Exploring the Keys to Educational Success for Black Males: A
Comparison of Results from Focus Groups of Black Males to Focus
Groups of Black Females and Suggestions from the Literature

BY

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Chapter One - Introduction

Historians and scholars have long documented the racism and cultural intolerance that has afflicted Blacks in the United States. Even since the Civil Rights legislation and school desegregation policies in the 1960's and 1970's, Blacks, (especially those in urban areas and with low incomes) have found themselves lacking the education necessary to acquire upward mobility. Given this problem, many have turned to the challenge of improving the plight of Blacks in America. As one will see in the review of the literature, the suggestions on how to do this are numerous.

Of particular note is the chronic educational underachievement of Black males. Black males are continually seen at the lowest levels of academic achievement statistics, compared to other students of different races and sexes. The roots of this problem run deep. The first government collegiate scholarships for Blacks were designed for females, many parents expect more educational success from their daughters than from their sons, and Black males often view educational achievement as effeminate. (Kunjufu, 1986a) This has resulted in what is often viewed as a dependent, uneducated section of Black males, stuck in a cycle of poverty and hopelessness.

The Purpose of the Research

Unfortunately, the literature lacks studies of Black educational successes, both male and female. The problems and solutions found in the literature are based on a priori categorizations, which points to the need for field research on

this topic. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to identify the factors that Black male and Black female students state as being key to success in the public education system.

The research will be chiefly descriptive in nature, since perceptions of individuals will be described. It is also quasi-explanatory in nature, since the relationship between varying key factors (as identified by the students) will be discussed. These goals are fulfilled by using focus group research. Five focus groups were completed, two were all female and three were all male. This provides the basis of an analysis of factors that are unique to Blacks, and a way to explore the differences in Black male and Black female explanations of educational success. Since this is perhaps the first study using focus groups dealing with educational successes, the following discussion should be an important contribution to the literature on the education of Black Americans.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2. The literature review provides a good feel for the opinions of scholars on the plight of Black males in public education. It also serves to identify the key concepts, vital to this project's conceptual framework.

This chapter is divided into the broad categories of the School, Family, Student, and Society, highlighting the potential influences on educational success for each. Within each of these categories, specific key concepts are delineated. For example, under the heading of the school, concepts like teacher expectations, curriculum, and tracking are discussed.

Chapter 3. The research setting chapter discusses the legislative and legal foundations for public education policy, along with some statistics on how Black males are performing academically in this system. While the effects of many court cases, government funding policies, and desegregation regulations will have already been discussed in Chapter 2, it is important to more clearly define the political and statistical environment in which this research is conducted.

Chapter 4. In this chapter the methodology, data and variable measurement are identified and discussed. The methodology, of course, is focus groups which provide a unique form of data from group interaction. The detailed and heartfelt responses by the students allow for concepts to be introduced that were not discussed in the literature. The history and purposes for using focus groups are discussed, as well as their specific appropriateness to this research. Chiefly, focus group research is strong due to its inductive, rather than deductive nature. The data is transcripts from the focus groups, which is a nominal level of measurement. No statistical analysis is used.

Chapter 5. The analysis chapter presents the results of the focus group research. The results are presented in both tabular and narrative form. The results are then compared to what is suggested as important (in varying degrees) to educational success by the literature. Since the subjects identified concepts not suggested in the literature, the strength and significance of such concepts are also discussed.

Chapter 6. The final chapter serves as a summary and conclusions section. The need for further research, if any, will be identified, as well as a restatement of whether the concepts stressed in the literature were confirmed, denied or added to as suggested by the focus group participants. Ideas for changes in areas like public school policy, funding, curriculum, and parenting techniques will be suggested.

Relevant Appendices. There will be five appendices that will accompany the chapters outlined above. These will consist of the transcript data from each focus group.

Acknowledgements

Before proceeding, a note of thanks is due to one of this country's leading authorities on the Black family, Rev. Anthony Wilcots, who provided valued insights and source references. Also, gratitude is owed to the focus group participants, who are members of Praise Tabernacle Outreach and Family Worship Center in Austin, Texas. That church, and especially its founder, Pastor Dana Carson, provided the inspiration and desire to embark on this project. It is hoped that the results found here will aid in the development of Praise Christian Academy, an institution of learning which will not make many of the mistakes described here. Our next generation of Black males need look no further than to Pastor Dana Carson as a clear example of manhood, fatherhood, and the value of an education. Therefore, it is to him, and to his parishioners, that this project is lovingly dedicated.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

Before proceeding in this study of Black male educational successes, the scholars perspective of predictors of educational success will reviewed. The literature examined in this chapter is used to develop the larger conceptual framework. Throughout the literature, reasons that many Black male students succeed in school are discussed.

Of all of the racial and ethnic groups in the United States, it is widely held that Blacks receive the poorest education. The thinking follows that it is this lack of education that keeps Black people in a cycle of poverty, subservience, and hopelessness. Robert Staples (1982) writes of what he calls an "educational apartheid" where tracking, low teacher expectations, and low achievement is reinforced to keep order in the classroom and to maintain the colonial status of Blacks.

To better identify the plight of the Black male in public education several telling statistics can be used. Clarence Page (1990) notes that there are 610,000 Black males in the penal system while there are only 436,000 enrolled in college. A Texas Department of Human Resources document shows that 40 percent of all Black males are illiterate. Bernard C. Watson (1980) notes that two-thirds of all law degrees awarded to Blacks in Texas come from Texas Southern University, a Black college. Finally, John E. Fleming (1981) shows that while there is one White lawyer for every 560 Whites and one White doctor for every 627 Whites, there is only one Black lawyer for every 3,700 Blacks and one Black doctor for every 1,700 Blacks.

Given these problems, the question then turns to how these trends can be reversed. A good working definition for education is the "acquisition of those basic skills that assure the pupil's successful access to the next level of schooling." (Edmonds, 1979:15) The literature suggests a variety of factors that prevent Black males from obtaining this "successful access."

This literature review will provide an overview of many scholars' opinions on the causes and cures for these problems. They have suggested that several factors contribute to educational success in Black men including: the school environment, curriculum, parental involvement, education of parents, home environment, government policies, peer pressure, and the media. W.E.B. Dubois (1989), in his classic book, The Souls of Black Folk, writes that "education is not to make men carpenters, but to make carpenters men." (DuBois, 1989:75) How best to achieve this task will be explored in the following discussion.

The School

What Makes a Successful School

Nicholas Hobbs and Sally Robinson (1982) note that, among adolescents, success is more likely in some schools than others because of an emphasis on academics over athletics, teacher attitude, incentive and rewards, good conditions for learning, and a stable staff that will encourage the student to take responsibility for success.

Some authors place the educational burden squarely on the school. Ronald Edmonds (1979) is one of these authors. He writes that "all children are eminently educable and that the behavior of the school is critical in determining the quality of that education." (Edmonds, 1979:21)

Edmonds calls for strong administrative leadership, high expectations among all staff, an orderly, quiet and pleasant atmosphere, task oriented teachers, close monitoring of student learning, the use of materials from outside the classroom, community volunteers, and a responsible and disciplinarian principle.

While Edmonds' research focused specifically on the urban poor, his results certainly apply to Black males. His final conclusion also applies, which is that if one needs more than one example of educational success among urban poor, the problem is in one's attitude and not the student.

James P. Comer (1985) has developed a program that involves what he sees as the important ingredients for a successful school. His idea is to implement "School Development Programs" which involves: (1) a mental health team that works with students, teachers and parents; (2) a school governance and management body which has representatives from the mental health group, teachers, and parents; (3) a parents program, which involves helping teachers in the classroom; and (4) a curriculum and staff development program, which serves to assist and encourage creativity by the teacher.

The observed success of such programs points to the need for more communication between the important actors in the education of children. What the scholars see as the school's responsibility in the educational success of Black males is discussed in more detail below.

The Effects of Desegregation - Teachers, Principals, and Administrators Cannot Relate to Black Male Students

Nancy L. Arnez (1978) writes that perhaps the most important result from school desegregation was that Black children lost role models, were exposed to hostile White teachers and parents, had no support system, were subject to discriminatory school rules, and had teachers that were ignorant of Black learning styles, culture, society, and educational and psychological needs.

Similarly, E. Earl Baughman (1982) finds that while desegregation could be an advantage to some Black children, it is likely that Blacks will suffer more than Whites in such a system.

These differences are further explained by a psychological study by Amos Wilson (1978). Wilson writes that since desegregation, Blacks perform slower than Whites, have a lower self-esteem and confidence about academic success, and are more fatalistic about their ability to change the factors that determine their socio-economic status. Interestingly, Wilson also found that differences between Black and White students existed after the first year of education as much as it did in later years. Wilson maintains that schooling is natural for the

White middle class child but quite difficult for poorer Blacks. Since the school environment, language, and culture is so radically different from home, the child must "balance between the two worlds but belong to neither". (Wilson, 1978:186)

These are difficult indictments, since schools can only operate with the staff that is able and willing to work in education. Historically, it has been White females that have largely staffed our nation's schools. This has presented problems for Black males, as evidenced by the writings of many of the authors discussed here. The problem is evidently twofold - first, there is a lack of male role models for many Black boys, and second, there is a racial, sexual, and cultural gap that separate many boys and their teachers.

Indeed, Jawanza Kunjufu (1986a) finds that between the grades of Kindergarten and Eighth, Black males will have a maximum of two male teachers. He puts the blame on administrations that put the "best" teachers, especially the males, in the upper grades to combat discipline problems (Kunjufu, 1985:13).

James M. Patton (1981) has a more conspiratorial approach, stating that schools are set up to maintain the dominant societal and industrial values and structure. He sees schools as "middle class enclaves" where "middle class teachers teach middle class values to middle class White America and middle class Black emulators." (Patton, 1981:182)

Arnez (1972) places some of the blame for this gulf between Black students and White teachers on social science. The

avalanche of studies on Black negative self-concept have only "crystallized" the attitudes and policies of teachers, administrators, and school boards.

In his book, Douglas G. Glasgow (1980) shows that the desegregated classroom is often one where Black culture has a negative value, including dance, music, modes of communication, and speech. Hale (1982) places Black males in a "subculture" within the Black culture, where their walk, hand shakes, slang, and manhood rites are often rebuked.

