchen area as well as other parts of the school, is a common occurrence (Kozol (1991). There are holes in the ceilings, floors, and walls and children attend schools in which portions of the building have been destroyed by fire and have not been remodeled (Kozol, 1991). Jonathan Kozol (1991), described schools in which the dropout rate is 87% and public schools where there are 40 plus children in one classroom with one teacher and where there are not enough textbooks for the children. One school was an old condemned roller rink converted into a school and some schools are so crowded that teachers are forced to have classes in closets, divide gymnasiums into four classrooms, and in some cases, even the rest rooms have been converted into classrooms (Kozol, 1991)! In the book Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation, (1995) Kozol stated: "In South Bronx many elementary and junior high school students seldom see a certified teacher but are instructed, for the most part, by

'provisional,' or permanent subs. At one junior high school in the South Bronx, for example, only 15 teachers in a faculty of 54 were certified" (p. 155). Kozol (1995) also recorded:

In order to make the rate of failure less apparent, or to placate students who have failed to learn enough to graduate, officials at some schools have been prepared to make unusual concessions to their pupils.... At one Brooklyn high school were only one in six of those who enter graduates in four years, the principal allows the kids who cannot graduate, but who at least have not dropped out or been ejected, to participate in the commencement exercises if they pay \$200 - an arrangement that is known as "pay to appear" (p. 151).

Those who are responsible for making educational decisions in our society would have a difficult task trying to convince these students that they have compassion for them. The result of compassion is action to alleviate conditions that are contrary to a good learning environment (Reynolds, 1995). This also includes a curriculum of compassion.

### ***Curriculum***

Reynolds (1995), stated that "a compassionate curriculum would no longer always look for answers. It is the questions that receive importance because in questions there is hope" (p. 16). However, the idea of a compassionate curriculum does not seem to have the same priority or relevance for advocates of education reform. Their idea of a compassionate curriculum is one that involves spending millions of dollars on education

reformation in order to move closer and closer to national teacher certification and a nation curriculum (Bradley, 1995).

According to an article in the February 8, 1995 issue of Education Week, entitled *National Board Announces First Teacher Certificates*, eighty-one middle school teachers from 23 states became the first educators to earn national certification recognizing their expertise (Bradley, 1995). In another article in this same issue entitled *The Five Design Tasks* (1995), the National Alliance for Restructuring Education listed five goals for education:

- \* To set common high standards for what students should know and be able to do in the core subjects and use advanced assessment techniques to measure their progress toward the standards, and require all but the most severely disabled students to earn a "Certificate of Initial Mastery, based on these standards by age 16.
- \* To create curriculum, instructional methods, and professional-development experiences that are tied directly to the standards. Also to integrate technology and school-to-work programs.
- \* To design the delivery of health and social services to more effectively support students and their families so that children can learn in school.
- \* To incorporate high-performance management techniques.
- \* To engage the public in the educational decision-making process.

How can these reform efforts demonstrate compassion for inner city students who do not have the resources necessary to achieve these goals? How can **all** students be required

to earn a "Certificate of Mastery" if they have obsolete textbooks and materials, are in overcrowded classrooms, and in buildings which are falling apart (Kozol, 1991)? What good is it going to do to create curriculum and instructional methods if teachers do not have the materials to implement such programs? How can technology programs be integrated where no technology exist? Why not advocate a national teacher's salary that would pay teachers the same amount of money regardless of where they teach, based on their years of experience? Why not allocate funding that will bring all school buildings and materials up to the same standards? Yet when these children are tested using "national assessment instruments" a big deal is made out of it when the test results show that these children are not performing up to their grade level and are far below other children in the "better" public schools (Levine & Havighurst, 1992).

Kozol (1991) repeatedly pointed out the vast difference in the amount of money spent to educate a child in prominent schools as oppose to the amount spent on children in urban schools, yet school officials repeatedly deny that more money would make a difference. While money is not going to solve all of the problems of inner-city schools, it would certainly allow for remodeling of buildings, better teachers, smaller groups of children in classrooms, and better teaching materials. These things would contribute to a better education for the children (Kozol, 1991). Spring (1994) suggested that it is these type of circumstances which perpetuates an endless cycle of hopelessness. These children are acutely aware of the difference in their education in comparison to what their White peers are getting. Media and travel have made it possible to know (Kozol, 1991). So then, what message are we sending these children?



### *Educators*

Even with the massive inequalities in the physical conditions and curriculum challenges, a caring teacher can make all the difference in a child succeeding or failing in his educational pursuits (van Manen, 1991). With or without the many challenges a teacher may face teaching in an inner city school, he or she can still make a difference in the life of a child. Payne (1994) spoke candidly about the difference a teacher can make in the article *The Relationship Between Teachers' Beliefs and Sense of Efficacy and Their Significance to Urban LSES Minority Students*. Payne (1994) stated: " A basic prerequisite to learning in school is an openness on the part of the student to accept the teacher as a credible source. For this to occur, the student should feel that the teacher is significant to him or her in a positive way" (p. 181). van Manen (1991), would describe this type of teacher as someone who possesses:

a sense of vocation, love of and caring for children, a deep sense of responsibility, moral intuitiveness, self-critical openness, thoughtful maturity, tactful sensitivity toward the child's subjectivity, an interpretive intelligence, a pedagogical understanding of the child's needs, improvisational resoluteness in dealing with young people, a passion for knowing and learning the mysteries of the world, the moral fiber to stand up for something, a certain understanding of the world, active hope in the face of prevailing crises, and not the least, humor and vitality (p. 18).

William Ayers (1989), confirmed what van Manen said about teachers in The Good Preschool Teacher: Six Teachers Reflect on Their Lives. He described good teachers

as having qualities like a commitment to dialogue and to interaction with children; an attitude of relatedness and receptivity, concern and compassion for the ways and lives of children; an active investment in and passion for the world, or a piece of it, and for meaningful knowledge and information that allow human beings to function fully and freely.

Dialogue is defined in as: "a conversation between two or more persons; an exchange of ideas (Webster, 1986, p. 623). A good teacher understands the importance of having an atmosphere that is committed to dialogue with the students (Ayers, 1989). They understand not only the effect they have on the students but also the effect the students have on them and on each other. van Manen (1991) defined this as "a pedagogical relationship; a relationship in which both the teacher and the child bring the necessary requisites and are actively and intentionally involved. You can not have a pedagogical relationship with a child unless the child perceives that you do. This perception is born out of care and compassion shown towards the child" (p. 71).

It is the care and compassion that the teacher has for the child that sets the tone of the classroom. van Manen (1991) suggested, the pedagogical love of the educator toward children is the precondition for the pedagogical relationship to grow. It leads to an understanding of the term *in loco parentis*. "A good teacher who is loving and caring will have an understanding of and willingness to take on the *in loco parentis* relation and responsibility toward the children they teach" (van Manen, 1991, p. 5). The caring and loving teacher must be willing to go one step further, however, they must be motivated

to go beyond the initial surface; behind the scene of a child to process and unveil the true potential in each child, therefore they must be knowledgeable (van Manen, 1991).

When speaking of a good teacher as being knowledgeable, van Manen (1991) refers to them as those who instantly know what to do; someone who possesses pedagogical tact. "Pedagogical tact is the mindful skills that enable a teacher to act improvisational in always-changing educational situations... The teacher is constantly challenged to give positive shape to unanticipated situations" (van Manen, 1991, p. 187). In other words, a good teacher who is knowledgeable understands teaching should be relevant to the child, therefore they must also be knowledgeable concerning the development of children. They must know how to follow children's leads. "It is this ability to see pedagogical possibilities in ordinary incidents, and to convert seemingly unimportant incidents into pedagogical significance that is the promise of tact for teaching" (van Manen, 1991, p. 187). However, this is a far cry from what many African American students experience in relationships with teachers and other educational personnel.

Irvine (1990) suggested that the role in which educators play in the school performance of African American children is central and critical. McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) stated, that teachers bring to the education profession perspectives about what race means which they have constructed from their own life experiences and vested interests. Gouldner (1978) added, "teachers, even Black teachers whose life experiences are similar to those of the White middle class, tend to group and rank their Black students according to socioeconomic characteristics, teachability, and adaptability to

bureaucratic school norms" (p. 181). Irvine (1990) agreed with Payne by stating, "education personnel and cultural attributes, as well as their attitudes and behaviors are important" (p. 17). She pointed out:

Many educators speculate that low-income Black children bring to school a set of antisocial behaviors and traits that emanate from a culture of poverty. They rationalize their harsh treatment of these children by citing instances of an undisciplined and unstructured home life, a lack of positive male models, and early exposure to crime, and delinquency, and a disrespect for adult authority figures (Irvine, 1990, p. 17).

Payne (1994), suggested that negative attitudes and stereotypes on the part of the teacher may act to destroy a crucial bond, or prevent it from ever developing, thereby creating student resistance to the teacher both personally and educationally. Payne (1994) also suggested that if teachers of African American students allow their stereotypical perceptions to develop, they are apt to misperceive their students' behavior and performance in all or some aspect. "These misperceptions are likely to influence the education system in terms of their effect on attribution acquisition, expectation formation, and motivation. In addition the students and teachers will feel increased alienation from one another resulting in negativism, isolation, powerlessness, and meaninglessness" (Payne, 1994, p. 184). Buchman (1986) suggested, teachers who have come to believe stereotypes about African American students will lower their goals and discount some groups as unteachable. In her research, Payne (1994) quoted one teacher regarding her attitude toward African American students:

"And there are some, you know, that you never want to see, you just hope they won't show up and that's just being realistic. There are some kids you shouldn't want to meet anywhere" (p. 190).

Irvine (1990), suggested that stereotyping occurs when teachers perceive Black students to be potential sources of classroom disruptions and results in unfair disciplinary practices. She uses information from a study conducted by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (1984/ 1985) to solidify this information. According to this study, Black students are two to five times as likely to be suspended at a younger age when compared to Whites. In addition, Black students are more likely to receive lengthier repeated suspensions (Irvine, 1990). The Carnegie Study also reported that although minority students represent 23 percent of the nationwide school population, they constituted 40 percent of all suspended and expelled students (Irvine, 1990).

Kozol (1991) ended his book with this statement:

**"All our children ought to be allowed a stake in the enormous richness of America. Whether they were born to poor White Appalachians or to wealthy Texans, to poor Black people in the Bronx or to rich people in Manhasset or Winnetka, they are all quite wonderful and innocent when they are small. We soil them needlessly" (p. 233).**

It is this quotation that captures the essence of what pedagogical experiences should be for African American students and what they are in actuality.

## Conclusion

This literature review has addressed the emergence of the stereotypical image portrayed of African Americans including the part African Americans play in the formation and perpetuation of this image. It has examined how society affects schools and how schools treat African American students. However, there is little research which addresses the African American student's perspective concerning these issues. In the researcher I have examined, with exception of Kozol and Kotlowitz, researchers talk *about* African American students, but not *to* them. Few researchers tell the stories from the student's perspective.

It was my goal to talk with students and allow them to tell their stories. I was particularly interested in how they perceive themselves and how society portrays them and how they feel they and their peers are treated by education personnel. I sought to find out if their experiences are synonymous with the research literature. I wanted to know if African American students believe they and their peers are fulfilling the expectations society has of them which has been described in the literature and if so, what kind of changes they believe need to take place.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

What experiences have African American students had concerning the treatment they receive by educators and how do they respond to this treatment? To pursue the answer to this question, the researcher used human science research methodology to collect and analyze data from eight adolescent African American students who attend diverse schools. Interviews, close observations, and documents were the resources for collecting data. This data was reported using hermeneutic phenomenological methodology.

Human science research differs from natural science research in that it requires interpretation and understanding whereas natural science research involves for the most part external observation and explanation. van Manen, (1990) stated, "the difference between natural science research and human science research is what it studies: natural science research studies 'objects of nature', 'things', 'natural events', and the way that objects behave. Human science, in contrast, studies 'persons', or beings that have 'consciousness' and that 'act purposefully' in and on the world by creating objects of 'meaning' that are 'expressions' of how human beings exist in the world" (p. 4).

#### **Participants In the Study**

Erlandson, et. al. (1993) suggested that respondents (or informants) are key figures in an interview. They are powerful figures because their perspective contributes greatly to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon. Eight

adolescent African American students were used as informants for collecting data from their lived experiences. Crabtree and Miller (1992), defined informants as, "knowledgeable individuals from within the culture who teach the researcher through modeling and interpreting by supplying information" (p. 57). van Manen (1990) described researching lived experiences, as the process of having a reflective awareness of a past presence and again becoming involved in that experience immediately and naturally by gathering hermeneutic significance as we (reflectively) give memory to these experiences and through meditations, conversations, day dreams, inspirations and other interpretive acts, assign meaning to them which is then expressed in a textual content involving reflective writing. In other words, my goal was to get at the "essence" of the lived experiences the research participants had as it related to the treatment their peers and they had received from education personnel. van Manen (1990) described essence as, "what makes a thing what it is (and without which it would not be what it is); that which makes a thing what it is rather than its being or becoming something else" (p. 177).

van Manen (1990) gives an example of hermeneutic phenomenological research using the idea of essence, stating: "Phenomenology does not ask, 'How do these children learn this particular material?' but it asks, 'What is the nature or essence of the experience of learning (so that I can now better understand what this particular learning experience is like for these children)?" (p. 10). Additionally, van Manen (1990) said in regard to the essence of phenomenological writing, "The essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the description reawakens or



shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner" (p. 10). van Manen (1990) referred to the subject matter of hermeneutic phenomenology as "*geist*" or "the mind, thoughts, consciousness, values, feelings, emotions, actions, and purposes which find their objectifications in languages, beliefs, arts, and institutions" (p. 3). Therefore, the students were asked to assist the researcher because the researcher believed they had lived experiences that they were willing to share about the treatment they as well as other African American students had received from education personnel, and to get at the "*geist*" of those experiences.

Merriam (1988) suggested that key variables in having good interaction between the researcher and the informant are the attitudes and orientation of the informant. These factors also determine the type of information obtained from the informants. Merriam (1988) also indicated that a good researcher is sensitive to the verbal and nonverbal messages being conveyed by the informants. The researcher believes that this type of relationship emerged as I worked with the students in groups and individually.

There were, in all eight participants. I solicited four of the participants from the community church where we all attend. The other four were solicited by what is known as the referral method or "snowballing" (Johnson, 1990). In using the snowball method, the first four respondents were selected carefully since they determined completely the direction of the study. Once I identified the first four participants, I asked each of them to name an African American student who might be helpful to the research study. If any of the four participants who had been referred had not been available or choose not to

participate, I would have returned to the previous participants and asked for another referral.

### **Parental Involvement**

Because all of the participants were under the age of 18 and were therefore considered minors, the parents of each participant were approached first. A description, as well as the purpose of the research project was explained in detail with all questions answered to the best of the researcher's ability. A copy of the interview questions was distributed to the parents also. It was explained to the parents that the participants in no way would be deceived or misled and that materials to which they would have access to were not offensive, threatening, or degrading. The parents were informed that the students would be asked to keep personal journals which might contain personal or sensitive information and the researcher would have access to the personal journals. Parents were informed that there would be no inducements offered as a result of their child's participation in this research project, but that the students were asked to participate on a voluntary basis only. Parents of each participant were informed that the researcher would do as much as possible to protect the anonymity of the participants through the use of pseudonyms, by omitting damaging or identifiable information, by establishing before hand who had the final say over the study's content, and by being sensitive to time and the number of interviews involved in the study. Privacy and confidentiality would be confined not only to what the researcher disseminated but also to necessary "personal space" that the researcher or the informants declared off limits

even to my own investigation. Both the parent(s) of each participant, as well as the participants were asked to sign a consent form which stated all of the above information. In addition, while they were encouraged to enter the project with a commitment to remain involved until its completion, it was explained orally and in writing that they were free to withdraw their consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty. Once parental consent was given, an explanation of the research project was presented to the students who were asked to participate.

Erlanson, et. al. (1993) stated, "Participation in naturalistic study should be educative. Opportunities to share, confront, criticize, and learn from one another's constructions is a central feature of naturalistic inquiry. Each participant should emerge with more information and a better understanding than he or she had initially" (pp. 158 -159). The researcher explained to the parents of the participants that by allowing their children to participate in this research project, the students would be given an opportunity through discourse with me and the other participants to share the experiences they and their peers had as they related to the treatment received from education personnel. Through describing and interpreting these lived experiences the researcher believes the participants emerged with a better understanding of themselves and the major role they play in charting the course of their lives based on the choices they make.

The fact that the students attend diverse schools was not a determinant for their participation in the research project. However, the researcher believes this made the

research richer and allowed the researcher to look for consistencies in the treatment of African American students in diverse settings.

### **Methodology used for Collecting Data**

Triangulation, or as Crabtree (1992) defined it, both multiple informants as well as multiple methods were used to collect data. The researcher established triangulation by using eight different informants as well as multiple methods which included interviews, close observations, and the use of documents to collect data.

#### ***Interviewing***

Erlanson, et. al. (1993) defined an interview as "a conversation with a purpose" (p. 85). van Manen (1990) suggested that in hermeneutic phenomenological human science research this type of interview may be used as a vehicle to develop a conversational relationship with the interviewee about the meaning of an experience. While it is impossible to offer ready-made questions in this type of interview, van Manen (1990) did suggest that the researcher stay close to the experience as lived, be very concrete when asking what an experience is like, ask the person(s) to think of a specific instance, situation, person, or event, and then explore the whole experience to the fullest. This interviewing technique allowed the researcher the flexibility needed when working with teenagers, to understand and put into a larger context the interpersonal, social, and cultural aspects of the environment, as well as the ability to move back and

forth in time in order to reconstruct past events, and to describe and interpret these events.

There were group interviews conducted with the informants. As stated by Erlandson, et. al. (1993), these interviews took on a variety of forms, from being very focused or predetermined to being very open-ended. At times there was a set of basic questions, and at other times during the interviews, neither exact wording nor the order of questions was predetermined. A sample of the basic questions which were asked includes:

- \* How do you think you are treated by educational personnel? Give an example of an experience you have had.
- \* From your perspective, how are African American students treated by education personnel and how do they respond to this treatment? Give an example.
- \* What image or images do you perceive society has of African Americans and how do you feel about this image or these images?
- \* Do you believe African Americans play a part in the formation and perpetuation of the image you described that society has of them? If so, how?
- \* What, if any, suggestions do you have to change society's image of African Americans?

### ***Observations***

van Manen (1990) described another way of collecting material from others as a method of close observations. Erlandson, et. al. (1993) noted that "interviews and

observations build understanding of a social context in an interactive way. Therefore, the researcher cannot treat these two human sources of data as independent of each other" (p. 99). Erlandson, et. al. (1993) further stated, "the interaction of these two sources of data, interviews and close observations, not only enriches them both, but also provides a basis for analysis that would be impossible with only one source" (p. 99).

Close observation, according to van Manen (1990), allows the researcher to enter and participate in the informants' life world (the world of lived experiences). This method requires that the researcher be a participant and an observer at the same time. Therefore, I observed the informants' verbal and nonverbal communication as they participated in interviews with me in an effort to capture the essence or the nature of the lived experiences they were sharing. Also, the researcher had the opportunity to observe them as they interacted with one another in other social settings such as extra curricular school activities, church services, youth fellowships, and community outreach activities. This ensured a richer description of the experience.

### ***Documents***

A third method for acquiring data is through the use of documents. The term documents, according to Erlandson, et. al. (1993), refers to "the broad range of written and symbolic records, as well as any available materials and data" (p. 99). The central offices of the school districts in which the schools the participants attended were a part, provided documents that contained general student profile information. In addition, each participant was asked to keep a personal journal which was completed outside the

parameters of the school setting. Hoskisson and Thompkins (1987) suggested that the use of personal journals is for students to keep a written account of events in their lives and to write about topics of their own choosing. van Manen (1990) stated that "journal writing may contain reflective accounts of human experiences that are of phenomenological value. Through written descriptions the researcher may be able to detect emerging and recurring themes as well as look for consistencies in lived experiences" (p. 73).

The participants were asked to include entries concerning the treatment their peers and they received from education personnel. They were asked to concentrate on a specific experience they had and to write about it as if they were living through it. They were asked to describe their thoughts, feelings, emotions, and attitudes concerning the experience. Because personal journals are by nature private and because this activity did not take place during school hours, students could not be forced to disclose to teachers or peers the content of their journals. They were free to write whatever they chose to write in their journals with the understanding that the researcher had complete access to their journals and was obligated to report any illegal or life-threatening activities.

### **Analysis of Data**

Marshall's and Rossman (1989) defined data analysis as, "the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat" (p. 112). van Manen (1990) suggested that patterns of analyzing

and presenting phenomenological human science research can often lead to uninteresting and un insightful works which consist of little more than endless reproductions and fragments of transcripts under the guise that the researcher has decided to let the data speak for themselves, he admitted that because there is no research design to follow, the potential exists for the researcher to have feelings of frustration which can ultimately lead to a halt in the work. Therefore van Manen (1990) recommended that a very broad organizational approach be established for the research project based on the fundamental question or notion which is being addressed. Hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry should be conducted as an activity which involves simultaneously the collection of data, data interpretation, and narrative reporting writing. Creswell (1994) confirmed that in data analysis several simultaneous activities engage the attention of the researcher including collecting information from the field, sorting the information into a story or picture, and actually writing the text.

Creswell (1994) stated that "for phenomenology the outcome typically consists of a descriptive narrative" (p. 160). van Manen (1990) suggested that if in-depth conversational interviews are used as a method of collecting data, these interviews may be reworked into reconstructed life stories, or the conversations may be analyzed for relevant anecdotes, or they may be used for constructing fictionalized antinomous accounts that bring out contrasting ways of seeing or acting in concrete situations. The researcher used anecdote as a methodological device in the phenomenological writing of this study. van Manen (1990) defined anecdote as, "a story or something depicted in narrative form" (p. 21). van Manen (1990) concluded, "the significance of anecdotal



narrative in phenomenological research and writing is situated in its power to compel, lead us to reflect, involve us personally, transform us by our being touched, shaken, or moved by the story, as well as teach us, and measure our interpretative sense" (p. 21). Through the use of anecdotal narrative, a pedagogical experience will be the result of all who encounter this research.

Creswell (1994) suggested that in this type of study, one does not begin with a theory or test to verify. However, the perpetuation theory was helpful in shaping the initial research questions. This theory was also used as a basis of comparison for the narrative description. However, the intent was not to be constrained by this theory. The researcher used it as a lens through which the participants lived experiences were examined to see if it adequately explained what occurred naturally in the experiences (Creswell, 1994).

### **Theme Analysis**

An additional responsibility of the researcher was to look for emerging themes while in the process of collecting, analyzing, and reporting the data. van Manen (1990) referred to a theme as an element which occurs frequently in the text. He stated:

As we are able to articulate the notion of theme we are also able to clarify further the nature of human science research. Making something of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning is more accurately a process of insightful

invention, discovery or disclosure-grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning (p. 79). van Manen further stated: "Phenomenological themes may be understood as the structures of experience. So when we analyze a phenomenon, we are trying to determine what the themes are, and the experiential structures that make up that experience" (p. 79). As the lived experience descriptions of each of the participants were studied, themes began to emerge which recurred throughout the various descriptions gathered. These themes were then highlighted in the anecdotal narrative and were used to confirm or to refute the implications of the perpetuation theory.

### **Building Trustworthiness**

Erlandson, et. al. (1993) suggested that in order for inquiry to be valid the researcher must be concerned with how "truth" will be established, how it will be communicated, and how error will be detected and corrected. Erlandson, et. al., (1993) further concluded that "if intellectual inquiry is to have an impact on human knowledge, it must demonstrate its true value, provide the basis for applying it, and allow for external judgements to be made about the consistence of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions" (p. 29). This process is referred to as trustworthiness. The researcher used triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, and an audit trail to establish trustworthiness. Triangulation, which is the use of multiple informants as well as multiple methods was explained in detail earlier in this chapter.

According to Erlandson et. al. (1993), peer debriefing helps to build credibility in the research by allowing a peer who is a professional outside of the context and who has some general understanding of the study to analyze materials, test working hypotheses and emerging designs, and listen to the researcher's ideas and concerns. The researcher had already established a relationship with such a person who agreed to take on this responsibility.

Member checking was used in order for the informants to review the data collected as well as the interpretations of the data, which allowed them to immediately correct errors of facts or challenge interpretations. Erlandson, et. al. (1993) urged that member checking be conducted continuously and before submission of the final report. A member check should be conducted by furnishing entire copies of the study to the respondents and other persons in the setting being studied for a final examination.

In addition to other strategies used to establish trustworthiness, the researcher enlisted the help of a seasoned educational researcher to conduct an audit trail. To check on the dependability of the research project, it was necessary for the researcher to have an external check on the process by which the study was conducted. Erlandson, et. al. (1993) stated, "an adequate trail should be left to enable the auditor to determine if conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations can be traced to their sources and if they are supported by the inquiry" (p. 35).

Finally, the researcher relied on the expertise of the advisement committee to provide guidance. It was important that they be involved in every step of the research project in order to answer and ask the questions that stirred the researcher in the right

direction. The advice was taken seriously and acted upon immediately, thus saving the researcher from unnecessary stress and frustration.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the approach outlined in this chapter, the phenomenological methodology, according to van Manen (1990), is a more carefully cultivated thoughtfulness than a technique. van Manen (1990) explained that to be able to do justice to the fullness and ambiguity of the experience of the lifeworld, writing may turn into a complex process of rewriting (re-thinking, re-flecting, re-cognizing). This depth of writing cannot be accomplished in one straightforward session. Rather, it involves the process of going back and forth between the parts and the whole in order to arrive at a finely drafted piece that often reflects the personal "signature" of the author (van Manen, 1990). The researcher believes this methodology was the best way to report the findings from the research study because it allowed examination and reporting on all of the pertinent aspects of the research study. It allows the reader vicariously into the context and allows him to interact with the data presented.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

Merriam (1988) suggested that one of the key variables in having good interaction between the researcher and the informant is the attitude and orientation of the informant. Merriam (1988) further indicated that a good researcher is sensitive to the verbal and nonverbal messages being conveyed by the informants. I was somewhat apprehensive as to whether or not I could successfully gain the type of information I was seeking from adolescents without having established a prior relationship with them. Therefore, my intention was to seek out students with whom I had already established a relationship and was familiar with their attitudes as well as their verbal and nonverbal communication. I chose six adolescents from my church. I had known this group of students and their parents for several years and felt that a relationship which was based on mutual trust and respect had already been established. In addition, I felt this would cut down on the time needed to establish a basis in which the participants felt comfortable enough to openly share their experiences. However, in order to achieve a richer research study I felt it was important to include students in my research from outside of the church. Therefore four students were selected from the original group and four others were selected. The other four participants were solicited by what is known as the referral method or "snowballing". In using the snowball method the first four were selected and then each was asked to identify an African American student he/she felt would be helpful to the

study. Eventually, after one and a half months, I was able to conclude the search for participants when I had located eight adolescents eager to tell their stories.

