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Expectations and Experiences of Black Students at Two Predominantly White
High Schools in Southern Appalachia

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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December 2011

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ABSTRACT

Expectations and Experiences of Black Students at Two Predominantly White High Schools in Southern Appalachia

by

Lori Jean Price

This study addressed the academic, cultural, and social expectations and experiences of 20 Black students at 2 predominantly White high schools in the Southern Appalachian region of the United States. The participants' experiences revealed how institutional practices promoted or obstructed their successful experiences at high school.

Qualitative ethnographic methodology guided the study. The data collected included the stories of the Black students based on individual interviews, focus groups, and document reviews. The data showed the positive and negative experiences of the Black students in predominantly White high schools and the negative impacts of racism and racist behaviors on Black students' experiences at their high schools.

Findings indicate a difference between the students' academic, cultural, and social expectations and experiences. Many of these differences in expectations and actual experiences were caused by the racist experiences of the Black students. Social networks were shown to contribute to the students' need for a place of safety. Recommendations

based on the results of the study are provided for school administration, teachers, and other staff members.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

Mom, Dad, Michael, Sheri, Emily, Zae, Callie, and Jaden

I love you guys! You are the loves of my life!

This work is also dedicated to Willow and all of the students who allowed me to share their stories. You are brave and hopeful and I am inspired by you.

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Goethe is credited with having said, "Treat people better than they deserve and in doing so you help them become what they are capable of becoming." Martin Luther King must have believed this way and I know the students involved in this study believe this way. I want to thank you for allowing me to hear your stories. You truly are beautiful.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Opening Vignette

Alfred Williams had no idea that the expectations he had as he walked down Foley Hill to his new high school would not match his experiences there. Alfred Williams was one of 12 high school students who would be the first to integrate Clinton High School in Clinton, Tennessee in 1956. When his parents told him earlier that summer that he would be attending his senior year at Clinton High School he was not excited. Not only would he be leaving friends with whom he had attended school for 11 years, but he would be one of only 12 Black students who would attend a previously all White high school (A. Williams, personal communication, July 12, 2011). Later to be known as the “Clinton 12,” these students revealed that their experiences did not meet their expectations (Adamson, 2002).

Throughout the weeks prior to the beginning of school, Williams spoke with his friend, Bobby Cain, who would be the first Black student to graduate from Clinton High School in May of 1957. He and Bobby Cain knew that things would not “set good” with the White students, but their experiences were far more serious than they feared. He said he knew things were going to be different, but he did not realize that kids “could get so mean.” When he and the other 11 Black students arrived at the front of the high school, there were groups of students saying, ‘We don’t want you n-----s here.’ However, they were not yelling or holding signs as they would begin to do in the weeks ahead when a man named John Casper came to town. When Casper came, Williams explained that they had a feeling something was going to happen, but he never thought the school would be

bombed. (A. Williams, personal communication, July 12, 2011). Casper was an outsider who went around the community stirring up messages of hate and it worked. In the weeks and months ahead the hatred and violence increased.

Williams expressed that he did not expect the White kids to get as “rowdy and above themselves” as they did. They would throw all kinds of objects at them in the halls and step on their heels until they bled. The girls would have their hair pulled all day long. They would be pushed and hit in the halls and have their lockers vandalized. Williams said that there was no way that teachers could watch 600 kids at one time, so the students just had to tolerate the abuse (A. Williams, personal communication, July 12, 2011).

Unfortunately, an incident would occur that would change the course of William’s life. Williams would never graduate from Clinton High School. On a cold winter day in January 1957, Williams was held after class and was not able to walk with his younger brother, who was a freshman. As he walked up Foley Hill toward home, he saw a group of White boys with their knives pulled out surrounding someone. He heard them saying, “Cut him! Kill him!” When he came closer, he realized it was his little brother. He pulled out his knife and told everyone to get away. The next day at school, Williams was expelled. The White students were not reprimanded. Williams explained, “That incident ruined my life and I spent a lot of years trying to find peace” (A. Williams, personal communication, July 12, 2011). Notwithstanding, there would be many years of struggle ahead for equality.

A large part of the struggle began in December of 1952 when Kansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, South Carolina, and Virginia all had cases to be heard by the United States Supreme Court. They all challenged that racial segregation was

unconstitutional. The court consolidated these five cases under one name, *Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka*. This case was initiated by members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter in Topeka, Kansas after 20 students were denied admission into all White schools. The parents filed suit against the Topeka Board of Education on behalf of their 20 children (Adamson, 2002). With the court ruling for the parents, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision made it clear that segregation was unconstitutional. The doors were now open for Black students to have the advantages of an equal education. Federal Courts mandated race-conscious means to desegregate the public schools, such as Clinton High School. According to Orfield and Yun (1999) voluntary race-conscious policies were used to help prevent racial isolation and promote diverse school bodies. Various interventions were promoted to raise Black students' achievement; however, despite these measures, the struggle continues. As Hallinan (2001) suggested the Black-White achievement gap remains a defining mark of inequality in public education.

More than 50 years later, being a minority in a predominantly White high school is still a challenge. An initial review of literature reveals that despite the efforts of many to minimize the challenges these students face, their experiences still fail to meet their expectations.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to describe the academic, social, and cultural expectations and experiences of participating Black students at two predominantly White high Schools in Southern Appalachia and to determine if the high schools are meeting the expectations of Black students. Student success should be every high school's most

important goal. How can teachers and administrators work together to narrow the gap between expectations and experiences of Black students? I examine expectations in comparison to experiences of Black students in predominantly White high schools by determining the expectations and comparing them to experiences of the students.

Significance of the Study

Results of studies (Carter, 2007; Datnow & Cooper, 1997) regarding the experiences of Black students in predominantly White high schools show that the expectations often differ from actual experiences. This study provides information about the expectations and experiences of Black students at predominantly White high schools. This information could help inform administrators and faculty and improve practices that promote academic, cultural, and social success for Black students at predominantly White high schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be used to guide this study:

1. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe their academic expectations and experiences?
2. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe their social expectations and experiences?
3. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe their cultural expectations and experiences?
4. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe the practices that promote or hinder a successful experience?

Limitations and Delimitations

This study is limited to only Black sophomores, juniors, and seniors in high school. The students were volunteers. At this age the students will have had ample high school experience to reflect upon and be articulate in voicing their reflections. There are also a large percentage of girls in the study. I am also a White woman conducting interviews with Black students. This study is also limited to two high schools within 25 miles of each other. The number of students in high school A is 1,250 and the number in high school B is 1,050. At both high schools there are less than 10% minority students.

Definition of Terms

1. *Black or African American*: Depending on the author of the reference used, these terms are used interchangeably throughout the study. These terms are racial and ethnic labels. According to Kivel (1996) the terms Black or African American denote feelings of connection and inclusion to certain cultural communities.
2. *Culture*: According to Banks and Banks (1989) culture is the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich diversity in each individual. Culture is the way that a group of people defines, celebrates, and sustains themselves (Karenga, 1966). In this study this term concerns ethnic group.
3. *Diversity*: composed of distinct or unlike qualities or elements (Merriam-Webster, 2010).

4. *Appalachia*: Appalachia is defined as those areas from southern New York to northern Mississippi that follow the ridges of the Appalachian Mountains (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2009).
5. *Expectations*: A prospect of future good or profit: to have great expectations. In this study, expectations refer to the future experiences expected by Black students in White schools. Expectations are beliefs that someone will or should achieve something (Merriam-Webster, 2010).
6. *Experiences*: According to dictionary.com (2011), *experiences* are the observing, encountering, or undergoing of things generally as they occur in the course of time. In this study, experiences refer to the experiences of the Black students as they were encountered.
7. *Racism*: According to dictionary.com (2011) *racism* is a belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human races determine culture or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to rule others. Schwalbe (2008) refers to racism as involving beliefs and practices that one group uses to keep another group of people down.

Summary

This qualitative study focuses on the expectations and experiences of Black students in two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia. This study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 provides the introduction, background, statement of the problem, significance of the study, definition of terms, and delimitations and limitations. Chapter 2 presents a review of literature that includes sections considering influences on the achievement gap; experiences of racism; acting White; factors for

achievement; segregation trends; and networks. Chapter 3 includes the researcher's role, research questions, and data collection methods. Chapter 4 includes the data analysis and findings. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions, recommendations, and implications for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review addressed the history of Black students at two predominantly White schools and focused on their cultural, social, and academic expectations and experiences. The research is divided into sections considering the influences on the achievement gap; experiences of racism; acting White; factors for achievement; segregation trends; and networks. Much of the literature concerning Black students at White institutions showed the challenges that Black students faced in these environments. The literature also showed that Black students were not accepted socially, culturally, or academically.

Influences on Achievement Gap

There is much research concerning factors that may influence gaps in achievement (Diamond, 2006; Fordham, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lee, 2002; O'Connor, Lewis, & Mueller, 2007; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Strayhorn, 2010). Recent data from the U.S. Department of Education indicated that achievement disparities between White and Black youth continue despite decades of school reform efforts and federal policy mandates geared toward minimizing the Black-White achievement gap (Strayhorn, 2010). Strayhorn distinguished that while studies have been conducted on the size and persistence of the Black-White achievement gap (Braun, Wang, Jenkins, & Weinbaum, 2006; Chubb & Loveless, 2002), little is known about what influences those gaps among racial groups (Krueger & Whitmore, 2001). Ladson-Billings (2006) argues that poverty levels of those students who are underachieving is where the focus should be. She explored the relationship among the financial support of schools where students are predominantly Black and how this affects achievement. She

maintained that in communities where education is needed most, schools are consistently underfunded (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Lee's (2002) research supported this theory showing that schools with a higher percentage of Black students are more likely to be represented by higher levels of poverty compared to predominantly White schools that have a higher percentage of middle class students.

Fordham (1996) found that Black students are frequently discouraged from showing their intelligence at school. In fear of being made fun of, they do not study or do homework which inhibits their academic achievement and hinders their ability to succeed. Perry, Steele, and Hilliard (2003) supported the idea that Black students are not the only ones hindering their ability to succeed academically. Perry et al., (2003) posited that many teachers are unaware of ways in which race can impact attitudes about school and learning-profile preferences that often lead to both the academic, social, and emotional challenges. Diamond (2006) supported the idea that Black students had disadvantages that may be responsible for widening the achievement gap. These disadvantages included:

1. Being taught by less qualified teachers.
2. Being enrolled in lower level classes.
3. Not being held to high expectations by teachers
4. Attending lower-performing schools at disproportionately higher rates.
5. Being more likely to live in segregated neighborhoods.

Strayhorn (2010) suggested that it is important to further explore the impact of individual factors, such as class size and opportunity to learn, on the nature of the achievement gap (Braun et al., 2006; Krueger & Whitmore, 2001). O'Connor, Lewis,

and Mueller (2007) also contended further research is necessary. They indicated that present research into academic achievement of Black students is oversimplified or shows inaccurate conceptualizations of race, even though racism continues to play an integral role in all aspects of society. They examined the idea of how the tradition of exploring race as culture limits masks the whole Black experience and that in many studies race and racial discrimination are not analyzed thoroughly which confuses the significance of race.

Influences on Achievement Gap: Stereotyping

According to Slaughter and Johnson (1988), “all children carry the culture of their communities and families into their schools” (p.5). Arrington, Hall, and Stevenson (2003) suggested the importance of being aware of the messages about race that students and adults present because they have a huge impact in shaping the academic and social environments for Black students. Arrington et al. (2003) indicated that Black students will engage with race differently due to their unique characteristics, developmental history, and experiences across social contexts including the family and neighborhood. This is a part of their racial identity that may not be considered by White students and teachers.

Kellow and Jones (2008) maintained that the effects of stereotyping affect how Black students score on standardized tests. They assumed that students in stereotype threat situations, which refers to underachievement that results from students’ fear of confirming group stereotypes, perceive themselves like students who believe in fixed intelligence. Students who believe intelligence is fixed may be more likely to be less motivated and perform worse when faced with difficulties than students who believe intelligence is changeable (Kellow & Jones, 2008). That means that in the same way

fixed intelligence leads to lowered performance goals, stereotype threat may lead to lowered performance goals. Kellow and Jones also found that Black students are at a disadvantage compared to White students when their knowledge is measured using standardized tests. Kellow and Jones surmised that one reason Black students are disadvantaged is that they are left behind when they are retained in previous grades for failing to pass standardized tests.