Kunjufu (1986a) discusses this phenomenon further by his observation on the "fourth grade syndrome" where Black males often lose their desire and love for school and learning. While less nurturance and parental involvement and peer influence contribute to this syndrome, part of the problem is the more competitive nature of the classroom, the analytical learning techniques, and the fact that the once cute child is now almost the size of teacher.

Kunjufu also speaks of a "showdown" that often occurs at this age. This is when the student looks defiantly at the teacher, begging for a confrontation. Stating that "no teacher can teach a child she is afraid of," Kunjufu stresses the need for greater cultural understanding on the part of the teacher. (Kunjufu, 1986a:20)

All of these authors suggest that a small amount of cultural awareness can go a long way towards educational success. Appreciation for the oral tradition of Blacks, the use of verbal confrontation as a means of relieving conflict (Hale, 1982), and

the difficult transition from Black English to Standard American English (Kunjufu, 1986a) can greatly assist the Black male in achieving the difficult balance between school and home.

The Promotion and Placement of Black Teachers, Principals, and Administrators

Desegregation has also resulted in a greater number of dismissals, demotions, and "push outs" (meaning economic and social pressure to quit the profession) of Black educators. Many Black teachers experience discouragement and unfair treatment in the public schools, which often leads to their leaving. In many ways, school administrators and principals often misdirect the usefulness and potential of Black educators. Arnez (1978) writes that there is also a placement of excellent Black teachers in predominantly White schools who are then replaced by unqualified White teachers.

Sharon P. Robinson (1987) concurs with Arnez by stating that national and state teacher examinations often force Black teachers out, since they often do not perform as well as Whites. Robinson also sites low pay, status and prestige as a reason why excellent teacher prospects either leave or avoid the profession.

In his study on higher education, Fleming (1981) stresses the importance of affirmative action programs in the hiring of faculty. Without them, he fears that Blacks will remain in entry level jobs, competing with older professors for fewer and fewer jobs.

<u>Teacher Expectations</u>

A natural result of the effects of desegregation discussed above is the low expectations for success that many teachers have for their Black male students. This phenomena occurs at job settings as well. Baughman (1982) notes that since Black males are expected to perform worse than Whites, they are paid less.

In the school setting, an excellent explanation can be found in Ray C. Rist's (1970) field research done on a group of Kindergartners and their journey to the Second Grade.

Rist found that the Kindergarten teacher had in her mind an ideal type of student, based on the social and economic criteria she felt was necessary to ensure societal and academic success. He also found that these subjective evaluations were made at the first meeting with the teacher, that fast learners were taught more thoroughly and intensely than slow learners, that the patterns of the quality of communication between the fast and slow learners rigidified as the year went on, and that teacher in later grades used this poor performance in earlier grades as a more "objective" means for classifying students.

Rist writes of four criteria that go into determining teacher expectations. The first is physical appearance, the age and quality of clothing, body odor, darkness of skin and the color and texture of hair. The second criteria is the interactional behavior of the student, meaning the extent to which the child wants to be close to the teacher and possesses leadership qualities. Third is the linguistic criteria or the ability to speak and quickly learn Standard American English,

rather than "Black English". Finally, there are social factors, such as the income, education, and marital status of the child's parents.

Rist laments that "the child's journey through the early grades of school at one reading level and in one social setting appeared to be pre-ordained from the eighth day of Kindergarten." (Rist, 1970:435) First, the Kindergarten teacher brings with her a perceived notion, often based on racial, sexual, and economic stereotypes, of who will be academically successful. Secondly, she awards those with "potential" with more positive reinforcement. Thirdly, the children react either with positive (for the desirables) or negative (for the undesirables) behavior to get attention from the teacher. Finally, the cycle completes itself because the teacher and the school focus only on those children that passed the initial subjective evaluation.

Margaret Beale Spencer (1985) finds that while Black teachers have more positive attitudes toward Blacks than White teachers, teachers of both races had more positive perception of girls than boys. Surveying fourth and fifth graders, Spencer compares her results to the scores of children on achievement tests. Unlike White students, Black student achievement could be predicted by teacher attitude and characteristics. Spencer also found that Black children often had older teachers with entry level degrees, lacking newer knowledge on child development. Clearly, Black students are shown to be sensitive to their academic environments. As Spencer concludes, "the child's perceptions of the teacher's academic attitudes more often were

predictive of achievement for Black children than for White
children." (p. 106)

Curriculum

Having completed the discussion about teacher expectations,
one could then expect to see a similar pattern result in the
manner in which curricula are developed and implemented. The
literature that focuses on curriculum is often prescriptive,
giving suggestions on how classrooms can become more relevant and
effective.

Kunjufu (1985) writes that both the lack of male teachers
and a racist curriculum keep the emphasis on training to maintain
the status quo rather than educating for problem solving in the
real world. He suggests pep rallies to honor academic
achievement and turning fights into public contests matching both
physical (push ups, sit ups) and academic skill (math and
spelling).

Hobbs and Robinson (1982) agree with Kunjufu that the
academic emphasis should be switched to cognitive and problem
solving skills. They stress that basic academic skills should be
taught to all children, regardless of their tracked
classification or age. Baughman (1982) also suggests a shift
towards teaching basic skills and away from focusing on IQ tests.

Arnez (1972) notes that children that learn about Black
history and culture have a better self-concept. Using popular
music, dance, and the visual arts stimulate literary expression

and reading skills among Blacks, as well as the use of Black writers.

Similarly, Jewelle Taylor Gibbs (1984) writes about the importance of using resources from Black culture. She stresses the use of youthful drug counselors, community youth programs, and a flexible curriculum to fight delinquency among secondary students. She believes that notions such as "dropouts and suspended students are beyond help" should be challenged and reversed.

Janice E. Hale (1982) writes that there should be three major components of curriculum for Black children: (1) a political/cultural part that instills a positive ideology; (2) pedagogical relevance that teaches methods for problem solving; and (3) academic rigor, or ensuring that curriculum will be both challenging and relevant to the child's daily life. She also believes in having a curriculum reflect the Black child's outside world by using music, dance, and African-American history.

Hale suggests a curriculum that develops language and communication skills, mathematical understanding, a positive self concept towards learning, and African-American studies. To do this, she suggests having rotating classroom groups with high affective support, developing a child's self-concept, encouraging creative expression, arts and crafts, learning about African culture, experiencing extracurricular activities, and celebrating African-American holidays.

Tracking

The literature clearly reports that Black students are tracked into lower learning groups at a disproportionate number than Whites. Arnez (1978) says that desegregation has caused Blacks, especially males, to be placed in special education and learning disability tracks. She points to norm-referenced tests as a tool for educators to separate races and classes and use these classes as a "dumping ground" for behavior problems. This is not at all to imply that desegregation has been completely bad for Blacks. However, Arnez would state that it has both benefited and harmed some more than others.

Bernard C. Watson (1980) further identifies the problem by reporting that while 33 percent of Black high school seniors and 40 percent of White seniors reported that they were on a college preparatory track, school administrators replied that only 27 percent of Blacks and 49 percent of White were college preparatory. This both destroys the notion that Blacks do not value education and confirms the idea that administrators greatly underestimate the potential of their Black students.

The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Given the above discussion about schools, one can now see how a self-fulfilling prophecy exists when it comes to Black males. It could indeed be said that "the education system does not really fail but rather fulfills its lowest purpose: to perpetuate a permanent, underachieving, socially obsolete group of Blacks." (Glasgow, 1980:68)

Glasgow sees the cycle beginning with failure in the school setting, which leads to a negative feeling about formal education on the part of the student, which then leads to qualifications for only menial jobs and, finally, more failure in society.

Staples (1982) further discusses the effects of this cycle by writing about how the young, uneducated, unskilled Black male is alienated and frustrated by his inability to establish and maintain a family. In his view, this frustration begins with the education system.

Finally, Kunjufu sees the self-fulfilling prophecy as occurring when parents, teachers, and counselors constantly reinforce a sexist and racist paradigm about education and social life. As he put it, "It is difficult to be economically, emotionally, and domestically, self-sufficient when academic mediocrity, non-attendance at spiritual activities, minimal intimate communication and exemption from household tasks is condoned." (Kunjufu, 1985:18) Kunjufu's other partner in this phenomena, the family, will be discussed next.

The Family

While there is much that a school can do to assist children in their educational success, most would agree that the influence of the parents and family plays a similar, if not stronger, role. John Scanzoni (1985) writes that there are several "structural background factors" that contribute to the educational and occupational success of Black children.

First, he notes that many Black parents, raised in or influenced by the rural South, seem "less likely to be able to socialize their children for effective achievement in urban society." (Scanzoni, 1985:115) Second, he stresses the importance of the social position, meaning the education, job status, and income, of the parents. Thirdly, he sees the household composition of important, since for emotional and economic reasons, children from female headed household achieve less than those with two parents involved. Furthermore, Scanzoni advises parents to be "functional", by instilling a positive orientation and family life. He also thinks parents should help their children identify with them, which involves exhibiting positive qualities that the child will want to emulate.

Parental Expectations and Involvement

Most writers in this review agree that the task of the Black parent is a difficult one. Jessie Bernard (1966) sees an extra burden on these parents, since they must also socialize their child into the role of being young and Black in American society. He also believes that Black parents value education for their children, but vary by class in their ability to implement them.

Along those lines, Hale (1982) thinks that Black parents only seem uninvolved in the education of their children, since interactional opportunities with teachers and school staff is designed around the schedule of a White middle-class mother, not a young Black single parent. Hale then suggests that schools should concentrate more on tapping the strengths of these mothers

rather than exposing their weaknesses. This can be done by holding classes for parents on nutrition, child development, linguistics, and African-American history.

Both Parham (1987) and Kunjufu (1986a) stress one on one parental involvement with children where learning can be lovingly encouraged. However, they state that parents should exhibit more discipline towards their Black male children, holding no fewer academic, social, or moral expectations for them than they do their daughters.

Being Male Rather Than Female

As mentioned above, it has been found that there are often different expectations for females than males. Baughman (1982) believes that sex differences even outweigh racial differences in academic success. Kunjufu (1986a) reports that on average teachers allow girls 3.2 seconds to respond to a question in class, while only allowing boys 2.7 seconds. Bernard (1966) reports that low income mothers were able to state their goals for their daughters at three times the rate than for their sons.