Because of the fact that all the participants were under the age of 18, it was necessary to seek parental consent before the research could begin. This proved to be another challenge. My original plan was to meet with all the parents at once to explain the research study and to answer all questions and then to get all parental letters and consent forms signed. Trying to find a time to meet that all could agree upon was impossible. Therefore, I had to settle for meeting with most of them at once and then catching the others one by one. With all letters and consent forms signed, the eight participants were finally confirmed and ready to begin.

### **The Participants**

I chose to include a description of the school each participant attended, therefore, I grouped the ones who attended the same school together. All of the schools which the participants attended were located in the same school district, except for Cortez's. However, the schools are vastly different. John and Denise attended a magnet school which was located in the inner city. Crystal and Richard attended a school which was also located in the inner city and had been labeled an "at risk" school. Joe and Leslie attended two different high schools populated by students from the middle class socio-economic level of society. Brenda and Cortez were the youngest members of the group. Both were in middle school and all of the others were in high school. Brenda attended

a middle school in the inner city and Cortez attended a school in the upper middle class socio-economic level of society.

### *John and Denise*

John and Denise were both freshmen at the same public magnet school which is known for its excellent sports programs and high academic standards. The school reported composite national percentile ranked scores for the achievement test taken by the ninth and eleventh graders during the 1993-94 school year of 78% and 82% respectively. These data were reported in School Profiles, which is the August, 1995 edition of a booklet published annually by the districts' Department of Planning, Implementation and Assessment. This school had a total population for the 1994-95 school year (which were the latest figures available) of 1,197 students, of which 48% were African American, 3% American Indian, 1% Hispanic, and another 1% was Asian. Of the student population, 46% were White.

The Student Profile booklet also included the number of suspensions which took place during the 1994-95 school year. Of the 63 suspensions, 1 involved an Asian student, 22 involved White students, and 40, almost twice as many suspensions involving White students, involved African American students.

While John and Denise were both somewhat shy, John was the more withdrawn of the two. He was very quiet and did not participate in many extracurricular school activities. His mother described him as being very active during the time he attended middle school, playing sports as well as taking private music lessons and playing three

different instruments in the school band. However, when John reached high school, he was no longer interested in being involved. When school officials tried to encourage John to participate in the academically-accelerated programs, John protested that he was not capable of the challenge and chose to remain in the regular program. John maintained between a "B" and "C" average.

Coming from a family of singers, it was natural for Denise to find her niche in the school's gospel and honor choirs. She started the school year participating in the girls' basketball team which was a carry-over of her middle school involvement with the sports program. However, struggling to find a satisfactory balance between her academic expectations and her sports activities, Denise was forced to abandon the sports arena. Denise was very outgoing and found the social life at her school very rewarding and the academics challenging. She admitted that she was struggling to maintain the minimum grade point average required to remain a student at this magnet school.

### ***Crystal and Richard***

Crystal was a junior and Richard was a senior at an inner city school that was known for the many acts of violence that occurred on a regular basis, as reported by the news media. It had been labeled an "at risk" school because of the overall low achievement scores held by the student body as reported in the August, 1995 edition of the school district's School Profiles booklet. According to this booklet, the composite national percentile ranked scores for the achievement test taken by the ninth and eleventh graders during the 1993-94 school year is 30% and 25% respectively.



The school had a total population for the 1994-95 school year of 849 students. Of these students there were 12 American Indian students, 2 Hispanic, 1 Asian, 27 White, and 807 students (95%) were African American. Of the total number of suspensions for that school year, there were 4 that involved American Indian students, 1 in which an Hispanic student was involved, and 3 which involved White students. Of 309 suspensions, 301 involved African American students.

Other interesting statistics involving this school included the fact that while there were only 37 transfers into the school, there were 434 transfers out of the school. In addition, during the fourth quarter of the school year, 321 students which is almost 39% of the total student body, was absent over 20% of the time.

The total population of students who had been serviced by the special education department and labeled as exceptional students was 175. Of that number, 6 were American Indian, 1 was Hispanic, 13 were White and 155 of the students were Black. Of the students that attended this school, 72% participated in the school's free lunch program which meant that they came from families that are either near, on, or below the poverty level.

Crystal spent her freshman year of high school attending the same magnet school which John and Denise attended. However, her overwhelming dedication to and support of her neighborhood school and her determination to make a difference, were the deciding factors which led her to spend her sophomore and junior years at the school she attended. Crystal was very active and was involved in several extra-curricular activities. She was very outgoing, outspoken, and friendly, and was filled with school spirit. She

set and achieved high academic goals and was involved in the college preparatory program which the school offered.

Richard, while small in stature, struggled to maintain his position as a starter for the school's football team. He never wavered in his self esteem and belief in his own abilities. Richard appeared to be a young man who had given much time to reflection about his years of school experiences. He was very mature and always hesitated before answering questions in order to ensure that his responses were accurate and fair. While other participants sometimes wavered in their responses and blamed a variety of circumstances and people for their experiences, Richard was very consistent with his responses.

### *Joe*

Joe attended a high school where the African American population was in the minority. Of 1,192 students, only 265 were Black, 62 were American Indian, 42 were Hispanic, and 24 were Asian. While 809 of the students were White, of the 265 Black students who attended this high school, 57 (which is almost 22%) were eligible for the special education program. Only 60 of the 809 White students were a part of the program. While the Black population was only 22% of the entire student body, they accounted for 140 of the total amount of 348 suspensions which took place during the 1994-95 school year.

Joe stated that he got along well with the rest of the student body. He found being an athlete, a football player, at this school somewhat challenging because he said, "The teachers push you harder to make sure you stay eligible to play" (Appendix A, p. 217). Joe was a "C" average student and worked in the office as a student aide. He expressed himself freely and openly and while participating in the group interviews. He willingly shared a number of personal experiences which added richness to the discussions.

### *Leslie*

According to the School Profile booklet Leslie attended a school where the total student population is 958. There were 214 Black students, 63 American Indian students, 30 Hispanic students, 11 Asian students, and 640 White students. Out of those students, 42 Black students, 16 American Indian students, 3 Hispanic students and 75 White students were serviced in a special education program. The number of suspensions included 77 Black and 153 White students. Considering that only 22% of the total student population was Black while 67% was White, the number of suspensions involving Black students, while substantially lower than those involving White students, is disproportionately high.

Leslie was a very outspoken individual who shared that she liked school. She was a "B" average student who was a member of the Spanish club and Future Educators of America. She enjoyed helping young children and said that people saw her as being "down to earth" and "silly".

***Brenda***

Brenda attended an inner city middle school which had several security officers on duty because of the gang activity, according to Brenda. Brenda said that the security officers selected and took the bad students on field trips to visit jails (Appendix A, p. 209). The School Profile booklet listed the total number of the student population as 604. Of that number 565, or 94% of the student body was Black, and 31 were White. The booklet reported that 426 Black students were involved in suspensions and of 565 Black students, 144 qualified for the special education program. Of this school's total student body, 87% qualified for the free lunch program, and the composite national percentile ranked score for the seventh graders was 24.

While Brenda was known for being a very quiet and shy young lady, she was surprisingly quite vocal in her opinions concerning the issues raised during the interviews. She had a definite opinion about everything. According to Brenda, she had only gotten into trouble once during her attendance at the school. While she believed she had not learned much, academically, she maintained good grades (Appendix A, p. 223).

***Cortez***

Cortez attended middle school in a different district, located in the upper-middle class part of town. It was known for its high academic standards, excellent performing arts and winning sports programs. While the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade middle school had a total population of 1,355 students, only 93, or 7% were Black students according to the enrollment office.

Cortez was a very popular student who got along well with his teachers and fellow students. He was actively involved in the school's sports programs, playing both football and basketball. While Cortez was capable of doing well academically, his mother implied that he did not always work up to his full potential.

### **The Group**

I discovered a group of young people who were serious, committed not only to the study but to each other, accepting of others, honest, and who had much to say with deep convictions and emotions. Elkind (1984) suggested that teenagers can sometimes have short attention spans so I assumed after the first hour that they would show signs of restlessness, therefore I tried to bring closure to the interview because my time commitment for each group session was limited to one hour. However, the first session lasted almost two hours because the group was so engrossed in what they were discussing they did not want to stop! What I took as signs of restlessness, such as twisting in their seats, making jokes with one another, and changing the topic periodically, was their way of coping with such a heavy topic of discussion. In actuality, they were more than willing to continue sharing their perspectives concerning how African Americans are treated in schools.

I was particularly impressed with how committed the group members were both to the research study and to each other right from their first meeting. One of the group members was almost an hour late. When I posed the question shall we begin or do you want to wait for the other group member, without hesitation they unanimously stated that

they wanted to wait. They spent their waiting time getting to know one another better and making one another feel comfortable and accepted. One young man, Cortez, was a stranger to everyone in the group; he had been recommended by someone else who was no longer a part of the group so he did not know anyone. Without any prompting from me, the rest of the group members proceeded to ask him several questions, which enabled him to relax and be himself. In fact, when the last member of the group finally showed up, she bought food with her and graciously offered to share one breakfast sandwich and one hash brown with anyone who wanted some. All but a few of the group members, including Cortez, accepted some with great enthusiasm.

In every meeting with the students both as a group and individually, I was amazed at their level of seriousness and commitment to the project. It was evident by the time they took to ponder each question posed to them and by the type of responses they gave that they considered the topic of discussion very important. During the second group session they tediously spent one and a half hours going through the transcript from the first session to verify what they had said and to clarify any questionable or confusing statements. They actually went through the entire document, which was several pages long with a red pen, read every word of it and made additional comments and corrections. In addition, I had previously collected their journals, read each of them, and constructed a list of questions to which the group members were to respond. I was again very impressed with the enthusiasm, seriousness, and commitment which they demonstrated while completing this task.

This group of participants were honest with themselves, each other and with me, and they were not afraid to disagree with one another. I was surprised that right from the start there was an atmosphere in which they felt very comfortable in speaking honestly. They were not the least bit intimidated by or hesitant because of my presence. While some of the group members were very quiet and had to be drawn into the discussion by use of direct questioning, most of them were very outspoken and willing to share. This necessitated my having to work hard at dissuading a few people from dominating the entire discussion. At times this was an impossible task.

Sometimes it was very difficult for me not to register through my comments, intonations, and body language, my apparent shock at some of their comments. It was also very difficult for me to keep my personal opinions to myself. In fact, several of the informants wanted to read the proposal. While flattered by their interest, I knew it was necessary for me to deny them that privilege because it would influence their perspectives.

It is apparent by the number of pages of the transcript from the interviews that the participants had a lot to say. John and Cortez were very quiet and had to be pulled into the discussion several times by my asking what they thought. Denise started out being very quiet but soon began sharing her thoughts more. While Brenda and Richard were quiet, whenever they were asked direct questions, they had a great deal to say. Crystal, Joe, and Leslie had a comment for almost every question and a response for almost every comment made by the other group members. They had a wealth of experience and information and I am positive they could have taken up all of the

interviewing time had I allowed them to do so. Therefore it was very important that I fulfill my role as mediator in order to achieve input from every participant.

### **Theme Analysis**

I found Marshall and Rossman's (1989) definition of theme analysis to be descriptive of the process I was engaged in as I analyzed the data collected. They stated that "the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data is a messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat" (p. 112). I was engaged in several activities simultaneously which included collecting information from the field and the participants, sorting the information, and writing the text, while continuously looking for emerging themes.

van Manen (1990) referred to a theme as an element which occurs frequently in the text. He further stated: "Phenomenological themes may be understood as the structure of experiences. So when we analyze a phenomenon, we are trying to determine what the themes are and the experiential structures that make up that experience" (p. 79). As I engaged in purposeful conversations with the participants during group interviews and individually through dialogue journals, several themes began to emerge. After I examined the dialogue journals and the interview transcripts I began making a list of emerging themes. I then went back through the data and labeled the participant responses with the theme that matched best. In going through the process I noticed that there were themes within the themes, so I engaged in the lengthy and tedious process of



sorting the data according to the emergent themes, and then color coding the themes that had emerged within the primary themes. Through this process I identified several themes that make sense to me. Although another reader might see different themes, for me the emergent themes fell into three categories: themes of what an image is and whose images they are; themes of treatment; and themes of changes. These emergent themes also answered the questions:

- \* What, if any, image or images do African American students perceive society has of them and how do they feel about this?
- \* What part do African American students feel they play in perpetuating the image society has of them?
- \* If African American students determine that society does portray an image of them, do they feel the need to change the image?

### **Themes of Images**

Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1986) defined "image" as: "the production of a person or thing, or to create a representation, which is a statement or an account made to convey a particular view or impression of something with the intention of influencing the opinion or action of a thing or person" (pp. 1128 & 1926). Throughout the review of the literature there is a consistent referral to the "image" of African Americans which implies that all African Americans share one common "image". In fact McLaren and Dantley (1990) implied that the image portrayed of African Americans has been constructed by a set of structured social practices which reproduce

themselves through individuals who are imprisoned by historically conditional regimes of discourse, by market-logic interests, and by the interests of dominant groups. This not only implies that there is *one* common image of African Americans but that African Americans have no choice but to fulfill and perpetuate the image of themselves. I, therefore, felt it was imperative to address the question: *What, if any image or images do African American students perceive society has of them and to determine from the participants, how they defined "image"; if they thought there was an "image" of African Americans; and if so, what they perceived that image to be, and who or what determined the image of African Americans.*

I began our first group meeting by asking the participants to engage in the activity of defining and describing what "image" meant to them. While at times the discussion did refer to image as *one* common picture of African Americans, it was not the dominant theme. Instead, emergent themes included image as individuality, a teenage image, a self-image, and an image based on appearance. The participants also brought out some interesting comments which led to emergent themes of image as it relates to labeling, the "images" of African Americans as a group, "images" of African Americans through the media, and an image of African Americans *by* African Americans.

### ***Image as Individuality***

When asked what they thought the word "image" meant, the informants' first response was that it was *"a very specific, individual thing"*. Crystal stated, "it is how *somebody* looks" (Appendix A, p. 199). Linda and Brenda both concurred by stating "a

person" and "the way *you* act" (Appendix A, p. 199). Crystal used the group of participants to stress her belief that an image is based on individuality. She stated,

"If somebody came in here right now and looked at all of us, some things may be true about all of us together - we are all Black or have Black in us. But just to say we are all something (stupid) yeah, it wouldn't be fair because I'm *different* and I want to be seen as *different*. So I'm not just going to look at everybody in a white school and say they are all valley girls, or they are all prejudice, or they are all devil worshipers, or rock and roll people, or whatever. I'm not going to do that because I don't want to be done like that." (Appendix A, p. 228).

Crystal was very passionate in her response. She went on to say,

"Because everybody is not the same and you can't take a group and look at them and say, 'Oh well they are 4.0 students or whatever.' You can't do that because everybody is *different*. People don't understand that. You have to let people be who they are. You can't just take a whole group of people and judge them and put them in this category because that's what you think they are" (Appendix A, p. 228).

Two of the participants, Joe and Richard, referred to an image as something negative. Joe implied that a person could have a 'bad' image of you from coming up and talking with you, while Richard referred to an image as a stereotype of *somebody* who is not going to make it in life or *someone* who is not trying (Appendix A, pp. 199, 200).

Whether referring to an image as something someone perceives of you or as something you perceive of someone else, throughout the interview, the informants were persistent with their responses. Richard said, "Image means how *you* view *something*" (Appendix A, p. 199). He went on later to say, "Yes, I think it [image] is *individual*" (Appendix A, 203). Even later in the interview when asked what they thought about Michael Jordan, Cortez said that he liked him because he played basketball and had a lot of money, but Denise was quick not to allow Cortez to put Michael Jordan in a group that shared a common image. She interrupted with "But you can't really say because you don't *know him*. You just don't know him." (Appendix A, p. 232). Crystal agreed by adding, "You know 'Air Jordan', but you don't *know* Michael Jordan." (Appendix A, p. 232).

While they insisted that an image is based on individuality and were reluctant to agree that an image of African Americans as a whole does exist, the participants contradicted themselves by bringing out an interesting angle I had never thought about. They seem to believe that there is an image society has of *teenagers*. I felt that if I was going to be led in this research study by the perceptions of African American adolescents, I was obligated to pursue this line of thinking.

### ***A Teenage Image***

The participants had many interesting points to make about teenagers. They vacillated between whether they were discussing teenagers in general or African American teenagers, whether the comments they were making were their own thoughts

or the thoughts of an older generation, and whether there existed a good or bad image of teenagers. While Brenda felt that teenagers were *not* mistreated by adults and were instead treated very well by them, and that teenagers were good, she stated that "Some of them [teenagers] are just growing up" (Appendix A, 202). Richard felt that teenagers as a whole are disrespectful (Appendix A, 219). Brenda also stated that *some* teenagers just don't think. She said "They don't care themselves what they do and stuff" (Appendix A, 200). Richard was insistent, in stating that "they [teens] don't care about life. They aren't trying to make it. They aren't trying to do anything with their lives" (Appendix A, p. 205). When asked if he thought that was just with African American young people, he said "It's not a matter of race, it's just young people themselves" (Appendix A, p. 205).

Joe stated that "some Black people would say that the Black youth of today are lazy" (Appendix A, p. 201). However, Richard was quick to make sure Joe's statement was inclusive of all adults and teenagers, not just African Americans by stating, "That's how the older adults view the younger people. I think more than just a view of African American teenagers, they have a view of teenagers, period" (Appendix A, p. 201). When asked what that view was, the group made comments like "stupid" "hormones are crazy", "getting pregnant", and "on drugs" (Appendix A, p. 202). John joined in by saying, "...And they think young men, that's all they are after, is to just have sex, smoke weed and all of that, and run around town starting trouble" (Appendix A, p. 202).

To agree that there is a stereotypical image of African Americans would mean to the participants that they would have had to surrender the idea that "image" is an

individual thing, but the informants were not willing to give into that idea. They decided that if *a* stereotypical image of African Americans did exist, they would lay no claim to it for themselves. They did, however, seem comfortable admitting that there is an image of teenagers, and the majority of them seemed to think it was a negative image. Again, while this may be true about *some* teenagers, in their opinion, they (the participants) were *excluded!* They saw themselves as individuals and refused to be grouped under the patronage of one common image.

### *Self-Image*

Webster's third New International Dictionary defined self-image as "one's conception of oneself or of one's role" (p. 2060). This group of African American participants had no problem with thinking highly of themselves, nor with thinking of themselves as individuals. All but one of them had positive self images and believed others perceived them the same way.

When asked what type of image people have of her, Brenda did not hesitate for one moment before answering "good" (Appendix A, p. 223). She also saw herself as a kind and friendly person and believed that others would use the same adjectives to describe her. Leslie described herself, in a lighthearted manner, as being really goofy and filled with laughter (Appendix A, p. 227). John, who was bi-racial, took pride in the fact that he considered himself Black. When asked about it he stated, with enthusiasm, "my mother is Black and I'm with her most of the time and I really don't spend that much time with my real daddy. Black, that's what is on my school forms"

(Appendix A, p. 214). The 1990 General Social Survey study indicated that the image the majority population has of African Americans is that they are poor, lazy, violent, ignorant, and nonpatriotic (Garcia, 1994). This group of participants had not accepted this as an image for themselves nor their friends.

Richard, while having a good self-image, felt there was one contributing factor to his self-image that he desired to change, his appearance. Richard felt that his wardrobe was similar to what "gang members" wear. When asked what type of image he thought people had of him, he stated, "For me it's [meaning his self-image] probably more of a stereotype because I don't dress like someone trying to be successful. So I am probably stereotyped as somebody who's not going to make it in life. I wear DNKY [a brand of clothing] and stuff like that." (Appendix A, pp. 200, 201). When I inquired as to why he dressed in this manner if he knew what it was associated with, his reply was, "because it is comfortable, but I'm trying to get out of that" (Appendix A, p. 201). Several of the participants validated what Richard had said about clothes being associated with the image you portray.

### *Image Based on Appearance*

I did not encounter any information concerning clothing being associated with the image society has of African Americans while reviewing the literature. However, the participants placed great emphasis in the important role clothes played in their image. In fact, according to them, wearing the wrong color or style of clothing can lead to misjudgments being made, conclusions being drawn, and action being taken. The

participants told of incidents in which they had been accused of being part of a gang because of the way they wore their clothes. Joe told of such an incident. "I wore some baggy clothes, right, and the teacher asked me if I was a 'gang banger' because my clothes were baggy. It was a White teacher and he was like, 'So are you one of those gang bangers who walk around here trying to start trouble?' I was like, 'No, why?' He was like, 'Well, look at your pants. They're all baggy.' I was like, 'Well, mine aren't suppose to be tight like yours. This is how I feel comfortable'" (Appendix A, p. 205).

Richard also believed that wearing the right clothes can have a positive effect on your image. He explained that "if you have someone walking around looking like a gang member, they wouldn't be viewed as someone trying to go to college and trying to major in something and trying to be successful. But if you see somebody maybe dress somewhat differently, more mature or like they are trying to accomplish something in life, the view of them would probably be different" (Appendix A, p. 203). Cortez brought out that White students can also be misjudged by their appearance. When asked if he assumed that all White students who went to his school cared, he stated, "They are perceived as caring unless they are *dressed* like a kid who doesn't care" (Appendix A, p. 213). I was informed by the participants that not only are conclusions drawn based upon the clothes you wear, but also by the labels different people attach to you.



### *Image In Labels*

When referring to labeling students, the participants spoke of it in a different connotation than Irvine (1990) when she concluded that a disproportionately high number of African American students are labeled as being slow and placed in low ability groups and special education classes. They spoke of being labeled in terms of educators labeling them as being "smart" and having unreasonable expectations of them because they had previously attended a magnet school. Crystal spoke very candidly:

But teachers put labels on kids all kind of ways. When I was at another school my freshmen year, my history teacher asked the class a question and this school is a magnet school so there are all kinds of kids that go there from all over the city and he asked a question and no one knew the answer. So he said "Who is in here from the middle school that is a magnet school?" ...And some of the students raised their hands, and he said, "You all should know the answer"...like the rest of us shouldn't because we are from a different school (Appendix A, p. 206).

Because Crystal had not been one of the students who had previously attended a magnet school, she was offended by the teacher's comments.

Other participants expressed grave concerns with labeling. Richard expressed that people had labeled his entire school as having a bad reputation based on a few incidents which received negative publicity from the media, which he insisted were both unfounded. When asked why he thought his school had been labeled as "bad", his response was, "It's probably because a lot of Blacks go there and plus we *do* get into a

lot of trouble. We get into as much trouble as the other schools do, but it seems like ours is brought up on the news more" (Appendix A, p. 226). Richard was persistent in defending the image of his school. When asked if he was afraid of going to the school because it had been labeled as "bad", he stated emphatically, "No, because I know everybody. It's not as bad as everybody thinks. It's just like any other school. It's just a lot of Blacks that go there. People don't walk around carrying guns and all of that. It's not all that bad" (Appendix A, p. 236).

According to the informants, people not only label other people and schools, but they label entire areas of a city. Richard felt his school had been labeled as bad because its location on the north side of the city was considered a lower socio-economic part of town. However, more than being labeled because of the clothes a person wears, or the school a person attended; more than having the school labeled based on who attended that school, or how the media portrayed the school or what part of the city in which the school was located, the participants were most offended by the images and labels attached to Black people as a whole.

### *Images of African Americans as a Group*

While they were emphatic that an image is based on individuality and that there were multiple images portrayed, the participants were very reluctant to concede that there existed *one common image* of African Americans. They really struggled with this issue and signs of distress were obvious as they debated how to address it. When asked what type of image they thought African Americans had, Crystal stated, "It depends where you

are coming from because a White person might see us as being bad, but another Black person might see us as being educated" (Appendix A, p. 201). Brenda commented that she thought the image of Blacks was good, but that only *some* [Blacks] carried themselves [as bad] that way. She further stated, "They [Blacks] have a good image but they don't show it" (Appendix A, p. 200).

Still struggling with the issue, the participants did, however, state what they believed were some common images portrayed of African Americans. Crystal suggested that one image was of everybody being on welfare and walking around pregnant with no shoes (Appendix A, p. 199). But in an effort to refute this image, she continued by saying, "...well there are more White people on welfare than there are Blacks. But when you say welfare, that's the first thing people think of is some Black women with five babies" (Appendix A, p. 229).

Richard stated, "I don't really focus on color because you see it [stereotyping] a lot with Black people. There's going to be stereotypes with Black people" (Appendix A, p. 202). Brenda later decided that there *was* an image of Black people. This contradicted her previous statement. She said, "Like they say Black people shoot a lot and stuff, that's their character and stuff..." (Appendix A, p. 200). But then in defense of African Americans, she continued "...but that's only with *some*" (Appendix A, p. 200).

Joe gave a personal testimony of the image perceived of African Americans as it related to their "names":

Here's something that happened to me last week. There were three White kids in my class, my English class, and they were talking about how plain their names

were and how all Black people have long weird names. And they expected me to laugh, I guess, because he was like, "Why do all Black people have weird names?" He said, "Why can't Black people have plain names like Jeff and John?" I told him, "my name was plain. My name is J." And he said "Yeah, you're ok. But what about those people who have those ghetto names?" And I asked him, "what's a ghetto name?" He said "like Shaquita or Shalanda" (Appendix A, p. 236).

When asked if they thought there was one view of African Americans or multiple views, Crystal stated, "I think if you ask as a whole, they could probably come up with one thing, but I don't know what it would be (Appendix A, p. 202). But John thought he knew what that "one thing" would be, "lazy as a whole" (Appendix A, p. 200).

To reiterate how defensive the informants were, when asked about the image portrayed of African Americans, Crystal announced, "You can't just take a whole group of people and judge them and put them in this category because that's what you think they are (Appendix A, p. 228). Joe also said defensively, "I know one thing that's a fact. There are more White people in prison than there are Blacks, but they portray more of the Black people in prison for murder" (Appendix A, p. 229).

Cortez explained it best when he shared a conversation between his father and him with the other participants:

I guess I would say that I don't like whenever they try to label Blacks as stupid because my dad found something. I don't know where he found it, but it was like a political cartoon and it said if you want to hide something from a 'nigger',

put it in a book. So they are trying to say that Black people don't read and so that made me mad. And my dad said, "See you need to read more because this is what they think and you don't want them to think that about you."