Okeke and Howard (2009) validated that youth who think they are academically weak may be more likely to believe race stereotypes about Black inferiority than youth with more positive self-concepts regardless of their actual achievement. Therefore, youth who may actually be successful academically, may still view themselves as unsuccessful due to low self perception. Stereotypes may have a negative effect on self-esteem affecting the youth's perception of competence as Okeke and Howard (2009) suggested, and this could be one reason that these students do not do well on tests as Kellow and Jones (2008) affirmed.

Anderson (2010) connected cultural proficiency to academically underperforming African-American students. Anderson (2010) proposed that African-American students are at a disadvantage to White students:

“One reason for the achievement gap is that American schools are built around the beliefs and values of White middle class America which suggests that students raised in the same cultural background valued by educators have an advantage over those who are not from the same cultural background.”
(Anderson, 2010, p. 56)

Anderson (2010) analyzed teacher and student perceptions of cultural proficiency and found that teachers perceive themselves as more culturally proficient than the students did, which can have a negative effect on students' performance.

Influences on Achievement Gap: Teachers

Several studies have validated Anderson (2010) concerning the important role teachers' beliefs and perceptions play in minority students' success academically (Ferguson, 2003; Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2006; Irvine, 2003; Wilder, 2000). According to Ferguson (2003) schools can positively affect this disparity by examining both teachers and students. Teachers' perceptions and expectations influenced students' beliefs, behaviors, and study habits in ways that influence the Black- White achievement gap. Ferguson (2003) also suggested that teacher expectations, perceptions, and behaviors can appear biased if judged by one criterion and unbiased if judged by another. Therefore, it is important to look at more than one criterion when examining how teacher perception influences the Black-White achievement gap.

Teachers' perceptions of Black students can be shaped by negative stereotypes and these views can directly and indirectly affect student performance in school (Banks & Banks, 1989; Howard, 2001, Ladson-Billings, 1994a, 2006). Ladson-Billings (2006) asserted that teacher perceptions of Black students have a significant impact on student learning. These perceptions can lead to negative associations with Black culture and low expectations. Teachers may not believe that minority students can act in a certain way, and the result is that teachers respond with sympathy (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Ladson-Billings (2006) also contended that teachers may only value students who demonstrate mainstream behaviors. These misunderstandings by teachers can lead to academic and social failure (Banks & Banks, 1989).

There are also other performance indicators involving teachers. Garrison-Wade and Lewis (2006) stated that one reason for the achievement gap may be a shortage of

teachers who understand cultural needs of Black students. Wilder (2000) maintained that Black students who do not have minority teachers will not have the advantage of having someone who understands their culture and learning needs. This could affect those students' academic achievement. Irvine (2003) stated that 44% of schools in America have no teacher of color and that is a big concern because many Black students could go through their entire school experience without someone who understands their diverse needs. Howard reported (as cited in Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2006) that there are only a few studies that examine the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching from students' perspectives.

Influence on Achievement Gap: Discipline

Another factor contributing to achievement gap concerns is discipline. Thomas and Stevenson (2009) reported that American male students are more likely than any other group to be suspended and expelled from school. Furthermore, Thomas and Steven presented (as cited in the U.S. Department of Education, 1999) that disparities in school disciplinary practices have been shown to contribute to low academic achievement and behavior problems across groups of ethnic minority children and youth.

Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera (2010) also supported that the use of school expulsion as a discipline practice may contribute to racial gaps in academic achievement. They argued that this suggests that there is a pressing need for schools to pay attention to how the racial discipline gap affects the achievement gap. Arcia (2006) also supported the idea that discipline affects academic achievement. In many schools, large proportions of a group receive at least one suspension that results in missed instructional time and, for some, could escalate a cycle of academic failure and disengagement. Depending on

conduct and school policy, a student could miss from 1 period to more than 10 days for an infraction. Arcia (2006) compared a cohort that had received no suspensions to a cohort that had received 1 or more suspensions and found that suspended students in year 1 were 3 grade levels behind in reading skills compared to their peers who were not suspended. In the second year, the suspended students were almost 5 years behind. Arcia (2006) supports the idea that other immeasurable factors may have contributed to the differences, but it is reasonable that suspension may have initiated a process of lower academic performance. The school disciplinary practices used most throughout the United States may be contributing to lowered academic performance among Black students (Arcia, 2006; Davis & Jordan, 1994).

Experience of Racism

Arrington et al. (2003) explained that understanding Black students' experiences with racism is important because it can affect their emotional and psychological coping in school. The more students report dealing with racism at school, the more their sense of connection to the school decreases and their emotional stress increases (Arrington et al., 2003).

Arrington et al. (2003) acknowledged that 82% of Black students interviewed reported that they had negative experiences at their schools. Black students have reported feeling isolated, alienated, and highly-visible when describing experiences in predominantly White high schools (Brayboy 2004; Franklin 1999). Ford and Whiting's (2010) study found a significant barrier to the underrepresentation of Black students in advanced programs was the decision by some Black students and their families to not participate in advanced academic programs due to their fear of being isolated. Several studies supported the idea that Black students chose not to participate in advanced

programs due to concerns about being isolated from their peers and rejected by White students (Ford, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). According to Fordham and Ogbu (1986) feeling isolated in any situation can lead to insecurities; however, feeling isolated as a teen, with all of the stress that comes with that age, can be socially and academically disabling. Feeling as if one is being watched or highly visible can also create feelings of insecurity that can hinder a person both socially and academically. Pair these feelings of insecurity with the feeling that one is not understood and this can be disastrous for a Black teen (Ford, 1996).

Arrington et al. (2003) validated three main factors to be shared concerning the experience of Black students in schools. First, it is important to promote Black students' connection to the school community and to promote their emotional health which is important to their academic success. Also, schools socialize students academically as well as socialize students racially. Lastly, the experience of racism is a reality that compromises the quality of the school experience as well as students' emotional health (Arrington et al., 2003).

In society today racism can take a more covert form. People view racism as involving the more crude actions of the past and, therefore, racism may not be acknowledged as such. But racism can come in the form of lowered expectations and stereotyped thinking. Arrington et al. (2003) suggested that teachers do not think that discrimination is a problem that their students face in school, even though those students reported feeling that discrimination was present. Arrington et al. (2003) examined that because the topic of race is so uncomfortable for many, it is ignored, and this can make students' ability to cope effectively with racism more difficult. Arrington et al. surmised

that avoiding discussing race and racism also leaves the notion of White privilege unexamined and that this leaves all members of a community without the tools to work through the role that race and racism play. Ignoring the issue of race is not the answer to making the experiences of Black students an equal one.

Segregation Trends

The percentage of Black students in predominately White schools in the late 1990s dropped to levels of those seen in the 1970s (Orfield & Yun, 1999). Orfield and Yun also reported that there is a change in the racial composition of American schools and that Black students in racially integrated schools are generally in schools with higher levels of average academic achievement than those in segregated schools. This suggested that Black students who go to schools with White students are better off academically than those who go to schools that are not integrated. Desegregation does not assure that students will receive better opportunities, but it puts minority students in schools that have better opportunities and better prepared peer groups (Orfield & Yun, 1999). Knowledge of trends in segregation are important now especially due to the increased requirements of No Child Left Behind and other state and federal policies that have increased achievement requirements for students, such as the increased testing requirements for graduation and college entrance exams. These concerns should be considered by educational policy makers to ensure that the population in segregated schools is taken into account.

Research (Gordon, Piana, & Keheler 2000; Scott & Barrett, 2004) shows that Black students are overrepresented when it comes to suspensions and referrals compared to White students. When students are suspended or referred, they usually assemble with

students who are also delinquent which can influence bad behavior (Gottfredson, 2001). Also, behavior problems can lead to attendance problems and academic problems (Gottfredson, 2001; Ialongo, Poduska, Werthamer, & Kellam, 2001). Scott and Barrett (2004) affirmed this and concur that suspensions and referrals can have negative effects, such as reduced opportunities to learn that greatly affects a Black student's academic success.

In a study conducted by Gordon, Piana, and Keheler (2000) data were collected for 1.8 million school children from public schools in the year 1999 which showed that the greatest percentage of suspensions were for Black students at 12.8%, followed by Native Americans at 11%. White student suspensions were 8.4%. A Task Force was set up by the American Psychological Association in 2004 to examine racial differences in school suspensions and reported its conclusions in December of 2008. The data showed the same differences reported in several earlier studies (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Black students were suspended 2.84 times more than White students. This rate of 2.84 times more suspensions is almost the same as the rate reported in 1970 by Backman (1970) which was 2.5 times that of White students' suspensions. The data also showed that there was no information that supported the assumption that Black students demonstrated higher rates of disruption or violence that would warrant the higher rates of discipline. The study suggested that Black students may be disciplined more severely for less serious or more subjective reasons due to lack of teacher preparation in classroom management, stereotypes, and lack of training in cultural competency (APA Task Force, 2008).

Acting White

There is much research that documents the academic experiences of Black students (Andrews, 2009; Fordham, 1986; Ogbu, 1992). Some research focuses on factors that contribute to the failures of Black students to achieve as well as White students (Ferguson, 2002, 2003; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Fordham, 1986; Morris & Monroe, 2009; Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005). Fordham (1986) purported that one factor that contributes to failure is the burden of *Acting White*. This comes from the Black students' fears of being accused of acting White because of their attempts to do well in school. This fear causes social and psychological situations that diminish Black students' academic attempts, leading to underachievement (Fordham, 1986). According to Ford and Whiting (2010), "It would be foolish to believe that all students respond to peer pressures, including charges of acting White, in the same way, it would be equally unwise to ignore that some students are negatively affected" (p.139). The idea is that educators working with gifted Black students must not discount the possibility that peer pressures contribute to underrepresentation. Ford, Grantham, and Whiting (2008) conducted a study of 166 Black students concerning peer pressures related to accusations of acting White and found that students defined acting White as being intelligent, speaking Standard English, being a high achiever and caring about school, and having mainly White friends. Black students' sense of collective identity plays a part in their lack of academic effort. According to Andrews (2009) the mainstream idea is that when Black students achieve academic success, they are going against the accepted norm for their racial group, which can be seen as rejecting group affiliation. Ogbu's (1992) research supports this idea. A Black student who wants to do well academically,

according to Ogbu, may be faced with a personal conflict between being loyal to same race peers, who provide a sense of belonging and security, and the desire to act in ways that increase academic success.

Black identity is a complex issue according to Morris and Monroe (2009), and it is difficult to capture the many layers of that identity and how those layers influence academic achievement. According to Morris and Monroe (2009) some psychologists use the term *stereotype threat* to refer to under achievements that result from students' fear of confirming group stereotypes. This is validated by the fear that some Black students have that their peers will believe they are acting White if they seem overly eager to achieve academically (Morris & Monroe, 2009).

However, a study by Bergin and Cooks (2002) reported that Black students did not thwart their academic attempts due to fear of being seen as acting White. The students felt strong resentment toward their peers' accusations of acting White. Tyson, Darity, and Castellino (2005) support that the acting White concept did not affect Black students' achievement. Their study supported that racial peer pressure was not a contributing factor in low academic achievement among Black students. Ferguson's (2002) study reported similar findings. Results from a survey of 40,000 middle and high school students demonstrated that African-American students were more likely than their peers to report that their friends think it is very important to study hard and get good grades. Very few students of any race reported that their friends ridicule those who try to do well in school (Ferguson, 2002). Ferguson also found that students from all racial groups taking similar classes report spending about the same amount of time on homework.

Factors Promoting the Success of Black Students

There are many factors that can promote a Black student's success. Promoting Black students' connections to the school socially is important to their emotional as well as academic success. According to Arrington et al. (2003) students assessed the climate of their schools as positive; however, 75% said that they had to make special efforts to fit in and 40% did not feel that the school treated all students the same.