In his writings, Patton (1981) sees female superiority due to the higher levels of encouragement that females receive, and to the lack of discipline exercised on the part of parents. To him, Black males are "differentially vulnerable to the total labeling process" and the "Anglocentric clinical measures" that have resulted in Black female college rates 5.5 points higher than Black males, independent of family income and stability. (Patton, 1981:207-09)

Kunjufu accuses mothers of "raising their daughters and loving their sons." (Kunjufu, 1986a:2) This is manifested by them not encouraging domestic responsibility in their sons, by mothers lack of sensitivity and knowledge about masculinity, by mothers replacing their sons for the loss or absence of a husband, for relating to and overcompensating more towards a daughter, by being protectionary from the racist society, and by the fact that "you cannot have an irresponsible man if he was not also allowed to be irresponsible as a boy." (Kunjufu, 1986a:2)

Ray Raphael traces the problem to a lack of a "definition of manhood" and "a clear cut and universal rite of passage." (Raphael, 1988:xiv) TDHR (n.d.) reports that it is because of this lack of a rite of passage that many males turn to crime and gangs to confirm their manhood. Also, Raphael laments about the emphasis on athletics, where so few males are able to enjoy high levels of success. This, coupled with stereotypes about Black male discipline and academic problems, lead Raphael to believe that Black male failure is not only institutionalized, but required.

Bruce R. Hare (1985) spells out the effects that the differences have on the student at school. Hare finds that while Black boys perform the worst on achievement tests, they have a higher self esteem than other sex and racial groups. Hare suggests that this is due to Black boys being more concerned about social success than academic. Also, his survey research, along with analysis of test results, finds that sense of control of the future is race-related, with Blacks feeling less in

control. Anxiety over academic success is higher among females than males, even within racial groups, which may point to differing expectations felt among teachers and parents. (Hare, 1985:151)

Two Parent Versus Single Parent Homes

Given the described interaction between mothers and sons given above, it is important now to turn to the effects that two parent homes have compared to single parent homes. Gibbs (1984) reports that in 1980, 44 percent of Blacks under the age of 18 lived in female headed, single parent households. Peter J. Bourne (1973), in his study on alcoholism, shows that absence of a father figure and drinking by female members in the household are strong predictors of future alcohol abuse.

Bernard (1966) does an excellent job in comparing male and female parental roles by showing that the fathers have a more instrumental and controlling role and the mothers have a more emotional and supportive role. Males raised in fatherless homes find it more difficult to delay gratification, show less social responsibility, are less achievement oriented, more delinquent, and find it more difficult to understand sex differences.

To Bernard, the fatherless child often rejects femininity and becomes overly masculine, joining gangs. Law, morality, and religion are often viewed as effeminate. This results in Black males feeling victimized, non-trusting, and hostile. Bernard is quick to connect the cyclical nature of this phenomena and the other societal aspects that combine to make it so prevalent.

Although he was writing in the late sixties, Bernard's assessment of the combining factors of societal pressure, single parenting and schooling are present today. Indeed, "the overriding horror of the present system is that it is teaching millions of Negro children to disrespect their parents and to despise them." (Bernard, 1966:128)

Income

Another factor that undermines educational success is economic stress that occurs in the family. Bernard (1966) describes how low income families often share households with family members, resulting in the crowded, noisy, and unpredictable conditions not conducive to educational success. Low income children are also forced out of educational environments into employment, due to financial pressures on the family.

It is indeed documented that children from higher income household are more likely to enroll in college. However, Watson (1980) effectively uses this statistic to show how much education is valued in the Black family. He also notes that the families of most Black college students make less than $10,000 a year. Further, 68 percent of Black students use no financial aid. As a result, high numbers of Black student enroll in community colleges.

<u>Education of Parents</u>

The literature reviewed in this chapter is rather silent on the relationship between parents' education and the education of their children. This is perhaps due to the close link observed between levels of education and income. Robert B. Hill (1972) gives his reason for a lack of emphasis by downplaying the importance of parental educational success. He notes that in 1970, three-fourths of college enrolled Blacks belonged to families where the household head had no college education.

The Student

<u>IQ Tests and the Educability of Black Males</u>

Independent of the school and familial influence, many people believe that all that is needed for educational success is a high level of desire, educability and competence on the part of the student. The literature here warns strongly against blaming the victim of educational process, the Black male. Arnez (1978) claims that Blacks are often misclassified due to misinterpretations of behavior and cultural biases in IQ tests. Baughman (1982) interestingly reports that there is no difference in academic performance between Blacks and Whites at intermediate IQ levels before the age of seven. After the age of seven, Black children outperform Whites at low IQ levels, providing evidence for a possible bias in these tests.

Robinson (1987) shows that it is mostly a lack of hope, rather than potential that causes males to drop out with no work ethic and a false notion of manhood. Authors like Patton (1981)

would suggest that males drop out due to repeated discouraging experiences in the educational process. Many Black males report feeling uneducable and like they are expected to fail. Patton thinks this is caused by norm-referenced tests and the Anglocentric curriculum discussed earlier.

Kunjufu (1985) shows that Black males in the primary grades are trustful and eager to please and learn. However, after third grade the happy environment changes to a more competitive and less socially interactive environment that is not conducive to Black male success.

Black males are often forced to operate in their areas of weakness, rather than their areas of strength. Kunjufu (1986a) shows that the observed lack of attention span for Black males is based on a White perspective, noting that the classroom environment is more like Mr. Rodgers than Sesame Street. Among the strengths that he sees in Black males is the interest in math (so word problems should be used in reading), advanced gross motor skills (so parents should expose males to scissors as well as balls), a love for fine arts, a sensitive ego, an ability to rhyme, a large vocabulary and a sharp mind as evidenced in oral confrontations.

The Value of Education to the Student

Another factor is the personal importance of educational achievement for the student. Some say that this can exist independent of many negative environments. For instance, Watson (1980) admits a frustration that many Blacks do not understand

the necessity of a college education to the continuance of the struggle for economic and social freedom. This, of course, is something that is often transferred by the value of education exhibited by parents, as discussed earlier.

In his interviews with dropouts, Glasgow (1980) found that while many subjects valued education, it went no deeper than finding it necessary to get a better job.

Suspensions and Discipline Problems

Suspensions, expulsions, dropouts, "push-outs" (those who dropout after repeated failures and suspensions), and discipline problems are examples of problems which are quick to blame the victim. It is true that unruly children are more difficult to educate, but that should not exempt educators from their responsibility to attempt to reach them. Many such critics would perhaps be surprised to find that many disciplinary policies and procedures contribute to the rate of Black male discipline problems.

Arnez (1978) found in Houston schools, when 56.4 percent of the students were minority, fully 71 percent of the dropouts were minority. In Dallas, a 68.5 percent minority suspension rate was observed, with only a 49.4 percent minority enrollment. She believes that school policies are most to blame for this disproportionate number of minority dropouts due to the lack of fact gathering, no formal review of decisions, and because students often get no opportunity to change their behavior.

Arnez sees the effects of these policies as disastrous because many Black students are induced to drop out. Most aggressive Black student leaders are often pushed out, and that there is a strong relationship between expulsions and drop outs. To Arnez, principals must be sensitive and fair, and teachers and parents should be open and understanding about the pains of adjusting to a desegregated environment often very different from home. Violations like being tardy due to long bus rides and possessing a pick for one's hair should be eliminated.

Despite the environment, Thomas J. Cottle believes that "suspended children usually end up in situations far more serious than if they had been allowed to remain in school and work out their problems in a school atmosphere." (Cottle, 1975:5) Cottle discovered that suspensions involving drugs and dress code violations were small, and that Blacks were suspended at three times the rate as Whites. Parents and school administrators often do not connect, since 33 percent of suspended return to school without a parent attending a hearing.

Cottle also writes of the tragic effects of being suspended. He notes that offenders are labeled as troublemakers, lose class time without the opportunity to make up their work or even return to class to receive assignments, and are subject to longer periods of punishment with each offense. These effects linger into the post-education environment, since police, courts, and employers often get access to school records.

Gibbs (1984) notes that while Black suspension rates have declined since 1960, one in five Black between the ages of 18 and

21 cannot fill out an employment application. Showing that one-third of Black families making $6,000 a year or less had at least one child suspended, Gibbs maintains that the lack of communication between teachers and parents, the community attitude, and bureaucratic inflexibility contribute to the cycle of discipline problems in Black males.

Hale (1982) believes that discipline problems are due to White behavioral models, lack of sleep, and malnutrition. Bernard (1966) writes that delinquency and misbehavior is the Black child's way of venting aggression towards the White world. Noting that violence is not positively valued but a way of life, Bernard suggests that Black parents may receive vicarious satisfaction from the misbehavior of their children.

Self-Concept

It is often believed that discipline problems arise out of a poor self-concept. Vetta Sanders Thompson (1991) finds that identity, specifically racial identity, is a process that includes four parameters: psychological, cultural, socio-political, and physical. (Thompson, 1991:157) The individual's development within these parameters explains behavior like being intolerant of African dress and Black English while having African-American cultural items at home. This type of variance is important to understand when exploring how self-concept develops for children in public schools.

Self-concept has been discussed throughout this review, and it does indeed vary from individual to individual. Watson (1980)

writes that negative self-concepts about learning come from the use of terms like "culture of poverty", "inappropriate role models", "welfare dependent", "maternal dominance", and "Black English", which all blame the victim.

The use of language is also important to Arnez (1972), who links language and race relations. Associating Black things as bad and White things as good is an example. Arnez also warns about the association of negative self-concept to academic and economic failure, which seems to underestimate the racist nature of society.

Developing a positive self-concept is important, since it not only contributes to academic success, but to mental and physical stability and well-being. (King:1982)

Clifford L. Broman (1992) writes of the self-concept that older Blacks have towards their participation in the labor market. He found that unsuccessful Blacks cite talent and effort as the reason for their economic failure, not racial discrimination. Similarly, younger, less educated Blacks are more likely to point out effort and talent than more educated respondents. This seems to reinforce the link between education and positive self-concept.