So if they wanted us to be stupid and keep us stupid, they shouldn't have had all of those civil rights things and allowed this to happen or else this wouldn't happen now. They wouldn't have so many smart people educated who are able to go back into the constitution and say you see this right here says you can't do that (Appendix A, p. 232).

Cortez mentioned several times during his conversation, "*they*". Who are "they"? I wanted to know where the images and labels that have been attached to people, in particular African Americans, come from? The student responses were "society", "Whites", and "Blacks" (Appendix A, p. 227).

McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) suggested that these images and labels are the product of human work. They are the product of encounter between and among differently located human groups which possess diverse interests, need, desires, strategies, capacities, and forms of organizations, and which are deeply etched and written into the historical identities. A review of the literature revealed that the image portrayed of African Americans has been constructed by social and historical contingencies based primarily upon the majority population's perspective.

However, while the informants did agree that they believed the images portrayed of African Americans were based upon diverse social and historical contingencies, they were not as eager to hold only the majority population responsible for the portrayal and

perpetuation of these images. Rather, their beliefs were that these images and labels were the production of multiple sources. They felt the media was the primary vehicle through which the image of African Americans was funneled, and they insisted that not only were these images portrayed and perpetuated by White people, but by *everyone*.

### *African American Images through Media*

When asked by Dreyfuss (1994) which part media plays in formulating the present-day image of Blacks, Jonathan Van Meter, (editor-in chief of VIBE, a hip-hop culture magazine), replied, "the media is incredibly irresponsible about the image of Black men" (p. 124). Trend (1994) said this about media: "Without doubt, substantial ingredients in the process of national identifications are delivered through newspapers, magazines, television, and movies" (p. 225). The participants agreed that media is a powerful text or source of information or authority used to help create and perpetuate the images portrayed of African Americans.

When asked where they thought the images of African Americans came from, Leslie quickly responded with, "the media, what we see on TV... the media" (Appendix A, p. 229). Crystal agreed, stating, "If you have a group of White people that do not live around or go to school with Blacks, or go to school with very few Blacks, then what they see on TV is what they are going to think. It's how they think we are going to act because they don't know and if you don't know, then whatever you see, [on TV], that's what you are going to believe" (Appendix A, p. 203). Then John added, "and I hate some of them shows that are on because they have all White casts, and when they do

bring a Black person on there, they are from the ghetto or they are real poor and that's how they think all Black people are (Appendix A, p. 203). Crystal emphasized these points by stating, "Just like if you ask little kids about Africa, they are going to think that they [Africans] are running around half naked. And there are a lot of them that are kings and queens and live in big mansions and stuff, but that's not what they see [on TV] and that's not what they have heard so that's not what they believe" (Appendix A, p. 203).

Martindale (1986) suggested that those working in the field of media have used and are continuing to use the racial stereotypical images which they have formulated of African Americans to form a grid through which news about Blacks is being filtered. Richard, who attended school where the majority population was Black, felt the media had a lot to do with how his school was portrayed. He, like Martindale, suggested the media was very selective with whom they targeted and what they reported. When asked how he felt about his school's reputation, he responded with,

It makes me feel bad because you have to go there and see us on the news as just corrupt and all of that. The community wide, they know the kids and they know that there's a lot of things that need to be done. But the people that are not on the north side and don't know what's going on, they have a lot of say so in it and they don't even know what's going on (Appendix A, p. 226).

Joe was also quick to blame television for the images portrayed of African Americans by pronouncing, "I think a lot of it comes from the media because every time you hear it [negative images], it's on the TV" (Appendix A, p. 229).

In the book American Education, Spring (1994) stated that "The problem with stereotyping is that if students are expected to do poorly; if they are expected to be violent, they become violent. This is referred to as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'" (p. 87). It is believed that many African Americans are living the prophetic images that have been placed before them, in part, by media. But Crystal was not willing to allow Blacks to use the media as an excuse for what they do or become. She boldly stated, "Yeah, but *we* carry it out though. Just because we see it on TV, it doesn't mean *we have* to go out and do whatever" (Appendix A, p. 229). While Cortez thought the media was responsible, he also agreed with Crystal that it is an individual's choice, stating, "I think it's also how people see *you* act. People around you, how they see you act, that is the image they will get of you" (Appendix A, p. 205).

### *Images of African Americans by African Americans*

While the participants felt that media was a major source used to portray and perpetuate stereotypical images of African Americans, they often spoke in generalities, not labeling any particular group of people as totally responsible. They spoke of parents passing on the images to their children, and how their friends, and even they themselves, participated in the portrayal and perpetuation of the images of African Americans. But what was most surprising was that the participants expressed, with great emphasis, and in one accord, that they felt *Blacks* were the ones primarily responsible for the portrayal and perpetuation of the image of African Americans, and in doing so, addressed the



question, *What part do African American students feel they play in perpetuating the image society has of them?* In fact, Leslie went into a lengthy oration to emphasize her point:

I think that Black people stereotype each other *more* than Whites do to a certain point. You can probably see a Black person "downing" another Black person before you see a White person [do so]. For example, I got some new shoes and I wore them to school. All of the White kids would tell me that my shoes are cute and would say, "I want some of those", and the first thing this Black girl told me is, "You think you're cute because you got some new shoes. You think you're all that now." That's the first thing she told me and I thought, why is she going to say that? That's what I think Black people shouldn't do, is put each other down (Appendix A, p. 230).

Crystal chimed in stating, "It's *us*... most of the time it is *us*" (Appendix A, p. 204). In fact, the participants admitted that they were also guilty of using stereotypes when describing African Americans. Joe confessed, "I've stereotyped people before. I can't sit here and say I'm a perfect person and I've never judged anybody" (Appendix A, p. 229). Leslie also said, "I think *everybody's* done it. But you can do it to a certain point and it gets old. It gets ridiculous so you have to stop it so it won't happen" (Appendix A, p. 229).

Some of the informants felt that the image of African Americans was passed down from one generation to the next. When John was asked where he thought the images of African Americans came from, his response was, "The way people are brought up, it's how their *parents* taught them how to believe" (Appendix A, p. 204). Brenda agreed,

and gave an example: "They just tell their kids, cause one time I was in the bathroom and this little girl said, "Mom, there goes a Black person." And she was like, "It's okay" (Appendix A, p. 204).

Crystal wanted to make it clear that it is not just White parents passing down images of African Americans to their children. She proposed:

I agree with both of them because what Joe is saying is true because a lot of parents, a lot of *Black people* don't think that Black people are worth anything. It's women out there that have been pregnant and their husbands have left them, or it's men out there that have babies and they don't get to see their kids because their wives won't let them. So when the mom is sitting around talking to their babies about, "You're going to be like your daddy. No good.", well then that's what they are going to grow up to believe and that's the way *they* pass that on to their child" (Appendix A, p. 204).

The participants concluded that there are many images of African Americans, both as individuals and as a group. They felt that the portrayal and perpetuation of those images were the result of a combination of what is filtered through media, what parents pass down from one generation to the next, and the actions of African Americans themselves. While discussing this information, it was natural for the participants to engage in conversations about how they perceive African Americans are treated by education personnel.

### Themes of Treatment

One major resource of portraying and perpetuating the images of African Americans, according to the participants, is educators. Richard announced, "And a lot of my teachers at my school don't live in the area. They live in little country towns outside of the main city. So how they see the majority of the kids act at school, that's what they go back and tell their friends, 'This student acts like da-da-da-da.' And so their friends will think that" (Appendix A, p. 236).

Irvine (1990) suggested that the role which educators play in the school performance of African American children is central and critical. McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) suggested that teachers bring to the education profession perspectives about what race means which they have constructed from their own life experiences and vested interests. There is critical evidence which points to the conclusive statements made by Irvine and by McCarthy and Crichlow that the treatment students receive from educational personnel is based on the educator's perspective of the student.

Cortez felt he had been the recipient of such treatment. "Sometimes you can show the teacher that you want to learn, but it's just not going to help because they have already perceived that you don't care or they just don't care about teaching. They don't care if you are learning or not" (Appendix A, p. 213). Crystal added:

They already perceive that you are in the class and you don't really care. That someone just really pushed you and you are just there. They don't think that you want to learn and so you just have to show them that you want to learn. I just think it's the way it works out to being because they've been teaching there and

they have seen kids come through that don't care and they haven't been White students (Appendix A, p. 213).

When confronting the perception African American adolescents have of the treatment they receive from educational personnel, their perspectives were similar to that of a kaleidoscope. Their responses were a great deal more diversified than what I found in the literature. They ranged from being very general to very specific. They addressed how students in general (not specifying race or culture) are treated by educators, how African American students are treated, and the personal treatment they had received from educators. They also discussed how African American students are treated by administrators and the school's security officers. They cited another important factor to be how athletes are treated by educators, and an angle I had not previously considered - how *students* treat the teachers, and how *students* treat each other. I found these to be very interesting perspectives. Finally, in their determination to find a reason for the treatment they and their peers had received from educational personnel, the participants concluded that a lot of the treatment they received was based on *ignorance*. I chose to pursue this concept with them.

### ***Treatment Toward Students by Education Personnel***

If educators think they hide their feelings from students, they are wrong. Students are very perceptive and how they perform in school can be a direct result of how they perceive they are treated by educators. Payne (1994) suggested that negative attitudes and stereotypes on the part of the teacher may act to destroy a crucial bond, or prevent

one from ever developing, thereby creating student resistance to the teacher both personally and educationally. The participants give validity to Payne's suggestions as they related accounts of incidents that took place in classes of which they were a part. I found it interesting that as the informants were describing these particular incidents, they spoke of the student body as a whole, not highlighting any particular race or culture. Their perception of these particular incidents was that the entire student body, the Black as well as the White students, were the recipients of harsh treatment administered by educators.

Leslie stated, "We have one teacher at school, he doesn't like the Blacks *or* the Whites. He's just rude altogether" (Appendix A, p. 208). Joe spoke of a specific teacher in his school as well. "I have this one class at school and it's predominately Black and there are a few White students in the class and our teacher is White. Everyday she says she can't stand this class" (Appendix A, p. 208).

When asked if he thought teachers treated any students better or worse than other students, Richard did not specify whether or not there was a discrepancy in the manner in which educators treated Black or White students. Instead, he indicated the treatment was based upon whether the teacher *liked* you or not. He gave a lengthy response pressing this point:

Yeah, they do. Like some teachers may not want to help another student because of the way that person might have acted. I think I've seen it a couple of times. He [the student] might call for help before another student but he [the teacher] might go to the other student first because he *doesn't like* that student or have

something against that student. I've seen that a couple of times" (Appendix A, p. 210).

He continued, "It probably depends on how *you act* if they *like* you or not. Some teachers respect everybody and some if you don't respect them, they don't respect you. It probably depends on how you treat the teachers, because some teachers flunk students because they *don't like* them. That's how it is" (Appendix A, p. 210). Brenda also felt that students were treated differently because of the way they acted. She mentioned that the "bad students" were chosen by security to go on field trips to visit *jails* (Appendix A, p. 209).

According to the participants, not all treatment received from educational personnel was based on racial identity or whether the educator liked you. The informants also concluded that treatment students received from educators was because of the students' prior educational experiences and because educational personnel sometimes chose to "lord adult authority" over the students. The latter was highlighted in discussions concerning students being reprimanded and concerning homework assignments.

Denise and John explained that at the magnet school they both attend, students received unfair treatment and teachers had different expectations of them *not* because of their racial identity, but based on the school the student had previously attended. Denise, who had *not* attended another magnet school prior to this magnet school told of her personal experience:

If you didn't come from the magnet school, they treat you like you are not as smart. At the school I came from, they need to give us more work to challenge our minds like any other schools do, because I had to ask more questions and they looked at me like 'don't you already know this?' So I would ask one of my friends. Most of the teachers [at the magnet school] had that attitude, but they were nice and I didn't really have any problems" (Appendix A, p. 208).

In retrospect, John expressed his frustration with the treatment he received from educators because he *had* attended a magnet school prior to coming to this magnet school:

I came from the other magnet school and it's like we should know [the information], but when we were at the other school, teachers would give us homework and act like we should know what we are doing. It's like we are suppose to be on a whole other level than the rest of the students from the rest of the schools, so they get mad at us because we are from the other magnet school and they think we should know (Appendix A, p. 209)

The informants also believed that there existed a *different* type of discrimination, or an issue of adults "lording power" over the students. Leslie declared that she did not like it when, "there was trouble with the teachers, Black and White, but mostly White, they [administrators] take the teacher's side before they listen to what you [the student] have to say. They don't take into consideration what caused you to get mad or what caused the teacher to get mad" (Appendix A, p. 210). She went on to give a specific example: "Like if you get caught in the bathroom smoking, they will take the teacher's

side and they don't even want to hear it because there is no excuse. But if you have an argument with a teacher over something they automatically take the teacher's side" (Appendix A, p. 210).

While on the subject of education personnel using a "power-lording" position over students, the participants dove into a somewhat amusing and lengthy discussion concerning their opinions of teachers and homework assignments. While Brenda decided that, overall, her teachers, except for a few, treated her pretty well (Appendix A, p. 207), Joe complained of too much homework, stating:

There is no purpose. They just say do these sixty problems or whatever. They don't explain it to you, just because they want to have something to do. I don't know about other schools but we stay in the class about one hour and thirty minutes every day. They are done with their lesson plans and they say we don't have anything else to do so do all of this. And when you are done with that they say do this and do this. Or there are some teachers that try to put a week's worth of lessons in one hour and thirty minutes. That happened when I was in French. That teacher had us going over four chapters a day and we didn't understand anything. You can't teach a language like this (Appendix A, pp. 225-226).

Cortez agreed by jokingly comparing his math teacher with another math teacher at his school:

I think we [students] could do without all of the homework because our math teacher doesn't give out a lot of homework. We end up with about twenty problems a night and we would get time in class to work on it. And everybody



in class, I think everybody in class except the ones that don't turn in their homework, has a 'B" or higher. So we are all still understanding all of the material and everything and we haven't had a lot of homework. We laugh at other kids in the other classes because they come home with like 60 problems and I have like 20 or 25 (Appendix A, p. 225).

However, Crystal did not see this as a humorous matter, she perceived it as being mistreatment by educators. She felt that homework was useless without proper explanation beforehand:

My freshmen year in Algebra I, my teacher was going to sleep at his desk so I was not getting Algebra. We came in there and all the kids were telling her we need Algebra I and to go slow because in Algebra II we are going to need some help. This women gave us three assignments in one day. She would give us like three assignments and it would be fifty problems and then tell us it should be done tomorrow and then she would try to give us work on weekends and they would be worksheets. We would be like, "Mrs. so and so, I don't think so" (Appendix A, p. 215).

The informants continued to discuss their perceptions of how students in general are treated by education personnel. Emerging from these conversations was the fact that they felt there were times when there was a distinct difference between how African Americans students were treated compared to how White students were treated.

*Treatment of African American versus the Treatment of White students by Educational Personnel*

As the participants shared their perceptions, they brought out some interesting information concerning how African American students are treated compared to how White students are treated by teachers, administrators, and others, such as the school's security officers. Denise felt that while teachers at her magnet school expected more from the students who had attended magnet schools previously, there was a higher expectation of the White students compared to what was expected of the African American students. Crystal added, "Overall, they expect all of the students to know, but when it gets down to it, they expect more mainly from the Whites" (Appendix A, p. 210).

Leslie's discussion of how the students at her school were treated if they were caught smoking reminded Crystal of an incident that took place at her school. "At our school a couple of White boys got caught smoking and all they got was five days of detention, and other Black students get suspended. And I don't understand because we have Black administrators" (Appendix A, p. 211).

This statement led to other participants testifying that at times they, too, noticed a difference in the way African Americans and White students were treated. Joe told of an incident that happened at his school. "One thing that bothers me is that security caught three White boys in the bathroom smoking weed and had it on them. They got suspended for one day. The next day they caught a Black dude with a walkman and he got suspended for a week" (Appendix A, p. 211). When I pressed Joe by asking if he

knew this to be a fact, he was emphatic about it. "I know it to be a fact because I was in the office when it happened. And I was there when my friend got suspended because during my sixth hour I run errands for my teacher" (Appendix A, p. 211). He went on to discuss how the security officers at his school treat the students:

One thing I hate about security is that every morning you can see all along the wall where the Black students sit and they [security] will come over there and just watch you like a hawk and they tell us, "Ya'll need to break up and spread apart". But then right across the hall it's a big group of White students just standing there yelling and doing whatever, and they don't say nothing to them. That irritates me (Appendix A, p. 212).

As the informants embarked on a discussion about students telling jokes about different races, Leslie revealed that there were times when joking around was taken too far and had led to students getting into fights which she felt, resulted in African American students being treated differently. "When one of the Black kids hit them [White students] the Black kid is the one that's wrong. They [education personnel] don't want to hear what the White kids did. They just want to know if the Black kid hit him and he is getting ready to get suspended. They don't want to know what caused it. That's what goes on in my building" (Appendix A, p. 236).

Crystal emphasized that teachers' expectations of them resulted in their [African American students] being mistreated.

You could count the White people on your hands, but at our school it's more of the White teachers that treat us like we are slower than other kids. In my English

class we go to the computer lab and do English stuff on the computer. But I found out that the stuff we are doing on the computer is elementary work. It's not eleventh grade work. Treat us like we are supposed to be treated. Don't just give me elementary work (Appendix A, pp. 207-208).

Brenda also believed African American students were treated differently at her predominately Black school. "The White teachers, they treat the 'colored' students... they don't get any chances. They just tell them to raise their hands and stuff and when it comes to the other people [White students], they just answer their questions and stuff" (Appendix A, p. 207).

Joe also told of how a teacher at his school blatantly opposed the African American students organizing the Afro American Society.

I have this one teacher and half the students already know she doesn't like Black programs in school. She was against our Afro American Society and then she was against our dance which consisted of all Black girls. She said we shouldn't have it at school. She voted against it and she was very open about it. She said it was no need for it here at school (Appendix A, p. 210).

When I asked Cortez to share his perceptions of how African American students were treated in his school, his reply was, "They [teachers] already perceive that you are in the class and you don't really care. That someone just really pushed you and you are just there. They don't think that you want to learn and so you just have to show them that you want to learn" (Appendix A, p. 213). I was interested in how he drew this conclusion so I asked him what kinds of things the teachers did that made him think

teachers thought that way about the African American students. He answered, "I don't think they really *do* anything. I just think it's the way it works out to being because they've been teaching there and they have seen kids come through that don't care and they haven't been White students" (Appendix A, p. 213).

It was evident that the participants had disturbing perceptions as it related to how African American students were treated. Brenda recalled a teacher who constantly called the students "niggers"! I asked her if she had actually heard him say it and her response was "unhuh" (Appendix A, pp. 220-221). She also shared that administration knew about it. When asked what they did, she replied, "Nothing! I [meaning Brenda] asked the office secretary why didn't they fire him, and she said, 'They didn't have any other teacher to hire'" (Appendix A, p. 221).

According to Reynolds (1995), schools should be made up of environments filled with compassion. It is obvious that not all education personnel concur with Reynolds (1995) and van Manen (1991).

### ***The Treatment the Participants Received from Education Personnel***

Payne (1994) suggested that the student should feel the teacher is significant to him or her in a positive way. In spite of the experiences the informants shared concerning how African American students were treated in their schools by educational personnel, it was evident that the informants had positive feelings toward many of their teachers. As they discussed their own personal relationships with teachers and

administrators and in some instances, they even defended the actions of the educators toward African American students.

When asked how he thought people in education treated him, Richard's response was:

I haven't really had any confrontations with my teachers. I'm pretty cool with them. The only experience I have had is where I might mess up on my grade and I go to confront them; something like that. I haven't really had anything where I get written up or we end up fussing or having an argument. I haven't had any experiences like that. I try not to argue with adults (Appendix A, p. 206).

Cortez, who had stated earlier that teachers in his school automatically assumed African American students did not care, seemed to be actually expressing some animosity toward African American students for what he perceived as the behavior which caused *teachers* to treat them differently. He concluded that the key to his being treated differently would be if *he* were to behave differently. He stated, "So they [teachers] have to see that you want to learn and then they will act more normal toward you. You have to participate in class and ask questions that challenge them to make them have to answer" (Appendix A, pp. 207-208).

Not only did Brenda share that overall she got along well with most of her teachers, she was under the impression that one of the administrators at her schools was "*too nice*".

He was too nice because they switched another principal to our school and he was mean and stuff and you know I didn't like him because he was mean. He was

more strict and stuff. He told us we had to raise our hands to get out of the cafeteria 'cause we used to have a bunch of food on the floor from food fights and stuff. He stayed there for like a week. The cafeteria was clean and there were no fights and then they switched again. The cafeteria was back again (Appendix A, p. 223).

Not all of the comments about the participants' personal relationships with their teachers were positive. Brenda told of an incident when a teacher lied about her and got her into trouble with her father (Appendix A, p. 211). Leslie also shared her perception of how teachers felt toward her. "They don't think I'm as smart as the White students. That's how I feel" (Appendix A, p. 206). When asked what made her feel that way and what gave her that impression, she responded:

Let's say they [teachers] asks a question. I could raise my hand and the White girl next to me could raise her hand. We could both have the same answer but they are in different forms and he [the teacher] would automatically go to her answer because he would say that there was more to her answer than there was to mine. And I felt like our answers sounded just alike. And he will pick her answer over my answer and I don't understand that (Appendix A, p. 206).

Crystal also told about a personal confrontation she had with her history teacher. My history teacher came up to me and I had my hair in some braids and he came up to me and said something... and I don't let him get off with those little comments because he is here to teach me. He doesn't have to have a conversation with me just as long as you give me what it is I am suppose to be

doing. And he said something about "Are your braids a little too tight today?" Something about my weave. He came up and kinda like touched my head and I looked up at him and he just walked off. I really didn't say anything because sometimes I just let stuff go. I wanted to say to him, "First of all you don't know anything about a weave and you don't need to come over here touching my hair. You need to go back in front of the class and teach me" (Appendix A, pp. 234-235).

Leslie said that if she had the opportunity, she would address these issues with her teacher in the following manner:

I would ask him why he thinks a whole group of people are stupid just because of like "Buckwheat", because of the way he use to talk and act. I would ask him if that is why he thinks all Black people are like that. I would tell him that all Black people are different, just like Whites. You have the smart White ones and you have the dumb White ones. You have the White girls that are pregnant and you have the Black girls that are the same way (Appendix A, pp. 233-234).

It is obvious that the participants have had both positive and negative experiences in personal relationships with their teachers. In an effort to get at the "essence" of their experiences it was very important to them to make sure they shared every aspect of their experiences. As they were taking inventory of their life experiences, it was imperative for them to make sure that they were being fair and honest about everyone they spoke of. In the process of the reflections of their educational experiences, it was natural for



them to discuss their involvement in athletics and how they perceived they were treated as athletes.

### *Treatment Toward Athletes*

Five out of eight of the informants participated in their school's athletic program. Denise was part of the freshmen basketball team but had to drop out of the program to pursue better grades. Cortez was very involved in sports but he did not contribute much on the subject. Joe, however, was very vocal concerning the athletic program at his school. He complained saying:

Me, myself, I get along with everybody. But it's one thing at my school that I hate and it's "athleticism". If you are a Black student, because most of the athletes at my school are Black unless you play baseball, hockey, golf, or tennis... I don't know what it is, but Black students, we can do our work but the teachers can still pass us as ineligible for a game. Like in my geometry class, most of us are Black and we play football or track or whatever and the other half are cheerleaders. And the cheerleaders are passing with A's or B's but the Black students that play football or track are barely getting along with a "D". And you just can't seem to get over that hump to make a "C", or whatever to make a better grade because the teacher portrays you in a different way, and they won't help you that much (Appendix A, p. 216).

Contrary to Joe's description of the athletic program at his school, Brenda and Richard had positive comments about their school's athletic programs. Brenda, who

plays basketball, shared that the members of the all-Black basketball team were not treated any differently than anyone else (Appendix A, p. 216). Richard expressed disappointment in feeling that he was discriminated against in football because of his size. However, he felt the teachers did all they could to help him maintain the eligibility status. He stated:

As far as all of the other sports, I was treated like everybody else. But in football, because of my size, the coach tried to tell me I was too short to play a certain position. I guess he tried to discriminate against my size.

I have always been little and I have never had that happen to me. So I didn't really expect it too much. But that was the first time that ever happened to me. The first five or six games I started, but then the last four games, he said I was too short to play this certain position. I have been playing that position every since I had been in the sixth grade. I was probably the best person at that position on the team. He just said I was too short to start the last couple of games (Appendix A, p. 216).

When asked how his teachers treated him as an athlete, and did they treat him any differently than the rest of the students, Richard replied with:

Yeah, they work you harder! They probably worked you harder because they were on you more than everybody else. You know like if you have work to turn in they stayed on you to do your homework, because it was no pass no play. So you had to keep your grades up. I'm not going to say they helped you more than

anybody else, but they gave a better effort to help you [as an athlete] than if you weren't an athlete (Appendix A, p. 217).

Richard's perception of treatment as an athlete was somewhat different from Joe's. He felt that the harsher treatment he received as an athlete was for his benefit and therefore seemed grateful that he had been treated *differently*.

### ***Treatment from Students toward Education Personnel***

Researchers suggested that the dominant culture has a major influence in the formation and the perpetuation of the image portrayed of African Americans (Merelman, 1992; Ichheiser, 1970; Martusewicz and Reynolds, 1994; Morrison, 1987). However, this group of informers were not willing to blame only the dominant culture for the treatment they received. They were compelled to include everyone they felt was responsible for the treatment African Americans receive and for the "images" portrayed of them. When asked about this treatment, they approached it from a different angle. They included information concerning how education personnel are treated *by* the students.

Leslie stated: "In my school there are more Whites than Blacks and there are some Black kids that don't care and they talk back to the teachers. And then the teachers assume that all Black kids are like that. And it's just not true" (Appendix A, p. 208). Richard agreed with Leslie by stating: "They [meaning his friends] have been cursing them [teachers] out and fussing with them. Just not respecting them at all. Like I said, they don't care. They don't respect adults at all" (Appendix A, p. 214).

Brenda had a great deal to say about the students who attend school on the north side. She said, " When they do get money for new textbooks, the Black students write on them and lose them" (Appendix A, p. 218). When I asked her what kind of a reputation her school had, she commented:

"Bad...cause it *is* bad. The kids, they [are] rude to everybody. They [the kids] just carry themselves in the wrong way... position and stuff. ...like mean to teachers [and] get into fights. A bunch of stuff. They [teachers] can't teach. They don't teach anything. I mean they teach but the kids don't give them a chance to teach" (Appendix A, p. 222).

The informants were willing to examine the research question from a global perspective. Not only were they willing to discuss how students treat educators, but they were also willing to discuss how students, particularly African American students, treat each other.