One way teachers can help Black students feel that they are being treated the same, according to Douglas, Douglas, Garrison-Wade, Lewis, and Scott (2008), is to train teachers to communicate their belief in Black students in a way that lets the students see that they can face and solve their problems whether they are at home or at school. Martin and Baxter (2001) discussed the importance of antiracism education in providing a basis for teachers to develop a common language around the experience of racism. They support that antiracist educational principles provide a means for creating instructional practices that lessen the negative impact that racism has on school children. When racism has a less negative effect, Black students can focus on academics.

In an ethnographic study by Ladson-Billings (1994) involving eight highly effective teachers of Black students it was found that they all followed a philosophy of teaching that provided students regular opportunities to learn cooperatively and collectively, they viewed teaching as an art, they made few assumptions about students' prior knowledge, and their teaching required critical thinking skills. In Ogbu's (1992) investigation of how schools could help Black students be more academically engaged, it was recommended that helping students develop and distinguish long-term and short-term goals and improved study habits could increase student success.

In recruiting and retaining Black students in academically challenging classes one must consider several factors such as: students' sense of belonging, relationships with peers and educators, academic support, expectations of self and others, and academic identity and self-perceptions (Ford & Whiting, 2010; Harmon, 2002; Louie, 2005). According to the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, (2009) these factors may have been considered as evidenced by increased enrollment of Black students in academically challenging Advanced Placement (AP) classes.

According to the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2009) the percent of Black students taking the Advanced Placement or AP exam has risen to 6.1 % in 2008 up from only 1.4 % in 1985. This is progress, but despite this progress, Black students still lag far behind White students in participating in AP classes in high school. Some Black students feel that if they pursue AP classes that they are acting too intelligent and are accused of acting White. According to the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2009) nationwide the average AP scores, which are on a 5 point scale, is 2.97 for White students and 1.91 for Black students, which is a full letter grade lower. White students were more than twice as likely to receive a qualifying grade on AP exams taken. It is important to note that attention to preparation is an area that could help Black students' success with this test (Cross, 2009). Ford (1994) proposed that the representation of Black students in advanced programs would improve when professionals follow the recruitment and retention examples of higher education. She posited that educators must: find culturally sensitive instruments, strategies, policies, and procedures to effectively recruit Black students; find more effective and inclusive ways of retaining these students in gifted programs once recruited; and collect data on gate keeping factors in both the

recruitment and retention of Black males and females in gifted education. She argued for initiatives that were specific and direct.

In a later study Ford (2004) found that retention is often neglected when considering underrepresentation. Not paying attention to retaining the Black students in gifted programs contributes to the continued underrepresentation. Adding to this idea, Harmon (2002) supported that students' sense of belonging, their relationships with their peers and teachers, and academic support must be considered. Notwithstanding, Ford and Whiting (2010) support that there is no lack of concern for the underrepresentation of Black students in gifted and Advanced Placement programs, nor is there a lack of proposals to reverse the underrepresentation. They argue, however, that the progress has been inadequate due to the evidence that for more than 50 years this underrepresentation still persists at high levels across the nation. They support the idea that not only should we continue to find more effective tests and instruments but that there should be more focus on the social and psychological factors that affect recruiting and retaining Black students in these advanced programs. Ford and Whiting (2010) offer various recommendations to help with the underrepresentation of Black students in gifted and AP classes, such as focusing on the instruments used to test and assess these students. They also suggest that it is important to explore the psychological and social factors such as racial identity and peer- pressure that can affect student test outcomes. Ford's (1994) ideas for recruitment and retention and Ford and Whiting's (2010) suggestions concerning the exploration of the factors that influence that recruitment and retention represent only a few of the studies that focus on lessening the underrepresentation problem.

Fordham (1996) and Perry (2003) suggested that researchers focus more attention on Black students' success as a way to counter negative societal messages about their intellectual ability. Broadcasting the academic achievements of Black students would not only help promote positive thinking among the Black population but would also support more positive views among the population in general.

Fredricks and Eccles (2010) found that extracurricular activities can improve academic achievement, as well as lead to more success in the future for Black students. Their study revealed that students who participated in extracurricular activities were more likely to have good grades and to be more involved in civic activities.

Taylor and Antony (2000) contend that students' academic achievements can be improved using instructional strategies that reduce stereotype threat and assure students that they will not encounter negative stereotypes. It is interesting to note that reducing stereotypes can start with the teacher. Anderson (2010) studied the level of cultural competence in teachers and found that teachers who felt they were culturally proficient were not as proficient as those who felt they were not culturally proficient. The research is important because currently Black students from working class backgrounds underperform academically compared to White students. Anderson wrote that one reason for this achievement gap was because American schools are built around beliefs and values of White middle class America. She posited that students raised in the same cultural background, embodied in the school system, and valued by educators had an inherent advantage over those who come from a home culture that does not reflect the values of American public education. In her study, teachers and students rated the teachers and school's cultural proficiency and teachers perceived themselves to be more

culturally proficient than students did. Teachers who believed they were culturally proficient did not have the values and beliefs that are often a part of being culturally proficient. The teachers who did not rate themselves as culturally proficient actually did recognize the values and beliefs of cultural proficiency. Anderson (2010) concluded that this showed that teachers who felt they were proficient were actually less proficient. It is positive that overall students and teachers both perceived that cultural proficiency was important and that valuing cultural diversity improves the experience for the student by fostering connection to the school (Anderson, 2010).

Kerr (2010) found that culturally responsive teaching study groups were effective. The research showed that there is a great need for schools and school districts to offer teachers more meaningful staff development on culturally responsive teaching and that many trained and certified teachers have very little understanding of the aspects of culturally responsive teaching strategies (CRT). New teachers must have an understanding of culturally responsive teaching. Liu (2010) found that there are ways that teachers can be successful at teaching multicultural classes. Liu's (2010) suggestion was to combine Cochran-Smith et al.'s (2004) *Understanding the Multiple Meanings of Multicultural Teacher Preparation*, Gay's (1997) *A Dual Approach to Multicultural Infusion in Teacher Education*, and Melnick and Zeichner's (1998) *Educating Teachers for Cultural Diversity*. Liu (2010) recommended that teacher preparation programs could significantly help teach candidates to successfully incorporate multicultural teaching by establishing a vision in support of diversity and multicultural education, creating caring learning contexts, fostering teacher candidates, examination of societal and personal diversity and prejudice, preparing teacher candidates to help diverse student populations

access academic content, and cultivating teacher candidates' connections between course work and student teaching. Helping new teachers become proficient in multicultural education can make the education experience for Black students more meaningful and validating (Melnick & Zeichner, 1998).

Teachers can also improve the learning environment for Black students by listening. Schultz (2003) says it is important to listen for silence. This includes noticing when students take critical or risky stands and supporting them to articulate their positions. Teachers can teach students how to recognize and honor multiple perspectives. They can listen for the internal dynamics of the classroom that might silence students from articulating alternative views that challenge the mainstream. Teachers can listen for how students silence their own success (Schultz, 2003).

There are other factors for teachers to consider that could make the experience for Black students more meaningful and validating. According to Carter and Tuitt (2008) making sure there are clear expectations of the learning environment, having high expectations for Black students, including diverse content and diverse perspectives, and working to minimize experiences of overt racism can help Black students feel at ease. This can make their educational experience a more successful one.

Networks

Other research has studied factors that contribute to Black students' successes (Carter, 2007; Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Tatum, 1997). There are many ideas and theories about how to help Black students achieve at their most successful level. Datnow and Cooper (1997) established that formal and informal networks have been successful when it comes to the academic success of Black students. Data revealed that these networks not

only supported more academic success but also were important in creating opportunities for Black students to reaffirm their racial identities and facilitated their adjustments to situations that might otherwise prove difficult.

Carter (2007) explained that there are many studies that provide evidence that same race peer networks have an effect on student achievement in private schools but research was lacking in public White high schools. In the Carter (2007) research, Black students were studied in public schools and the informal and formal networks were shown to serve as a positive resistance strategy for Black students that allowed them to have a strong racial sense of self while maintaining school success. Her research supported the idea that it is important for Black students to have safe spaces in predominantly White educational settings to help with the stress that comes from experiences with racism (Carter, 2007).

Carter (2007) postulated that other studies (Cookson & Persell, 1991; Datnow & Cooper, 1997) provided evidence of the strong positive and negative influences of same race peer groups on Black student achievement. According to Tatum (1997), Black students sit together in places such as the cafeteria because this helps them have a network of people who are all dealing with reflecting on their identities and the same type of issue-racism. School personnel are noted as seeing this as a negative, when it actually could be important. Black students group together because they share common stressors and having this network is important in dealing with those stressors. Alfred Williams (Clinton 12) reported that he and the other members of the Clinton 12 were not allowed this privilege of social networking at Clinton High School in 1956. They were told to make sure that they (the Black students) never grouped together when they were in the

halls, auditorium, cafeteria, or in any other setting in the school. This was seen as a deterrent to other students who might want to attack them. If they were not in a group, they were seen as less threatening. This disallowance of same race social network made the experience even tougher, according to Williams. By not allowing the students to network with each other, the stresses of the day were compounded (A. Williams, personal communication, July 12, 2011). Carter's (2007) research encourages educational leaders to see the grouping as a way that Black students cope, not something of which to be threatened.

Carter (2007) also supports the idea that Black students perceive that predominantly white learning environments are hostile (Carter & Tuitt, 2008; Hamm & Coleman, 2001; Ogbu, 2003). Carter and Tuitt (2008) posit that the mixture of Black students' fears that they will be judged based on a negative stereotypes *and* having those fears confirmed through White students' actions creates a racially hostile learning environment. These racist actions increase the apprehension Black students feel in predominantly White high schools.

Having informal networks of same race peer groups is important for two reasons according to Carter (2005). The first reason same race peer groups should have *counter space*, or a place to meet with peers, is that it serves as a place for Black students to express the stress of dealing with racism and discrimination. The second reason counter space is important, according to Carter (2005), is that it allows Black students of similar cultural backgrounds a place to bond.

Summary

Research has shown that Black students' experiences are different from their expectations (Arrington et al., 2003; Kellow & Jones, 2008; Strayhorn, 2010). The literature review exposed issues that directly affect the achievement of Black students. For example, Strayhorn (2010) suggested that it is important to further explore the impact of individual factors such as class size and opportunity to learn on the nature of the achievement gap. Fordham (1986) reported that one factor that contributes to failure of Black students is the burden of acting White. Anderson (2010) studied how teachers' cultural competence influenced student achievement. Carter (2005) researched the importance of networks as a place for Black students to bond and deal with the stress of racism. Researchers have identified many factors that influence Black students' experiences in school including: Influences on the achievement gap; experiences of racism; covert racism, acting White, factors for achievement, segregation trends, and networks.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

Over 50 years ago Alfred Williams, one of the Clinton 12, was integrated into one of the first White high schools in the South. His experiences did not meet his expectations. He knew that things would not “set good” when he attempted to help integrate a previously all White school, but he never expected the level of hate that he experienced (A. Williams, personal communication, July 12, 2011). Despite the many means by which the struggle has been lessened, there are still challenges for a Black student entering a predominantly White high school. This qualitative ethnographic approach provides the best framework for this study.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a process that emphasizes the importance of looking at variables in the natural setting in which they are found (Key, 1997). Also, according to Key (1997) interaction between variables is important and detailed data are gathered through open-ended questions that provide direct quotations. Patton (2002) suggested that qualitative research involves an inductive evaluation approach in which the evaluator attempts to make sense of a situation without imposing pre-existing expectations on the setting. Weiss (1998) examined that advantages to using the qualitative approach include having a greater awareness of the perspectives of the participants and having the capability of understanding dynamic developments in the process as it evolves.

I have chosen ethnography from the five traditional qualitative approaches because it allows the researcher to focus on the participant's point of view while collecting data that are free of the researcher's assumptions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2004).

Triangulation was used by combining interviews, focus groups, and document review. Triangulation can increase validity and strength and decrease investigator bias (Banik, 1993).