Peers

The influence of peers increases as a child gets older. Bernard (1966) sees peers as a deterrent to the proper enforcement of cultural standards by a family, since oftentimes the peers of the child will have quite different standards.

Kunjufu (1985) notes that in 1950 Blacks were most influenced by home, school, church, peers, and television, in that order. In 1980, this had changed to home, peers, television, school, and church. Unfortunately, the influence of peers is most often a negative one.

Role Models

Associated with the influence of peers is the question of who is acting as a primary moral, educational and spiritual influence for young Black males. The need for positive male role models is important, since they exhibit proper examples of manhood, family, and responsibility to young males. This is especially important during the transition from the primary grades (Kindergarten through Third Grade) to the middle grades (Fourth through Eighth Grade), since hormonal changes are occurring along with increased levels of responsibility and social interaction. Kunjufu (1985) writes that during this time, more hours are spent away from the home in favor of being with peers and on the street. Unfortunately, many children find their role models in hustlers, pimps and street men.

Both Arnez (1978) and Patton (1981) see desegregated schools as a major reason for this loss of positive role models. This could perhaps be because the overwhelming majority of teacher are White females, and that there are few Black male teachers. Patton shows that in 1976, while 83 percent of all elementary school teachers were female, only 10.1 percent of that number were Black. Similarly, of the 17 percent that were male, only

1.2 percent of that number were Black. At the secondary level, 54.3 percent were male, but only 3.2 percent of that figure were Black. Patton identifies a need for "similar others" in the education system who will be much more effective in communicating values and academic standards.

Society

The Media

Staples (1982) has found that by the age of twelve, a child has witnessed over 10,000 acts of violence on television. This problem is more severe for Blacks because they often watch more than Whites. Bernard (1966) explains that television is often the Black child's window to the outside world.

Television and other media have been found to effect on the self-concept of Black males. This is perhaps due to the manner in which Black males are portrayed over the airwaves, and the message that that sends to younger males, who may be inclined to emulate the behavior of media personalities and characters. Arnez (1972) points out that Black males are often portrayed as ultra-masculine individuals who follow the orders (often in police shows) of their White superiors. Watson (1980) sees a negative message given towards education as evidenced by a Bell Telephone commercial that states, "kick the letter writing habit - use the telephone." A more striking example is given by Carson (1992) who stated that historically, children get their example of pre-historic families from the White Flintstones, the family of the future from the White Jetsons, and their example of the

Black family from Amos n' Andy. While these trends are now
beginning to subside, even shows depicting modern Black families
have been criticized due to their lack of accuracy.

Social Science

At some point, many authors suggest that social scientists
begin to contribute to the cycle of low achievement among Blacks
rather than identifying or changing it. Arnez (1972) holds that
recent findings have only solidified the negative opinions of
teachers, politicians, and administrators.

Glasgow (1980) states that social science has identified the
causes of low achievement: home environment, curriculum,
educability of ghetto youth, learning styles, and Black language.
However, they have contributed to the premise that being Black
and poor is directly related to educational underachievement - a
concept that has resulted in programs that do everything but
teach the needed basic skills to these youth.

Public Policy

As suggested above, misguided public educational policies
can do more harm than good. Hobbs and Robinson (1982) write
about the lack of anticipated success for programs like Head
Start, that have mistakenly placed too much emphasis on early
learning and cognitive development. By ignoring secondary
schools in the process, these policies keep educators from
stressing cognitive development for all ages and at all levels.

Watson (1980) sees education finance as a critical issue. Exhibiting how school finance is based largely on declining property taxes, Watson suggests focusing on what individual schools can do to operate more effectively with fewer funds. He calls for programs targeted at youth employment and crime prevention, as well as more accountability on the part of school boards.

Striking statistics are given by Robinson (1987) who reports that 80 percent of Black students are educated in 4 percent of the school districts. Warning that by the year 2000 1 in 3 students in public education will be non-White, Robinson calls for Black parents to become advocates for children, early childhood development programs, a redefinition of compensatory education programs from remediation to acceleration, community based efforts to work closer with schools and teachers, improved vocational education programs, and a serious reconsideration of school finance plans.

Summary

Given this review of the literature, one can see an overwhelming emphasis on analysis of existing documents and content analysis used by the authors. The relative lack of field research and focus groups, points to the need for this type of study to confirm or deny the findings prevented here.

Table 1 visually summarizes the findings of the authors discussed above. Each author's work is marked for the use of eleven concepts which occurred most often as being a predictor of

academic failure for Black males. The reader should note the
comparative frequency of home environment, role models, and
school environment over other categories.

These measures will be tested, along with the others, in
focus groups. Since the literature suggests that a variety of
factors contribute to educational success among Black males,
focus groups with successful students should reveal similar
results. Interesting in the literature is the absence of any
focus group research or even surveys directed at successful Black
male students. Therefore, there is a need to test the accuracy
of the scholar's conclusions.

It should be noted that no public agency or entity will be studied specifically in this research. Instead, the focus is on what Black males identify as being key to their educational success. Certainly, public education agencies, school boards, and legislatures do have a great impact on the effectiveness of schools, and consequently, Black male students. But as the review of the literature points out, these effects are but one of the many key concepts involved in this project.

The Black students participating in this research went to public educational facilities in locations throughout the United States. For this reason, any discussion on the research setting should include the state of Blacks on a nationwide basis. Therefore, this chapter will present some telling statistics on the educational achievement of Black students.

Among the first concerns that many have is that there are an unusually high number of Blacks that are not in school due to dropouts, economic pressure, and parental irresponsibility. The National Research Council (NRC) (1989) reports that "there has been a substantial reduction in black-white inequality in the basic amount of schooling received." (NRC, 1989: 197) For example, school participation from 1968 to 1985 increased from 69 percent to 93 percent for five year old students.

Despite the improvements, substantial racial gaps remain. In 1940, Black men averaged 6.5 years of schooling compared to 10.5 years for White men. These figures improved to 12.6 years for Blacks and 13.0 years for Whites in 1980. Similar

improvements exist in high school completion rates, but the gap increases. Eleven percent of Black men and 40 percent of White men had graduated in 1940, improving to 74 percent and 87 percent respectively in 1980. (NRC, 1989: 200)

These gaps are steeper when considering college enrollment. The NRC finds that Black college entry has recently decreased during a period of increasing rates for Whites. In 1986, 36.5 percent of Black high school graduates entered college at a rate that has decreased from 48 percent in 1977. However, from 1973 to 1984, the college enrollment rate for Whites increased from 48 to 57 percent. (NRC, 1989: 203-4) The rates of completing college reveal a similar gap, with 4 percent of Black males and 25.5 percent of White males having completed four or more years of college. (NRC, 1989: 205)

At least as important are measures of educational achievement for those that are enrolled in school. The trends discussed above seem also to be true of achievement statistics. The NRC finds that Blacks' achievement rates have increased at a faster rate than Whites, but not enough to correct the gaps that still exist. (NRC, 1989: 213) They also note that this is true of each geographic region nationwide.

One of the measures cited frequently by students of this topic is Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, given to high school juniors and seniors. Blacks have again improved at a higher rate than Whites on this measure, perhaps due to Blacks taking more math and reading courses and the effects of desegregated schools. (NRC, 1989: 215)

Class enrollment results still reveal substantial racial differences, however. This can be illustrated in the relationship between taking advanced math courses and high test scores. The difference between Black and White math scores on the SAT could be due to White high school seniors being twice as likely to have had a class of Algebra I or higher, and four times as likely to have taken four or more advanced math courses. (NRC, 1989: 216)

Racial differences in reading have been found to be related to geographic considerations like living in areas like rural, disadvantaged urban, and advantaged urban, with proficiency increasing in areas in the order listed. Black-White gaps in reading increase along with increasing levels of proficiency. (NRC, 1989: 217) Like the other measures discussed in this chapter, Black achievement rates have shown some increase, despite the consistency of higher levels of White achievement.

These statistics are just a brief overview of the current status of Black educational enrollment and achievement. It seems that Blacks performance has increased at a steady level since school desegregation. However, these statistics clearly show that there are still barriers to equalization between the races. These barriers are explored in the focus group results which follow.

It is against this backdrop that the research proceeds. Black males are certainly aware of these trends in public education, and they have often experienced many the behaviors and policies that produce these trends personally. Therefore, the

research setting is both hopeful, due to recent improvements, and skeptical, since the racial gaps have not significantly decreased.

Chapter Four - Methodology

The methodology chosen to answer the research question is focus groups. David Morgan, in his book <u>Focus Groups as Qualitative Research</u> (1988), defines focus groups as "group interactions based on topics supplied by the researcher who acts as a moderator." (Morgan, 1988:9) For this project, the topic is the effects of public education on Black males and females. The moderator is the author.

The Uniqueness of Focus Group Research

Morgan shows that the types of research questions that are most appropriate to focus groups are those that: are exploratory; provide orientation to a new field; will generate new hypotheses; evaluate different research sites and populations; develop interview schedules; and provide participants' interpretation of earlier studies. (Morgan, 1988:11) This project will use focus groups, then, since it is designed to identify new hypotheses and to receive interpretations of earlier studies on what factors lead to educational success for Blacks. The flow of discussion during focus groups allows for these goals to be met, making this methodology the most appropriate.

The use of group dynamics is crucial to this research, since it is hoped that sharing experiences will cause participants to recall past educational experiences. As Morgan writes, "The hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in the group." (Morgan, 1988:12)

This is especially true when dealing with education, since many of the participants will have shared similar experiences. This can result in more honest interviews, where heartfelt opinions can be shared in a supportive environment. What is expressed is what Morgan calls "perspective", "the experienced opinion based in an individual's social context." (Morgan, 1988:24-5) This differs greatly from the expression of opinions, which are often not based on experience.

Morgan writes that focus groups are used for both market and social science research. Market researchers use them often to test products and advertising, using some sort of prepared material to invoke responses. The emphasis during this type of group is psychodynamic, where the moderators often are psychologists. In social science, the motives are based more on receiving experienced opinions on the research topic. The researcher can often moderate and develop the questions. Social science oriented focus groups are the most appropriate for public administrators, since they are less costly and can be more exploratory if considering the effects of policy.