### ***Treatment of Students toward Other Students***

Irvine (1990), suggested that while society and the educational profession must bear the responsibility for the portrayal of African Americans and the harsh treatment of Black students, African Americans must take responsibility for their own behavior and attitudes, as well as the behavior and attitudes of their children. By sharing many insightful examples of African American students being ostracized by other African American students, the participants validated Irvine's suggestions.

When asked how he saw his friends being treated, Cortez responded with:

Pretty much the same as everybody else, but everybody sort of hangs with their race. If you are Black, you hang with the Black people. And if you are White, you hang with the White people. There is no obligation but you're looked down on if you don't.

Like when we are outside we might be all together. But you can tell how they are grouped and talking with each other. If they [Blacks] see you talking with somebody White, they say you're not like them (Appendix A, p. 212).

To solidify what Cortez was saying, Leslie spoke of a specific incident which happened to her:

I have some White friends at school and they had this party. They asked me to come. So I went and I had a really nice time. And the next day I went back to school and the White girls were like, "I'm glad you came to my party. We had fun". And the Black girls were like, "Why did you go to their party? Why don't you hang out with your own kind"? And they were talking about, "You just like to hang out with White people". And they kind of hurt my feelings because I was like, "They are my friends, and I just went to their party". And the Black kids made a big deal out of it...That's another thing about Black people, I don't understand how they can judge you by who you hang out with. I have this Black friend and she's going out with this White guy. They [the Black students] are giving her a hard time over that. It's like the Black kids give her a hard time and I don't understand that either (Appendix A, p. 215).

Joe did not see things quite the same. "Now it's not like that at my school unless you just strictly hang around White people and you know you are Black. But when you try to talk with another Black person, they try to talk down about that person. That's what they say about some of the students at the magnet school. They [the Black students] call them Black snobs" (Appendix A, pp. 215, 218).

Denise, who attends that magnet school, reluctantly agreed with him by stating: "Yeah they do have some of them. I am not going to lie. Why can't you just get along? You know what I'm saying. There's a lot of Black people that hang around White people, but some of the White people up there [school] are crazy. They come in there with black capes. But I'm not going to be like u-u-u, you know. But I say hi to everybody. If you pass me and you say hi, I'm not going to look at you like, "you're White". I'm going to talk to you because I wasn't brought up that way" (Appendix A, p. 218).

Brenda also shared some insights about how the Black students at her school treat other Black students. She shared that they have as many as three to four fights a day at her predominately-Black school (Appendix A, pp. 229-230).

Crystal concluded that even if the treatment received *is* from the dominant culture, and even if the dominant culture *is* responsible for the formation and perpetuation of a negative stereotypical image of African Americans, it can not be used as an excuse for African Americans to succumb to the image. She stated with a strong conviction, "You know that's the thing about me, they encourage the stuff, but we as [Black] people don't have to go out there and put it out there" (Appendix A, p. 236).

After much discussion, the participants decided that perhaps there were some instances when African American students were treated differently than other students by education personnel, as well as, by the students themselves. In their quest for answers, they concluded that a lot of the treatment African Americans receive is the result of ignorance.

### *Treatment as a Result of Ignorance*

Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1986) used words and phrases such as destitute of knowledge; uninstructed; unlearned; exhibiting lack of perception, knowledge, or intelligence; unaware; uninformed; unenlightened; primitive; and crude to define the word "ignorant"(p. 1125). As the informants wrestled with explanations for the treatment they perceived African Americans were sometimes the recipients of, they used many of the same adjectives and adverbs found in the definition, or synonyms of those words to describe those who had administered the treatment.

I posed the question, do you think things would be different if you were going to an all Black school with all Black students, teachers, and administrators? Crystal answered with a lengthy explanation for why she thought it would be better:

I think it would be better because a lot of White people don't understand where we are coming from. And I think that Black people learn differently than White people do. The way the teachers teach you is how they have been taught to teach and the way they learned. So I think if we have Black teachers then they will understand where we are coming from and they can relate to the kinds of things

that go on in our lives. Especially where you live. A lot of kids come to school hungry and sleepy and tired, and White teachers don't understand because that's not reality to them. Kids are working late and they are coming to school hungry and when they do, kids are sleepy and they go to sleep in class. And I think that Black teachers will understand to challenge them more. They understand how far some of them can go. And not try to take them to the extent where the kids are just confused (Appendix A, p. 215).

Leslie used what Joe had said earlier about an announcement made over the intercom concerning Black History month, as an example of how people speak and act out of ignorance.

...like what was said over the intercom, they just *don't know* that we are getting offended by it. They just think they are doing us a favor and giving us advice. When White people respond like that, they don't think they are really hurting anybody. They just enjoy it. That's what hurts, when there is racism and they *don't know* it. That hurts more when they don't know it then when they do know it (Appendix A, p. 234).

Leslie gave an example of how some White students try to make a joke about being Black and expect the Black students to laugh. Leslie explained:

One day I was sitting in math class and a couple of us were sitting around, some Blacks, Whites, and Indians. And we were all telling jokes. And I didn't say any racist jokes, but one of the Black kids did. Then he said, "Well I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that." Then one of the White kids said, "Well I have one



for you all". I said, "What do you mean for you all"? He was like, "Just let me tell it". He said, "How do you keep a Black person from not drowning?" He said, "Just take your foot off of their head". He thought everybody was going to laugh. And all of the White kids laughed and none of the Black kids laughed. And he asked, "Why isn't it funny to ya'll"? And I said, "It's not funny because you know that wasn't called for". He said, "Well I was just trying to get back at him". And I said, "Well you didn't just get back at him, you got back at all of the Black people who heard that joke because it really wasn't funny". Then he said, "Well I have another one for you". He said, "Why don't Black people use Tylenol... because it has cotton in it". He just kept telling these little jokes, and I said, "They were not funny". And he was trying to make us laugh.... When they say things like that, they expect us to laugh and that's not really saying that they don't know it. That's one of those kind of kids thadot n't know what they are saying is not funny" (Appendix A, p. 235).

Crystal agreed with Leslie, stating, "They don't know how far to take it" (Appendix A, p. 236). Crystal and Cortez were not willing to conclude that all mistreatment of African Americans was the result of ignorance. Nor were they willing to place the blame only on White people. Crystal concluded, "Some of them know and don't care and it makes no sense to me. And it goes both for Blacks and Whites" (Appendix A, p. 234).

Cortez offered further explanation of what Crystal meant. "They [Blacks] act the way they [Whites] are trying to make their jokes about, so they [Blacks] do it and they [Blacks] think it's funny. So then when Whites see it and they [Whites] make a joke

about it to everyone else, they expect you to laugh too. And I don't act that way so I'm just sitting there" (Appendix A, p. 235).

Crystal went on to say, "When you don't know that you are ignorant, you are more dangerous to other people because you don't know what you are doing. At least when you know that you are stupid...", Leslie finished, "...you can *change*" (Appendix A, p. 234).

### **Themes of Changing**

A popular singing group known as the Winans recorded a song entitled "It's Time to Make A Change". Part of the lyrics are: *It's time, time to make a change; we are the people who can do it; the choice is up to you...* Apparently the informants have heard this song and have made it a part of their philosophy for life. Contrary to Spring's (1994) statement concerning the "self-fulfilling prophecy" and contrary to the perpetuation theory, the informants expressed thoughts which were similar to the thoughts of autonomous people. When asked: *If African American students determine that society does portray an image of them, do they feel the need to change the image?* Their reactions were not only was change inevitable and necessary, but they desired change. They declared that changing your image was possible. They also expressed an interest in changing schools and changing the curriculum taught in schools. Finally, they felt that personal change could lead to learning and growing.

### *Themes of Changing an Image*

The participants expressed that change could be positive or negative. Richard declared that "Today's image of young people has probably changed from when his mother and I were younger. Today's young people are probably seen as being more violent" (Appendix A, p. 204). When the participants were asked if they thought there was a problem with the image portrayed of African Americans, Leslie's comments summarized the group's opinion best:

You can't let nobody choose who you are. It's like you've got the White people with the fancy clothes. You can't *change* them so why are they trying to *change* us? But if we are doing something wrong and we know it, we should try to *change* that. But we shouldn't *change* our image. Because everybody's going to be different (Appendix A, p. 227).

Thoughts about changing images were not the only thing the participants saw as changing or desired to change, they also had mixed feelings about changing schools.

### *Themes of Changing Schools*

I asked Cortez, who attended a predominately White school, what he thought it would be like if he changed and attended an all Black school, with all Black teachers and administrators. His response was, "I think the same thing would happen with Blacks. They would have stereotypes of other people. They would get their certain opinion of Whites so when they got around them they would act sort of the same way that they think Whites act toward Blacks" (Appendix A, p. 218).

Leslie concurred with Cortez: "You know how they separate you now. Well if you went to an all Black school, they would have the poor Blacks, the Blacks that are doing good, the rich Blacks. They would treat you differently, and it would start all over. So you should just be with everybody" (Appendix A, p. 218).

Brenda, who attended a school with these similarities, with a majority population of African American students, teachers, and administrators, contributed some interesting comments concerning changing schools. She said that she desired to change and attend a different kind of school. Even at the risk of being mistreated, Brenda wanted to attend a school located on the south side of the city because she felt that she could learn more, because the teachers are different and the students do not disrupt (Appendix A, pp. 223-224). When asked how and why she thought she might be mistreated, she said, "Probably because some of the teachers are prejudice and are just more used to the White students" (Appendix A, p. 224). Holding steadfast to her position, and being willing to pay the price of changing schools for what she perceived would result in a better education for herself, she went on to say, "I wouldn't worry about that. I'll just leave it alone unless they get to far where they hit me and treat me mean or suspend me for nothing, or they blame stuff on me that I didn't do" (Appendix A, pp. 224-225).

In contrast to Crystal's statement about things being better at an all Black school with Black teachers and administrators, when Richard, like Brenda, who also attended a predominately Black school, was asked if he had his choice would he go back to that school, his response was, "Probably not. Because the first couple of years it was fun, but a new principal came in and things changed and it wasn't as much fun. And there

weren't as many activities to do. Things became more strict. You didn't have as much freedom as you use to, so I probably wouldn't go to the same school" (Appendix A, p. 236). While the participants were inconsistent in their responses concerning the type of school they would want to attend, they were very consistent in vocalizing opinions about the need for changes to take place in the current curriculum offered at their schools, especially in relation to the history curriculum.

### *Themes of Changing the Curriculum*

Denise and Leslie expressed frustration about the fact that the current history curriculum offered at their school was not meeting their personal need to know about their past. Leslie complained saying:

Like with school during Black History Month, we don't really talk about that kind of stuff. They don't really tell us about all of the famous Black people who invented stuff. They tell us about all of the White people who did that. And we are like, "What about the Blacks, and the Hispanics and all of them?" We don't really talk about that (Appendix A, p. 232).

I offered as a solution, them going to the library and checking out books to read about Black History for themselves. Both Crystal and Leslie responded. Crystal responded by saying, "You can do that, but everybody else is not going to read them. Everybody else is not going to sit there and realize, 'well then fine I'll just go to the library and look it up in a book.'" Leslie responded with: "Yeah, I feel like if we can talk about White history everyday, why can't we talk about it [Black History] in class and then maybe I

could go to the library" (Appendix A, p. 232-233). Crystal continued: "And if we *do* learn about it [Black History], it will be about us as *slaves*. It won't be good achievements" (Appendix A, p. 233). Joe added, "...And they make the people who bought us here as slaves, good citizens" (Appendix A, p. 233).

Cortez also felt the history curriculum used at his school needed to be changed as well. He stated that "the only class that really did anything was civics and that was only about a week. We never really did anything for Black History Month. We had all of the posters up and everything, but they never really said anything about it" (Appendix A, p. 233).

### ***Themes of Personal Changes***

In the midst of discussing changes, three of the informants, Brenda, Richard and Leslie, felt it was necessary for them to take a look at themselves to discover if they desired to make any changes in their own lives. Brenda concluded that going to a different school would make her a better person because she would have the opportunity to learn more (Appendix A, p. 224-225). Richard admitted that if he had to do it all over again, he would go to a different school, but that he would not change the experiences he has had at the school he attended because he had learned a lot about how to deal with people, and this information would be helpful to him when he went away to college (Appendix A, p. 237). Leslie decided that she really was not interested in changing schools and attending a school with all Black students, teachers and administrators because, in her opinion:

Once you go on in life you are going to be working with all kinds of people. And you're going to have to realize where they are coming from and how to get along with them. And going to an all Black school, you will just know how all Black people act. You're not going to know about the Whites and other people. And you're not going to be around just Blacks all of your life. (Appendix A, p. 230).

In spite of the many challenges, disappointments, and desire to change things and make personal changes, the participants agreed that the one thing they *would not* change was having to go to school. They *liked* the place called school. John pointed out that he liked hanging out with his friends (Appendix A, p. 225). Other participants said they liked hanging out at school with other Black students, but that they also hang out with White friends, even though they are sometimes ridiculed by their Black friends who want them to hang out with "their own kind" (Appendix A, p. 225).

### **Journals**

Hoskisson and Thompkins (1987) suggested the use of personal journals is for students to keep a written account of events in their lives and to write about topics of their own choosing. van Manen (1990) stated that journal writing may contain reflective accounts of human experiences that are of phenomenological value. I predicted that by having the informants engage in the activity of having dialogue with me through journal writing, it would yield additional valuable information as it related to their perceptions

of their educational experiences. The participants all received the following instructions for beginning their journals:

Your assignment is to take some time at home and write in your personal journals about an experience you have had with an adult at school. You may write about any experience you wish to write about. You may even write about more than one if you prefer. Please think and write about the following:

- a) Describe the experience - when it happened; where it happened; how it happened; who was all present; every detail you can remember
- b) Describe how you felt while it was happening and after it happened
- c) Describe what, if any, emotions you had
- d) Describe what you were thinking
- e) Describe your actions and the actions of all who were involved

I was correct in my prediction. The dialogue journal activity did yield additional valuable information.

van Manen (1990) suggested that through written descriptions the researcher may be able to detect emerging and recurring themes as well as look for consistencies in lived experiences. Many comments made by the participants were consistent with the theme: treatment toward students from education personnel; a theme which emerged during the group interviews. Emergent themes within this theme were, treatment received as a result of teachers and administrators "lording power" over the students, and treatment received based on the teacher's capabilities. These themes also emerged during the group interviews. In addition, this activity also yielded unique consequences educators



received as a result of their treatment toward the students. Specifically, administrators listened to the complaints of students concerning an educator and the result was that a change was made, and the teacher was placed at another school. Other emergent themes within the theme of treatment students receive from educational personnel, were the perceptions of the informants concerning African American students being mistreated by educators because of their racial identity, and treatment directed toward one of the participants because of his racial identity.

### **Treatment Toward Students from Educational Personnel**

During the group interviews, the participants gave several examples of treatment they received from education personnel which resulted in educators "lording power" over the students. John, Denise, and Leslie also chose to write about this in their journals. Leslie and Crystal chose to write about their perceptions of the treatment African American students were recipients of from education personnel. In addition, Crystal's journal writing implicated that the treatment they received was because of their teacher's capability, or lack of capability, to teach. Unlike other instances, however, the students took action which had positive results. Finally, through Cortez's journal writing rose implications that he was mistreated by an educator because of his racial identity.

#### ***Teachers and Administrators "Lording Power" Over Students***

John wrote about his Spanish teacher who exercised her power over the students by renegeing on an earlier agreement not to give them homework during Christmas

holidays. John's journal writing gave *no* indication that this perception of mistreatment was administered because of the fact that there were 24 Black students and 6 or 7 White students in the class (Appendix B, Journal #1, p. 238). In fact he wrote, "We are our teacher's favorite class". And later wrote in regards to his class, "It's all cool again because everyone likes Mrs. W" (Appendix B, Journal #1, p. 238).

Denise also chose to write about a teacher "lording power" over the students. According to her, Mrs. B. tried to give them additional assignments to make up a few days before progress reports were due to go out (Appendix B, Journal #2, p. 240). However, the students choose to confront the teacher because they felt she was not organized. Denise wrote, "I think she doesn't have her daily schedule together as far as what each class does" (Appendix B, Journal #2, 240). The result of the student-teacher confrontation was that the students did not have to do the additional assignments (Appendix B, Journal #2, pp. 240-241). Again, Denise *did not* indicate that this treatment was aimed specifically at the 16 out of 24 African American students in the class.

### ***Treatment of African American Students from Education Personnel***

Leslie's and Crystal's journal writings yielded information which hinted that the mistreatment they and their peers received *was* due to their racial identity. Leslie wrote about an incident which involved her and two other African American students being accused by a teacher and a security guard of smoking in the restroom. She stated that both the White teacher and the White security guard mistreated her and her two friends.

"We got yelled at, screaming, hollering, talking very rude...." (Appendix B, Journal #3, p. 242). Leslie commented that she was really upset and embarrassed because kids in classrooms across the hall from the restroom heard everything (Appendix B, Journal #3, p. 242). She stated that finally the girls who were actually the ones smoking, confessed and apologized but, she wrote: "It seemed like they didn't really mean it" (Appendix B, Journal #3, p. 243). Leslie concluded, "The girls were suspended for three days" (Appendix B, Journal #3, p. 242). There was never any mention of the teacher nor the security guard apologizing.

#### ***Treatment African American Students Received Based on the Teacher's Capabilities***

Crystal also wrote about the treatment her and her African American peers received from education personnel. She chose to write about an African American math teacher who thought he did not have to teach. She wrote, "He would give us work and would hardly explain what we were supposed to be doing. When we would ask him questions, he would repeat what he just said but he would say it slow like we were stupid" (Appendix B, Journal #5, p. 246). Crystal concluded, "I think he felt that way because in the Black schools on the north side, they pass so many teachers [around] that don't care, or have been there so long, they're tired" (Appendix B, Journal #5, p. 246). However, rather than do nothing about it, the students decided to take action. Crystal stated:

This really upset me and I was already sick of him not teaching so I wrote down everything that happened that day, and all I could remember from other days.

My friend wrote what happened down and I had everyone in the classroom sign to say that it really happened. We went to the principal and dean, gave them the papers, and told them that we were upset with him [the teacher] (Appendix B, Journal #5, p. 246).

She continued by describing what happened when she and some of her peers went to visit with the principal:

We all came into the office (about six or seven of us), asked to see the principal, and the dean was already there. So we went into a conference room and told the things he [the teacher] was doing, or in this case, not doing. I don't remember if they recorded the meeting or not, but they did take our complaints that we had written, and the class had signed. They made copies and told us that we weren't the only ones that had complained and they would put our complaints in the teacher's file" (Appendix B, Journal #5, p. 247).

As a result of this incident and previously filed complaints about the teacher, he received a transfer to another school with a majority African American student population (Appendix B, Journal #5, p. 246).

While Crystal expressed satisfaction with the removal of the teacher from her school, it saddened her that this teacher would be given another placement. She wrote, "I want to be an educator and I know that teaching is a very important job to have, because you have the most important part of the body in your hands, the brain. And what you feed, or don't feed into those kids' brain can affect them for the rest of their lives" (Appendix B, Journal #5, p. 248). She added, "He's at another school because

the principal didn't want him at our school anymore. He was passed to another "Black" school to do whatever he wanted, because when it comes down to it, the school system (public school system) stinks (Appendix B, Journal #5, p. 248).

### ***Treatment the Participant Received from Education Personnel***

Cortez's chose to write about an incident which took place in the majority White student-populated school he attended during his third grade school year. He wrote, "I had a teacher in third grade that I didn't like at first because whenever I couldn't find something when she wanted it, she would grab my desk and drop everything on the floor and I had to pick it all up" (Appendix B, Journal #4, p. 244). In response to how that made him feel, he wrote, " I didn't appreciate this then because it didn't seem to be happening to any of the other students and it was embarrassing to me to have my belongings strewn about like this" (Appendix B, Journal #4, p. 244).

Cortez remembered being the only African American student in his class. His reaction to this incident was, "Now I appreciate it more because every time I get unorganized I remember that, and it helps motivate me to organize whatever it is that needs it" (Appendix B, Journal #4, p. 244). He took what was a negative experience, and even though he felt, "I still think she could have thought of a better way to accomplish this" (Appendix B, Journal #4, p. 244), he used it as a motivational tool to help him achieve a well organized lifestyle.

*Joe's, Richard's and Brenda's Journals*

Just as there was valuable information yielded from the dialogue journal activity, there were also some disappointments. Joe never turned in his journal. Even after several attempts were made to contact him, his journal never materialized. Richard's journal entry was about his taking a ride in a stolen car and the lesson he learned from that (Appendix B, Journal #6, p. 249). It did not disclose any information that was useful to the study. Finally, Brenda's journal entry had some interesting statements, such as:

I had a teacher [named] Mr. I. He would always talk about Black people but it was kind of weird because it would be in a good way, and you can tell something was wrong. He would say "White people are trash", and he would just put down his own color. He would say, "Black people are just the nicest people you ever seen". I have nothing against that, but I never heard that come out of a White person's mouth and he would just exaggerate about Black people (Appendix B, Journal # 7, p. 250).

However, many of her statements were conflicting and were not clear. She made statements such as: "One day my friend said she walked into another class and she heard him say, '[all] Black people do is just drugs and White people got money, living on the south side like me....Black people are making money doing good and most Black people doing this stuff, not thinking. White people are doing the same thing like doing drugs and killing'" (Appendix B, Journal #7, p. 250). For reasons I am not aware of, and had

no control over, Richard and Brenda did not respond in their journals after their initial entries.

### **Negative Responses**

While the instructions to the participants were to write about *any* experience, or experiences they have had with an adult at school, a common occurrence that I found very interesting and worth pursuing, was that all of the participants chose to write about negative experiences. In my response I asked why they had chosen to write about negative experiences. Cortez's response was, "I'm not sure why I assumed you wanted us to tell you about a bad experience with our teacher. I didn't really want it to look that way it was just the opening sentence" (Appendix B, Journal #4, p. 244). Denise stated, "I focused on this problem, because not only did this have something to do with my grades but I was blamed for not doing something that I knew nothing about" (Appendix B, Journal #2, p. 240). In addition to the other responses, John wrote, "The reason I wrote about this experience is because this experience was on my mind at the time" (Appendix B, Journal #1, p. 238).

### **Close Observations**

Close observation, according to van Manen (1990), allows the researcher to enter and participate in the informants' life (the world of lived experiences). This method requires that the researcher be a participant and an observer at the same time. I observed the informants during the group interviews as well as, while they were involved in other

social settings. Erlandson, et. al. (1993) noted that "interviews and observations build understanding of a social context in an interactive way. Therefore, the researcher cannot treat these two human sources of data as independent of each other" (p. 99). Therefore many of the observations are intertwined in the descriptions of the participants, both individually and as a group, and in the anecdotes explaining the emergent themes.

In the descriptions of each of the participants, exists observed behaviors. John and Denise, were described as having qualities closely related to a person who is said to be shy. Both were quiet and withdraw at the beginning of the interview. Crystal was observed as being very outspoken and friendly, while Richard was observed as confident, self-assured, thorough, and consistent. Joe was observed as being open and free to express himself. Leslie was observed to be very outspoken. While Brenda appeared to be shy and very quiet, in actuality, she was very bold and vocal. Finally, Cortez appeared to be very easy going.

What I assumed would be eight individual African American adolescents all voicing their unique experiences and perspectives concerning the treatment they and their peers received from educational personnel was in essence a group of young people or informants who possessed several of the attributes van Manen (1991) described as pedagogical thoughtfulness:

"a sense of caring, a deep sense of responsibility, self-critical openness, thoughtful maturity, an interpretive intelligence, a passion for knowing and learning the mysteries of the world, the moral fiber to stand up for something,



a certain understanding of the world, active hope in the face of prevailing crisis, and a sense of humor and vitality" (p. 8).

I observed a group of participants who were accepting of one another and who were committed to making each other feel comfortable. The group went out of their way to make Cortez feel welcomed. Their willingness to share and their ease with accepting food from one another led me to conclude that this was a common occurrence between adolescents. I observed a high level of commitment as the participants went an hour over the initial time allotted for the interview and as they forged through the transcripts to make corrections. As they labored over some to their responses I also observed several emotions.

I was not prepared for the rollercoaster of emotions demonstrated by the difficulty and levels of frustration which registered in their faces as they contemplated some of their responses. At times they would throw up their hands in frustration and say "I don't know". At other times they would answer questions in a tone which communicated anger. Some told of experiences while trying desperately to hold back tears. Then there were times after long serious moments of discussion that someone would tell a joke just to lighten up the atmosphere.

The characteristics I observed in the participants as we were engaged in the group interviews were consistent with observations made of the participants in other settings. John and Denise were consistently quiet and reserved when observed in social settings. I observed Denise as she participated in an engagement in which she and several of her peers sang to a group of elementary children. Her teacher asked her to sing a solo and

at first she sang very softly, however, after being encouraged by her teacher to sing louder she bellowed out the rest of the lyrics to the song in a majestic voice. This was not unlike her experiences in the group interviews. She started out being very quiet. I had to encourage her to speak by asking her direct questions. Later, she opened up and had a great deal to say. She can also be the "life of the party", as I observed her recently with a group of friends at a skating party.

While John was quiet in almost every setting I observed him in, he was very friendly. While at a skating rink, he went out of his way to make sure everyone was having a good time. In youth groups I observed him asking thought-provoking questions about life.

No matter what setting I observed Crystal in, she seemed to take on the role of leader. This was not unlike her as she described how she led her entire class in a protest against a teacher, whose behavior, in her opinion, was inappropriate. I observed her speaking with boldness and clarity about the state young people find themselves in and what alternatives they have recently at a youth rally. An observation of Crystal yielded that she was very close to her mother, very confident, and a friend to everyone she came in contact with.

Leslie described herself as having special feelings for young children. My observations of her confirmed that fact. She consistently demonstrated a protective and caring attitude toward her younger sister and her recently adopted baby brother. I have observed her quietly making new friends in her own unique manner. Unlike my

observation of Leslie in the group interviews, however, she remained somewhat quiet, to herself, and very soft spoken.

Brenda was quiet and somewhat shy when I observed her socially with a group of friends during a community activity, when a group of young people went to visit a home for senior citizens. While she would talk quietly in a one-on-one situation, she never took the lead and she was rarely seen in the midst of a large group of her peers.

As I observed Richard in many social settings, he was very friendly toward his peers and especially respectful of adults. This, was consistent with the behaviors I observed as he participated in the group interviews. He reiterated the need for young people to respect adults several times during the interviews. I observed Richard to be an easy going guy.