Research Questions

1. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe their academic expectations and experiences?
2. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe their social expectations and experiences?
3. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe their cultural expectations and experiences?
4. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe the practices that promote or hinder a successful experience?

Researcher's Role

As a White doctoral student with a nephew and niece who are Black, I am intimately connected to the subject matter. I have had to acknowledge my own prejudices, specifically toward people I feel are being intolerant. I am deeply connected to this research because I want to do everything in my power to make sure that my nephew and niece have the most successful experiences in school. My concerns for my nephew and niece helped me to be open minded about the stories I heard from the Black

students, especially since they realized that I had a shared concern. I wanted to be able to share their voices.

Population

Morris and Monroe (2009) posit that race and place are a part of the multilayered nature of Black identity and that it is important for the scholarly community to note. They examined that the 2000 U.S. Census showed that in comparison to the rest of the nation, the South had the largest Black migration between 1990 and 2000. They also explored the history and migration patterns behind the contemporary presence of Black people in the U.S. and concluded that it should not be dismissed as insignificant. Recent census data confirmed their research that the South is the place where the majority of Black people live and that this has important implications for educational opportunities and outcomes (Morris & Monroe, 2009). They reference studies by Henig, Hula, Orr, and Pedescleaux and Johnson confirming that the political structure and racial dynamics of urban, suburban, and rural school districts shape Black students' access to rigorous academic curriculum, their perceptions of educational opportunities, and other influences to their education.

Site selection included two predominantly White high schools that were within 25 miles of each other. Choosing two sites allowed the study to have greater external validity, as suggested by Merriam (1998). High school A had approximately 1,250 students with fewer than 40 who were Black. High School B had approximately 1,050 students with only 8 who were Black. Interviews and observations occurred in public places that provide a confidential process.

The critical selection criterion for this study was Black sophomores, juniors, and seniors at the two predominantly White high schools. I chose sophomores, juniors and seniors because they would have at least 2 years experience in a predominantly White high school with which to reflect.

The study involved 20 Black sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Following approval from the Institutional Review Board at East Tennessee State University, student identification was conducted with assistance from the guidance offices in each school. All Black students were sent emails with my solicitation letter attached explaining the research goals and objectives (see Appendix E). Of the emails sent out to all Black students, 20 responded. These are the 20 students that were involved in the study.

Scheduling interviews, which were conducted over a 3-week period, involved choosing a mutually agreed upon place suggested by the student that would allow for confidentiality. Students selected a pseudonym to be used during the interviews. Students were asked at the beginning of the interviewing process to select any name they wanted to be used as their pseudonym in the interviews and focus groups. It was explained that interviews would last approximately 1 hour and would be recorded and transcribed.

Data Collection

This ethnography included interviews, focus groups, and document review. Greene and Caracelli (1997) noted that the advantages of using multiple sources of data is to decrease potential bias in gathering, reporting, coding, and analyzing data and to contribute to internal validity.

Interviews

Before interviews, the 20 Black students were given an informed consent document (see Appendix D) to read and sign and given a parental permission document (see Appendix C) to take home to parents to have signed. These documents assured that the participant could quit the study at any time. Also, students were able to choose a pseudonym for use during the interviews and focus groups and the transcripts. Interviews were conducted in during and after-school meetings at the location chosen by the interviewee. The four main research questions directed the interview guide that was modified by this researcher with permission from Brenda White Wright (2008) (See Appendix A). Audio taped one-on-one interviews which were approximately 1 hour each, were conducted using the four open-ended research questions to guide the interview. After the interviews the audio tapes were transcribed. Each student received a copy of the transcription to validate for accuracy.

Focus Groups

Each participant was given an informed consent document as well as a parental permission document. Audio taped Focus group interviews were conducted with those of the 20 high school students who could schedule the time. Focus group interviews would last from 1 to 2 hours. Focus groups would allow for the students to interact with each other and give them opportunities for recall. Audio tapes were transcribed for accuracy and detail and a copy given to the appropriate participant to clarify and edit details.

Document Review

Document review was conducted using school websites, and newspapers, both school and local. The purpose was to gather information about the cultural, academic, and social experiences of the Black student.

Data Analysis

The aim of Data Analysis according to Jorgensen (1989) is to assemble or reconstruct data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion. Seidel (1998) explains that analyzing qualitative data is essentially a simple process consisting of three parts: noticing, collecting, and thinking about interesting things. Researchers analyze for patterns in observations throughout the entire data collection phase (Jorgensen, 1989). Open and Axial coding was used to discover meaning and link relationships.

Validity and Reliability

Merriam (1998) explained that qualitative research focuses on understanding and explaining the world as others have experienced it. This qualitative research involved interviews, focus groups, and document review. The researcher is the primary instrument, and detail in transcription was maintained to increase validity and reliability. Using rich, thick description in telling the stories of others involves writing out detailed descriptions of the participants in the study (Creswell, 1998). Patton (2001) contended that any qualitative research should be concerned with two factors, reliability and validity. According to Creswell (1998), reliability referred to the ability of research to be credible and dependable. Using triangulation can strengthen credibility and dependability. To ensure validity and reliability triangulation was used involving interviews, focus groups, and document review. A constant check with participants to correct transcriptions and observations was also involved. After each interview and focus group students received a copy of the transcript to read and review for accuracy.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) were followed at all times to ensure the safety and security of the participants and information received. An Informed Consent Document (see Appendix B) was given to each participant prior to interview. This document explained the purpose and goals of the research and the research method involving the use of a recording device. Also, a parental permission form (see Appendix D) was given for the student to take home for parental permission.

Privacy and confidentiality were assured as student chosen pseudonyms for the students were used. The purpose of the study was continually reinforced as was the option to discontinue the study at anytime or to withdraw their words at anytime without incident. Participants read and reviewed transcripts for deletions or changes. They also received a copy of the dissertation for their review. Confidentiality was secured at all times by all means to protect identities.

Summary

This qualitative ethnography included interviews, focus groups, and document review. Triangulation was used to strengthen credibility and dependability. I sought to clarify the educational experiences of Black students in predominantly White high schools. The goal of this study is to contribute information that can be added to existing literature concerning Black students in White schools.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

Data analysis involved transcribing individual interviews, focus group interviews, and document review. Open and Axial coding were used to discover meanings, links, and relationships within the data that examined academic, cultural, and social expectations of Black students at two predominantly White High schools in Southern Appalachia.

In order to understand personal expectations and experiences of these students, I conducted interviews and focus groups at two predominantly White high schools and collected and analyzed documents from both high schools. Triangulation of data added credibility to the findings.

Throughout the process the focus was capturing ways that being Black in a predominantly White school impacted the students' academic, cultural, and social expectations and experiences. The focus was also on what high schools can do to make Black students' expectations more closely meet their experiences by improving institutional practices. The stories that these students shared illuminated changes that need to occur in order for Black students to have a more successful academic, social, and cultural experience.

Participants

There were 20 students who participated in this study. They chose their own pseudonyms and presented below are brief descriptions of each student that may provide the reader with a sense of connection to their stories.

Kim is a junior and she lives with her dad and his girlfriend and her little sister. Her mother had cancer and passed away in May and she is having a hard time with having a new woman in the house. She said that she and her little sister and her dad were close, but now that the new girlfriend is living with them, they are not close. She says that she and her dad's girlfriend do not speak. She starts for the basketball team.

Oprah is a sophomore who lives with her mom and step-dad and two step-siblings. Her parents are fostering two children who have been left without families. The other students in the focus group talk about how nice her family is and speak about how they will do anything for anybody. She belongs to Youth for Christ.

Nikki is a sophomore who lives with her grandmother and grandfather. She has no siblings.

Little Focka has a big family. There are four children and two adults in her house. She lives with her mom and dad, one sister, and two brothers. Her mom is White and her dad is Black. She said that people are always calling her family mixed breed. The twins, a girl and a boy who are in 6th grade are often called this. She is a cheerleader and belongs to Youth for Christ and Young Life.

Klashaya lives with her mom and her mom's girlfriend. Her mom divorced her dad when she was younger and has had another girlfriend prior to this new girlfriend. Klashaya's mom is Black and her mom's girlfriend is white.

Flocka has one sister and two brothers and lives with her mom and step-dad. She had been in trouble in middle school and her first year of high school for fighting and having an attitude. She says that she has learned to control herself now and that she wants to be successful at school.

Rianna lives in a family of seven. She lives with her dad and her step-mom, a sister, a brother, and a step-sister and step-brother. Her dad is Black and her mom is white.

Siera is a sister to Kim and her mom died of cancer last May. Now, she lives with her dad and her dad's girlfriend. Basketball is her life. She is a starter on the basketball team. She started as a freshman and has played since.

Beyonce is a junior and lives with her mom and her mom's fiancé. She also has two step-siblings and has a very strong personality. She often was the first person to speak in our focus groups.

Willow moved from Atlanta after her brother was killed in a gang related incident and was adopted by her grandparents. She has had a hard time adjusting to a rural school that is predominantly White from a predominantly Black school in Atlanta. She was moved from foster homes several times before being adopted by her grandparents.

Shontell is a sophomore whose brother is albino. She admits that he has a really hard time with being Black and also albino. People will often come up to her and ask what is wrong with her brother. She says that this gets to her sometimes.

Reggy is a junior and plays on the football team. He lives with his mom and has never met his father.

Gucci is a junior and lives with her mom. She is not involved in anything at school. She was very shy and often just listened in the focus groups.

Peter is a sophomore and plays an instrument in the high school band. He has accommodations due to his hearing impairment. He does well in his classes and says he likes his teachers. His parents, who have adopted him, are White.

Nehemia is a sophomore and his grandparents, who have adopted him, are White. He said he was angry when he had to move from South Carolina and come to Tennessee to a predominantly White school. He was getting into trouble and he said that he had a chip on his shoulder. He said he started to change after his mom (the grandmother who adopted him) discussed with him that he was never going to be liked if he acted angry all the time. He said it worked and he started making friends and getting involved in athletics. Now, he says that he takes things a lot better. He said that at his elementary school he tried to deal with racist comments on his own by fighting back or talking back and that he ended up being the one to get in trouble. He said he learned that he had to let the racist comments go because he got into trouble for taking up for himself. When asked about his experiences at high school concerning racist comments, he said that at first he tried to defend himself or fight or argue with others but that he ended up getting in to trouble, so now he just walks by students he calls rednecks who say the n word as he passes by. He said he realizes that these are just students who probably had grandparents who were racist or that there is a long family line of slave owners who treated Blacks like property and now still had hate for them.

Marshall is a junior and plays on the football team. He likes the town he lives in and lives in a house with his mom. He has never met his dad but has recently found out he has two siblings whom he would like to meet. He lives beside his grandparents who he says are very supportive of him.

Madea has a blended family. She lives with her aunt and uncle. Her aunt has three biological children. She has a boy 12, a girl 14, and a girl 19. The uncle has raised an 18 year old girl since birth. Madea also has a brother who is 17. They have recently adopted a 14 year old boy. She describes her uncle as the rock of her family and their stability. "My aunt is very nurturing and she makes everyone feel the same. We are all a strong Christian family. My Aunt says, "We can't love you the way God loves you, but we will always be here for you." Madea plays community basketball and plays powder puff football at her high school. She belongs to Youth for Christ.

Chanel is a sophomore who lives with her mom. She has a sister. She is not involved in anything at school.

Pinky is a senior who has lived in a big city all of her life until last January when she moved in with her dad, his girlfriend, and their new baby and her dad's girlfriend's two children. She moved out of her mom's house after her brother who was 15 died in a car accident. Her two brothers were getting into trouble and her mom thought it would be a good idea for her to get away from the chaos. Pinky is on the dance team at her high school and she says it is the only thing she is involved in other than a part-time job. She said that there was so much diversity in the town from which she came that it was shocking to be in a town and a high school where you are constantly reminded that you are Black. She wants people to know that Blacks are just as capable as Whites at succeeding in anything they want. She said that she thinks small minded people need to be educated on Black people.