Strengths and Weaknesses

It is important to put more plainly the strengths and weaknesses of focus group research. Morgan identifies some practical, procedural, and substantive strengths and weaknesses of the methodology. The practical strength is that focus groups are relatively inexpensive and timely to conduct. However, this leads to a weakness since the research is not based in a natural setting. From experience, another weakness could be that it is

often difficult to arrange for the groups at a convenient time and location.

A procedural strength of focus group research is that the researcher is able to test and generate new hypotheses. Therefore, focus groups are especially conducive to new research areas. The procedural weakness is that the researcher does not have total control over the data that is generated. This weakness can be combatted through the involvement of the moderator during the focus group.

The substantive strength of focus groups is that the data is collected in a group setting with group dynamics. The advantages of this have been discussed, but is important to note the corresponding weakness. Of some concern is that the individual can be influenced by the group, and that their responses do not truly reflect their true perspectives. Hopefully, the subject matter, experiences in public education, will decrease this weakness since they are based on direct memories and instances. Also, because the subject matter is based so directly on individual experience, there is no need for consensus or persuasion within the individual focus groups.

The Appropriateness to the Research

To strengthen the notion that focus groups are the most appropriate methodology for this research, it is important to compare it to other methodologies. First of all, it should be again stressed that this research needs the perspective of individuals on education, not their opinions. This points to the need for a qualitative research technique, rather than a

quantitative one, like survey research. Morgan provides a
discussion of two qualitative techniques, individual interviews
and participant observation.

Focus groups are more appropriate to this research than
individual interviews since the respondents will be able to
interact with a group, rather than just the interviewer. Also,
more individuals can be used in a smaller amount of time and with
a smaller expense. Observing participants does provide more
naturalistic observations and a variety of different
interactions. Again, focus groups can do this in smaller amount
of time. The groups can be done in a natural environment for the
participants, and can be tailored towards the research question,
unlike participant observations.

Planning and Performing the Focus Groups

In planning the focus groups, Morgan challenges the
researcher to consider budget, time, political, ethical, and
realistic factors. Also, the number of groups, the size of the
groups, the source of participants, and the level of moderator
involvement should be pondered.

To provide a basis for comparing the views of Black males
and females, three focus groups were done with all Black males
and two were done with all Black females. After performing the
first two sessions, the number of participants was lowered from
four to six to three to four. This was done to ensure that all
of the topics could be covered in the one and a half hours that
Morgan identifies as an appropriate length. The level of
moderator involvement in the interviews was relatively low, since

it was best that the environment was respondent, rather than interviewer, dominated. Participants were informed that the session was being recorded, and that their names would not be used in the transcriptions. This researcher will be the only person to listen to the tape recordings.

The participants were recruited from Praise Tabernacle Outreach and Family Worship Center in Austin, Texas. Praise Tabernacle is an independent, neo-Pentecostal church founded in 1986 by Dana Carson, a Black male. Carson, now in his thirties, has attracted many young Black males and females through his frank and practical preaching and exciting praise and worship. This researcher, who is a White male, has at this writing attended the church for 21 months. Therefore, there is already a rapport developed between the moderator and the respondents. The atmosphere for the groups was relaxed and friendly, erasing the concerns that the respondents may not be comfortable with a White male interviewer. Also, it should be noted that the church is in the process of opening a private elementary school. It is this project that has inspired both the author and the participants, so that Praise Christian Academy will not make many of the same mistakes made in public education.

The participants are under 30 years of age, with only two exceptions - one male and one female. All of the participants attended public education facilities, and are "successes", since they are high school graduates.

Development of Focus Group Questions

The questions for the focus groups were developed from the key concepts suggested in the literature review. This will allow for the strength or weakness of these concepts to be identified, providing a test for the scholar's opinions on predictors of educational success. Also, open ended questions were developed that allow for the participants to identify concepts not identified in the literature. This question will hopefully generate new hypotheses and areas for further study. Also, respondents were also given the opportunity, if they could, to identify the single most important factor in their educational success.

As stated earlier, focus groups are appropriate to this research because of its inductive, rather than deductive, nature. This, combined with the perspectives shared in group interactions, will allow for the research question to be explored and answered effectively. The data collected from focus groups are transcripts, which can be found in the appendices. Transcripts are a nominal level of measurement, which does not allow for statistical analysis. However, results from the focus groups will be presented in both tabular and narrative form.

Chapter Five - Results

As a means of organization, the results on each key concept will be discussed separately. Each topic discussed in the focus groups will be discussed here, by stating the opinions from the male focus groups, then the female focus groups. It is also important to note that the results will also be presented in tabular form. Transcripts from each focus group can be found in the appendices at the end of this essay.

The Influence of Black Educators

For the males, this question was designed to measure the presence and influence of Black male teachers, counselors, coaches and administrators. For the females, the question was asked in terms of Black female staff.

The males that reported having Black male teachers remembered their influence as not being as positive as it was not negative. Striking in their responses was that most of their experiences with Blacks male educators were in athletics. One male reported that the Black males in school were not influential "because I was not on the sports track."

As fas as experiencing Black males in the classroom, several of the men said that they displayed an especially high level of discipline compared to other teachers. Also, many noted that the Black male coaches also served as teachers, usually in civics. Of those coaches, none of the males could report them as having an especially positive influence.

Interestingly, none of the males felt a great disappointment in the low number of Black male teachers. All of the men seemed

Table 2 - The Effect of Black Male/Female Educators

Subject	Strong Pos.	Some Pos.	Neutral	Some Neg.	Strong Neg.
Male #1.1*		*			
Male #1.2		*			
Male #1.3	*				
Male #1.4				*	
Male #1.5	*				
Male #2.1				*	
Male #2.2	*				
Male #2.3			*		
Male #5.1			*		
Male #5.2				*	
Male #5.3		*			
Fem #3.1		*			
Fem #3.2					*
Fem #3.3	*				
Fem #4.1	*				
Fem #4.2	*				
Fem #4.3		*			

* The #1.1 means that this respondent was the first in focus group #1.

to have expected and accepted that fact. One male, who had very positive experiences with Black staffers in elementary school, recalled that as he got older, "There were very few Black males, the only ones I would see were in janitorial positions and that psychologically had an effect on me, but not initially. Later I saw that increase, as Black administrators decreased."

With only one exception, the females had fond memories about Black female educators. Unlike the males, they reported that the influence was academic. It is interesting to note that many women were able to report a Black female in high school who took a special interest in them. A typical recollection was given by one female who had a counselor that "helped me pick out a college, what to do, and study my SATs."

The results provide both a confirmation and a criticism of the literature. First, it is indeed true that the Black males

lacked positive academic influences, especially in high school, where critical educational and career decisions are made. They lamented a lack of academic guidance and reinforcement. The criticism is that this researcher did not get the impression that such an influence had to be a Black male. Certainly, that would be an ideal situation, but the men in this study craved any type of guidance in high school, and would have taken it from an educator of any race or sex.

Teacher Expectations

The males showed differing levels of teacher expectations. The effect from the positive expectations was obvious, since they were the ones that seemed to have more pleasant experiences in school. There also seemed to be a correlation between high teacher expectations and self-esteem. The male quoted earlier who had several Black educators in elementary school said that, "the way I was groomed in elementary, I went to junior high knowing that I was somebody, and that I was not going to be rubbed the wrong way by any White administrator, teacher, student, any White anybody."

Those that had negative expectations remembered them coming from White educators who lacked an appreciation of Black learning styles. One male reported that the predominantly minority school in his city served as a kind of "dumping ground" for less successful teachers.

The females had generally positive expectations from their teachers. Several had teachers who would give them extra work and requirements if they saw potential in them.

Table 3 - The Effect of Teacher Expectations

Subject	Strong Pos.	Some Pos.	Neutral	Some Neg.	Strong Neg.
Male #1.1	*				
Male #1.2		*			
Male #1.3			*		
Male #1.4		*			
Male #1.5				*	
Male #2.1				*	
Male #2.2			*		
Male #2.3		*			
Male #2.4				*	
Male #5.1			*		
Male #5.2					*
Male #5.3				*	
Fem #3.1			*		
Fem #3.2				*	
Fem #3.3			*		
Fem #3.4	*				
Fem #4.1				*	
Fem #4.2		*			
Fem #4.3		*			

For both sexes, the differing expectations seemed to vary more with the school than by sex or race. The students from northern or suburban schools reported higher expectations than those from southern or rural schools. It is not clear from these groups of the notion that males receive lower expectations than females in accurate. The males did report lower expectations, but that could be attributed to geographic locations.

Tracking and Labeling

There were males that felt positively tracked and those that felt negatively tracked. For those that were labeled negatively, their frustrations are now evident. One such male felt that attention was only paid the Black males who were good at athletics. He said that, "Right now, I'd like to run a little slower and read a little better." He also said that, "If you didn't function at a certain level they would put you in a

Table 4 - The Effect of Tracking and Labeling

Subject	Strong Pos.	Some Pos.	Neutral	Some Neg.	Strong Neg.
Male #1.1		*			
Male #1.2	*				
Male #1.3		*			
Male #1.4				*	
Male #1.5				*	
Male #2.1		*			
Male #2.2				*	
Male #2.3			*		
Male #2.4					*
Male #5.1					*
Male #5.2	*				
Male #5.3				*	
Fem #3.1				*	
Fem #3.2		*			
Fem #3.3	*				
Fem #3.4	*				
Fem #4.1	*				
Fem #4.2		*			
Fem #4.3		*			

special class and label you as slow. If you got in one of those classes, there would be so much ruckus in the room, you had to be slow, because you couldn't learn nothing."

Those labeled positively felt good about where they ended up educationally. However, they lamented that it made their schooling unnecessarily easy for them. One male said that "when you're labeled that early, it makes you lazy later in life."

Only two of the females experienced a negative labeling in school, and both of them believe that it lead to academic intimidation that they still feel today. The females tracked positively revealed similar experiences to the males. It was interesting that all of the participants felt like the track they were on was rigid. One female remarked that due to her placement in advanced classes, "If I wanted to be a hairdresser, that wasn't so much an option."