Finally, Joe was observed in a social setting as well as on his job. Joe did not seem to relate too well with the rest of his peers. Perhaps this may have been different if I had the opportunity to observe him with his school friends. While he did not display actions that would be interpreted as his being mean, he would not mingle with his peers. This observation was consistent with what was observed while Joe was on the job. He kept to himself and was very quiet, but he would always speak and treat people with kindness when interacting with them.

Close observations of the participants during the group interviews as well as in other settings yielded valuable information. This information helped to bring validity to the comments of the informants. It would not have been possible to get at what van

Manen (1990) described as the "geist" or the essence of their lived experiences without the inclusion of these close observations.

### **Building Trustworthiness**

In order for inquiry to be valid the researcher must be concerned with how 'truth' will be established, how it will be communicated, and how error will be detected and corrected (Erlandson, et. al., 1993). This process is referred to as trustworthiness. The researcher used triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, and an audit trail to establish trustworthiness.

#### ***Triangulation***

Triangulation, which is multiple methods, was used to build trustworthiness. The researcher engaged eight participants in group interviews and dialogue journaling, used school documents, and participated in close observations to gain information for the research study. The collections of eight African American students' lived experiences were shared in group interviews. School documents such as the School Profiles booklet and a statistics information sheet provided valuable background information on the schools which the participants attended. In addition, dialogue journals were used as a means of communicating with the informants on a more personal level and allowed the participants to go more indepth about their lived experiences. Finally, the informants were observed both as they participated in the groups interviews and as they engaged in various activities with their peers.

### *Peer Debriefing*

I spent many hours engaged in dialogue with several of my peers as I organized the study, reviewed the literature, and as I participated in what Erlandson, et. al. (1993) referred to as the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. A member of the clergy was consulted to help locate literature which provided information from the Biblical perspective. Once this literature was organized the clergyman was again consulted to ensure that the information was theologically sound. Additionally several of the faculty members, who are also employed at the same institution of higher learning I was employed with offered advice and suggestions, including my dean. They have all acquired experience in the area of research by walking through this process and by their continued engagement in research studies and writings. One faculty member declared herself as my mentor and took on the responsibility of editing my writings. She also conducted my audit trail.

While I do not consider myself as a peer, my advisement committee certainly functioned in the capacity of "peer debriefers". One member was pertinent in helping me mold my thoughts into an organized introductory chapter as we went through the process of developing section by section of it in a research class. This process brought into focus many loopholes in my study. Another member required me to present the plan of my research study to a class of my peers all involved in the same process, and to engage in dialogue in a simulated defense. The result was that the committee member and my classmates made several suggestions, and I was encouraged by their genuine interest in the study to pursue what I had started to its completion. Last, but in no way

least, my committee advisor spent countless hours laboring over my documentation, consulting with and encouraging me. Also, through a series of class assignments, while taking a class under her tutelage I was exposed to the process of theme analysis and as a result, felt confident that I had gained the fundamental knowledge and skills needed to use this technique in my research study as I grappled to make sense of the data collected. It is apparent that peer debriefings were a very important part of this research study and I am sure that successful completion of this study would not have been possible without them.

### *Member Checks*

Once the tapes from the group interviews were transcribed, the informants were given the opportunity to read the transcripts and to make corrections. The informants took this responsibility seriously and spent several hours on it. In addition, once the findings were reported, the participants were again asked to read it and to make sure the interpretation of the data was synonymous with their thinking. And again, the informants handled this challenge with great success. This process resulted in very few changes being made. The informants felt that what they had said in group interviews and written in their dialogue journals had been interpreted correctly. They were surprised at how much they had actually contributed to the study and the importance of it. They were also delighted to see their "voices" in writing.

### ***Audit Trail***

Dr. Jill Steeley took on the responsibility of conducting an audit trail. She dedicated several hours, between coordinating and supervising student teachers, teaching classes, spending time with her family, and meeting her civic obligations, to performing this task. By calling to question unclear data, she has ensured that the data collected can be "tracked to their source" (Erlandson, et. al., 1993). In addition, as the themes emerged, the data was sectioned into units and coded so that they could be accessed as part of the audit trail. Erlandson, et. al.(1993) suggested that intializing data is the process of 'disaggregating data into the smallest pieces of information that may stand alone as independent thoughts in the absence of additional information other than a broad understanding of the context" (p. 117). Finally, the auditor read through the dissertation several times and questioned anything she had doubts or concerns about. All information pertinent to this study was made available to her upon request. The audit trail proved to be very valuable in maintaining the authenticity of the research study.

### **Inconsistencies**

One of the challenges the researcher faces when using hermeneutic phenomenological human science research methodology is that each person's lived experience is unique and they must be allowed the freedom to share their lived experience in their own way. While it was important to stick close to the purpose of the research study and to make sure the questions that drove the research were addressed, I had to allow the participants the leverage they needed to speak freely and in an

uninhibited manner. Therefore, I was responsible for making sure the informants remained close to their lived experiences, and at the same time obligated to *go* where they led. This process brought about some interesting results. The informants brought out many issues that either were not addressed in the research of the literature, or that were in direct opposition with what was reported in the review of the literature. These inconsistencies were brought out in the emergent themes: themes of images, themes of treatment, and themes of changes.

### *Themes of Images*

The review of literature implied that there was a stereotypical image of African Americans which was that they were poor, lazy, violent, ignorant, and nonpatriotic (Garcia, 1994). However, the participants were adamant that there were multiple images of African Americans and insisted that an image is an individual thing. While they expressed that African Americans do have some things in common, they were sure, as Richard stated, "Yes, I think it [image] is *individual*" (Appendix A, p. 199). They were reluctant to admit that a stereotypical image of African Americans existed, however, they did decide that there *was* a common image of teenagers. In their descriptions of this image, it was obvious that they were speaking of teenagers from two perspectives. They spoke of teenagers as a whole, not distinguishing between cultures or races, and at other times they were specifically speaking of African American teenagers. I found it interesting that when they did describe African American teenagers; they used words like "stupid", "lazy", and "dumb" (Appendix A, p. 202). But they did not think of



themselves in that manner. In fact most of the participants were very self-confident and self-assured and felt they did not fit the mold other teenagers fell into.

Clothing and appearances played an important part of a person's image from the perspective of the participants but this was not a major factor brought out in the literature review. This reiterated to me the importance of this study; looking through the eyes of adolescents at how African Americans are treated. As far as they were concerned, what teenagers wore could help them or hinder them regardless of your racial identity.

When the informants spoke of image in labeling, again their perspective was somewhat different from the literature. Researchers referred to labeling as being placed in ability groups (Irvine, 1990), but the participants spoke in terms of being labeled because of the previous school attended.

The thing they grappled with the most was what they thought of African Americans as a group. I questioned why it was so stressful for them to discuss this issue. Crystal and Leslie were most persistent in demanding that different circumstances would result in different images of African Americans. Crystal stated, "You can't just take a whole group of people and judge them and put them in this category because that's what you think they are" (Appendix A, p. 228).

This group of participants where not willing to credit the majority population solely for whatever image or images existed of African Americans. This was in direct opposition of what was found in this literature. Instead they found African Americans were the ones primarily responsible for the portrayal and perpetuation of the images of African Americans. Leslie emphasized this point by stating, "I think that Black people

stereotype each other *more* than Whites do to a certain point" (Appendix A, p. 230). Crystal added, "It's us.... most of the time it is us" (Appendix A, p. 204). They went on to discuss how African American parents are also responsible for passing down a negative stereotypical image of themselves from one generation to the next by "bad mouthing" the other parent.

### ***Themes of Treatment***

One would assume by what is found in the literature that any mistreatment experienced by the participants and their peers was administered by the majority population. However, this was not the case. Not only was mistreatment administered by African American education personnel but it was also directed, in many cases, toward students from every culture. Joe mentioned how one teacher told the entire class that she couldn't stand *any* of them (Appendix A, p. 208). Leslie also spoke of a teacher who stated he did not like Black or White students (Appendix A, p. 208). Crystal shared an incident which involved Black administrators: "At my school a couple of White boys got caught smoking and all they got was five days of detention and other Black students get suspended. And I don't understand because we have Black administrators" (Appendix A, p. 211).

Richard and others brought out the fact that sometimes treatment was administered toward students, not because they were Black or White, but based on whether the teacher liked you or not or because teacher wanted to "lord authority over the students" (Appendix A, p. 210). Leslie suggested that when there is trouble between a teacher and

a student that administrators would immediately take the side of the teacher; not considering what caused the student to get mad (Appendix A, p. 210). This was not an issue discussed in the review of the literature.

The participants perceived being given homework, without adequate explanation, a form of mistreatment from educators. In fact, this was the main focus of Crystal's journal entries. However, unlike most instances, the students were able to bring about a change for the better for themselves by taking their complaints to the administration. The teacher was reassigned to another school as a result of the students' actions (Appendix B, Journal #5, p. 246). This action was never mentioned in the literature as an alternative for the mistreatment of students.

I was appalled that educators got away with calling students "niggers" and nothing was done about it. Although, (according to the literature,) it is typically the case that nothing was done, the reality that these sort of things happened was still a shock to me. I thought it was interesting that in some instances the participants actually *defended* the treatment they received from educators both as regular students and as athletes. Cortez implied that teachers would not mistreat you if they knew you cared (Appendix A, p. 207). Additionally, Cortez's journal writing implied that the treatment he received from his third grade teacher, which seemingly was a result of his teaching being prejudice, was *deserving*" (Appendix B, Journal #4, p. 244). He wrote, "Now I appreciate it more because every time I get unorganized I remember that and it helps motivate me to organize whatever it is that needs it" (Appendix B, Journal #4, p. 244). Brenda mentioned that she had a principal that was *too nice* to the students and the

results of this treatment were not good (Appendix A, p. 223). Richard also felt that the athletes in his school were "pushed harder" than other students so that they would remain eligible to participate in the sports program. He felt that the harsher treatment he received as an athlete was for his benefit and therefore seemed grateful that he had been treated *differently* (Appendix A, p. 217).

As adolescents, the participants expressed that their peers were just as guilty of administering mistreatment as they were of being the recipients of mistreatment from others. They discussed, at length, how some *students* treat the educators. Brenda stated that the kids were rude and that teachers don't teach anything because the kids don't give them a chance to teach (Appendix A, p. 222). Richard also brought up several times that the students curse and fuss at the teachers and talk back to them (Appendix A, p. 214).

The informants witnessed, not only students mistreating educators, but also each other! Cortez stated, "if Blacks see you talking with somebody White, they say you're not like them" (Appendix A, p. 212). Leslie also shared about two incidents when she or her friend was ostracized by other Black students because they were socializing with White students. Crystal's response to how African Americans treat other African Americans, however, was the statement that challenged the very existence of the perpetuation theory. She stated, "You know that's one thing about me, they encourage the stuff, but we as [Black] people don't have to go out there and put it out there" (Appendix A, p. 229).

The participants were not as convinced that the acts of mistreatment toward African Americans were because the dominate culture wanted to keep them in a

subordinate position. Rather they felt these deeds were done out of "ignorance". Crystal expressed that many White teachers just *did* not understand (Appendix A, p. 234). Leslie spoke of an incident that took place at Joe's school as she said, "they just think they are doing us a favor or giving us advice.... they don't think they are really hurting anybody" (Appendix A, p. 234).

### ***Themes of Changing***

The literature indicated that African Americans had very little control over the image portrayed of them or how they would react to that image. Spring (1994) suggested African Americans will fulfill the image portrayed of them. However, this was not the impression I was left with after interviewing, journaling with, and observing the participants. They insisted that they were in control of their own lives and their own destinies and if they did not like their current image, they could exercise their power to make changes! They expressed that *if* an image needed to be changed that it was possible to do so.

The informants concluded that changes could be negative or positive depending on circumstances. While the debate is ongoing concerning whether or not cultures should be educated in separate educational institutions, this was not an overwhelming desire of the informants. When asked if they would desire to attend an all Black school with Black teachers and administrators, while some thought it might begin as a positive experience, they believed that eventually changes would take place and the African

American students would be placed into different groups based on a set of stereotypical criteria.

I found it intriguing that Brenda, who attends a majority Black student-populated school was willing to change schools and go to a majority White populated school in order to place herself in what she described as uncomfortable surroundings for the opportunity to receive a better education. When asked about her concerns for being mistreated, she responded, " I wouldn't worry about that. I'll just leave it alone unless they get too far...." (Appendix A, p. 224). Concerning changing to go to an all Black school with Black teachers and administrators, Leslie stated,

once you go on in life you are going to be working with all kinds of people and you're going to have to realize where they are coming from and how to get along with them and going to an all Black school, you will just know how all Black people act. You're not going to know about the Whites and other people. And you're not going to be around just Blacks all of your life (Appendix A, p. 216).

I thought Leslie's statements about changing schools showed insightfulness on her part to look beyond her years of attending school to what was ahead, and see the need for integrated schools.

The nature of hermeneutic phenomenological human science research methodology is to follow the lead of the participants while staying close to the research question. The result of doing so yielded a vast amount of rich information. It is obvious to those who read this chapter that many of the findings contrast with what was written in the review of the literature and will cause a diversity of emotional feelings.

## Conclusion

From the length of this chapter, I believe it is apparent that adolescents have a lot to say regarding their perceptions of their educational experiences. The group interviews were rich and yielded a multitude of information from which many themes emerged. Some of the information was consistent with the findings in the review of the literature, while other information was not. The participants also discussed issues which were not addressed at all during the research of the literature, yet, because of the nature of the study, I felt obligated to pursue.

The dialogue journals and school documents added to the richness of the study. Journaling allowed the participants to focus on a particular incident, and the school documents added a "backdrop" for each of the schools attended by the informants. While their writings proved to be somewhat consistent with emerging themes which were present in the group interviews, *some* of the reactions to these experiences, reactions from educational personnel as well as the participants, were unique.

The close observations provided many insights to the emotions the participants were dealing with as they shared their lived experiences. These observations also proved to be valuable because I learned a lot about the participants' personalities as they interacted with one another, other peers, and their family members.

Finally, the question that remains, is why were there so many inconsistencies between the research of the literature and the information shared by the participants? Chapter five will be an attempt to explain the reasons for these inconsistencies.

## CHAPTER V

### REFLECTIONS

van Manen (1990) suggested, "the significance of anecdotal narrative in phenomenological research and writing is situated in its power to compel, lead us to reflect, involve us personally, transform us by our being touched, shaken, or moved by the story, as well as teach us, and measure our interpretative sense" (p. 21). He defined reflection as "a form of human experience that distances itself from situations in order to consider the meanings and significance embedded in those experiences." (van Manen, p. 100). He further states, "Inevitably the reflective moments of life involve a temporary stepping back or stepping out of the immediate engagement we have with the world" (van Manen, 1991, p.101). As I contemplated the "essences" or "that which makes a thing what it is" (van Manen, 1990, p. 177), of this research study, I found that it was necessary for me to "distance myself" or "step away" from the research study to get at the meanings and the significance of the lived experiences of eight African Americans adolescents' as it relates to their perceptions of educational experiences. As I read and reread, the introduction, review of the literature, the methodology and the findings, my reflective thinking led to a specific line of questioning: *why* did the participants' lived experiences differ from the literature reviewed? In using the perpetuation theory as a lens through which the participants' lived experiences were examined, does it explain what occurred naturally in the experiences? Based on the findings, what are the implications of this study? What are the recommendations?



### Inconsistencies

Research of the literature revealed that African American students are often the recipients of harsh and unfair treatment administered by education personnel (Irvine, 1990; Spring, 1994; Giroux and Freire, 1989; Apple and King, 1983; Helms, 1990; McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993). The research also indicated that these practices and policies, which are a reflection of society exist because African Americans are often portrayed in a mediocre stereotypical image which ultimately leads them to a lifestyle which is in fulfillment of this image. An immediate consequence is the perpetuation of this stereotypical image, or the self-fulfilling prophecy (Wells and Crain, 1994; Spring, 1994; Irvine, 1990; McCarthy and Crichlow, 1993). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to talk with eight adolescent African American students and allow them to describe and interpret their experiences as it related to the treatment they received from education personnel, in order to determine if their experiences were synonymous with what was found in the literature. While the participants' experiences were consistent with the review of the literature in some ways, *many* of the issues were either not addressed or in opposition of the literature. The purpose then is to determine if the participants' experiences differed from the literature review?

The school profiles of each of the schools attended by the participants were more consistent with the literature than what the participants actually had to say. The statistics consistently reported a higher percentage of African American students being suspended from school, participating in programs for students with exceptional needs and, students receiving reduced or free lunches, which is an indication that the family income of these

students is near or below the poverty level. Why then, are the perceptions of the participants vastly different? I would like to suggest several possibilities. Perhaps the participants are naive and refused to face the realities of the society in which we live. Perhaps reality is just too painful for these students to face. Perhaps African American adolescents *really* see things from a different perspective. Perhaps because of the caliber of students the participants are and their family ties, they are somewhat unaware of all of the dynamics of their school environment. This group of students were not among those the school profiles reported had suspended or received exceptional services, nor were they participants in the reduced or free lunch program. Finally, perhaps these students are autonomous individuals and therefore "march to a different drumbeat."

### *Are the Participants Naive?*

To be naive is to be "unsuspecting; marked by a lack of instructions, experience, and learning: exhibiting lack of analysis, or depth by ready acceptance without consideration" (Webster, 1986, p. 1500). At a glance it might appear that the reason the participants have experiences which are not consistent with the literature is because they are *naive*.

In spite of what the literature suggested and in spite of the fact that the School Profile booklet gave specific statistics which added validity to what was found in the literature, the participants insisted there was *not* a mediocre stereotypical image of African Americans. Instead, they concluded that there were several images of African Americans and that image was based on individuality. Crystal's statement concerning

image was so passionate, it was as though she tried to convince herself as well as those around her that what *she* was saying represented the truth, *not* what was stated in the literature. But is she naive? Is she exhibiting a "lack of ability to analyze" (Webster, 1986, p. 1500)? I believe she had given long, careful, analytical and reflective thought to her stance and as a result, chose to adopt a philosophy. I believe she chose not to waiver in her thinking no matter what the research or literature stated.

Perhaps the participants' stance concerning the image of teenagers "fit" more closely with what the research stated concerning images. Although a discussion on "teenage" images was not a part of the literature review, the participants concluded that a mediocre stereotypical image of all teenagers, Black, White, etc., did exist.

How could it have been so easy for them to admit there was an "image" of teenagers and at the same time be so difficult for them to conclude there was not a mediocre image of African Americans? Again are these the thoughts of naive students or does this line of thinking represent "where they are" at this point in their lives? Could it have been easier for them to discuss a stereotypical image of teenagers because they are aware that being a teenager is not a place of permanence - that it only represents a short time span in their entire lives, so that the image of a teenager is temporary, while to take ownership of an image attached to being an African American is permanent?

Even though the participants concluded that there was a mediocre stereotypical image of teenagers and hinted that there *could* be a mediocre stereotypical image of African American teenagers, they emphatically chose to exclude themselves from this image! They all thought very highly of themselves. Why? Could they have been

operating under the disguise of naive realism, an operation in the deception that their perceptions of themselves and *not* what the literature concluded about African Americans, represented reality to them? Or could it be that in spite of what was in the literature, this group of African American students had a strong sense of self identity that was unwavering?

Researchers such as Hacker (1992), Levine and Havighurst (1992), and Fulks (1969) reported that one's location in the social class as well as where one lives is closely tied to the image projected of him. The participants never gave one thought to their socio-economic status, and the only time they discussed where they lived was when Richard pointed out how the media portrayed a negative image of the school he attended because of its location. However, the informants believed that their appearance, or the clothes they wore tied them to certain images. Is this naivety seeping through or does it represent what is important to teenagers?

The participants expressed very strong convictions that if there were images of African Americans, the dominant culture was not solely to blame. Instead, Leslie and Crystal made it very clear that they thought Black people were largely responsible for projecting a negative stereotypical image of themselves. Perhaps I am too suspicious, but I must pose the question: Are these the thoughts of intelligent, mature teenagers or have they been so deceived by the dominant culture that they have accepted these statements as truths without any consideration that they have been "baited"? Is this a form of hegemony? Have these thoughts become so embedded in their conscious that they think of them as their own ideas?

When the students engaged in discussions regarding how they had been treated, there was *finally* some consistency with the literature. The participants brought out evidence that African American students had been mistreated by education personnel. The participants gave several examples of how African American students were sometimes treated *differently* than other students, but that is where the similarity between the perception of how African Americans were treated by education personnel and the review of the literature ceases to be consistent. The participants' lived experiences led to entirely different discussions than what was reported in the literature.

Leslie brought out that not only did a teacher dislike Black students, but this teacher told them that he disliked *all* students! Despite implications from the literature that the dominant culture was guilty of mistreatment toward African American students, the informants told of *many* incidents in which African American educators were also responsible for administering harsh treatment to African American students. I must revisit the question driving the analogies of the informants' perspective versus the review of the literature: Are these students naive, or do they chose to focus on the entire picture and not just a portion of it? Evidence suggests that they chose to focus on the entire picture. Not only did the informants address how education personnel treated *all* students, they also address how the students treated the educators and each other. Leslie and Richard gave excellent examples of students mistreating education personnel, and part of Cortez's and Leslie's lived experiences were about how students sometimes treated each other. Being naive would perhaps suggest that the participants would be inexperienced,

however, these students spoke from their own lived worlds. They were not just speaking of *someone* else's experiences, they were sharing their own.

Are the informants naive to have suggested that ignorance is the basis for some of the acts of mistreatment toward others? Crystal explained that sometimes students were mistreated because White teachers just did not understand. Leslie used a comment Joe had made earlier about an announcement made over the intercom concerning Black History month as an example of how people speak and act out of *ignorance*. Crystal suggested that ignorance could also be knowing and just not caring.

Webster (1986), used words and phrases such as destitute of knowledge; uninstructed; unlearned; exhibiting lack of perception, knowledge, or intelligence; unaware; uninformed; unenlightened; primitive; and crude to define the word "ignorant" (p. 1125). In my opinion, the participants' descriptions of acts of ignorance were synonymous with Webster's definition of ignorance. These are *not* the thoughts of naive students. Rather, they represent the result of deep analytical thinking.

Finally, do naive people speak boldly about having the power to change? When asked if they thought society portrayed an image of them and if so, if they felt the need to change the image, their reactions were that *change* was inevitable and necessary, and they desired *change*. They declared that changing your image was possible and they expressed an interest in changing schools as well as changing the curriculum taught in schools. The participants felt very strongly that change was within their reach. Brenda even decided that at the risk of being mistreated, she might change schools for a "better" education. After careful consideration of having the opportunity to attend an all Black

school with all Black administrators, faculty, and staff, the participants agreed, this was not a change that they desired. Are these students naive? If the definition of naive is "being willing to accept things the way they are without any consideration" (Webster, 1986, p. 1500), then these participants are definitely *not* naive.

A thorough investigation of the interactions between the participants dispelled any thoughts that they might be naive. Instead, it reveals a group of adolescents who are inquisitive, analytical, and who consider every possible angle before accepting anything as truth. These qualities are *not* the make up of naive people. They are instead, the characteristics of people who are strong and opinionated, possessing uncompromising convictions.

### ***Is Reality Just too Painful?***

Psychologists maintain that a stable concept of self, both as an individual and as a member of the Black race, is essential to the healthy growth and development of a Black self (Comer & Poussaint, 1975; Ladner, 1978). Cross (1991) suggested that the development of a positive Black identity involves synthesis of internal and external experiences within the context of cultural, familial, societal, and historical influences. Therefore it is safe to conclude that a threat to the concept of self, both as an individual and as a member of the Black race can be detrimental to the healthy growth and development of a positive Black identity. For this reason, I must explore the possibility that the inconsistencies between what the participants reported and what was found in the literature could be because it would be too painful and too detrimental to the participants'

self-identity and their identity as an African American to validate what was found in the literature. There is significant evidence which supports this possibility, particularly as I recall the emotions the participants displayed as they described their lived experiences.

Often, after long intense discussions, one of the participants would tell a joke to lighten up the atmosphere. Perhaps the jokes were just a diversion from having to deal with the fears resulting from what they and their African American peers had experienced and the implications of this treatment. Joe told of an incident that happened at his school in which African American students received longer punishment than their White peers for what they perceived as a lessor offense. Crystal also emphasized that teachers' expectations of them resulted in African American students being mistreated.

While the implications of these experiences could cause fear to permeate in the lives of the participants, the reality of Brenda's and Cortez's experiences could be detrimental to the concept of self identity. Brenda recalled a teacher who constantly called the students "niggers"! Cortez, who was the only African American student in his class, wrote in his dialogue journal about a frightening experience he had as a third grader. Cortez's reaction to this experience was that he now appreciates what happened to him in third grade because it helps to keep him organized.

It is difficult to believe that he *really* "appreciates" being treated in that manner. Perhaps that is just his way of rationalizing the actions of his teacher to avoid dealing with the painful reality that his teacher was racist.

There *is* evidence which indicates that whenever the participants came too close to their lived experiences lining up parallel with the literature, it was painful. Perhaps



as a protective shield, they protested *too* much. Leslie insisted that a whole group of people can not be judged and put into a category. Perhaps the possibility that this may be reality was just too painful for Leslie, and the others to admit.

***Do African American Adolescents Really "See" Things from a Different Perspective?***

Russell (1990) writes in the article, *Native Assumptions Cause Unpleasant Surprises When Targeting Ethnic Youth*: "When many marketers try to develop strategies to target young Blacks and Hispanics, they often assume that all young adults, regardless of race or ethnicity, are alike. They often assume that no segments exist within a minority group. Such assumptions are a sure-fire invitation to unpleasant surprises" (p. 14). I believe the same could be said regarding many of the researchers used in this study such as Spring, 1994; Wells and Crain, 1994; Braddock, 1980. They reported that there is a stereotypical image of African Americans and that all African Americans believe it, are destined to give in to it, and there is nothing they can do about. In other words, all African Americans are the same. However, contrary to the literature, this group of African American adolescents *did not* accept that there was a mediocre stereotypical image of them. They did not accept that the dominant culture had control over their lives, and they did not believe that their only option was to become the preconceived image society portrayed of them. It is safe to say that African American adolescents are not *all* alike! Perhaps it is because they "see" things from a different perspective than the researchers.

While discussing the treatment African American students received from education personnel, the participants had the insight to include how students treated educators and how students treated each other. They acknowledged that African American students were not the only ones being mistreated by education personnel, but at different times pointed out that all students are mistreated by educators. Additionally, the participants were not satisfied to accuse only White educators of mistreating students, but felt Black educators were also guilty. Perhaps these students have not been so tainted or indoctrinated with what society projects about African Americans that they see through tunneled or limited vision. Instead, they have retained the ability to "see" from a global, or peripheral perspective, or what Webster (1986) defined as "the surrounding space: the area beyond the strict limits of a thing" (p. 1681). Perhaps the participants are able to "see" beyond the surrounding space, or the area beyond the limits of print.