Melanie is a senior who is also on the dance team at her high school. She was the only Black student on her team for 3 years. She lives with her mom, grandmother,

and four second cousins. They are ages 13, 12, 10, and 6. She says her house is crowded but that she is glad that they are taking care of her cousins because the mother was unfit to do so. Her boyfriend is White and she says that people usually stare at them when they go out.

Academic Expectations and Experiences

The first research question is addressed in this section. How do Black students attending two predominantly White High Schools describe their academic expectations and experiences? The themes were: (a) academic expectations and actual experience, (b) the elephant in the room (being the minority in the class), and (c) teacher and student relationships.

Academic Expectations and Actual Experiences

Students were asked to discuss their expectations involving their grades and their actual experiences. Most of the students expected to maintain the As and Bs they received in elementary school but found that they had to work harder to keep this average. In most instances they were not able to keep the average as easy as they did in elementary and middle school.

Nikki explained that she expected to do as well or better:

In elementary school it was easy and I did not have to study. When I came to high school I started making bad grades...

Reggy said that he could take higher level classes and do well and he did, as he reported:

I noticed that the teacher had written both the honors class and the regular class assignments on the board and the lessons were exactly the same. I decided that I was in as good a class as those students in honors because our lessons were the same. And I am making good grades.

Oprah had always made good grades and transferred from a city school to this rural school and did not know what to expect. Oprah shared:

I wanted to take the higher level classes but did not feel I would do as well in them.

The Elephant in the Room

Many of the students I interviewed found themselves as the only Black student in many of their classes. In other classes, they were one of only a few. When they were in this situation, they report that it made them feel uncomfortable and as if they were being watched by everyone. It made them aware that others were very aware they were the only Black person in the room.

Reggy shared:

I am the only student in my English class and anytime there is a Black part to a story or play we are reading the teacher calls on me to read it. If we watch a video about a Black person the students stare at you.

Nikki shared an experience:

Me and one of my teachers were talking about the movie *The Help*. She asked if I had seen it and I said no, but I want to go see it. And a White girl who had seen it was like, yeah, I like Minnie, she was always loud and getting in trouble and another girl in class said yeah just like a typical black, ain't that right Nikki. Then the girl said, you know I love you though. That really made me mad.

Klashaya confirmed a shared frustration:

Today in my class we had to stand up and share some information on a lesson. One of the White guys in my class yelled out, "Act ghetto, Act ghetto." It's because I am Black isn't it. I don't say to him act like trailer trash. I don't get it.

Siera shared:

In math class we were doing a problem and the teacher asked the class, "what do you want us to draw today, a ghetto living room or a barn or something? I screamed out a ghetto living room and he started drawing the room in black and some White guy in class said, "Of course it would be Black." I said, "What's that suppose to mean?" and he said, "Ya get it? I said, "Yeah, I get it."

Chanel added:

Yesterday we were in class and someone started talking about how many minorities there were in the school and this White guy said, "All you guys could fit in the office." Then the conversation changed to all the names that we are called and the same guy asked, "how do you feel about the C word and I said what's the C word and he said 'Colored.'" "Nikki, how do you feel about being called Colored? Is it ok if I call you Colored? I was like Dude, it's not even like that.

Siera commented:

Whenever I am in class and there is like a Black part or a ghetto scene some of the kids are like: have Siera do it and I am like why, cause I'm Black and I'm like, What?

Nikki shared her concern and surprise at what a White student asked her to do:

Yesterday in Spanish class I got in trouble and this guy said it's only because you're Black that you are getting in trouble. Say it. Say," it is only because I'm Black" and I will give you ten dollars.

Kim shared:

Sometimes when we are reading a book and there is a Black part they will be like, "Kim, read this part."

Beyonce agreed:

They will be like, "Now, why don't you do this Beyonce?" or like, "who wants to be the negro?" and they expect you to raise your hand.

Teacher and Student Relationships

Many students said their teachers were caring and trying to help them succeed. There were several stories, however, where students said things could have been handled better. Oprah told the story of a White teacher who treated her differently in class. When she asked a question, the teacher would tell her to seek advice from someone around her, but when one of the female White students asked for help, the teacher would go over to help her.

Oprah recalled:

When I ask the teacher to help me, she tells me to ask someone around me and then just as soon as she told me this, she goes to answer the question of a White student. This happens all the time in this class.

Nikki added:

Actually today in class it was me and Willow and Chantel, and we were sitting in a circle with 3 other Caucasian girls. And we were just talking at a whisper. We were not really being loud we were just laughing, occasionally. We were reading a book and then all of a sudden we get pointed out, the teacher was like “that group over there needs to go sit over by themselves.” The other groups were being loud, but it seems like she singled us out.

Oprah commented:

Also, in Math class, me and Chantel will be talking when we are allowed to talk, and the Caucasian kids will talk and interrupt all the time. Out of the whole entire class, I get sent out into the hall. I get in trouble for smarting back because I get mad because I get called out for no reason at all.

Melanie commented:

I’ve never tried to get close to my teachers. I just go to class. I’m Black. I separate myself from the teachers, because we are different.

Willow shared an incident that left her in tears. It was heartbreaking to hear that these situations still occur:

Last week after our field trip, everyone was in the cafeteria to eat ice cream and these redneck boys starting calling out nigger when I walked by and they laughed. I told them to stop it and they kept laughing. Some teachers were standing around and turned and walked away. I started getting upset that no one was doing anything about it and finally the vice principal got a mega phone and yelled out, No racial slurs, and then they told us to come and get ice cream. Those boys did not get in trouble for calling me a nigger and I don’t want to be at this school anymore. I can’t take it. I told my dad I did not want to be here another day.

As tears fell down her face she said:

I don’t think I can take it anymore. I am going to explode.

Nehemia and Peter had different experiences with their teachers. They both said that their teachers were supportive and helped make them feel comfortable in school.

Nehemia explained:

I have had good experiences with most of my teachers here. I told a teacher that I really needed to bring my grade up so that I could play football one Friday and she told me, “Definitely,” that she would help me anyway she could and I got to play that Friday. The teachers here are very good at helping you. If you let them know, they will help you.

Marshall commented:

I get along with all my teachers. I have been here all my life and I think it helps. My teachers know I want to do well and help me whenever I ask or need it.

Peter shared that he had very nice teachers and he loved his band and English teachers:

My teachers are strongly effective. I feel like they are helping me to meet my goals.

Pinky said that her teachers were helpful also:

I feel like my teachers really enjoy me. I have not met a teacher at this school, since I have been here, that has not been helpful to me.

Cultural Expectations and Experiences

This section addresses the second research question: How do Black students in two predominantly White high schools describe their cultural expectations and experiences? The themes were: (a) the N word, and (b) where is Black History Month?

The “N” Word

When I asked the students to describe their cultural experiences, this label turned up often. Kim shared:

My brother graduated a couple of years ago and there is this kid who always bothered him but he never worried about it because he was one of the popular kids I guess and one day out of school the kid was like with one of his friends

and my brother and one of his friends and I think something happened with the kid's little brother and I think my brother was messing with him and the kid had said something about my mom. He said your mom is a stupid nigger lover. And my brother got really mad and started to fight him and he had problems with that during school the rest of the year.

Shontell described an incident:

Like yesterday, during basketball, these girls were sittin' under the goal and I said to Seira, if one of those girls gets hit, I'm not going to sugar coat it and be like, Oh, I'm sorry, when I shoot this ball. I am just going to laugh at you. And they were like, "I hate you, stupid niggers."

Nikki shared her own experience with the racial slur:

I had an incident last year in my fourth block wellness class, and there was this one girl in there and we were cool like at first like we never had a problem with each other and then one day I made her boyfriend mad or something like that and she acts all hard and at school she is all racist. And like one day she didn't say it to me but she walked by me and she was like, "Oh, you nigger bitch. Those stupid nigger bitches." So, I confronted her when we went back into the locker room and she said Yeah, I did call you that. And I said well if I am one then stop acting like one or whatever. And we started arguing and the teachers came in there and said go to the office and we had to walk to the office by ourselves and I opened the door for her when we went in and she was still rude.

Willow said:

No one ever got in trouble for saying it. The teachers hear people saying it and do not do anything about it in the hall. I hate when people get the best of me and that just makes me mad when they say it.

Pinky replied:

People need to be educated on Black people. People are so small minded here. Teachers need to be educated on how to deal with racism, too.

Melanie stated that starting in high school was not soon enough:

I don't see anything changing. People can try to do stuff to help it, but I don't see that anything could help when they start at such an early age. Their minds are already set. If you are going to try to educate people, it should start before high school, at least in Middle school.

Beyonce added:

Today we were coming out of the gym and this big White girl said, “Oh, I hate stupid niiii... “ and she started to say it (the “N” word) and Chanel pointed a bottle in her face and said, “what did you say?” She said I wasn’t talking to you. During 2cd I walked by her and she stared me down and I thought to myself, “What did I do to her. I don’t even know her.”

This incident ended with a suspension due to a racial slur. Kim shared:

There is this one kid in class and I gave him some Skittles and another guy asked, "Where'd you get them Skittles?" and he told him that they were from me. The guy said never mind and he did not want them. Then Tommy (my friend) asked him why and the racist guy said "I don't care nothing about getting candy from that nigger." And Beyonce heard it and told the teacher and the kid got suspended for 3 days.

Where is Black History Month?

“It’s the shortest month of the year for a reason.” *(As repeated by Reggy who has heard several people at school say this.)*

Students who participated in this study described their disappointment with how Black History Month was treated at their school. The students interviewed said they wanted to learn more about their history. They said that many teachers avoid presenting Black History month. According to their stories, omitting Black History month is further validating that Black peoples’ contributions to history are overlooked.

Beyonce began:

At our church they make Black history month like a huge thing and everyone learns things they did not know and finds out about Black leaders. At school... I remember that in middle school, one teacher put a poster up that read, Black History month and in elementary, we talked about it, but after about 6th grade we have not talked about it.

Reggy compared it to studying the Holocaust:

We just don’t talk about Black history month. I have yet to have a teacher talk about it since 7th grade. To me, it’s like, they talk about the Jews and the Holocaust so we can understand it on a more and to put it on a mature level, but

when its Black history month no one talks about it. If they explained things on a more mature level, then people would pay attention. No one even talks about it. We don't get to see it on a mature level.

Willow responded:

They like just skip over it.

Kim shared her thoughts:

I think if we did have a Black history month here or took it more seriously, that some of the kids would think it is a big joke.

Siera replied:

I think the teachers should do more about Black History month because we are always talking about authors and we will read about the author and then read the story and discuss it and the only Black author we have read about was Elouda Equiano and she made us take that home to read it and we never discussed it and I guess it just made me mad that we did not go over it.

Reggy added:

The only thing I hear about Black History month is, Oh, yeah, Black history month, it's the shortest month for a reason.

Kim replied sadly:

Yea, I've heard that a lot, too.

Social Expectations and Experiences

This section addresses the third research question: How do Black students in two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe their social expectations and experiences? The themes were: (a) dealing with it-the slurs and stereotypes, (b) in the lunch room, and (c) The Oreo Cookie incident.

Dealing With It

Many times the students asked each other how they deal with the racial slurs. In one focus group the conversation went as follows:

Flocka started:

How do you deal with racial slurs and you don't do nothing back. I got in trouble in school for taking up for myself when a girl called me that. I went to the principal and I was not focusing on what he was saying and I should have told him that she called me a nigger. How do you deal with it without taking it out on someone?

Willow gave her advice:

I make a joke out of it when they call me a nigger. I say you can call me that but don't cross the line and call me a negro or keep on and on, that's when I go crazy.

Chanel added:

Whenever they call us Niggers they say it like they are Black or they are acting Black and when you get mad at them or lash out about it they are like well that's why I'm racist or that's why I don't like Black people.

Oprah shared an incident from last year:

Last year I had a mixed best friend and she said the n word a lot and she got all the White kids to saying it and it did not bother me that my friend said it but the White kids started walking in and saying what's up my Nigger and I would think O.K. this is crossing the line. I guess they thought they could say it because my friend said it. The White teacher didn't care when I told her I was upset and one day there was a fight in my room about it for the people who were saying it and they got taken to ISS. The others were like what's up, why are you not taking up for us. I was like, I don't say that word and I am not going to take up for them for saying it. Y'all started saying it and I don't say it.