Discipline Problems and Policies

Dominant in the groups of both sexes was not so much a fear of school discipline, but parental reactions if school problems were revealed to them. One male's response was typical - "I tried not to get in trouble because I knew what I had to come home to." Also interesting was that for the students that were positively tracked, peer pressure and identity seemed to be a deterrent for discipline problems. Most of the males had positive recollections about corporal punishment, and wished it was still being used. Many felt like the discipline policies were fair, while some felt like there was a lower tolerance level for Blacks.

The females expressed similar sentiments of support for corporal punishment and a concern for unfair treatment of Blacks. On female stated that "the same ones ended up dropping out, getting pregnant, getting the same discipline, staying in the same trouble."

It should be noted that this was a study of educational successes, so one could expect a decreased level of discipline problems. However, it seems that the literature's proposition Blacks are treated more harshly than Whites has some support.

African-American History

The existence of an African-American history component is one key concept that does not respect gender differences, except perhaps for its impact when it is present. The males' perceptions on this topic were particularly insightful. Those

Table 5 - The Effect of Discipline Problems and Policies

Subject	Strong Pos.	Some Pos.	Neutral	Some Neg.	Strong Neg.
Male #1.1			*		
Male #1.2	*				
Male #1.3	*				
Male #1.4			*		
Male #1.5	*				
Male #2.1	*				
Male #2.2					*
Male #2.3	*				
Male #2.4			*		
Male #2.5				*	
Male #5.1		*			
Male #5.2			*		
Male #5.3	*				
Fem #3.1					*
Fem #3.2					*
Fem #3.3	*				
Fem #3.4	*				
Fem #4.1			*		
Fem #4.2					*
Fem #4.3	*				

that had it were glad for it and enjoyed it, but it made them feel, as one man put it, "proud and angry at the same time."

Most men had little or no Black history at all. They felt powerless to do anything about it, and to a man remarked that they were eager and enthusiastic to study it when they got to college. Many men would agree with the observation of one participant - "what was in {the textbooks} was what they taught." Another added that all he learned was that "Blacks were sent here from Africa, there were slaves, they were set free by Abraham Lincoln, and that's it."

The females had almost identical experiences. The only difference was that these women expressed that they personally felt a negative outlook towards Black history, because they resisted aligning themselves too closely with radical Black movements. None of the males expressed such a concern.

Table 6 - The Effect of the Presence or Lack of Black History

Subject	Strong Pos.	Some Pos.	Neutral	Some Neg.	Strong Neg.
Male #1.1	*				
Male #1.2				*	
Male #1.3				*	
Male #1.4				*	
Male #1.5				*	
Male #2.1		*			
Male #2.2	*				
Male #2.3					*
Male #2.4					*
Male #2.5					*
Male #5.1					*
Male #5.2					*
Male #5.3		*			
Fem #3.1					*
Fem #3.2					*
Fem #3.3		*			
Fem #3.4					*
Fem #4.1		*			
Fem #4.2					*
Fem #4.3					*

While those that had a significant amount of Black history benefitted, it is hard to say that the lack of it ever jeopardized their educational success. Unfortunately, many just accepted it much like the absence of Black teachers and administrators. As one female put it, "I didn't know to want to know."

Perceptions on the School Environment

A question on the funding, and perceived community and governmental support was asked to get a feel of how the participants felt going through school. Again, there was no real difference between the male and female responses. The responses varied instead with the economic condition, location, and involvement of the community.

The respondents who felt negatively about their school involvement saw school as an obligation to their parents. As far

Table 7 - Perceptions on School Environment

Subject	Strong Pos.	Some Pos.	Neutral	Some Neg.	Strong Neg.
Male #1.1			*		
Male #1.2				*	
Male #1.3		*			
Male #1.4		*			
Male #1.5	*				
Male #2.1		*			
Male #2.2		*			
Male #2.3				*	
Male #2.4				*	
Male #2.5				*	
Male #5.1				*	
Male #5.2					*
Male #5.3			*		
Fem #3.1				*	
Fem #3.2			*		
Fem #3.3			*		
Fem #3.4				*	
Fem #4.1		*			
Fem #4.2		*			
Fem #4.3			*		

as communities becoming involved in a school, one male reported that "I didn't feel ownership or a co-participant."

Those that felt positively about their schools, reported no noticeable lack of funding, a good level of community involvement and support from the educators, particularly in high school. Many of these respondents, especially the females, could point to teachers and counselors working together to ensure their success in school, and eventually their enrollment in college.

Parental and Family Environment

It was not at all surprising to find that in this study of educational successes that parental involvement was seen as a positive influence. While most of this reinforcement seemed to be negative - punishments for bad report cards, for example - the parents of these respondents seemed to have adequately communicated the value of education.

Table 8 - Effect of Parental and Family Involvement

Subject	Strong Pos.	Some Pos.	Neutral	Some Neg.	Strong Neg.
Male #1.1			*		
Male #1.2	*				
Male #1.3	*				
Male #1.4	*				
Male #1.5	*				
Male #2.1		*			
Male #2.2	*				
Male #2.3		*			
Male #2.4				*	
Male #2.5	*				
Male #5.1				*	
Male #5.2		*			
Male #5.3		*			
Fem #3.1				*	
Fem #3.2				*	
Fem #3.3		*			
Fem #3.4		*			
Fem #4.1	*				
Fem #4.2	*				
Fem #4.3	*				

Many of the men noted that there was a generation gap that existed between themselves and their parents. Many of the parents did not have a college or even high school education, (which strongly challenges the literature's ideas of education of parents being a predictor of educational success) many men felt that their parents wanted them to be educated, but could not personally relate to it. One male said that "they stressed a need for it, because they knew times had changed. But they didn't know the ins and outs of college education." Indeed, many males reported that parental support waned past the level of a high school diploma.

Another serious challenge to the literature is that several respondents lacked a positive male presence in the home. These males were glowing in their praise for mothers and grandmothers who helped and encouraged them through school. While those with

male influences did mention them quite positively, the results from these focus groups show that female headed households can and do produce strong male educational successes.

The males all felt strongly about their family involvements. Those that had positive family involvements seemed to see it as key to providing the support that the school and peers could not provide. One male reported that "It's only because of my background that got me through the system. I would probably be a statistic just like [my peers] if it weren't for that. I'd be either dead, in jail, or on drugs."

The females were more critical of their family involvement. They all reported some positive, especially matriarchal, influence. However, they more frequently noticed their parent's lack of attendance at PTA meetings and personal encouragement for post-secondary educational achievement. Also, the females in this study seemed to resent their parents using them as a "brag board". One female gave the example of her mother taking her report card to church to show off to her friends, but not attending a PTA meeting.

While the vitality of male support in the home is challenged, the literature's proposal that females receive more support than males in the home is supported. The females received more constant support through school and received higher expectations than the males.

The Influence of Peers

As mentioned earlier in the discussion on tracking, there is a strong correlation between tracking and peer influence.

Table 9 - Effect of Peers

Subject	Strong Pos.	Some Pos.	Neutral	Some Neg.	Strong Neg.
Male #1.1			*		
Male #1.2	*				
Male #1.3	*				
Male #1.4		*			
Male #1.5				*	
Male #2.1				*	
Male #2.2					*
Male #2.3					*
Male #2.4				*	
Male #2.5					*
Male #5.1					*
Male #5.2				*	
Male #5.3				*	
Fem #3.1					*
Fem #3.2				*	
Fem #3.3				*	
Fem #3.4		*			
Fem #4.1	*				
Fem #4.2			*		
Fem #4.3				*	

There were two males in particular who were placed in advanced classes. They saw a pressure to keep up with their friends' academic development and career goals. As one of them put it, "they indirectly pushed me to do better." While this effect is alluded to in the literature, its strength is underestimated. The power of this positive peer pressure was stronger than both peer influence from outside the school and home environment.

However, the rest of males reported that peers were a negative influence. They mentioned that being seen as "smart" involved a high social cost - being called a "nerd", "sissy", or "White boy". One male said that "I was ostracized by my peers because I could not study, hang out with them, and still pass." For such males, this resulted in having to find other friends of similar intelligence, the "nerd group" as one male called it, or becoming "loner" as one man did.

The females reported similar feelings. The correlation between tracking and peer influence existed for them as well, and most of the negatively tracked females reported having negative peer influences. Different, however, was that there did not seem to be the rejection by peers as a result of educational success. One female reported getting along fine with a friend who was doing poorly in school, because they were involved together in baton corps. This may point to the strong competitive nature of males, and their fear of failure. Regardless, it is a major finding in this study that females were able to use educational success as a means of self-esteem, while males could not. This point is not strongly discussed in the literature. Contrast, for instance, the feeling of rejection that many males felt for succeeding in school with one female's comment that "[education] was always my source of self-esteem. If I didn't like the way I looked, if I didn't have the right boyfriend, I always made good grades."

Male and Female Role Models

For the males with positive, active fathers in the home, the most important male model was that father. They saw him as a source of encouragement and admired them for their attainment of spiritual, worldly, and academic knowledge. One male listed his father as the most important role model because he was "everything I didn't want to be." One other man expressed such a sentiment. The other role models ranged from orchestra directors, to White cross country coaches, to neighborhood drug dealers.

Table 10 - Most Important Male/Female Role Model

Subject	
Male #1.1	None
Male #1.2	Father
Male #1.3	White Cross Country Coach
Male #1.4	Father
Male #1.5	Father
Male #2.1	Father
Male #2.2	Father
Male #2.3	Father
Male #2.4	Father
Male #2.5	None
Male #5.1	Local Drug Dealer
Male #5.2	High School Orchestra Director
Male #5.3	Father
Fem #3.1	Mother
Fem #3.2	None
Fem #3.3	Mother
Fem #3.4	None
Fem #4.1	Mother
Fem #4.2	Mother
Fem #4.3	Mother

The females were asked about the most important female role
model. One female could not list one, but all the rest chose
their mother. While the males did express a great appreciation
for their mothers, there seemed to be a bond between the females
and their mothers that the males could not approach. The best
example of this is one female's tender memory: "I was always
tall and had big feet - I would walk with my head down. [My mom]
would put her hand under my chin and tell to never walk with my
head down and be proud of who I am. She supported the household,
always stayed real positive."