### *Are the Participants Aware of Their School Surroundings?*

The school profile of each of the schools attended by the participants reported statistics that supported the review of the literature. Consistent with the Carnegie Cooperation Study reported by Irvine (1990), the School Profile booklet reported a high percentage of African American Students had been suspended, placed in special education programs, and received free or reduced lunch. Yet the discussions with the participants yielded a different point of view. Could the type of students the participants are, their family ties, and perhaps their not being the students suspended, participating in special education programs, or the free or reduced lunch program, have an effect on their

perspectives? These are good students! The participants rarely, if ever, got into trouble at school. They made good grades, C's or above, and they were active in extra curricular activities. They respect adults and preferred that their peers do the same.

John was very quiet and maintained between a B and C average. Denise was very outgoing and found the social life at her school very rewarding. Crystal was outgoing, outspoken, and friendly, and was filled with school spirit. Richard was a very mature young man and always hesitated before answering a question to ensure his responses were accurate and fair. Joe got along well with the rest of the student body and found the academics necessary for him to remain eligible to play football, a challenge. Leslie was also a B average student. Brenda was known for being very quiet and shy, yet she was also quite vocal about the issues that concern her. Finally, Cortez was a popular student who got along well with his peers and teachers.

In searching for reasons for the inconsistencies, I discovered that while both parents were not necessarily the biological parents of the participants, seven out of eight of the participants live with two-parent families and all of the participants have a parent, or parents, who are actively involved in their children's lives and education. At one of John's, Denise's, and Crystal's parents work for the school system. Joe's mother works for a company that extends services primarily to educators. Leslie's mom makes sure Leslie sets aside time everyday to complete homework assignments. Cortez's mother works the clock at his basketball games and volunteers for numerous activities at the school where her son attends. Denise's father used to help coach her basketball team.

According to the research, this is not the "norm" for African American families. Hutchinson (1992) stated, "the reality for many Black families is that Black men do desert their homes. They make babies that they don't take care of. They fill the jails and prisons. They join gangs and commit acts of violence. They die young from drugs, alcohol, and disease" (p. 17). This is *not* the case for the parents of the participants. *All* of the parents are gainfully employed. *None* of them are in jail, on drugs, or a part of a gang!

Given this information, it might be natural to assume that the participants live in the middle class socio-economic section of the city, however, this assumption would be incorrect. All but one of the participants live in what is considered to be the inner city, and what is often referred to as the Black part of town. Perhaps because the participants did well in school, were involved in extracurricular activities, and had strong family ties, they are somewhat removed from what research portrays as the stereotypical image of African Americans. Perhaps this could explain why these students' perceptions are not consistent with the research.

#### ***Are the Participants Autonomous?***

In the article *Autonomy: The Goal for Classroom Teachers of the 1990s* by Belinda Wilucki (1990), autonomy is defined as "the condition or quality of being self-governing" (p. 280). She continued, "Coupled with this definition is the proposition that teachers (people) are and should be prepared to be individuals who are independent, self-regulated, thinking persons, capable of making judgments related to right or wrong, true

or false, and able to use knowledge to make rational decisions" (p. 280). I believe this definition of autonomy describes the actions of the participants. I observed them to be independent in their thinking and unafraid to disagree with one another.

According to Kamii (1994), autonomy is the ability to think for oneself and to decide between right and wrong in the moral realm and between truth and untruth in the intellectual realm, independent of rewards and punishments. Kamii (1994) further suggested that autonomy is defined as the opposite of heteronomy. Heteronomous people are governed by someone else because they are unable to think for themselves (p. 673). The participants proved to be independent thinkers. They were not afraid to disagree with what the "authorities" stated.

Piaget (1932; 1965) suggested that moral autonomy appears when a person is able to think independently from all of the external pressure. I believe the participants were driven by their own convictions and therefore felt they had choices and were in control of their own lives. Denise decided that she was going to continue to befriend everyone, Black and White students, and even though John and Cortez sometimes felt the pressure to "hang out" with their "own kind", they said that they still "hung out" with and talked with White students. I am of the opinion that this group of informants' line of thinking, decision making processes, and unwillingness to believe that their destinies were to fulfill a mediocre stereotypical image society portrays of African Americans aligns them to those characteristics found in autonomous individuals.

As I search for explanations for the inconsistencies in my findings and the research of the literature, I realize there are no "right" answers, only possibilities.

Possibly, the participants are naive and out of touch with reality. Possibly, reality was too painful for the participants to face so they avoided it by diverting their attention to other issues related to the study. Possibly, African American adolescents really do "see" things from a different perspective. Possibly, the caliber of the participants and their strong family ties distanced them from what their peers were experiencing. Possibly, this group of participants are autonomous individuals. These are just a few possibilities. I am sure that as others read and discover the inconsistencies, they too, will emerge with possible explanations.

### **Through the Lens of the Perpetuation Theory**

The Perpetuation Theory was used as a framework in the explanation of the maintenance of the mediocre stereotypical image of African Americans. Creswell (1994) suggested that in this type of study, one does not begin with a theory or test to verify. However the perpetuation theory was helpful in shaping the initial research questions. Therefore, this theory was used as a basis of comparison for the narrative description, and used as a lens through which the participants' lived experiences were examined to see if it adequately explained what was occurring naturally in the experiences (Creswell, 1994).

McPartland and Braddock (1981) defined the perpetuation theory as a way of explaining the process of a person repeating what other people he identifies with have done across the stages of the life cycle. Braddock's (1980) research used this theory to explain how segregation tends to repeat itself across institutions when individuals have

not had sustained experiences in desegregated settings earlier in life. Wells and Crain (1994) suggested that the perpetuation theory can also be positive for African Americans where school desegregation is concerned. They concluded that Black students can overcome perpetual segregation as a result of their experiences in desegregated schools.

Wilson (1987) noted that the greatest barrier to social and economic mobility for inner-city Blacks is the degree to which they remain isolated from the opportunities and networks of the mostly White and middle-class society. In other words, it is suggested that in order to gain access to middle class values and higher-status jobs in their adult lives, African Americans must "come out" of the perpetual segregation and isolation of their neighborhoods and schools and place themselves in a desegregated educational setting, which Wells and Crain (1994) admit, "may have a short-term negative impact on the self-esteem" (p. 535). It is assumed then, that without these outside ties and desegregated experiences, African Americans will continue to perpetuate and fulfill the mediocre stereotypical image society portrays of them!

Brenda's idea of attending another school on the south side of town fit this theory. She decided that if she left her majority African American populated school and attended a school on the south side which is populated mostly by White students, she would get a better education. However, the remainder of the discussions with the participants suggested the opposite was true. It seemed to be their *strong ties* to their schools, peers, and family members that allowed them to develop as autonomous individuals who were confident that they *did not* have to fulfill any image society portrayed of them. Rather they were free to be who they wanted to be.

Perhaps the voices of the participants dispel the theory that African American students must "come out" of their segregated environments and have interracial contact in order to break the perpetual cycle! In other words, perhaps it is *inside* the community, not *outside* of the community that the participants draw their strength to resist being convinced that there is a mediocre stereotypical image that they are predestined to fulfill!

### **Implications**

While the participants would not agree on many issues, something they did agree on was that African Americans were not the only people being mistreated by education personnel and that the persons administering the harsh treatment were not only representative of the dominate culture. In their opinions, Black education personnel were just as guilty of administering harsh treatment to students as White personnel. In addition, the participants felt their peers were also responsible for mistreating the educators and other peers. The implications of these findings seem to be vastly different than what they would have been had the participants' lived experiences been more parallel with the research literature. Had this been the case, the implications would have been the need for drastic changes in the way in which African American students are being educated and the need for other interested people from the community to become more actively involved in the neighborhood schools. While there is definitely still a need for this type of innovation, it is not my primary recommendation. I believe what the participants have implied through the descriptions of their lived experiences as a primary



concern is the apparent lack of care and compassion toward *all* mankind, from *all* mankind.

In Alpert and Dunham's (1986) opinion, the school's job is to create situations in which all youth can excel and feel a sense of accomplishment. Bearden, et. al. (1989) felt there is a need to improve the school's climate and to recognize the school's responsibility to take direct action to address each student's need for success, approval, challenge, and meaning. According to Reynolds (1995), schools should be made up of environments filled with compassion. He quoted van Manen (1990) as saying, "schools should be places where we will care for our children - places where and when I meet the other person in his or her weakness, vulnerability or innocence, I experience the undeniable presence of loving responsibility: a child who calls upon me may claim me in a way that leaves me no choice" (quoted in Reynolds, 1995, p. 15). A caring teacher can make all the difference in a child succeeding or failing in his educational pursuits (van Manen, 1991). van Manen (1991) would describe this type of teacher as someone who possesses:

a sense of vocation, love of and caring for children, a deep sense of responsibility, moral intuitiveness, self-critical openness, thoughtful maturity, tactful sensitivity toward the child's subjectivity, an interpretive intelligence, a pedagogical understanding of the child's needs, improvisational resoluteness in dealing with young people, a passion for knowing and learning the mysteries of the world, the moral fiber to stand up for something, a certain understanding of

the world, active hope in the face of prevailing crises, and not the least, humor and vitality (p. 18).

It is the care and compassion that the teacher has for the child that sets the tone of the classroom. van Manen (1991) suggests, the pedagogical love of the educator toward children is the precondition for the pedagogical relationship to grow. It leads to an understanding of the term *in loco parentis*. A good teacher who is loving and caring will have an understanding of and willingness to take on the *in loco parentis* relation and responsibility toward the children they teach (van Manen, 1991). While the literature is directed mainly toward educators, I believe it can be reciprocated toward students.

Payne (1994) recommended that school personnel be selected on criteria beyond the technical that should include such qualities as openness, willingness to learn, empathy, concern for others, creativity, and motivation and social awareness. These same character traits must be developed in students, and it must start at a very early age. Perhaps the African American students who participated in this research study already possess several of these characteristics. I observed them to be a group of young people or informants who possessed several of the attributes van Manen (1991) described as pedagogical thoughtfulness. This could explain why there were so many inconsistencies with the literature. Perhaps if the participants had more of a background "typical," according to the research, of African Americans, as lazy, poor, violent, and nonpatriatic, the results would be vastly different...

### Recommendations

Recommendations are a necessary part of every research study. If the researcher can not make any recommendations as a result of his or her research study, the study has no value. I believe there are several recommendations that can be made as a result of this study.

The informants were asked to participate in the study solely because they were African American adolescents who I believed had lived experiences that would be helpful to the study, as it related to their perceptions of the treatment they and their peers received from education personnel. I did not require that they have "negative experiences" to participate in the study. Until we began the group interviews, I had no idea what kinds of experiences these students had in school, only that they have had experiences! Unknown to me at the time, the participants were *all* good students, making C's and above, they rarely got into trouble at school, and they had very strong family ties. I think it would be very interesting to repeat this study with a group of African American students from a more diverse background; students who have not had as many positive experiences in school, students who struggle academically, or students whose family ties are not as strong. I believe that if any one of these variables were different, it would yield very different results.

Perhaps a similar study using White adolescent students as the participants, or even a combination of Black and White participants would also yield different and valuable information. I believe White students' perspectives of the treatment African

American students receive from education personnel would have been completely different from the participants' perspectives in this study.

It was mentioned at the very beginning of this study that this could be perceived as a class issue rather than a racial issue. I believe there is some merit to this statement which is worth pursuing. Since researchers such as Levine & Havighurst, Hornsby, Comer & Hayes, Freeman, Payne, and Hacker usually study race, class, and gender issues together, it is very difficult to differentiate if they are referring to just one of these issues. It could be that some of the literature is referring to the treatment *all* students who attend schools located in the lower socio-economic communities and not just African American students. Perhaps a study focusing on adolescent students' perceptions of treatment received from educators, who attend schools located in these type of communities, would align more closely with the literature review.

The participants of this research study all have strong family ties which is in opposition to what researchers report about most African American students. It is believed that as a result of their family ties, these students did not have lived experiences similar to those described in the literature. I am of the opinion that families and educators working together will help students to develop positive, life-long character traits. Perhaps educators should pay closer attention to what research has to say about the necessity of the home and school working together, and solicit the help of family members in the process of educating students. Parental involvement seems to play a major part in how students are perceived and treated. I would recommend that programs which advocate parents as partners in education be pursued at all levels of education.

There is evidence which proposes that we treat differently, those things and people that we have care and compassion for (Reynolds, 1995; van Manen, 1990; 1991). A good teacher, or caring teacher is one who has a strong inclination toward others; a divine calling upon his or her life. It is out of this strong inclination toward others that he or she is motivated to make children the most integral part of the educational process. Therefore, van Manen (1990) suggested that to become a good teacher includes something that can not be taught. It includes an understanding of a divine calling or appointment for your life. Ayers (1989) also suggested that good teachers are those who are committed to dialogue and interaction with children. They can relate to children because they are concerned about them and have compassion for them. It is this care and compassion that the teacher has for the child that sets the tone in the classroom. I believe these are the teachers who stand out amongst their peers!

I believe that those responsible for educating future teachers and those responsible for hiring them must continue researching the part that care and compassion play in the classroom. They need to be knowledgeable of what research says about the caring and compassionate educator, and they must be keenly aware of those who possess these traits and encourage them to pursue careers in education. Likewise, they must also be keenly aware of those who do not possess these traits and redirect them into other careers.

Eleanor Duckworth (1987) explored in detail the idea that future educators, while pursuing their careers, need to have experiences much like the experiences we desire children to have in the classroom. In addition, I believe it is also necessary for future educators to have more "real life" contact with children of all races and from all socio-

economic levels of society while pursuing their education degree. Perhaps these types of encounters will allow them to get to know students as individuals and will dispel the stereotypical images of African Americans brought out in the literature. Perhaps as a result of these types of experiences, educators will bring "lived experiences" into the classroom that will build rather than destroy crucial bonds and allow positive relationships to develop between teachers and students (Payne, 1994).

Finally, I believe because of this group of adolescents' ability to "see" things differently, they no longer "see" as far back in history as adults are capable of seeing. They have been able to allow some things from the pass to die, while we tend to hang on to them and allow them to affect the present as well as the future. I recommend that we follow Paul's advice as stated in the King James version of the Holy Bible. In Philippians 3:13, he states, "...but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before..." (1981, p. 209). Perhaps as educators, we need to take our cues from our students. While we must always remember the richness of our history, we must be determined to move forward. As long as educators allow their experiences, especially those past experiences which contribute to their belief of a mediocre stereotypical image of African Americans, to dictate their treatment toward students, we will continue to destroy bonds that are critical for the success of students. As educators, we must be willing to go beyond the outer appearance, or the initial surface, of our students and get behind the scene in an effort to unveil the true potential of each individual student.

What is apparent is that we must pay close attention to what young people are saying. They are anxious to share their experiences if they can find someone who will listen. David Elkind (1984), implied that in today's society, adults are so busy with their own lives, they have little or no time for teenagers. Most researchers talk *about* teenagers, but very few talk *to* them. It is imperative that we learn to talk with, and listen to young people.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The purpose of this study was to get at the "essence" of the lived experiences the research participants had as it related to the treatment their peers and they received from education personnel. van Manen (1990) described essence as "what makes a thing what it is (and without which it would not be what it is); that which makes a thing what it is rather than its being or becoming something else" (p. 177). The essence of this research is what it is because of the shared lived experiences of the participants. If *one* participant would have been added, subtracted, or substituted, the essence of this research study would probably be very different. If *one* participant would have shared just one different lived experience, the outcome of the study would perhaps be completely different. It is their lived experiences - the lived experiences of these participants - that make this study what it is.

van Manen (1990) stated in regards to essence and phenomenology writing, "The essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the description reawakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience

in a fuller or deeper manner" (p. 10). I believe this has been achieved. I am of the impression that the participants and I have emerged from this study as completely different people, possessing deeper, fuller meanings of African American adolescents' perceptions of their educational experiences. van Manen (1990) referred to this activity of hermeneutic phenomenology as "*geist*" or "the mind, thoughts, consciousness, values, feelings, emotions, actions, and purposes which find their objectifications in languages, beliefs, arts, and institutions" (p. 3).

I believe a thorough investigation of African American adolescents' perceptions of their educational experiences has been done.... but is it complete? No! This is just a temporary resting place! A re-visitation with this group of participants at a later time, or even a different group, is always possible and promises to yield a new and different narrative.



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## **APPENDIX A**

## GROUP INTERVIEWS

**When you think of the word "image", what do you think?**

- T. how somebody looks
- L. a person...the way they talk
- T. how they act
- B. the way you act
- J.R. the way a person responds to other people
- R. Image means how you view something.

**View something in particular or specifically?**

- R. Specifically, like something someone imagines.

**J. R. why do you say the way a person responds to other people?**

- J.R. because someone could get a bad image of you from coming up and talking with you and like da-da-da-da-da
- L. or like that women on the phone, we thought she was upset by the way she was talking
- T. or like people have an image of the North side. Like everybody's on welfare and walking around pregnant with no shoes. It's how people perceive someone else to be or a group of people.

**What do you think C and J?**

- C. I think of an image as a picture, like when you get an image in your head it's a picture.

**What kind of a picture?**

- C. That's just the way it is.

**J. what do you think?**

**\* SEE PAGE 237**

J. I guess it's just the way you perceive something.

**So when you say people have an image of you, what kind of image do you think people have of you, of African Americans?**

B. Good.

**Why do you think they have a good image? What do you mean by good?**

B. The way they carry themselves, but only some. They have a good image but they don't show it.

**According to who, do they have a good image, according to you, do you think they have a good image? Do you think African Americans themselves have a good image?**

B. Yes.

**You said some of them do, why just some?**

B. Cause only some carry themselves that way. Like they say Black people shoot a lot and stuff, that's their character and stuff, but that's only with some.

**And who is they? Who says that?**

B. Me, that's what I think.

**Why do you think that?**

B. Why I think that some of them do?

**Why do you think some people have that kind of image?**

B. They just don't think.

**What do the rest of you think?**

R. It would probably be an image of... instead of an image it would probably be a stereotype of somebody who is not going to make it in life or of someone who is not trying. For me, it's probably more of that stereotype because I don't dress like someone trying to be successful so I am probably stereotyped as somebody who's not going to make it in life. I wear DNKY and stuff like that.

J. Lazy as a whole

T. It depends where you are coming from because a White person might see us as being bad, but another Black person might see us as being educated.

L. it depends on the person

T. it depends on who it's coming from.

**Who do you think sees African Americans like that?**

R. African Americans themselves

**So are you saying it depends on whose image it is and it is not a whole thing it's individually, what are you saying?**

L. It depends on who you are asking. Like if you asked a White person about C they may give you a different opinion than a Black person or her friend. So it doesn't depend on the person, it depends on who you are asking.

JR. Some Black people would say that the Black youth of today is lazy.

R. That's how the older adults view the younger people.

**R. you said that people see you that way because of the way you dress, so you think it has to do with the way you dress?**

R. Yes

**So how do you think you dress?**

R. Like gangs. A lot of gangs wear like DNKY and stuff. I'm trying to get out of that.

**Why do you dress like that if you know what it is associated with?**

R. Because it is comfortable.

**B. how do you see yourself as an African American young lady?**

B. A kind friendly person.

**Okay, do you think other people see you that way?**

B. Yes.

**So you don't think people have one view of African Americans, you think people have multiple views of African Americans?**

- T. I think if you ask as a whole, they could probably come up with one thing but I don't know what it would be. I think more than just a view of Black teenagers, they have a view of teenagers period.
- R. I don't really focus on color because you see it a lot with Black people. There's going to be stereotypes with Black people. But you see it a lot with older people because older people always looking down on younger people and what they do and their actions.

**What view is that?**

- JR. stupid
- L. not really stupid, but drugs, sex
- T. hormones are crazy
- D. Yeah, I agree, most people think of teenagers, especially young ladies getting pregnant and on drugs
- J. ...and they think the young men, that's all they are after, is to just have sex, smoke weed and all of that, and running around town starting trouble. That's the image that most people have of young Black youth that are males.

**B. do you feel like teenagers are mistreated by adults?**

- B. No

**You feel like they are treated good by adults.**

- B. Yes

**You feel like teenagers are good?**

- B. Yeah, some are just growing up.

**Do you think teenagers have a lot of things in common that they do that makes people view them the way that they do, or do you think they all act differently?**

- R. Well a lot of us act the same, but it all depends on a person's personality I guess and the way they are raised.

**Do you think people have different views of African Americans?**

- R. Yeah, by the way they look and the way they act. I mean if you have someone walking around looking like a gang member, they wouldn't be viewed as someone trying to go to college and trying to major in something and trying to be successful. But if you see somebody maybe dress somewhat differently, more mature or like they are trying to accomplish something in life, the view of them would probably be different.

**Where do you think that image comes from?**

- R. I don't know, it probably comes from their actions. What they do and what they are seen doing and how they act, their personality probably, characteristics of them.
- T. If you have a group of White people that do not live around or go to school with Blacks, or go to school with very few Blacks, then what they see on TV is what they are going to think. It's how they think we are going to act.
- L. because they are not around a lot of Blacks
- T. because they don't know and if you don't know, then what ever you see, that's what you are going to believe
- J. and I hate some of them shows that are on because they have an all White cast and when they do bring a Black person on there, they are from the ghetto or they are real poor and that's how all Black people are.
- T. Just like if you ask little kids about Africa, they are going to think that they [Africans] are running around half naked. And there are a lot of them that are kings and queens and live in big mansions and stuff, but that's not what they see and that's not what they have heard so that's not what they believe.

**So do you think it's an individual thing?**

- R. Yes, I think it's individual.

**What do you guys think, where does the image for youth... you all said teenagers first then you turned back to African Americans, so you tell me which one you are talking about, where do you think the image of people whether it's teenagers or African Americans come from?**

- L. the media; what we see on TV; the media



J. the way people are brought up, it's how their parents taught them how to believe.

**So are you saying that's it's passed down from one generation to another generation?**

B. They just tell their kids, cause one time I was in the bathroom and this little girl said mom there goes a Black person and she was like, it's okay.

**She said mommy there goes a Black person? Well, how old was this little girl?**

B. Around three or four.

C. I think it's the media

B. By other people too.

T. my parents didn't teach me nothing like that

R. It's probably not passed, it probably changes. Probably back in the days of you and my mom's generation young people probably weren't as violent as they are now. They probably viewed them [young people] as different.

B. I think it's from race, and ages, and stuff

**Ok, does it have to be one thing or can it be more than one thing?**

T. I agree with both of them because what J is saying is true because a lot of parents, a lot of Black people don't think that Black people are worth anything. It's women out there that have been pregnant and their husbands have left them. Or it's men out there that have babies and they don't get to see their kids because their wives won't let them. So when the mom is sitting around talking to their babies about, you're going to be like your daddy, no good, well then that's what they are going to grow up to believe and that's the way they pass that on to their child.

**So are you saying it's not just another race passing things on...**

T. It's us. Most of the time it is us.

**Do you think it is mostly African Americans that pass on our own image?**

R. Yes, nowadays they don't care. A lot of young people don't care about nothing.

- B. Yeah, mostly they don't think. They don't care themselves about what they do and stuff.
- C. I think it's also how people see you act. People around you, how they see you act, that is the image they will get of you.

**Don't care about what?**

- R. About life. They aren't trying to make it. They aren't trying to do anything with their life.

**Do you think that's just with African Americans young people?**

- R. No, all of us. Well I'm not going to say all of us. It's not a matter of race, it's just young people themselves.

**Where do you think not caring comes from?**

- R. I don't know. It could be the area where they are raised, or it could be from their parents not caring or something.

**Can you give me an example?**

- J. I can, Teachers, how they tend to label students.
- R. Yes, they label them.

**What do you mean by teachers and how they label students?**

- R. I don't know how, but they do label them.
- J.R. I wore some baggy clothes, right, and the teacher asked me if I was a gang banger because my clothes were baggy. It was a White teacher and he was like "so are you one of those gang bangers who walk around here trying to start trouble?" I was like "no, why?" He was like "well look at your pants, they're all baggy." I was like "well mine aren't suppose to be tight like yours. This is how I feel comfortable."
- L. And sometimes when they say things like that, they don't think they are being offensive about it. They think it's like complementing your hair style. They don't really think they are saying nothing bad about it, but most of the time people do get offended by it.

- T. But teachers put labels on kids all kind of ways. When I was at another school my freshmen year, my history teacher asked the class a question and this school is a magnet school so there are all kinds of kids that go there from all over the city and he asked a question and no one knew the answer so he said "Who is in here from the middle school that is a magnet school?" ..and some of the students raised their hands, and he said "you all should know the answer", like the rest of us shouldn't because we are from a different school. And I was like "no you didn't. You would feel real stupid if I was from an all Black school and I knew the answer". But teachers do that a lot.
- R. And a lot of my teachers at my school don't live in the area, they live in little country towns outside of the main city, so how they see the majority of the kids act at school, that's what they go back and tell their friends, "this student acts like da-da-da-da and so their friends will think that.
- L. and that's how they pass it on
- T. yeah, so it is really everybody

**You all go to a variety of schools, how do you think people in education treat you at your schools?**

- R. I haven't really had any confrontations with my teachers. I'm pretty cool with them. The only experience I have had is where I might mess up on my grade and I go to confront them; something like that. I haven't really had anything where I get written up or we end up fussing or having an argument. I haven't had any experiences like that. I try not to argue with adults.
- L. They don't think I'm as smart as the White students. That's how I feel.

**What makes you feel that way? What gives you that impression?**

- L. Let's say the teacher asks a question, I could raise my hand and the White girl next to me could raise her hand we could both have the same answer but they are in different forms and he [the teacher] would automatically go to her answer, because he would say that there was more to her answer than there was to mine. And I felt like our answers sounded just alike. And he will pick her answer over my answer and I don't understand that.
- T. In my school it is different. You could count the White people on your hands, but at our school it's more of the White teachers that treat us like we are slower than other kids. In my English class, we go to the computer lab and do English stuff on the computer but I found out that the stuff we are doing on the computer

is elementary work. It's not eleventh grade work. Treat us like we are suppose to be treated, don't just give me elementary work.

**B. how do you do in school?**

B. Fine.

**Fine, do you get along with people?**

B. Yeah.

**Do you get along with your teachers? Principals?**

B. Yes, some teachers

**Why just some?**

B. Cause only some people, well most of the other... The White teachers, they treat the colored students... They don't get any chance.

**What do they do to them?**

B. They just tell them to raise their hands and stuff and when it comes to the other people they just answer their questions and stuff.