The conversation involving stereotyping revealed some questions that the Black students had. Willow started:

And they always think that just because you are Black you have a bad history. I mean I am adopted but everybody's been through something. It's just because we are Black they think we always have our pants down and deal with violence. Shontell knows what I have been through. There is 11 of us and I am the only one living with my adoptive mom and dad. I know who I am. I don't know my daddy but I am not going to let you offend who I am or what you know about my family or my history. I know I don't know my daddy but, I mean, its life.

Madea added:

What I do not understand is why people think that all Black people are in poverty or they're living in small apartments and they're sleeping on the floor 5 to a bed. I live in a nice house but I will be sitting in Psychology or Social Studies and they will be like oh yeah Black people are poor and most Blacks don't have money. For some odd reason they will look at me and I will say I'm not a slave and I know I'm not poor. For some reason these days, people think that most Black people are poor and the White people are rich. But if you look around most of the crack heads are White-no offense. Most of the crack heads are White trying to get a fix somewhere. And on the streets usually when I have people come up to me who are homeless they are caucasian. I don't understand why people think like this.

Willow shared:

I hate it when they stereotype us and say, "Oh, yeah, you like Grape Kool-Aid." I don't understand. I know a lot of Black people that don't like grape Kool-Aid. And like they say we like watermelon, I am very allergic to watermelon and people make fun of me for that. Not all Black people like watermelon. Or they are like, "What do y'all eat for breakfast-do you like grits?" And I know sometimes they are kidding, but it is too much.

Reggie responded:

Yeah, they always say Black people like Fried Chicken and Kool-Aid, but who doesn't like fried chicken and Kool-Aid?

Nikki added:

Yea, that happens a lot here at the school. They come up with a lot of stuff. Riding on the bus can be unpredictable and Beyonce had an opportunity to take up for herself against a racial slur.

Beyonce shared:

We were on the bus this morning and this Black guy who does not normally ride our bus got on and this Big red neck guy who is always on our bus said to the Black guy: hey, if I start making nigger jokes, don't get mad. I was sitting there with my sister and her friend and the Black guy didn't say anything and I turned around and I was like what did you just say and he just looked at me and I said don't say that Bull shit around me anymore.

Little Flocka acknowledged:

My bus driver started talking to me the other day about why Black kids say the n word if they do not want other people to say it. I told him that I did not say that word. He started arguing with me about most Black people saying the word. Then he asked what I did when people said it. I told him that most Black people ignore it when others call them that and that we have to ignore it.

In the Lunch Room

The students in this study all eat lunch in the cafeteria at school. When they walk in, they are walking in to a sea of White faces. The students in this study shared several stories about the lunch room.

Kim shared:

This redneck threw an apple at me in the cafeteria. He slide it down the table at me right. And I slide it back and said keep your apple to yourself and then he like threw it again and I slid it and it like hit him. And he called me a Black nigger. It seems like anytime we make a White person mad, the first thing they think to do is call us that.

Klashaya added:

I was walking to lunch yesterday. I was walking with another mixed kid and some white kid just runs between us and says "Oreo" Yes, and he laughed this really deep laugh like Huh, huh, huh. I was mad though, I was really mad. He kept running. He is in one of my classes. When I got in the class, he was flicking paper at me. I was like, what grade were you in. You just stay in that grade because you sure are acting like it. He just looked straight ahead like this (Freezing her face and looking straight forward) He just did like this. He would not look at me and looked straight ahead. And I don't even know that kid.

Willow admitted to breaking down over an incident in the lunch room:

I had an incident at lunch where they were asking me questions like so you eat chicken a lot? Um, and they were saying yeah all niggers roll in packs and ya'll can't ever fight by yourselves. (And my brother was in a gang and happened to get shot and passed away from that). I was sitting with my friend who was a girl. I was sittin there and I wasn't about to show them I was upset and they kept saying it and I ran to the bathroom and broke down because I really hate when people make fun like that and try to stereotype me like that. Just chill out! Because I am Black, I am what I am.

Madea also remembered:

At lunch last year there was a kid who said I don't believe in mixed kids. He said it was a sin and at lunch there was a huge controversy and our whole lunch was Black and he has Black friends and White friends. He is friends with White kids and Black kids but he don't like mixed kids because he says it was a sin. And there was a huge controversy at lunch. He was telling people that that is a sin.

However, for several students they were happy to have a place to be together. The students reported that it helped them to have a place to reach out to other Black students and gave them a place to feel safe. As Carter (2005) noted, these areas serve as places for Black students to express the stress of dealing with racism and discrimination and gives them a place to bond.

Gucci shared:

I like being in the lunchroom with my friends. We all have a place to sit together and talk about the day. And be together.

Rianna added:

Yeah, it feels like you are safe.

Pinky smiled as she shared:

I look forward to lunch every day. We all sit together and can talk about our problems and it feels like I am with my family. I am stressed out and after lunch, I feel better.

On the Field and On the Court

Nikki told about an incident that several students in the group had heard about:

Everyone knows that the other high school is way more redneck than we are and they will have their little jokes. I remember people talking about the football game and when we played them, students in their student section would wear Kool-Aid shirts and wear KFC chicken buckets over their heads. When we played them in Basketball a few years ago, Kim's brother was on our team and they would have Oreo cookies and throw them out on the courts because Kim's brother is mixed. Last year, we went there and played Basketball against them and we were warming up in front of their student section and there are a couple of Black students on our team. There was a Black girl on our team who came from Oak Ridge and she was not used to hearing the students make fun of the

Black students. Most of the Black players on our team are used to hearing it (the 'n' word) and not making a big deal about it because we expect it when we go up there! They were messing with her and they were like, Oh, yeah nigger, blah, blah. So she gets mad and she is like if I am a nigger why are you playing nigger music. She ended up telling the coach and the principal. But the principal was just like, guys, O.k., calm down about it.

Institutional Practices

This section addresses the fourth research question: How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools describe institutional practices that promote or hinder their success in school? The themes were (a) recommendations for the future – literature and (b) recommendations for the future – clubs.

Recommendations for the Future

A resounding phrase that was voiced often during these interviews was, “some of the books could be better.” Students responded that they wished that they read more books about Black people, and specifically successful Black people. Many students voiced the need to have class sessions dedicated to diverse curriculum.

Reggie was clearly upset about not reading about Black characters that are successful:

In one of the books we are reading right now, the Black person does not have a name and there are all kinds of books you read in class that make fun of Black people or the Black person is not an important character. I would like to read a book about a successful Black person. There are none here. You don't ever read a book in school that discriminates against White people.

Madea added:

Yea, we are reading *Of Mice and Men* and the only Black person is named Crooks and his back is crooked and he talks crazy.

Beyonce agreed:

In most Black stories, they make the Black person out to be ugly and homeless and we either are ugly, homeless, and we die first.

Flocka shared about a book she was reading:

We are reading a book right now that is about White superiority and like this man is talking about Whites are dominant and Blacks should not have a say (*Great Gatsby*). So, the only mention of Blacks is how the Blacks are going to take over the world and it is something that he is scared about.

Reggie added:

In the book we are reading now, our whole class is reading, the Black characters do not have names. They are only called little Black man and negro man. I think it is called *A Streetcar Named Desire*... Bring in more books that have important or main Black characters.

Kim shared:

I was looking in my English book and it listed five Black authors in the back (index) and so when I went to look for their stories there were only a few pages I was like o.k. I am going to close it and go on.

Beyonce replied:

Give us some books with Black folks who are important and have success.

Madea agreed:

Yes, we are reading *The Contender* right now and when the Black guy is talking, it like does not spell the words out and the dialogue is making him look stupid and the teacher reads it and makes it sound like he is illiterate.

Siera stated:

I think the teachers should do more about it because we are always talking about authors and we will read about the author and then read the story and discuss it and the only Black author we have read about was Elauda Equiano and she made us take that home to read it and we never discussed it and I guess it just made me mad that we did not go over it.

Reggy acknowledged that the images of slavery were generally images that were cruel and ugly. He wanted to learn about the accomplishments of Black people beyond those of the escaped slave. He stated:

Something else that makes me mad is the only time we ever talk about Blacks ingeneral it is something bad like this slave that had a hard time growing up there are never any successful stories. It is nothing successful, like the most successful story of a Black student I have read is about a runaway slave who makes it.

Having a club that included Black people was a topic of interest for most of the students in this study. They each had their own thoughts about it.

Oprah began:

They need to have a club for the Black kids. At my last school they had a club for Black students and they did good things for the community and brought in White kids and made friends with them and they both came together to do good things for the community. You know they learn from each other and see that they are not all judging each other.

Nikki added:

We need a club that we can belong to, but I don't know if it would work. They tried this Gay Straight Alliance club doesn't work and It is like they think it is only for gay people and the rednecks are ripping the signs down saying if they can have a gay club we should be able to have a Southern Heritage club.

Oprah:

I wanted to join HOSA, but on the first club day I walked in and was the only Black person and I knew this club was not for me. If we had a diversity club, I am pretty sure a lot of people would join.

Beyonce agreed:

I think it would be a huge thing.

Melanie also agreed:

I like the idea of a culture diversity club. We are different, but we are the same.

A club like this would give people an opportunity to see that.

Reggy said it was a good idea but questioned if it would work. He suggested: I would like to see us have a club, but I think some people would think it was a joke. And who would we get to sponsor it.

This started some questions about teachers they would like to sponsor and only two names came up after a long pause of deliberation.

Document Analysis

Document review consisted of a review of the content of several sources, including high school and local newspapers, and websites from the two high schools in the study. The document review was used as a triangulation of data with individual interviews and focus groups. Newspapers were provided by the yearbook staff and the websites were those created by each school's technology staff.

Newspapers

A newspaper from school B had several Black images, included in an article about a drive to stop using hurtful words that label people and give them back dignity and respect. Students authored the articles and it was sponsored by the yearbook staff teacher. The newspaper is intended for students and staff at the high school. This paper has been produced by students for 10 years. Pictures of students and posters titled, *Spread the Word, End the Word* were included in the drive. Unique are the photos of students with posters with the caption, "Spread the Word", an article about the burning of the Koran, and a section with pictures of Black students and Black athletes, present and past. The May and August issues of the newspaper from school B included no Black images. This lack of Black images has implications for all students and reinforces negative stereotypes.

The local newspaper is located two miles from high school A. It serves communities that send students to both high schools. The newspaper is published once a week on Sunday, to over 4,500 households. It includes sections on sports, business, jobs, and community events. From the community events section of the newspaper, both high schools are represented, especially in the area of sports. Of 62 images examined in the community events sections of 6 issues, 18 included Black images.

Websites

Both high schools' websites contained significant amounts of information. The two websites for high schools A and B included, but were not limited to, links for: Director's Welcome, Assessment and Standards, Board of Education, District Photos and Documents, Human resources, Mission, Policies, and Plans, Teaching Resources, Anderson County Schools News, Top Events, Student Calendar , Tennessee Electronic Learning, My VR Spot (a location where teachers can download audio and video and share with other teachers), Brain Pop (daily lessons), For Parents, For Students, and Registration. Visitors to both websites can take a tour through each school's photo galleries and view slide shows that include the programs and activities in which the schools are involved. I linked to all of these locations and from the pictures on these 16 links all included the same picture at the top of five smiling students. One student was a blonde White girl, two students were White boys and two students were Black-one boy and one girl. The link to the District Photos and Documents provided 436 photos. Out of those 436 photos, 130 contained Black images.

The link to the Beliefs of both high schools included: Talent Can Be Developed—students have potential that can be developed if we provide quality teaching

and conditions; Prevention of Learning Problems and Failure—excellent instruction prevents many learning problems and failure; Optimism—optimism about people, education and the future serves all of us best; Cooperation in Learning—all learning experiences encourage and teach students how to cooperate; Inclusive Programs—All programs are inclusive and offer powerful learning opportunities for all students; Trust—trust should bond the community, students, teachers, administration, and parents in shared decision making. Pictures of students from diverse backgrounds would support that the school was aware of the importance of diversity in the images displayed.