Other Factors

Since the questions for the focus groups were taken from
suggestions from the literature, it was important to give the
participants a chance to identify other factors towards the end
of the session that had not been discussed to that point.

Table 11 - Other Important Factors

Subject	
Male #1.1	None
Male #1.2	Extracurricular Activities
Male #1.3	Extracurricular Activities
Male #1.4	Religion
Male #1.5	Religion
Male #2.1	None
Male #2.2	Religion
Male #2.3	None
Male #2.4	None
Male #2.5	None
Male #5.1	None
Male #5.2	Religion
Male #5.3	Religion
Fem #3.1	None
Fem #3.2	None
Fem #3.3	None
Fem #3.4	None
Fem #4.1	Positive Influence of Males
Fem #4.2	Mother
Fem #4.3	Money

Two of the males pointed to their participation in extra-curricular activities, music and sports, as being important since it made them, as one male put it, "[go] further than you thought you could."

Over half of the male respondents talked about their religious upbringing and personal relationship with God. Admittedly, these interviews were given in church settings, so a possible bias in these results is consequently admitted. However, the importance of religion was stressed in each focus group, and strongly emphasized by the males. One particularly telling account was given by one male who remembered:

> I had a personal relation with Jesus Christ in fourth
> grade. I would walk through the neighborhood in
> circles talking to God. How could I do that in the
> fourth grade? It was the spiritual emphasis I got
> growing up. It got me to focus on the better things in
> life and striving for better things....A lot of my
> peers weren't like that. Consequently, their lives are

as they are now, shot. Because Jesus was the focus, we
were destined to be morally correct and have a
conscience.

This topic was lumped in with family environment in the
literature, but the strength of this response would certainly
point to the need for further study.

Interestingly, none of the females mentioned religion in
response to this question. It was alluded to earlier by some of
them, but it was often mentioned as being a distraction to their
studies. In fact, only two of the female participants could
respond to this question - one mentioned the males in her life
and the other mentioned her family's positive economic situation.

The Single Most Important Factor

Most of the males pointed to their parents, (collectively
and fathers and mothers individually) as being the most important
factor in their educational success. They mentioned a desire to
please them, and seemed grateful for their support through
school.

The other males listed a personal values of education and a
desire to succeed, while the others reinforced the importance of
their spiritual influence. One man mentioned Pastor Dana Carson
specifically for his encouragement.

Many of the females mentioned personal desired to succeed,
pointing to their love of learning and how it improved their
self-esteem. Two females felt it was the influence of family,
while one female also listed Pastor Carson.

Table 12 - The Single Most Important Factors

Subject	
Male #1.1	None
Male #1.2	Friends
Male #1.3	Mother
Male #1.4	Parents
Male #1.5	Parents
Male #2.1	Father
Male #2.2	Self
Male #2.3	None
Male #2.4	None
Male #2.5	Self
Male #5.1	Pastor Dana Carson
Male #5.2	Religion
Male #5.3	Religion
Fem #3.1	Pastor Dana Carson
Fem #3.2	Self
Fem #3.3	Mother
Fem #3.4	Parents
Fem #4.1	Love for Words/Knowledge
Fem #4.2	Self
Fem #4.3	Family

Chapter Six - Conclusions

The results of the focus groups supported the larger literature. The trends exhibited on most key concepts were alluded to in the focus groups. The focus group participants, however, did not exactly mirror the literature. The relative importance of some of their predictors for educational success did significantly differ from the literature.

The Success of Focus Groups

More than anything, this research confirms the need for field research in this area and solidifies the proposition that focus groups could be a successful methodology. Especially when dealing retrospectively about a topic like education. When people are asked to recall experiences from ten to twenty years ago, the group dynamics served as a means for calling back old memories. In each setting, it was amazing to see these recollections arise and how they effected the other participants. By remembering old teachers, family experiences, and past feelings, the group members took a great deal of comfort in the other members, who were sharing a lot of the same emotions. As one male put it, "This is therapy."

Undoubtedly, a quantitative method like a survey, would not have yielded this type of result. The participants could have gone down a survey questionnaire without thinking deeply about each topic, or understood the things that made them feel the way they do. Through focus groups, this researcher was able to record how, why and how strongly each participant felt on each topic with a great deal of accuracy.

Important Findings

Perhaps the most important finding in these focus groups was how females were able to see and use educational success as a means of self-esteem, while the males were not. The females seemed to have relied on education even as an escape from family and peer pressure, and saw it as an almost guaranteed way to succeed societally. In sharp contrast, the males revealed bitter memories of being rejected by peers and family for "being smart" and often had outright opposition to their educational goals for college degrees. This points to the need for further study on how this phenomenon can be combatted in the home and at school.

The most successful males had at least one person who encouraged them about school, and it was interesting to note that that person did not necessarily have to be a Black male. This leads to the second major finding of the paper. One should certainly not underestimate the need and effectiveness of Black male role models and fathers, and this study certainly confirms that. However, the scholars seemed to have at the same time underestimated the power and effect that positive and loving Black females can have on their young men. Some of the most successful males in this study were from homes with no real Black male influence. These males were often positively tracked and thought of in school, were secure emotionally, and were not discipline problems. The frequency of this occurrence, even in this small study, points to the need to reconsider the seemingly dominant and non-substitutable nature of Black male role models for educational development. Clearly, the lack of Black male

role models can be addressed by loving families and supportive schools and teachers. Further study should also be done on determining what single mothers can do to help their sons educationally, especially when they themselves did not have much schooling. Again, it is not at all the finding of this study that Black male role models are unnecessary. Instead, what can be said is that it need not be seen as an insurmountable obstacle for educational success.

A third interesting finding is the link between the tracking of students and the influence of peers. Many of the male and female participants who were positively tracked spoke of their peers applying positive pressure on them educationally. It also seemed to give them a type of standing in the school and community that they were determined to maintain. This could lead to a hypothesis that students in school will always raise or fall to the level of their peers. This consequence of tracking was not discussed in the literature. Indeed, for many students it may be as simple as providing them access to more successful students in the school setting so they can be challenged by them. This could be an important strategy to use for underachieving children, and is therefore a suggestion that can be made as a result of this study.

Finally, the stressing of religiosity by the Black males should be highlighted. As mentioned earlier, the participants in this study were active church members, which creates a bias in this regard. But it may be enlightening because perhaps in no other institution outside of a college would one have found so

many educational successes. Further study should definitely be done on the effects of religion, and perhaps more specifically Christianity, on the educational success of Black males. The findings of this study should serve as an alarm to churches across this nation to the possible positive effects that they could have in reaching out to the Black males in their communities. In providing role models, moral training and guidance, and an environment of acceptance, the church can provide a foundation that many of the males in this study said they could not have done without.

The Implications for Praise Christian Academy

As mentioned earlier, much of the inspiration for pursuing this research was due to the development of Praise Christian Academy, a private school affiliated with Praise Tabernacle in Austin, Texas. From the "third sector", or non-profit, manager's perspective, these results are very encouraging. First of all, since it is a Christian school, the students will be able to receive the spiritual foundation stressed as being so important by so many of the males. The school will have the opportunity to accompany or, in some cases, replace the religious exposure the students receive at home.

Similarly, the school will be able to provide many Black male and female role models, in its teachers, administrators, and counselors. Verbal and physical reinforcement can be given to the students liberally, from the perspectives of other Blacks who have experienced many of the same pressures that they might be experiencing. Indeed, much of the social environment in a school

is under the control of the staff. With some effort, an atmosphere of educational encouragement, achievement, and expectancy can be created among the staff and pupils. This will be especially important in combatting some of the negative peer pressures felt by many of the males.

Finally, these results will be shared with those closely involved in the development of the school. Therefore, the administrators can be sensitive to the effects of tracking discussed here, as well as some key factors to look for in developing the curriculum, especially African-American history. Likewise, training and monitoring can be done to ensure that the teachers are maintaining high and positive expectations for all of their students, regardless of race, income, or the academic achievement of their parents of siblings.

Concluding Remarks

Clearly, this nation has a long way to go in providing a rich and supportive environment for all of its children. This study should serve as both a source of challenge and of encouragement. While many problems were explained and discussed, there were also many areas that can be improved upon with great effectiveness. While the old problems of racism and ignorance remain, this study demonstrates that solid Black educational successes are still being produced. To produce more such successes will not be easy, but it is a work which we can, ought, and must fulfill.

Michie - I'm getting a Masters in Public Administration at
Southwest Texas. In order to receive that, I have to do what is
called an Applied Research Project, which involves field
research. I'm doing mine on the effects of public education on
Black males. The interesting thing is that I have done research
on what effects Black males in public education. Absent from the
literature is anyone doing this - which is actually sitting down
with a Black male and asking them. The purpose of this project
is to see what you say. I am here to learn from you. First of
all, know that I won't use your names. Also, please state your
name the first few times you speak so I can identify you for the
transcription. The first thing I want to know is what your
experiences were with Black male, teachers, administrators,
counselors. What were your experiences with Black males at
school and how it had an effect on you, and made you successful
or not successful.

#1 - I don't really have too many strong memories of a Black male
presence in my elementary or junior high years, but I do remember
in high school there was a football coach that had a great
influence on me. It was from more of a material influence - he
had a car, the ladies after him, and he had a Bachelors degree
from the University of Maryland. He was a bigtime football
player. I looked at him and said if he can make it, I can make
it. Even though he didn't make the pros, I figured that I could
branch off into coaching and have some material success. I went
to a school that was predominantly - I went to school with
Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Whites and Blacks, a lot of Jewish
people - a mixed suburbian area.

#2 - Out of my whole career in Waxahachie I think I only had
three Black male teachers - two were football coaches and one was
my Algebra teacher my Freshman year in high school. The first
coach was great, because he took an interest in me and guided me
through junior high, and listened to my problems. The second
one, he was the type of guy who intimidated you. He was known
for hitting students, like in the chest. I didn't respect him
too much. The last person, the Algebra teacher. His big thing
was his class. We all struggled through his class. He would
joke with you, but his class was hard.

#4 - I don't really remember any Black male teachers. There was
always a Black coach, and he was always really mean. I had Black
female teachers, and they were really mean. They were really
smart, and their classes were always the hardest.