**In your classes what percentage would you say were African Americans and what percentage would you say was something else?**

B. The whole class

**Are African Americans?**

B. Except for around two

**What about you C. how do you see yourself being treated by teachers?**

C. I think the teachers have to see that you want to learn because they automatically assume that you just don't care and that you are there because your parents make you come to school. So they have to see that you want to learn and than they will act more normal toward you.

**So what do you have to do?**

- C. You have to participate in class and ask questions, ask questions that challenge them to make them have to answer.
- L. In my school there are more Whites than Blacks and there are some Black kids that don't care and they talk back to the teachers. And then the teachers assume that all Black kids are like that, and it's just not true.
- T. Sometimes you can show the teacher that you want to learn but it's just not going to help because they have already perceived that you don't care or they just don't care about teaching; they don't care if you are learning or not.
- L. We have one teacher at school, he doesn't like the Blacks or the Whites. He's just rude all together.
- J.R. I have this one class at school and it's predominately Black and there are a few White students in the class and our teacher is White. Everyday she says she can't stand this class. And I can raise my hand up and it can be up for about twenty minutes and then when you call out her name, she gets mad and usually she is just up in front of the classroom laughing her head off with her White students but when everybody else needs help, she gets upset and when you ask a friend for help, she thinks you're disruptive.

One time me and my friend were talking and she wanted to search us, and she called security on us.

**What about J. and D. what experiences have you had with teachers, or administrators, or the principal at your schools?**

- D. I haven't really had any. It's just like C. said, if you didn't come from the magnet school they treat you like you are not as smart. At the school I came from, they need to give us more work to challenge our minds like any other schools do, because I have to ask more questions and they look at me like "don't you already know this?" So I will ask one of my friends. Most of my teachers have that attitude, but they are nice and I don't really have any problems. Just with my typing teacher. I don't know what's wrong with that lady.
- T. Yeah I know, because I had her my freshman year.

**But is she like that with all of the students?**

- T. The Black students. She has her picks.

**Does she treat all of the African American students like that or just some?**

T. the ones in her class

**Besides the typing teacher do you have any problems with the other teachers or the counselor or the principal?**

D. No, not with the teachers, and my counselor is cool.

**B. you said earlier that some of the White teachers treated the few White students that you had in your school differently?**

B. un huh

**What did they do with them?**

B. They just take them everywhere and stuff. On our trips we go like to jail trips and stuff.

**Do you really, why?**

B. I guess to see how it is. Like...well not really... yeah that's why we went. But I didn't go.

**Why didn't you go?**

B. I don't know.

**Did you not want to go? Did your mom tell you couldn't go or did you decide not to go?**

B. I didn't get picked. They picked just most of the bad people.

**Your school picked kids to go and visit jails? Who picked them?**

B. I don't know. We have bunches of security around our school, around ten, and they just took them there.

**What about you J. how are you treated at school?**

J. I came from the other magnet school and it's like we should know but when we were at that school teachers would give us homework and act like we should know what we are doing. It's like we are suppose to be on a whole other level than the rest of the students from the rest of the schools, so they get mad at us because we are from the other magnet school and they think we should know.

**I know that both African American and White students come from this magnet school so do they treat all students like that?**

- D. They expect mostly the White students to know
- T. Overall they expect all of the students to know, but when it gets down to it, they expect more mainly from the Whites.
- J.R. I have this one teacher and half the students already know she doesn't like Black programs in school. She was against our Afro American Society and then she was against our dance which consisted of all Black girls.

**What do you mean she was against it?**

- J.R. She said we shouldn't have it at school. She voted against it and she was very open about it.

**What kind of things did she say?**

- J.R. She said it was no need for it here at school.
- L. One thing I don't like is when there is trouble with the teachers, Black and White, but mostly White, they take the teacher's side before they listen to what you have to say. They don't take into consideration what caused you to get mad or what caused the teacher to get mad.

**But do you think that's with all students? Do you think they treated any other kids better or worse than they treated any other kids?**

- R. Yeah, they do. Like some teachers may not want to help another student because of the way that person might of acted. I think I've seen it a couple of times. He [student] might call for help before another student but he [the teacher] might go to the other student first because he doesn't like that student or have something against that student. I've seen that a couple of times.
- L. It depends on what happens. Like if you get caught in the bathroom smoking, they will take the teacher's side and they don't even want to hear it because there is no excuse, but if you have an argument with a teacher over something they automatically take the teacher's side.

**Is that with all students?**

- L. No, because most of the White kids don't get into trouble.

T. At our school a couple of White boys got caught smoking and all they got was five days of detention and other Black students get suspended. And I don't understand because we have Black administrators.

J.R. One thing that bothers me is that security caught three White boys in the bathroom smoking weed and had it on them. They got suspended for one day. The next day they caught a Black dude with a walkman and he got suspended for a week.

**Do you know this to be a fact?**

J. R. I know it to be a fact because I was in the office when it happened. And I was there when my friend got suspended because during my sixth hour I run errands for my teacher.

**Why do you run errands for your teacher during sixth hour?**

J.R. Because I am a peer tutor and when they are in the cafeteria cleaning up she will have me run stuff down at the office.

**B. you said that you get along with most of your teachers, but some of them you don't, do you remember any particular incident with any of your teachers that you've had?**

B. Yes, but they were both Black though.

**The teachers that you had problems with were both black? What happened? Do you remember?**

B. The teacher lied on me and stuff.

**To who?**

B. This lady named Mrs. H. My daddy was up there and she kept on saying that I snatched a pencil away from my teacher and cussed him out and stuff.

**The teacher said that about you?**

B. Un huh, and she was in another class. This was between me and the other teacher.

**So what happened with your other teacher?**



- B. The teacher, Mr. J, me and him, we just settled it. And he wrote a note to my daddy and said that she was not telling the truth.

**Why do you think that she did that?**

- B. I don't know. She came from another school and there is a saying going around that she molested kids and stuff. And plus our secretary told me cause I used to be the office aide.

**What about at your school C how do you see your friends being treated at your school?**

- C. Pretty much the same as everybody else, but everybody sort of hangs with their race if you are Black you hang with the Black people and if you are White you hang with the White people. There is no obligation but you're looked down on if you don't. Like when we are outside we might be all together but you can tell how they are grouped and talking with each other.

**What do you think about that and why do you think that happens?**

- C. If they see you talking with somebody White, they say you're not like them.

**What do you think about that, who do you hang with at lunch?**

- C. everybody

**Do you get flack from your peers?**

- C. I have before, but they don't do it any more.

**Why not, what happened?**

- C. Because I don't pay any attention to them.

- J.R. One thing I hate about security is that every morning you can see all along the wall were the Black students sit and they will come over there and just watch you like a hawk and they tell us ya'll need to break up and spread apart. But then right across the hall it's a big group of White students just standing there yelling and doing whatever and they don't say nothing to them. That irritates me.

**B. you said you have lots of security guards at your school. Why do you have so many security guards at your school?**

- B. I don't know.

**Do you think other schools have as many?**

B. I don't know.

**So why do yall have so many security guards?**

B. Some is for gangs.

**Do you have a lot of gang activity at your school?**

B. un huh

**Does that scare you at all?**

B. No, cause some of them are just want-a-bees they are not really in it. They just like to claim something.

**C. remind me what you said about how AA students are treated in your school.**

C./T. They already perceive that you are in the class and you don't really care. That someone just really pushed you and you are just there. They don't think that you want to learn and so you just have to show them that you want to learn.

**What kinds of things do they do that make you think they think that way about you?**

C. I don't think they really do anything. I just think it's the way it works out to being because they've been teaching there and they have seen kids come through that don't care and they haven't been White students.

**So are you saying that White students go through the school and they all care?**

C. No, I'm not. It doesn't seem to me that they think of them that way first before the class starts, unless they are dressed like a kid who doesn't care.

**What gives you that impression?**

C. I guess sort of how the teachers look at you and stuff. Like whenever they are watching you during class and stuff like that.

**How do they look at you?**

C. I can't really explain it, you just have to be there.

**What about any of your friends R.?**

R. They [friends] have been cursing them [teachers] out and fussing with them, just not respecting them at all. Like I said, they don't care. They don't respect adults at all.

**B. do you have friends that get into trouble at school?**

B. No

**None of your friends?**

B. No

**Have you ever seen kids get in trouble at school?**

B. Yes

**What happens to them when they get in trouble?**

B. Suspended and they come right back and do the same thing.

**Really? Do the teachers treat those kids any differently than they treat the kids that don't give them trouble?**

B. Yeah, that's what I don't like either.

**What?**

B. Cause they like good kids, and they leave other people out.

**How? You mean like if you were a good kid they let you out, What do you mean by that?**

B. Like this one girl she's smart, she make straight A's. They are always depending on her. Like Amber go do this and that... That's her name Amber.

**J. I have a difficult question for you because you are mixed. What do you consider yourself?**

J. Black. Because my mother is Black and I'm with her most of the time and I really don't spend that much time with my real daddy. Black, that's what is on my school forms.

**Do you ever have any conflicts with that at all?**

- J. No I hang mostly with Black people, but I have some White friends. They aren't really friends but I'm cool with them. I mean I talk to them.
- L. I have some White friends at school and they had this party and they asked me to come. So I went and I had a really nice time. And the next day I went back to school and the White girls were like I'm glad you came to my party we had fun. And the Black girls were like why did you go to their party. Why don't you hang out with your own kind. And they were talking about, you just like to hang out with White people. And they kind of hurt my feelings because I was like they are my friends and I just went to their party and the Black kids made a big deal out of it.

That's another thing about Black people. I don't understand how they can judge you by who you hang out with. I have this Black friend and she's going out with this White guy and they are giving her a hard time over that. It's like the Black kids give her a hard time and I don't understand that either.

- J.R. Now it's not like that at my school unless you just strictly hang around White people and you know you are Black but when you try to talk with another Black person they try to talk down about that person.

**Do you think things would be different if you were going to an all Black school with all Black students, teachers, and administrators?**

- T. I think it would be better because a lot of White people don't understand where we are coming from; and I think that Black people learn differently than White people do. The way the teachers teach you is how they have been taught to learn, so I think if we have Black teachers then they will understand where we are coming from and they can relate to the kinds of things that go on in our lives. Especially where you live. A lot of kids come to school hungry and sleepy and tired. And White teachers don't understand because that's not reality to them that kids are working late and they are coming to school hungry and when they do that kids are sleepy and they go to sleep in class. And I think that Black teachers will understand to challenge them more. They understand how far some of them can go and not try to take them to the extent where the kids are just confused. My freshmen year in Algebra I, my teacher was going to sleep at his desk so I was not getting Algebra. We came in there and all the kids were telling her we need Algebra I and to go slow because in Algebra II we are going to need some help. This women gave us three assignments in one day. She would give us like three assignments and it would be fifty problems and then tell us it should be done tomorrow and then she would try to give us work on weekends and they would be worksheets. We would be like, Mrs. so and so, I don't think so, and I think a Black teacher would understand better.

- D. Especially when it comes down to history.
- L. I don't agree with some of it. I don't agree with some of it but once you go on in life you are going to be working with all kinds of people and you're going to have to realize where they are coming from and how to get along with them and going to an all Black school, you will just know how all Black people act. You're not going to know about the Whites and other people. And you're not going to be around just Blacks all of your life.
- J.R. Me, myself, I get along with everybody. But it's one thing at my school that I hate and it's athleticism. If you are a Black student because most of the athletes at my school are Black unless you play baseball or hockey, golf or tennis. And I don't know what it is but Black students we can do our work but the teachers can still pass us as ineligible(?) for a game. Like in my geometry class, most of us are Black and we play football or track or whatever and the other half are cheerleaders and the cheerleaders are passing with A's or B's but the Black students that play football or track are barely getting along with a D and you just can't seem to get over that hump to make a C or whatever to make a better grade because the teacher portrays you in a different way and they won't help you that much.

**What about you R. and B., are you involved with sports at your school?**

- R. Yeah.
- B. Yes, basketball.

**You play basketball. Is your basketball team all black?**

- B. Yes.

**How are you treated as an athlete?**

- R. As far as all of the other sports, I was treated like everybody else. But in football because of my size the coach tried to tell me I was too short to play a certain position, so I guess he tried to discriminate against my size. I have always been little and I have never had that happen to me, so I didn't really except it too much. But that was the first time that ever happened to me.

**Did you play?**

- R. Yeah, I played, the first five or six games I started, but then the last four games he said I was too short to play this certain position.

**Was it the same position you had been playing all along?**

R. Yeah, I have been playing that position every since I have been in the sixth grade. I was probably the best person at that position on the team. He just said I was too short to start the last couple of games.

**How did your teachers treat you as an athlete, do they treat you any different than the rest of the students?**

R. Yeah, they work you harder.

**B. do you feel like your teachers treat you differently because you're an athlete?**

B. No.

**Why do you think they work you harder and how?**

R. They probably work you harder because they were on you more than everybody else. You know like if you have work to turn in they stayed on you to do your homework.

**Were they really trying to be helpful?**

R. Yeah, because it was no pass, no play, so you had to keep your grades up. I'm not going to say they helped you more than anybody else, they gave a better effort to help you than if you weren't an athlete.

**B. you've had sisters that went to a magnet school and a brother that has gone to an inner city school, overall, How do you think schools treat kids? Based on not just your experiences but the experiences that your brother and sisters have had at school?**

B. They [schools] treat them different. It's only the different schools that kids go to.

**Why? What do you think makes the difference in the way that they treat them?**

B. South and North sides schools

**What's the difference?**

B. South they got more money and treat them right

**What about North?**

B. And when we do get the money and stuff they [Blacks] treat them like books...

**Who treats, what do they do with the books?**

B. Write on them, lose them

**So you think when they get materials they don't treat them right. Why do you think south side gets more money than kids in North Tulsa schools?**

B. Because the way the White people are. There are more White people out south and stuff.

**What do you think C about going to an all Black school with all Black teachers?**

C. I think the same thing would happen with Blacks. They would have stereotypes of other people. They would get their certain opinion of Whites so when they got around them they would act sort of the same way that they think that Whites act toward Blacks.

**So do you think you would end up with the same type of situation that you have at any other school?**

C. Yes

L. You know how they separate you now, well if you went to an all Black school they would have the poor Blacks, the Blacks that are doing good, the rich Blacks, they would treat you differently, and it would start all over. So you should just be with everybody.

J.R. That's what they say about some of the students at the magnet school.

D. What happened?

J.R. They call them Black snobs.

D. Yeah they do have some of them. I am not going to lie. Why can't you just get along? You know what I'm saying. There's a lot of Black people that hang around White people, but some of the White people up there [school] are crazy. They come in there with black capes. But I'm not going to be like u-u-u, you know. But I say hi to everybody. If you pass me and you say hi, I'm not going to look at you like you're White I'm going to talk to you because I wasn't brought up that way.

**B. do you have all African American teachers or are there White teachers or what?**

B. Mostly African American.

**How many classes do you have in a day?**

B. seven

**And how many of those seven teachers are African Americans?**

B. five

**Did you see a difference in the way those five taught and treated you as opposed to the other two?**

B. Yes.

**How?**

B. I think the Black teachers taught more.

**Really? Why do you say that?**

B. Cause I learned more in science than the rest of the Black teachers and I didn't learn anything from algebra. She don't know how to teach.

**How did she treat you all?**

B. She treated us pretty good but she don't explain, she'd just tell us how to do it.

**R. the school that you go to is mostly African American, but do you think teenagers are disrespectful as a whole or just the African Americans?**

R. Teenagers as a whole, because it happens at other schools too. You usually probably don't hear about it, but it happens at other schools too.

**You said you saw African American teenagers being treated differently but you related it more to how they behaved.**

R. Yeah, it was behavior, because the teachers at the school they know what's around like gangs and stuff so they aren't going to treat anybody differently because of that. But it's behavior. They [students] won't respect them.

**B. you said earlier that the few White kids that you have in your school are treated differently. Do you think they are treated differently?**



B. Yeah, sometimes

**How? And who treats them differently?**

B. Well, the 4th hour teacher Miss C. This boy named V, he uh kinda sucks up to them like if I don't raise my hand, she will yell at maybe all up in my face and stuff. But when he asks questions she don't be saying nothing.

**Is she White or Black?**

B. White

**How do you think teachers and principals treat you?**

R. It probably depends on how you act if they like you or not. Some teachers respect everybody and some if you don't respect them, they don't respect you. It probably depends on how you treat the teachers. Because some teachers flunk students because they don't like them. That's how it is.

**Is that just African American students or with just any students?**

R. I can't really say because I haven't really had any classes with any other races.

**Are you serious?**

R. I mean there are some Hispanics and Whites there but I haven't really seen anything because most of them are just quiet, so I don't really know how the teachers treat them. They treat them alright I guess.

**B. you get along with students pretty much and they don't give you a hard time at school? I asked the rest of the group if they thought things would be different if they went to an all Black school with all Black students and all Black teachers and administrators and you basically go to that kind of school, but what you have described is not a lot of learning takes place in that setting. So would you not prefer to be in that kind of setting any longer?**

B. Probably mixed, probably because we barely have any White people

**Really, even teachers?**

B. Yeah, we had this one prejudice teacher named Mr. J and he called us "niggers"

**He's a teacher?**

B. They don't fire him either.

**What happens when that happens?**

B. Nothing

**Do the students ever go home and complain to your parents?**

B. un huh

**What do parents say?**

B. Nothing, that's why the kids act the way they do cause they (the parents) don't care. But I'm glad I don't have his class.

**So, you didn't take a class with him?**

B. No

**So what would the students do? I mean just sit there and take that?**

B. Yeah, they'll laugh and stuff.

**Laugh? Was he serious when he was saying that?**

B. His name... I forgot his name, but it means black and they'll call him by his name and he'll call them "nigger".

**You have heard him actually say that to the students?**

B. un huh

**And nothing has happened to him? What does the principal say?**

B. Nothing. I asked the office secretary why didn't they fire him? She said they didn't have any other teacher to hire.

**Really? So what does your school secretary say about him?**

B. Well, she don't like him.

**Man that's deep. Has he ever talked to you at all?**

B. No

**B. what kind of reputation does your school have?**

B. Bad.

**Why?**

B. Cause it *is* bad.

**What's bad about it?**

B. The kids, they rude to everybody.

**They're rude to everybody, so, is it more the kids or is it the way the kids are treated, or both?**

B. They [the kids] just carry themselves in the wrong way. Position and stuff.

**Like how?**

B. Like mean to teachers, get into fights. a bunch of stuff.

**So do you all like school?**

B. Yeah, I did because it's fun but we ain't learning. I mean I learn stuff but not enough to be like other schools.

T. Yeah, I love school.

D. I do now.

**B. would you say that you like your school? Do you like going to your school?**

B. No, I don't.

**Why?**

B. They [teachers] can't teach. They don't teach anything

**What do they do?**

B. Nothing. I mean they teach but the kids don't give them a chance to teach.

**So is it the teachers' fault that they don't teach or is it the students'?**

B. The students.

**R. would you say that you have had some pretty positive school experiences and that you got along well with all of the teachers and administrators?**

R. Yeah, I haven't had any trouble with nobody.

**B. do you think that overall, besides a couple of your teachers, that your teachers treat you pretty good?**

B. Yes

**B. what about your principal?**

B. He was too nice because they switch another principal to our school and he was mean and stuff and you know I didn't liked him because he was mean, he was more strict and stuff.

**Mean, how, what did he do for instance?**

B. Told us we had to raise our hands to get out of the cafeteria cause we used to have a bunch of food on the floor, from food fights and stuff. He stayed there for like a week, the cafeteria was clean, there were no fights and then they switched again and then the cafeteria was back again.

**Do you think you would be treated any differently if you went to any other school?**

R. I don't think so.

**Do you think you would do better if you were in a school out south?**

B. Yes

**Why?**

B. Probably, I could learn more.

**Why?**

B. Cause the teachers are different

**How?**

B. They can just teach. The kids don't disrupt and stuff.

**Do you think they would treat you good as an African American in the schools in the south part of the city?**

B. No, there's the reason though.

**Why?**

B. Cause some teachers are prejudice and stuff.

**What would they do?**

B. Probably misuse you and stuff

**How?**

B. Like call on you for questions and stuff. Treat you different

**Do you have friends who have gone to schools in the South?**

B. No.

**Why do you draw those conclusions that they would treat you different?**

B. If you think about it probably most of them are prejudice.

**Why do you think that?**

B. That's how I feel, I don't know.

**But you don't know why you feel that way? You don't know where that came from?**

B. I guess they are just more use to the White students.

**So would you want to go to a school out South?**

B. Yeah, to learn

**So you would be willing to get pass all of the feelings of not being treated right because you think you would learn a lot more. What else where you going to say?**

B. I wouldn't worry about that. I'll just leave it alone unless they get to far

where they hit me and treat me mean suspend me for nothing.

**Okay**

B. or they blame stuff on me that I didn't do.

**But you said you wouldn't worry about all of that as long as you were getting a better education. Why do you think you'll get a better education out South? What's different about the teachers, they've all gone to college, they all have the same degree, so what would be the difference?**

B. The kids. They would probably sit there and learn.

**So you think the kids behavior would be different in that kind of school and the teachers wouldn't have to deal with a bunch of stuff, so you'll be able to learn a lot more.**

B. yes.

**Why do you all like school?**

J. My friends are there and I wouldn't want to be at home all day because there's nothing to do. But some of the teachers try to work you too hard.

C. It's ok. I think we could do without all of the homework because our math teacher doesn't give out a lot of homework. We end up with about twenty problems a night and we would get time in class to work on it and everybody in class, I think everybody in class except the ones that don't turn in their homework, has a "B" or higher. So we are all still understanding all of the material and everything and we haven't had a lot of homework. We laugh at other kids in the other classes because they come home with like sixty problems and I have like twenty or twenty-five.

J.R. Some teachers try to give you too much homework on purpose.

**What do you mean by that?**

J.R. There is no purpose. They just say do these sixty problems or whatever. They don't explain it to you, just because they want to have something to do. I don't know about other schools but we stay in the class about one hour and thirty minutes every day. They are done with their lesson plans and they say we don't have anything else to do so do all of this. And when you are done with that they say do this and do this. Or there are some teachers that try to put a week's worth of lessons in one hour and thirty minutes. That happened when I was in French.

That teacher had us going through four chapters a day and we didn't understand anything. You can't teach a language like this.

**B. do you get into a lot of trouble at school?**

B. No, unless I be trying to express my feelings to teachers.

**And then what happens?**

B. They brought me up on a referral.

**About how many referrals have you gotten?**

B. Probably one

**R. what do you think about the reputation that your school has and why do you think it has this reputation?**

R. It's probably because a lot of Blacks go there and plus we do get into a lot of trouble. We get into as much trouble as the other schools do, but it seems like ours is bought up on the news more.

**Why do you think that's the case?**

R. Because of all of the Blacks that go there and from being on the North side.

**How does that make you feel?**

R. It makes me feel bad because you have to go there and see us on the news and just corrupt and all of that. The community wide, they know the kids and they know that there's a lot of things that need to be done. But the people that are not on the north side and don't know what's going on, they have a lot of say so in it and they don't even know what's going on.

**Who has a lot of say so?**

R. I can't give any specific people or anything, but people who have never been in the school or never been over this way, but then they just have a lot of words to put in. I can't really say any names.

**Is there a problem with the image that is portrayed of African Americans?**

- L. You can't let nobody choose who you are. It's like you've got the White people with the fancy clothes. You can't change them so why are they trying to change us? But if we are doing something wrong and we know it, we should try to change that. But we shouldn't change our image. Because everybody's going to be different.

**B. how do you think society view African Americans?**

- B. Violent, they call them that.

**Who is society?**

- B. The people.

**What people?**

- B. Black people.

**Black people view other Black people that way.**

- B. Yes.

**Who else in society?**

- B. White

**Why do you think they treat Black people as bad and violent?**

- B. Well most of them are. I don't know.

**Why do you think most Black people are bad and violent?**

- B. Why do I think they are bad and violent? They just don't think.

**L. what is your image?**

- L. Mine? I'm real goofy. I like to laugh.

**You think image is an individual thing?**

- L. Yeah, as long as it is not hurting nobody else.

- T. It should be.



**Why do you say should be?**

- T. Because everybody is not the same and you can't take a group and look at them and say oh well they are 4.0 students or whatever. You can't do that because everybody is different. People don't understand that. You have to let people be who they are. You can't just take a whole group of people and judge them and put them in this category because that's what you think they are.

**Do you think that is what happens?**

J.R. Sometimes

T. It happens all of the time.

J.R. I know it's kind of off the subject but I know sometimes women can do that. They are like "all men are dogs". You all have probably done that before.

D. No

L. I haven't. There's a part of an image he thought we were.

J.R. I said probably. There's probably been a time when you said it.

T. No. If somebody came in here right now and looked at all of us. Some things may be true about all of us together - We are all Black or have Black in us. But just to say we are all something... (stupid) [said by L]... yeah, it wouldn't be fair because I'm different and I want to be seen as different. So I'm not just going to look at everybody in a white school and say they are all valley girls or they are all prejudice or they are all devil worshipers or rock and roll people or whatever. I'm not going to do that because I don't want to be done like that.

**Do you think somebody does that?**

L. Everyday

T. Yes.

**Who?**

L. Teachers

T. A lot of Black people do that to [each other], yeah and they do it to White people. Like when Black people go to the movies you always know that the first person who is going to get killed is a Black person. It may not be in all movies

because we haven't seen all movies, but most of the time when you do go to see them the first person to die is a Black person.

**So where do these generalities come from?**

L. The media

**So do you think it needs to change?**

J.R. I know one thing that's a fact. There are more White people in prison than there are Blacks but they portray more of the Black people in prison for murder.

T. Well there are more White people on welfare than there are Blacks. But when you say welfare, that's the first thing people think of is some Black women with five babies.

**So why is that?**

T. I don't know. I think it's everybody though because I can't sit here and say that I don't use generalities or stereotypes because you do that's just human. Everybody does that. But I think it's because we see it all of the time and that's how we've grown up. Parents do it. Everyone does it.

J.R. I think a lot of it comes from the media because every time you hear it, it's on the TV or...

T. Yeah, but we carry it out though. Just because we see it on TV, it doesn't mean we have to go out and whatever

L. Like everybody have heard at one time that Michael Jackson is White.

J.R. I've stereotyped people before. I can't sit here and say I'm a perfect person and I've never judged anybody.

L. I think everybody's done it. But you can do it to a certain point and it gets old. It gets ridiculous so you have to stop it so it won't happen.

**B. on the average how many fights would you say happen a day at your school?**

B. Three or four

**A day? You said they changed principals and the principal that's there now is too nice. Is he Black or White?**

B. Black

**And what does he do?**

B. Nothing. He just suspends them.

**If you had the chance to tell one thing about African American adolescence or the perception or image of African Americans as it relates to your school experiences or education personnel what would you say?**

L. I would say that everybody's different and you can't judge a person by the way they act or look or the way they respond to certain questions. You cannot separate Whites and Blacks because we are going to have to learn how to get along with everybody because this world doesn't just revolve around one race of people and we are just going to have to learn to get along with everybody.