Summary

The review shows that every website link included a picture of Black students. Only one school newspaper contained Black images. In the local newspapers examined there were Black images. Prospective students and parents who view the websites would find that diversity is included.

The individual interviews and focus group interviews provided information about the Black students' academic, cultural, and social expectations and institutional practices that hindered or promoted student success at predominantly White high schools. The data showed that most often students' expectations did not match their experiences and often institutional practices hindered the Black students' success. The Black students in the study often were the only (or one of a few) Black student in the class or at lunch. The Black students often were confronted with racism or racist behaviors. They were frustrated with some of the institutional practices at their schools. Sharing their voices, the students provided suggestions for future practices that would promote a more successful experience for Black students in predominantly White high schools.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the study in relation to the literature review, research questions, and recommendations for practice and future research.

The stories and views of the 20 Black students at two predominantly White high schools in southern Appalachia were presented in Chapter 4 and are the central focus of the study. These stories and perspectives can provide teachers and administrators increased awareness of continuing racist behaviors and provide information for developing strategies to create a more successful high school experience for Black students in predominantly White high schools.

Conclusions drawn from the literature review related to Black students' experiences at predominantly White high schools were consistent with data from the study. Black students experience many roadblocks to achievement. Nieto (2003) found that the lack of culturally diverse curricula, biased attitudes of some teachers, and teachers' and peers' negative stereotypical beliefs all led students to feel that others were being racist. These feelings certainly affect Black students' achievement in negative ways. Teachers, principals, counselors, and staff on predominantly White campuses need to arm themselves with information about how to minimize these roadblocks to achievement. Schools must do everything they can to ensure that Black students have the most effective experience possible to ensure success.

The purpose of this study was to describe the academic, social, and cultural expectations and experiences of participating Black students in predominantly White high schools in southern Appalachia. Through students' stories, a better understanding of their expectations and experiences was gained, and their perceptions of institutional practices that helped or hindered success were explored.

The significance of the study is to contribute important information to school faculty and district administrators so that they may identify ways that schools can improve the experience and success of the Black students on predominantly White campuses. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe their academic expectations and experiences?
2. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe their social expectations and experiences?
3. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe their cultural expectations and experiences?
4. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in Southern Appalachia describe the practices that promote or hinder a successful experience?

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to describe academic, social, and cultural expectations and experiences of participating Black students at two predominantly White high schools in southern Appalachia and to determine if the high schools are meeting the expectations of Black students. Student success should be every high school's most

important goal. This study examined perceived expectations and experiences of Black students in predominantly White high schools by determining actual expectations and comparing them to actual experiences of the students.

Discussion and Conclusions

Most students interviewed in this study found themselves to be the only Black student (or one of a few) in class and this led to uncomfortable situations for several students in the study. Four students said they felt that their experiences in class were positive and they did not feel out of place. However, 12 students expressed that there were times that they felt out of place. On several occasions the Black student was asked to read the part of a Black person in a story or play. This left the Black student feeling as if he were the voice of all Black people. According to Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) Black students should not be expected to speak as if they were the voice of all Black people during cultural discussions. Often, students reported that if slavery or anything that dealt with a Black person was exposed in class, students would turn and look at them. Eight students were asked by White students to read the part of the Black role in books or stories. Some were asked by teachers to read the Black parts in books or stories.

It is clear from the stories of students that they felt that they were being singled out as the voice of any Black character and that it was unfair and made them feel uncomfortable. As one student reported in her story, she did not feel she sounded like all Black people.

According to several students in the study, there were times when they felt that a staff member was not sensitive to their needs or ignored racist behaviors. Students said that staff and administration should have training or be exposed to literature that provided

instruction in how to handle racism and racist behaviors. The incident involving Willow, the student who had returned from a field trip and been treated with racism only to have staff avoid the situation, is an example of the need for training in dealing with racism. The students interviewed in this study often had difficulty trusting White staff. Carter and Tuitt (2008) suggested it was important for staff to work to minimize experiences of overt racism that can help Black students feel at ease. Similarly, Harmon (2002) asserted that Black students' relationship with their teachers has a big impact on their academic performance.

As the students' stories expressed, it is clear that students felt vulnerable by being singled out in the classroom and have been exposed to situations that involve staff being insensitive when dealing with racist behaviors.

Carter and Tuitt (2008) posit that the mixture of Black students' fears of being judged based on negative stereotypes *and* having those fears confirmed through White students' actions, created a racially hostile learning environment. These racist actions increase the apprehension Black students feel in predominantly White high schools. Most of the students in the study had experienced blatant acts of racism or racist behaviors. Atticus Finch, the father in the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, told his daughter, Scout, not to say Nigger after she came home one day from school. When she asked why, he explained it was a term that "ignorant White people use when they need a common term to label someone" (Lee, 1960, p.167). Even though Atticus related this over 80 years ago, the term Nigger is still being used today to label others. This term continues to be a label that hurts. Many times they heard racist slurs and just ignored them; however, often when they tried to defend themselves or take action, they would be reprimanded along

with the offender. In many stories, the racial slurs came from people Black students thought were their friends. Often, the racial slur occurred when a White student would get mad for one reason or other. One student reported that the first thing that happens when Black students make White students mad is they are called the “n” word. In many cases Black students reported that even teachers who heard racial slurs would ignore them. Black student athletes in this study revealed that White students would really demonstrate racist behaviors at ballgames. An example is a story from a student whose brother was bi-racial. When the student’s brother ran out on the court, students threw Oreo cookies on the floor. Another example is when the student who was new to the school was called the “n” word when she came out on the court.

Slaughter and Johnson (1988) pointed out, “all children carry the culture of their communities and families into their schools” (p.5). As Arrington, Hall, and Stevenson (2003) suggested, it is important to be aware of the messages about race that students and adults present because they have a huge impact in shaping academic and social environments for Black students. According to Arrington et al. (2003) the experience of racism is a reality that compromises the quality of the school experience as well as students’ emotional health. Most of the students in this study reported that they did not expect to have to deal with racism during their high school experience. Their expectations were not equal to their actual experiences.

Most students reported that their social expectations did not match their experiences in their high schools. According to Carter (2007) it is important for Black students to have safe spaces in predominantly White educational settings, to help with the stress that comes from experiences with racism. Many of the students reported that they

did not have many places they could go to be with other Black students. They reported that they did not attend proms because when they danced students made fun of them or called them names.

However, some students were able to be together in the lunch room which they said helped them feel comfortable. Many Black students expressed that this was a place they looked forward to going each day. Students who were in lunch with only one or two other Black students felt out of place. As suggested by Tatum (1997), Black students sit together in places such as the cafeteria because this helps them have a network of people who are all dealing with reflecting on their identities and the same type of issue-racism.

Several students reported that they felt their school was not hindering them in their success. It was clear, however, that many students in this study were frustrated with their experiences in high school. Many students said that more could be done to help improve their overall experiences. For example, several students expressed frustration over teachers who they said demonstrated racist and stereotypical attitudes. Martin and Baxter (2001) discussed the importance of antiracism education in providing a basis for teachers to develop a common language around the experience of racism. Taylor and Antony (2000) argued that students' achievements could be improved using instructional strategies that reduce stereotype threat and assure students that they will not encounter negative stereotypes. While some students reported that they liked some of the faculty, many said that they did not have a mentor at school. Also, many students expressed concern over the fact that there were no books that showed successful Black people. They reported that in the books they read that actually did include Black people, the character was either deformed, poor, or a slave. Students who were reading *A Streetcar Named*

Desire were frustrated that the Black characters do not have names. The students reading *Of Mice and Men* mentioned that the only Black character was a man with a crooked spine. Many Black students reported that the only successful Black character they had read about during their entire high school experience was about a slave who had run to freedom. It is clear that the Black students in these predominantly White high schools were longing for literature that showed the success of a Black character. Students said the school could do a better job of purchasing more diverse literature.

Students also said that there were not enough extracurricular activities for Black students at their high schools. A study by Fredricks and Eccles (2010) validates that extracurricular activities can improve academic achievement as well as lead to more success in the future for Black students. Many Black students were particularly frustrated that there were no clubs for Black students. An example of this was the story of the student who walked into the HOSA meeting on the first club day into a sea of white faces. She reported that she felt out of place and did not go back to the meeting again. Only a few of the Black students in the study belonged to clubs at the school.

Recommendations for Practice

To improve the experience and success of Black students at predominantly White high schools it is recommended that staff and administration work together to create a vision that focuses on the success of Black students in predominantly White high schools. Staff and administration should attend in-service training on dealing with racism, racist issues, and cultural sensitivity. Also, consequences for racism and racist behaviors should be clear and implemented as offenses occur. Clear and concise strategies should be put in place to meet the needs of students who are dealing with racist behaviors as well

as students who commit the offense. Appropriate staff members should meet often with Black students to ensure that their needs are being met.

Other recommendations as suggested by this research study include developing or strengthening peer mentoring programs at the school, providing support for a cultural diversity club or other clubs that support Black student organizations, providing a more culturally diverse curriculum including texts and novels that are culturally diverse and providing strong support for Black cultural events and issues including Black History Month.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future studies concerning Black students on White campuses include: A study to explore the availability and use of culturally diverse curriculum in predominantly White schools, a study to explore the integration of Black History Month at predominantly White high schools, a study to explore the perceptions of White teachers in relations to Black students at predominantly White high schools, and a study to explore the perceptions of White students relative to the Black student experience at predominantly White high schools.

Summary

Alfred Williams said that his learning environment certainly was hostile. He stated that the even though times have changed since his experience 50 years ago, he still feels Black students face hostility especially in predominantly White learning environments (A. Williams, personal communication, July 12, 2011). His grandchildren attend a predominantly White high school and he reports that they have experienced hostility (A. Williams, personal communication, July 12, 2011). Many of the findings

supported that this hostility still exists. However, the students' stories revealed suggestions to improve their experiences.

As outlined in the introduction, the purpose of the study was to describe academic, social, and cultural expectations and experiences of participating Black students in predominantly White high schools in southern Appalachia. A better understanding of their expectations and experiences and their perceptions of institutional practices that help or hinder success are provided through their stories.

Research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in southern Appalachia describe their academic expectations and experiences?
2. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in southern Appalachia describe their social expectations and experiences?
3. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in southern Appalachia describe their cultural expectations and experiences?
4. How do Black students attending two predominantly White high schools in southern Appalachia describe the practices that promote or hinder a successful experience?

As stated in the introduction, the significance of the study was to contribute important information to school faculty and administration so that they may identify ways that schools can improve the experience and success of the Black students on their predominantly White campuses and to add to the body of literature concerning these students.

Through individual interviews, focus groups, and document analysis, I have attempted to illuminate the academic, cultural, and social expectations and experiences of 20 Black students in two predominantly White high schools in southern Appalachia. Data from the study were consistent with the literature review as it related to Black students' experiences at predominantly White high schools. As an example, Nieto (2003) reported that racism and other forms of discrimination affected Black students and their learning.

The study found that the expectations of the Black students did not match their experiences academically, socially, or culturally. The students' stories also revealed that institutional practices often hindered these experiences.

This qualitative research was both challenging and exciting. The research was challenging in that the study revealed that there are many things that predominantly White high schools should be doing to improve the experiences of Black students. The research was exciting because it left me with a sense that those things that can be done are simple and can be implemented presently to improve experiences for Black students in predominantly White high schools.

In his "I Have a Dream" speech Martin Luther King declared, "History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people." With the willing voices and shared stories of the 20 resilient high school students it can be assured that there was no appalling silence but a resounding concern to be heard. We must be willing to share their stories and do what we can to improve their experiences.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Interview Guide

Name of student _____ Location _____ Date _____

Background:

1. In what grade are you?
2. How would you describe your family?
3. How would you describe your hometown?

Academic Expectations and Experiences:

1. Before entering this school, what did you expect to be your academic experience?
2. Describe your academic achievement experiences compared to your expectations.
3. What academic experiences have you enjoyed the most?
4. What academic experiences have you enjoyed the least?
5. How would you describe the effectiveness of your teachers?
6. How would you describe the school's effectiveness in helping you meet your goals?
7. What would you recommend to improve academic experiences for Black students?

Cultural Expectations and Experiences:

1. Describe what it is like to be Black in a predominantly white school.
2. Describe the interactions between Black and White students at this school.
4. Describe any instances of racism and segregation that you have experienced at this school?
5. Describe what cultural experiences you expected at this school?
6. What cultural experiences did you have at this school?
7. What cultural experiences have you enjoyed the most?
8. What cultural experiences have you enjoyed the least?
9. In what ways could your cultural experiences be improved at this school?

Social Expectations and Experiences:

1. What were your social expectations at this school?
2. Tell me about the extracurricular activities with which you were involved?
3. Tell me about the friends you hang out with at school?
4. Describe your social experiences at this school compared to your social expectations.
5. What would you recommend to improve the social experiences of Black students at this school?
6. What do you enjoy the least about your social experiences at this school?
7. What do you enjoy the most about your social experiences at this school?
8. Describe the relationships between Black students, faculty, staff, and administrators.
9. How would you describe the effectiveness of this school in addressing your social needs?

10. What you recommend to improve social experiences for Black students at this school?

School Practices:

1. Describe those school practices (policies, programs, services) that promote Academic achievement at this school?
2. Describe those school practices (policies, programs, services) that obstruct academic achievement at this school.
3. Describe any school practices that might improve the educational experiences of Black students at this school.
4. What institutional practices do you believe to be critical for success?
5. What recommendations do you have for improving the experience for Black student?

APPENDIX B:

Document Review Guide

1. Describe the document
2. For what purposes was it produced?
3. When was it produced?
4. Where did I find the document?
5. Who authored or generated the document?
6. For whom was the document intended?
7. What is the history of its production and use?
8. What photographs, if any, are shown on the document?
9. Is the document a primary or secondary source?
10. Did anyone lead me to the document? If so, who was it?
11. Is it a public, internal, or private document? If private, to whom does it belong?
12. Is the document complete, as originally constructed?
13. Has it been tampered with or edited?
14. What does the document imply about the school's commitment to diversity?
15. What does the document imply about the school's support of its Black students?
16. What is the document topic or issue?
17. In what ways does the document conflict or agree with school policies, procedures, and values?
18. List any unique document characteristics.
19. List any economic implications. Is it in color? Are there photographs? What is the quality of the paper?
20. What, if anything, does the document show to express diversity values?

APPENDIX C:

Parental Permission

East Tennessee State University
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Document (ICD)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Lori Price

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Expectations and Experiences of Black Students in Two Predominantly White High Schools in Southern Appalachia

This Parental Permission letter will explain about your child's being a participant in a research study. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish for your child to be a volunteer.

PURPOSE: The primary purpose of this research study is to fulfill the requirements for completing a doctorate degree in the ELPA Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program at ETSU. The intent of the study is to describe the academic, social and cultural expectations and experiences of black students at School A and School B and to examine the schools practices and policies that support or hinder students' success.

DURATION: The length of the interview will be 1 to 1 and a half hours and the length of the focus group will be 1 hour. The duration of the study is no longer than three weeks and the participants involved will be twenty or less. The interview process should take two weeks and the focus groups will involve one week.

PROCEDURES

Prospective Black junior and senior high school students will be indentified and contacted by email through two high schools in Southern Appalachia.

One-on-one interviews: The researcher will meet with a minimum of 10 different students on an individual basis regarding their academic, cultural, and social expectations and experiences.

Focus Group: The researcher will meet with a minimum of 4 students regarding their academic, cultural, and social expectations and experiences.

With participant's signed permission, the sessions will be recorded and the researcher will take notes.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES/TREATMENTS

There are no alternatives.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

Due to the subject matter and confidential identities, the foreseeable physical, psychological, economic, social or legal risks to the participants enrolled in the study that might cause anxiety discomfort, or distress when answering interview questions about their experiences and expectations are slight. To eliminate the possibility of risks, participants may choose to not answer any question or to withdraw from the study. Pseudonyms chosen by the students will be used during the data collection process and in the printed dissertation. Also, at the conclusion of the interview and subsequent transcriptions, participants will be allowed to review their personal transcripts for accuracy and potential changes. Additionally, each participant will be offered copies of his or her interview scripts and the final study.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

The possible benefits of your child's participation include contributing key information to school administration and staff as they plan and implement the learning environment for Black students that might enhance and improve their experiences and increase success academically, socially and culturally. Your child's stories and suggestions for improving practices at the high schools will be reported to the administration and academic communities. By comparing your child's expectations and experiences a new dialogue may begin that could help design programs and services that will help Black students and perhaps all students gain the tools needed to lead to academic, social, and cultural success. Your child's stories could potentially serve as guides in creating more effective practices.

COMPENSATION FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT:

No compensation will be provided to the participants.

FINANCIAL COSTS

There are not financial costs to the participants.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. Your child may refuse to participate. Your child can quit at any time. If your child quits or refuses to participate, the benefits or treatment to which your child is otherwise entitled will not be affected. Your child may quit by calling me, Lori Price, whose phone number is (865-599-6243). You will be told immediately if any of the results of the study should reasonably be expected to make your child change his or her mind about staying in the study.

In addition, if significant new findings during the course of the research which may relate to the participant's willingness to continue participation are likely, the consent process must disclose that significant new findings developed during the course of the research which may relate to the participant's willingness to continue participation will be provided to the participant.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

If you have any research related questions or problems at any time, you may call me, Lori Price at (865-599-6243), or my doctoral chairman Dr. Pamela Scott at (ETSU). You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

CONFIDENTIALITY (*Required paragraph*)

Every attempt will be made to see that your child's study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in my office for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the ETSU IRB , and personnel particular to this research who are members of my doctoral research committee have access to the study records. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a signed copy of this parent permission document. You have been given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your child's participation with the investigator. You freely and voluntarily choose for your child to be in this research project.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT _____ DATE _____

PRINTED NAME OF PARENT _____ DATE _____

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR _____ DATE _____

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS (if applicable) _____ DATE _____

APPENDIX D:

Student Assessment Form

East Tennessee State University
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Document (ICD)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Lori Price

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Expectations and Experiences of Black Students in Two Predominantly White High Schools in Southern Appalachia

This student assent form will explain about being a participant in a research study. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer.

PURPOSE: The primary purpose of this research study is to fulfill the requirements for completing a doctorate degree in the ELPA Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program at ETSU. The intent of the study is to describe the academic, social and cultural expectations and experiences of black students at School A and School B and to examine the schools practices and policies that support or hinder students' success.

DURATION: The length of the interviews will be 1 to 1 and a half hours and the length of the focus group will be 1 hour. The duration of the study is no longer than three weeks and the participants involved will be twenty or less. The interview process should take two weeks and the focus groups will involve one week.

PROCEDURES

Prospective Black junior and senior high school students will be indentified and contacted by email through two high schools in Southern Appalachia.

One-on-one interviews: The researcher will meet with a minimum of 10 different students on an individual basis regarding their academic, cultural, and social expectations and experiences.

Focus Group: The researcher will meet with a minimum of 4 students on an individual basis regarding their academic, cultural, and social expectations and experiences.

With participant's signed permission, the sessions will be recorded and the researcher will take notes.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES/TREATMENTS

There are no alternatives.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

Due to the subject matter and confidential identities, the foreseeable physical, psychological, economic, social or legal risks to the participants enrolled in the study that might cause anxiety discomfort, or distress when answering interview questions about their experiences and expectations are slight. To eliminate the possibility of risks, participants may choose to not answer any question or to withdraw from the study. Pseudonyms chosen by the students will be used during the data collection process and in the printed dissertation. Also, at the conclusion of the interview and subsequent transcriptions, participants will be allowed to review their personal transcripts for accuracy and potential changes. Additionally, each participant will be offered copies of his or her interview scripts and the final study.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

The possible benefits of your participation include contributing key information to school administration and staff as they plan and implement the learning environment for Black students that might enhance and improve their experiences and increase success academically, socially and culturally. Your stories and suggestions for improving practices at the high schools will be reported to the administration and academic communities. By comparing your expectations and experiences a new dialogue may begin that could help design programs and services that will help Black students and perhaps all students gain the tools needed to lead to academic, social, and cultural success. Your stories could potentially serve as guides in creating more effective practices.

COMPENSATION FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT:

No compensation will be provided to the participants.

FINANCIAL COSTS

There are not financial costs to the participants.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. You may refuse to participate. You can quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits or treatment to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected. You may quit by calling me, Lori Price, whose phone number is (865-599-6243). You will be told immediately if any of the results of the study should reasonably be expected to make you change your mind about staying in the study.

In addition, if significant new findings during the course of the research which may relate to the participant's willingness to continue participation are likely, the consent process must disclose that significant new findings developed during the course of the research which may relate to the participant's willingness to continue participation will be provided to the participant.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

If you have any research related questions or problems at any time, you may call me, Lori Price at (865-599-6243), or my doctoral chairman Dr. Pamela Scott at (ETSU). You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439/6002.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in my office for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the ETSU IRB, and personnel particular to this research who are members of my doctoral research committee have access to the study records. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. You have been given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator. You freely and voluntarily choose to be in this research project.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

PRINTED NAME OF PARTICIPANT DATE

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR DATE

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS (if applicable) DATE

APPENDIX E:

Interview Solicitation Letter

Lori Price, M.A.

Doctoral Candidate

East Tennessee State University

Dear Student:

This letter is an invitation for you to consider participating in a doctoral research study that I am conducting with Black juniors and seniors at xx and xx high schools. This letter gives you information about the research and what your involvement would require if you decide to take part.

My dissertation topic is, “The Expectations and Experiences of Black Students in Predominantly White High Schools in Southern Appalachia.” Through one-on-one interviews and a focus group discussion I will be looking at the practices and policies that promote or hinder the academic, cultural, and social success of Black students. As an upper class student, your input could really help bring about meaningful insights that could help in evaluating the learning environments at your school.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary involving a focus group discussion which will last about one hour and a one-on-one interview of about one hour at a mutually agreed upon location of your preference. All information you provide is completely confidential.

If you are interested in this study, please contact me as soon as possible at (865) 599-6243 or by email at lprice@acs.ac. Thank you for considering participation in this research.

Sincerely,

Lori Price, M.A.

Principal Investigator

APPENDIX F:

Informed Consent Form

My name is Lori Price and I am a doctoral student researching the topic “The Expectations and Experiences of Black students in predominantly White high schools.” The purpose of the study is to add information that may improve the practices of high schools which could lead to greater success academically, culturally, and socially for all students. I am conducting research using interviews and focus groups to aid in improving the experiences of Black students in predominantly White high schools.

The interviews and focus groups will occur after school at the location chosen by the group. The interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Names will not be used in the transcription and all statements will be kept confidential by the researcher. It will take 2 to 3 hours of your time. The data from the interviews and focus groups will be analyzed and themes that emerge will be shared with administration at the two participating schools for use in planning and improvements for Black students served there.

Participation in this research is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate. You can quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits or treatment to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected. You may withdraw from participation at any point in the process

Your signature below indicates your willingness to participate in this research.

Name (Please Print) _____

Date _____

Signature _____

If you have any questions about this study, you may call Dr. Pamela Scott at 423-439-7615. If you have questions or concerns about the study and want to talk to someone independent of the research, you may call an IRB coordinator at 423-439-6002.

VITA

LORI PRICE

Education: University of North Alabama, Bachelor of Science, English, December, 1991

Middle Tennessee State University, Teacher Certification, May 1993

Tennessee Technology, Master of Arts, December 1996

East Tennessee State University, Doctor of Education, December 2011

Academic Accomplishments: Business and Professional Women's Scholarship, 1991

Delta Kappa Gamma Scholarship, 2003

Teacher of the Year in Anderson County, 2005

Work History: Giles County Mental Health Center: Case Manager 1994-1995

Clinton High School: English Educator 1995-1996

Anderson County High School: English Educator 1996 to the present

Historic Knoxville High School: Adult Educator 2003-2006