J.R. But there are Black people who judge other Black people. They are like he's an Uncle Tom if he has a good job or whatever. They are like he forgot where he came from because of the way he speaks and the way he looks

L. He has a nice car and a nice home and he's not staying in the "hood".

J.R. He stays in a White neighborhood or something. But that's really not true.

L. I think that Black people stereotype each other more than Whites do to a certain point. You can probably see a Black person downing another Black person before you see a White person. For example, I got some new shoes and I wore them to school. All of the White kids would tell you that your shoes are cute and I want some of those and the first thing this Black girl told me is that I thought I was cute because I got some new shoes. You think you're all that now. That's the first thing she told me and I thought why is she going to say that. That's what I think Black people shouldn't do is put each other down. That's why we aren't accomplishing anything in life because we are putting each other down.

D. I would say that you can't judge anybody as a group. You really can't judge nobody period because nobody died... but you just have to be yourself. You can't change nobody.

J. I think it's that saying that you can't judge a book by its color. I mean you have to know us before you can have an opinion about us.

**Do you mean know us as a group or individually?**

J. Know us individually. Because I know there's some gang bangers out here and there are some good Black people and there are just different groups and they can't judge us as a group because there's just different people.

**B. that one time that you got into trouble do you feel like you were treated fairly?**

B. No.

**Why, was Mrs. H the lady that told a lie on you, Black or White?**

B. She was Black.

**So it didn't have anything to do with the fact that you were Black and she was White it happen to do with the fact that she was an adult and you were a child. Did she not like you or something?**

B. I guess not. She wasn't even in the classroom she was next door.

**Do you still see her now at school at all?**

B. No.

**Is she still there?**

B. Yes.

**So you just kinda stay out her way?**

B. Un huh

**You said you weren't treated fairly, who weren't you treated fairly by?**

B. By Mrs. C sometimes. Yeah because one thing I hate about her is she wouldn't teach things. She'll go to V and sit by him and teach him and stuff. I think that's why I got that referral cause I was like Mrs. C you don't even explain yourself and you don't even sit down and teach us, you just tell us how to do it and that's it.

**And then what happened? Did you have to go to the office?**

B. Yeah but he didn't do nothing.

**Why?**

B. I don't know. I went to the Dean, Mr. H

**And he didn't do anything. What did he say to you?**

B. He just said just keep your mouth shut and go in class.

**C. what do you think of Michael Jordan?**

C. I like him because I think he's a good basketball player. Because he has a lot of money.

D. But you can't really say, because you don't really know him. You don't know him you just know what he does.

T. You know "Air Jordan" but you don't know Michael Jordan.

C. I guess I would say that I don't like whenever they try to label Blacks as stupid because my dad found something, I don't know where he found it, but it was like a political cartoon and it said if you want to hide something from a nigger put it in a book. So they are trying to say that Black people don't read and so that made me mad and my dad said see you need to read more because this is what they think and you don't want them to think that about you. So if they wanted us to be stupid and keep us stupid they shouldn't have had all of those civil rights things and allowed this to happen or else this wouldn't happen now. They wouldn't have so many smart people, educated who are able to go back into the constitution and say you see this right here says you can't do that.

L. Like with school during Black History Month, we don't really talk about that kind of stuff. They don't really tell us about all of the famous Black people who invented stuff. They tell us about all of the White people who did that. And we are like what about the Blacks, and the Hispanics and all of them? We don't really talk about that.

**So why don't you go to the library and get books and check them out yourself and read them?**

T. You can do that but everybody else is not going to read them. Everybody else is not going to sit there and realize, well then fine I'll just go to the library and look it up in a book.

- L. Yeah, I feel like if we can talk about white history everyday, why can't we talk about it in class and then maybe I could go to the library, but I think our teachers should be more ....
- D. But half the time it's [history class] not really interesting. Because when I was in history, at the beginning of the year I didn't really study like I should, but then I started getting into it and I learned about different Indian groups but I didn't learn about what we did or what we had to go through.
- T. And if we do learn about it, it will be about us as slaves. It won't be good achievements.
- J.R. And they make the people who bought us here as slaves good citizens

**So how does that make you all feel?**

- C. I was going to say, the only class that really did anything was civics and that was only about a week. We never really did anything for Black History Month. We had all of the posters up and everything, but they never really said anything about it.
- J.R. I remember during Black History Month, they made a little comment over the intercom that said "remember it's Black History Month, be nice". We were like what does that mean it's Black History Month, be nice?
- L. Yeah, when White people respond like that they don't think they are really hurting anybody, they just enjoy it.
- T. Yeah, they just think its ha! ha! ha!

**How do those things make you feel as an individual and how do you react?**

- T. Angry, you get angry. And then if you don't have anyone to talk to you just go off one day.
- L. The movie "Higher Learning", that's a good movie that deals with what we are talking about right now. First I would want to know why they think we are stupid.

**Who would you ask that question to?**

- L. My teacher, the teacher who was putting me down. I would ask him why does he think a whole group of people are stupid just because of like "Buckwheat" because of the way he use to talk and act. I would ask him if that is why he

thinks all Black people are like that. I would tell him that all Black people are different just like Whites. You have the smart White ones and you have the dumb White ones; you have the White girls that are pregnant; you have the Black girls that are the same way.

**What type of emotions do you show when you talk about things like this and when you experience what you are telling me you and your friends experience?**

- L. I don't cry or nothing but I get mad.
- T. Like when I watched "Higher Learning" I was crying because I was really mad. I don't understand how people can be just so racist; they can be *so* racist.
- J.R. And not know it.
- T. Yeah, and some of them know and don't care and it makes no sense to me. And it goes both for Blacks and Whites.
- L. That's what hurts when there is racism and they don't know it. That hurts more when they don't know it then when they do know it.

**Like give me an example of what you mean by they don't know what they are doing?**

- L. Like a White person or anybody that's not Black... Like what was said over the intercom. They just don't know that we are getting offended by it. They just think they are doing us a favor and giving us advice.
- T. When you don't know that you are ignorant, you are more dangerous to other people because you don't know what you are doing. At least when you know that you are stupid ...
- L. ...you can change.
- J.R. Some White students will try to make a joke about you being Black...
- L. ...and they expect you to laugh.
- T. There is this boy in my school and my history teacher, they will make these little comments and stereotypes. My history teacher came up to me and I had my hair in some braids and he came up to me and said something... and I don't let him get off with those little comments because he is here to teach me. He doesn't have to have a conversation with me just as long as you give me what it is I am suppose to be doing. And he said something about "are your braids a little too

tight today". Something about my weave. He came up and kinda like touched my head and I looked up at him and he just walked off. I really didn't say anything because sometimes I just let stuff go. I wanted to say to him, "first of all you don't know anything about a weave and you don't need to come over here touching my hair. You need to go back in front of the class and teach me". And now it's to the point since my mother works at the school, he thinks that he can do whatever. If I do something wrong in class, he'll think that he can just go down and tell my mother. That's cool because, I'm not trying to do anything, but he wouldn't call any of the other kids' parents. He just makes little comments, and I don't think that's funny.

**Does anything like that ever happen to you C.?**

- C. Yes I see people doing it, but the Blacks act that way openly everywhere they are so they are expected not to be friendly.

**What are you saying, what do you mean by the Blacks act like that?**

- C. I mean they act the way they are trying to make their jokes about, so they do it and they [Blacks] think it's funny so then when Whites see it and they [Whites] make a joke about it to everyone else, they expect you to laugh too. And I don't act that way so I'm just sitting there.
- L. One day I was sitting in math class and a couple of us were sitting around, some Blacks, Whites, and Indians and we were all telling jokes and I didn't say any racist jokes, but one of the Black kids did. Then he said, well I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that. Then one of the White kids said well I have one for you all. I said, what do you mean for you all? He was like, just let me tell it. He said, "How do you keep a Black person from not drowning"? He said, "just take your foot off of their head". He thought everybody was going to laugh. And all of the White kids laughed and none of the Black kids laughed. And he asked, why isn't it funny to yall, and I said it's not funny because you know that wasn't called for. He said well I was just trying to get back at him, and I said well you didn't just get back at him you got back at all of the Black people who heard that joke because it really wasn't funny. Then he said well I have another one for you. He said, "why don't Black people use Tylenol, because it has cotton in it". He just kept telling these little jokes, and I said they were not funny and he was trying to make us laugh.

**Where do you think he gets those jokes from?**

- T. Their parents
- J. Their friends or their parents who told them



- J.R. I see jokes like that in magazines.
- L. When they say things like that, they expect us to laugh and that's not really saying that they don't know it. That's one of those kind of kids that don't know what they are saying is not funny.
- T. They don't know how far to take it.
- L. Yeah, they take it too far. But then when one of the Black kids hit them or something, the Black kid is the one that's wrong. They don't want to hear what the White kids did, they just want to know if the Black kid hit him and he is getting ready to get suspended. They don't want to know what caused it. That's what goes on in my building.
- J.R. Here's something that happened to me last week. There were three White kids in my class, my English class, and they were talking about how plain their names were and how all Black people have long weird names. And they expected me to laugh I guess because he was like "why do all Black people have weird names?" He said, "why can't Black people have plain names like Jeff and John?" I told him my name was plain, my name is J.R. And he said "yeah you're ok but what about those people who have those ghetto names?" And I asked him "what's a ghetto name"? He said "like Shaquita or Shalanda."
- T. But you see, he's heard that before. You know that's the thing about me, they encourage the stuff, but we as people don't have to go out there and put it out there.

**R. are you afraid to go to your school?**

- R. No, because I know everybody. It's not as bad as everybody thinks, it's just like any other school. It's just a lot of Blacks that go there. People don't walk around carrying guns and all of that. It's not all that bad.

**If you had your choice would you go to that school?**

- R. Probably not. Because the first couple of years it was fun, but a new principal came in and things changed and it wasn't as much fun and there weren't as many activities to do. Things became more strict. You didn't have as much freedom as you use to. So I probably wouldn't go to the same school.

**Do you think going to that school has helped or hindered what you can do as far as your future is concerned?**

- R. It helped me because the people that go there just knowing them helps you allot because you know how to react to what people do and stuff. It's probably like that when you leave school, but there I mean the way the people are just helps you once you go to college. It probably helps you learn how to deal with people.

**So you feel like you learned a lot about problem solving and things like that from going to school and that will be a help to you later on?**

R. Yeah!

- \* T. represents Crystal  
L. represents Leslie  
B. represents Brenda  
J.R. represents Joe  
C. represents Cortez  
J. represents John  
R. represents Richard  
D. represents Denise

## **APPENDIX B**

## **JOHN'S JOURNAL #1**

Back when school first started, around Thanksgiving time, I was in Spanish class. Being that it was Thanksgiving time, we students didn't want any homework. When we ask her (the teacher) not have homework, she gave us a choice of having it on Thanksgiving or Christmas. We chose to have homework on Thanksgiving and be free during Christmas. Christmas time came around and we thought we weren't going to have homework in Spanish. The teacher gave us homework anyway. We confronted her about it and she just got mad and "blew off". All of the students were angry at her. I was mad too. She knew she said she wasn't going to give homework, and she did anyway. I was thinking that she contradicts herself, and that she was wrong. If she was going to give homework on Christmas, she shouldn't have given us a choice. We were all mad at her for a while, but now it's cool again. They all must have forgotten about it.

### **Why and what is significant or important to you concerning this experience?**

The reason I wrote about this experience is because this experience was on my mind at the time.

### **Describe your spanish teacher?**

My Spanish teacher's name is Mrs. W. She's from Panama, and she has a Spanish accent. She's fun at times, but sometimes she can be really strict like in this situation.

### **Describe your class?**

My class consists of about 24 blacks and about 6 or 7 whites. We are our teacher's favorite class.

### **Why do you think she gave you all a choice and then renegeed on it?**

I don't know why my teacher gave us a choice and then renegeed on it.

### **Who confronted her? What did you all say to her?**

One of the Black students confronted her about it. The student told her that she said that she wouldn't give us any homework.

### **What did she say?**

The teacher said she was going to give us homework anyway.

### **Did you all have to do the homework?**

We did have to do the homework too.

**How do you know she got mad at you all? Who did she get mad at?**

She showed us she was mad by expressing her feelings by yelling at us. She got mad at the whole class.

**What do you mean "she just blew it off" How did she do that?**

She "blew it off" by letting it go and giving us more homework.

**Why were you all angry at her? How do you know everyone was angry? What did they (the students) say?**

We were angry at her because she told us she'd do something for us and she didn't. I know that everyone was mad because they expressed it by a long, harsh sigh. We showed her how we felt, and she got even madder.

**"I was mad too" Did you express this to her? If so what did you say? How did you handle your anger?**

I didn't express my madness to her. I kept it to myself. I handle my angry by letting it go, and I just went about my business.

**What do you mean "it's all cool again"?**

It's all cool again because everyone likes Mrs. W. now. They think she's alright, but she still gives us homework at inappropriate times.

**DENISE'S JOURNAL #2**

One problem I had was with my keyboarding teacher, Mrs. B. Normally, about a couple of weeks before report cards go out, she gives the class a list of our work that we had done from the beginning of that quarter until that day. She gives us the assignment. Well she had accused the whole class of not doing the some of the assignments that was on the board. The reason we had not done them was because she had not given them to us. At first I was mad but I just told my mother about it. I talked to the teacher and she said we didn't have to do it. But had an attitude.

**Why did you feel you had to focus on a problem?**

I focused on this problem, because not only did this have something to do with my grades but I was blamed for not doing something that I knew nothing about.

**What is the make up of your class? How many students? Males; females; Blacks; Whites?**

There are 24 students in my class. 4 male and 20 girls. There are also 8 Whites and the rest are Black.

**Describe your teacher?**

My teacher is 5'1". She has short hair and is White. She also wears glasses.

**Why did she accuse the entire class of not doing some of these assignments?**

I don't know exactly why she accused us of that. But I think she doesn't have her daily schedule together as far as what each class does.

**Why do you think she didn't give the assignments to you?**

I think she didn't give them to us because she didn't have them in her plans to give them to us.

**Why were you mad?**

I was mad because, when I personally went to her the first time and told her she didn't assign them to us. She acted like she didn't want to hear nothing I said. I went to her politely.

**What did you say to your mom? What did your mom say?**

I just told my mom that Mrs. B. told us to make up some assignments in 2 days because she was giving out progress reports the following Monday. Some of the assignments she put on the board was not assigned to us any time this year. My mom's response was that she would go and talk to the teacher.

**What happened when you talked with the teacher?**

This was the second time I talked to the teacher. I waited until after school to talk with her.

**What did the teacher say? What did you say?**

I told her that she had not given us those assignments and politely told her that it was not fair that she give out progress reports the following week because she didn't have everything graded and checked. Her response to that was that she would look on her chart to make sure she had assigned them.

**Why do you think the teacher said you didn't have to do it?**

It was a lot of people, well the whole class was complaining about it. She also couldn't find it on her chart. It wouldn't have been so bad if it didn't affect the grades.

**What made you think the teacher had an attitude?**

Well when you slam your books that kind of gave me an impression that you're mad. She blew and rolled her eyes.

### LESLIE'S JOURNAL #3

Well last year a very sad situation happened to me and a couple of friends at school. Me and my friends had walked to the restroom before class started, and a couple of girls (White) were in the stalls smoking. It was a few minutes till the bell was about to ring so they had left. Me and my friends were still in the restroom. As we got ready to leave, a security guard and a teacher entered the restroom, and me and my friend was accused of smoking. The first thing I felt was the way we were treated as if we was smoking. We got yelled at, kids in the other classes heard everything that was said. I was more embarrassed than, worried about getting in trouble because who wants to be known for smoking at school. I knew inside that we weren't smoking. Well I had to call my mother and told her. What had happened. Finally the girl confessed for smoking and they had apologized to us, but it seemed like they didn't really mean it. The girls had got suspended for 3 days.

**Why do you use the term "sad" to describe what happened?**

Because I thought that was very unfair the way I was treated.

**Describe the security guard and the teacher? White; Black; male; female?**

Security guard was a White little skinny guy. Teacher, White heavy set blond hair lady.

**How many friends? Were your friends White or Black?**

Two females, Black.

**How did you feel you were treated?**

Very unfair, like what I had to say didn't count.

**What do you mean by "got yelled at" What exactly did they say? What did your friends say?**

I mean by getting yelled at screaming, hollering, talking very rude they (the security guard and the teacher) said I had no business smoking. I should be ashamed of myself. I told them I wasn't smoking. I said a couple of cuss words and my friends responded by saying you have no business accusing us of that.

**How did you know kids in other class heard everything?**

The restroom was across the hall from the classes and the doors were open.



**Why were you more embarrassed than worried about getting into trouble?**

Because I know I didn't smoke, and telling my mother what I've been accused of.

**Kids smoke all of the time what's so bad about being known as smoking in school?**

Because it's not healthy and most kids think its cool, when they're really looking stupid.

**What happened when you called your mother?**

I explained to her what happened, she sort of did not believe me until she found out the truth.

**What made the girls confess?**

Because me and my friends had a little talk with them.

**How long was it before they confessed?**

A day.

**Who apologized? Why did they apologize? What did they say when they apologized?**

All of the girls apologized. I think they apologize because they were scared of us. They said I'm sorry and we should have confessed earlier.

**Why don't you think they meant it? What about them gave you that impression?**

Because they're always in the restrooms smoking. ... the way they said I'm sorry.

**How did this entire incident make you and your friends feel?**

Very cautious of people.

**Did you all talk about it later? What did you say?**

Yes, watch out for those kind of people.

**CORTEZ'S JOURNAL #4**

I haven't really had a whole lot of bad experiences with my teachers. I've pretty much just had nice ones. Although I did have a teacher in 3rd grade that I didn't like at first because whenever I couldn't find something when she wanted it, she would grab my desk and drop everything I had in it on the floor and I had to pick it all up. I didn't appreciate this then because it didn't seem to be happening to any of the other students and it was embarrassing to me to have my belongings strewn about like this. Now I appreciate it more because every time I get unorganized I remember that, and it helps motivate me to organize whatever it is that needs it. I still think she could have thought of a better way to accomplish this.

**Why did you assume I wanted you to describe something bad?**

I'm not sure why I assumed you wanted us to tell you about a bad experience with our teacher. I didn't really want it to look that way it was just the opening sentence.

**Describe your teacher.**

She had brown-gray hair and a mean look. She wasn't tall either. She's the principal to Central Middle School.

**Describe how you felt.**

I felt embarrassed and angry.

**How did you feel about the teacher?**

At the time when she did this I didn't like her.

**What were you thinking?**

Why would she do that.

**What did you say to yourself afterwards?**

Maybe I should ask for another teacher.

**What did you say to the kids around you?**

I didn't say anything to them. I didn't want to be talked to.

**What did they say to you?**

They surely didn't say anything to me, we were in third grade no one knew what to do when something like this happens.

**Was the teacher White or Black?**

White, I've never had a Black teacher in all my years at J.

**Were there any more Black students in your class? How many?**

No, none at all.

**Can you remember how they were treated?**

Well since there weren't any I guess I couldn't say and probably shouldn't assume their conditions.

**Why do you think she did that to you?**

I think she wanted me to see that I was sloppy and unorganized and that she wouldn't tolerate it.

**Tell about some of the nice experiences you have had.**

I have had several teachers that I really liked, one of which I had last year. Her name was Mrs. B. and she was my English teacher. I liked her because she seemed to know how to talk to her students and also cause she was pretty. Another one was my 4th grade teacher Mrs. W. she was an elderly woman who was very nice and understanding. I liked her because her class was fun. My 5th and 6th grade English teachers, I did like because they answered every question you had, even if it was stupid, and the answers they gave were always exactly what you needed to know. My 5th grade science teacher, I liked cause she was nice but didn't like cause she wasn't very lenient, but she was still a good teacher. My 7th grade math teacher, I liked cause she was nice and took the time to explain it if you didn't understand.

**CRYSTAL'S JOURNAL #5**

In the eighth grade I had a Black male, math teacher that thought he didn't have to teach us. He would give us work and would hardly explain what we were supposed to be doing. When we would ask him questions he would repeat what he just said but he would say it very slow like we were stupid. So the students, including myself, were getting sick of him not teaching, talking to us like we were stupid, and the comments he would say. So one day when one of my friends went up to his desk to ask him a question about an assignment. He did not explain to her where she could understand. So she told him if he could say it again because she did not understand. He got upset and got an attitude and started talking to her like she was a 1st grader. Then she told him he didn't have to talk like that, so he told her to go sit down she was causing confusion. Then he called her a "Texas Tramp". She was from Texas and had come after school had started. He thought no one had heard him but she did and another student that was next to talk to him had heard him also.

This really upset me and I was already sick of him not teaching so I wrote down everything that happened that day. and all I could remember from other days. My friend wrote what happened down and I had everyone in the classroom sign to say that it really happened. We went to the principal and dean gave them the papers and told them that we were upset with him.

Every time he would act like this it would be in front of the class, and I would feel bad, because I want to be a teacher so I know that what he was doing was not and should not be acceptable. He is now teaching at another school.

**Describe how the teacher looked...height, dress, etc.**

He was about 5' 10", peanut brown, boxed hair cut, dressed neat - pants and printed shirts, dress shoes, had a mustache wore reading glasses, very sophisticated looking. (if a man can look sophisticated)

**What do you mean by he thought he didn't have to teach you?**

I think he felt that way because in the Black (or mostly Black) schools on the north side they pass (around) so many teachers that don't care or have been there so long they're tired.

**What specifically would he say when he was explaining?**

He would say how to do the problem over, but slower with an attitude, and sometimes he would say things like I guess I have to explain everything to ya'll twice or three times.

**How did you know that the students were getting sick of his lack of teaching? What did they do and say?**

We would talk about the things he would do and how we still weren't understanding what he was doing. Some even thought *he* didn't understand what he was doing.

**What did he tell your friend when she asked him to re-explain?**

I don't remember.

**How do you know he was upset? What did he do and say?**

It was all over his face, his body language, you could look at him and see. I don't think he said anything to her at that time he just went on to explain to her like she was a child.

**How did she react to him call her a Texas Tramp?**

She didn't hear him, some other students heard him, they were near the desk.

**Why did he call her that?**

I have no idea.

**Do you still have a copy of what you wrote?**

I believe so.

**Why did you feel the need to be the leader in writing down your complaints and taking them to the principal and the dean?**

I don't know. I believe it was that I felt like I had to be, its just how I've been raised. To stand up for what I believe and to not let anyone mess over me. So I really just did what I felt comfortable doing.

**What happened, specifically, when you went to the dean and the principal?**

We all came into the office (about 6 or 7 of us) asked to see the principal and the dean was already there. So we went into a conference room and told the things he was doing, or in this case, not doing. I don't remember if they recorded the meeting or not, but they did take our complaints that we had written, and the class had signed. They made copies and told us that we weren't the only ones that had complained and they would put our complaints in his teacher's file.

**Why is he at another school?**

He's at another school because the principal didn't want him at our school anymore. Also because he was passed to another "Black" school to do whatever he wanted, because when it comes down to it, the school system (public school system) stinks.

**Why did you feel bad?**

Because I want to be an educator and I know that teaching is a very important job to have, because you have the most important part of the body in your hands, the brain and what you feed or don't feed into those kids' brains can effect them for the rest of their lives.

**What did you do when you felt bad?**

Nothing really, except tell people that I knew would be concerned and take me seriously and would actually do something. My mother and father, principal, and the dean.

**RICHARD'S JOURNAL #6**

An experience I've had is when I rode in a stolen car and I didn't know it. It was on graduation night and I rode with some friends to this party. I thought the car was the person who was driving it because he had a car like it. So we was at the party and I heard friends talking and I realized the car was "hot". Now I know I have to look out with who I hang out with and what I do.

**BRENDA'S JOURNAL #7**

My experiences that I had was with my teacher Mr. I. He would always talk about Black people but it was kind of weird because it would be in a good way. And you can tell something was wrong. He would say, "White people are trash". And he would just put down his own color. He would say, "Black people are just the nicest people you ever seen". I have nothing against that, but I never heard that come out of a White person's mouth and he would just exaggerate about Black people.

One day my friend said she walk into another class and she heard him say [all] "Black people do is just drugs and White people got money living on the south side like me". He wasn't finish talking so she got into a seat and listened to people express their feelings. She could not say anything because she was in there to give him something while she was working in the office. While she sat there waiting for him to finish talking she said B. [a student] said, "most Black people are making money doing good and most of the Black people doing this stuff not thinking. White people are doing the same thing like doing drugs and killing".



## **APPENDIX C**

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

251

Date: 04-01-96

IRB#: ED-96-104

**Proposal Title:** AFRICAN-AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

**Principal Investigator(s):** Kathryn Castle, Kim E. Boyd

**Reviewed and Processed as:** Expedited

**Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s):** Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
AT NEXT MEETING.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A  
CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD  
APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR  
APPROVAL.

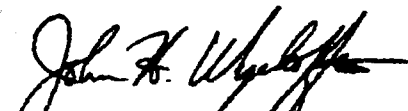
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Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval  
are as follows:

The consent form for the participants is exactly like the parent's form (note use of "my  
child" in both forms). Please submit a revised participant consent form to the IRB for  
approval.

If you have any strong disagreements with the reviewer's recommendations, you may  
respond in writing to the executive secretary (Jennifer Moore, 305 Whitehurst, 744-5700)  
or request a meeting with the full IRB to discuss the recommendations.

Signature:



Date: April 19, 1996

Chair of Institutional Review Board

VITA<sup>2</sup>

Kim Elizabeth Pennyfeather Boyd

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Major Field: Curriculum and Instruction

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, November 21, 1956, the daughter of James and Patery L. Pennyfeather.

Education: Graduated from Harrisburg High School, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in May, 1974; received Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education from Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma in May, 1979; received Master of Education Degree in Reading from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in May, 1987. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education Degree at Oklahoma State University in December, 1996.

Experience: Elementary School Teacher, Sapulpa, Oklahoma, December, 1978 to May, 1979; Middle School Teacher, Sapulpa, Oklahoma, May 1979 to May of 1982; Middle School Chapter 1 Reading Specialist, May, 1987 to 1989; Adjunct Professor, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, August, 1989 to December, 1989; Instructor in Elementary Education, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, January, 1990 to present.

Professional Memberships: Oral Roberts University Faculty Senate, Oklahoma Reading Association; Oklahoma Higher Education Association; Oral Roberts University Education Fellowship; Tulsa County Reading Council