#3 - I had one Black male teacher, a Kindergarten teacher. He
was an important influence since he made me realize that there is

more to this pool than just White females. Black coaches - I had one track coach, because he realized academic potential in me, probably because I wasn't that good an athlete. The Black males I came in contact, however briefly, helped me realize my academic potential.

#5 - I had three Black male teachers in junior high school. One was a science teacher, one was a history teacher, one was a math teacher. I learned more in those three classes than in any other classes I had. In high school I had one Black male teacher who was also a coach. He was also an English teacher. I always loved to write, but as far as getting an understanding of what other writers had to say, that really started with him. He had such an enthusiasm for literature and for English.

Michie - It's interesting that your experiences all happened later in your education. Did you ever remember thinking, like, from when you started school to about the age of twelve, "Man, are there any Black male teachers?" Did you struggle with that, or was it something you were socialized to and accepted off the bat?

#1 - I believe I accepted it off the bat. At the time, if a Black male wanted to teach Kindergarten or the First, Second Grade, people viewed him as being funny.

#2 - I never had a real problem with it. To me, it was like go to school and expect to see a woman as a teacher. I grew up thinking women should be teachers. My grandmother was a teacher.

#3 - When I started school, we were one the few in North Carolina, I had a Black male Kindergarten teacher. He's still out there. You expect to see females.

Michie - Did he have a positive effect on you?

#3 - Subliminally, yes. After him, I never had any male teachers until high school. My math teacher was male, but for the most part they were all females.

Michie - Let me ask you guys this - what was the extent of an African-American history component at your schools. Not only that but if there was one or wasn't one how do you remember it effecting you?

#1 - We had Black history at our high school, and the Afro-American club was real dominant. Keep in mind this was in Jersey, where we were ahead of Blacks in the South or West of Southeast. It was a powerful club. We didn't view it as being radical, but more of a social club. It wasn't limited to 28 days in February, it was all year long.

#2 - For me man, Black history consisted of one page in the American history book. It was like, Blacks were sent here from

Africa, there were slaves, they were set free by Abraham Lincoln, and that's it. Even Black history month was kind of slim.

#3 - It was the same ones every February - Fredrick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Phyllis Wheatley. All Black females as a matter of fact. Going through high school, I was usually the only Black in my class. Being in honors classes, I never really got back in it. I lot of what I learned about Black history was from my mom.

#4 - The slave trade, Harriett Tubman, Fredrick Douglass, Dr. King, and Black history month.

#5 - I knew what it was, but we never really celebrated it. I didn't know what was going on until I got to college.

Michie - Do you think the lack of a Black history component was pretty much accepted by you?

#3 - Yeah. We couldn't do anything about it.

Michie - I'd like to hear about your family environment. Your parents involvement in your education, your siblings. How was education viewed in your household?

#3 - My mom kicked my butt through school. Very important.

#4 - My father was like, don't you ever bring a B in this house, or else. Both of my brothers were involved in sports, but my sister got a four year scholarship to UT - academics. He would always talk to my teachers, and to my coaches and say, "He's not coming out there unless he's passing."

#2 - My mother was a school teacher. When I was four or five, she would drill me with flashcards. This one night she put out the card put. P - U - T. For some reason I couldn't spell it out or pronounce it. She said, "Come on boy, you know what it is. If you don't tell me what it is your gonna get a whoopin'." She spanked my butt good. That's the way she was, if I messed up in school, it got back to her and she took care of it.

#5 - Before you do anything, you had to do your homework. I was always having to go to bed early because of school nights. We would go to the library all the time to read.

Michie - So, going outside the home, what are your recollection of your peers. Did they encourage your educational success, or discourage it?

#3 - My peers were pretty much the braintrust of the school. I always felt a bit inadequate around them. We were always the most ambitious of the whole school. I was on the quiz bowl team in high school. The captain made a 1530 on the SAT. Full scholarship to Duke. He was the franchise, he knew everything.

We all had our own little areas. Education was a way of life, it was just there.

#2 - I was kind of like #3, everyone I associated with were some intelligent people. I remember in band, all of us band geeks were like in the top two percent of the class. And one day, I was sitting there wondering, "How can I converse with these people? I need to get on their level. They indirectly pushed me to do better. That was the way it was in elementary school, because I had a friend that was really smart. I remember thinking, "I want to be viewed like he is."

#4 - My friends parents were the same way my parent were, so it was expected. We were all strict Air Force kids.

#5 - I would say it was negative. As far as school, they never had any drive to do anything. Once I left the magnet program, and I got in with regular students, I really lost my focus.

Michie - Did you personally value education?

#3 - Yes. I always valued education, I never dreaded going to school. If I had to stay home, I was bored to tears.

#2 - I got to that point, but I at first I was like, "You go to school and that's it." Once you realize the potential of what you can do...

#3 - There's an arrogance that goes with it. Being on the quiz bowl team, we were well rounded people. We were geeks, but athletic too. I was in three sports a year - cross country, and indoor and outdoor track. Franchise, he was on the tennis team. We were all very well rounded people.

#4 - For me, I thought that "this is something I gotta do." It changed for me when I got to high school, when I became active in sports. When I got my first F I cried. I thought I was going to die.

#5 - I don't think I started valuing education until two years ago when I tried to get back into school and I couldn't. Before then it was always, this is what my parents want me to do, what my coaches want me to do... Everybody was proud that I got a scholarship.

Michie - Did you think that as you were going through school it was important for you to stay out of trouble? Did you think that discipline problems would have hindered your chance for success?

#3 - Oh yeah. But it was never really a problem. If you hung around with the wrong people you would get in trouble more. We could leave class, do whatever we wanted to. The principal would wave hi and keep on going. We ran the school.

#2 - For me, everything I did got back to my grandmother. If a
teacher paddled me, it would get back to my grandmother and then
I would get the real thing. When I got to high school, I didn't
want to get suspended because I didn't want it to look bad in
front of my friends.

#4 - First of all, I tried not to get in trouble because I knew
what I had to come home to. That was very scary. I had a
different background because I was involved in the arts. I had
some rebellious times.

#5 - There were times that you wanted to be like everybody else,
but we see this for you, we want you to be this. It was never
not wanting to get in trouble with the administration, it was not
getting in trouble at home. My parents would tell my teachers
"If you have any problems with my child, do not be afraid to beat
my child." They were very active in my education.

Michie - Looking back, in your younger years, what do you think
your teacher's expectations of you were? Were they too high, too
low, or what?

#3 - They were always very high. My problem was that my
grandmother was an elementary school teacher in the same school
where I went to. So, all of my teachers knew her. That's where
my expectations came from.

#2 - That's a tough question. I've always been treated average.
In about third grade they figured I had some potential so they
bumped me up. Then in fourth and fifth grade, I had a bad temper
and I was always in recess beating somebody up, so they had that
to deal with. I was never thought of as a smart kid or a dumb
kid, just a violent kid that needs some tough discipline.

#4 - It was kind of mixed. Some people didn't care, but some
people really wanted you to succeed. That was for both races.
My expectations were to do what everyone else did in class.

#5 - The majority of the time, the teacher's expectations weren't
high enough for the class. I felt like I would have gotten
better grades had the expectations been higher.

Michie - Because of these expectations, did you ever feel tracked
or labeled, either positively or negatively? And if this is
true, what was its effect on you?

#3 - I was labeled with a good label, but when you're labeled
that early, it makes you lazy later in life. I was always told
that I was smart. In high school, school was supposed to be a
breeze for me so I made it a breeze for me. When I got to
college, and had to actually study, my grades went straight down.

#2 - I definitely got tracked. This was about my eighth grade year. It didn't really bother me, it was more motivation. I got this reputation to uphold now, so I better stay on top of it.

#3 - But if you weren't on top of it, you couldn't tell anybody, since people would look down on you.

#5 - I had a lot of negative experiences that pushed me in a positive direction. This was mostly due to my peers rather than my teachers.

#4 - I don't think I was tracked. Maybe I was just naive. My teachers were nice. I had a simple, parochial education. It wasn't until college that maybe I wasn't treated fairly.

Michie - What were your perceptions of your schools in general? Was school a nice place to be? Was it well funded? Did you feel like social institutions like the government wanted you to succeed? Did you feel like there was a society behind you?

#3 - Looking back on that, since I was at a predominantly White school, funding was never an issue. I remember a Black school we competed against in quiz bowl where funding was always an issue. For the most part, if I had to pick a governmental party then - probably Republican.

#2 - I wasn't aware of funding as an issue either. I get the feeling that they were trying to have enough programs for us. I wish they had more, especially since my Freshman year in college when I met other students who talked about the programs in their schools. But we didn't have that.

#4 - We always had what we needed. It wasn't Westlake, but we never had any funding problems.

#5 - We had a lot of community support. They tried to close our school my junior year, and a lot of the community turned out and kept the school from closing.

Michie - Who were the most important male role models in your life, and what were their effects on your educational success?

#3 - I never really had a whole lot of male influence. I always sent my mother and my grandmother mother's and father's day cards, they were pretty much both. What I saw as Black male role models, would come in and go out. They would take whatever they needed and leave. I had several White male role models, my cross country coach who was also my English teacher. He made me realize I should question authority a little more, I was always too passive in my education. My mother would say that too, but it meant more coming from a male.

#2 - I was really the same way. Growing up, there weren't any Black male role models. My dad served as a negative reinforcer

in my life. If you don't continue in your education and go on to
better things, you're going to end up like him, which is
something you don't need to do. My role models were my
grandmother and from my friend ties. I would see them trying to
make the highest grades and get in the best classes. So I wanted
to be like them.

Michie - We've talked about a lot of things. Was there anything
else that was an influence on your education.

#3 - Sports was an influence.

#2 - I was just about to say that.

#3 - Going further than you thought you could. Running cross
country made you do that. But the number one influence was my
mom and my grandmother. They put it there that "you have enough
in you know, enough resources here at home to be where you need
to go."

#2 - I would agree. Extra-curricular activities as whole was
important. I played sports in junior high, but in college I got
more into music, which led me to where I am today.

#4 - God. School was important, but we were in church all the
time. Now I look and I see that it was the grace of God that I
was raised in a Christian household.

Michie - Did the environment of the church reinforce your
education, or did you think it was something that God personally
required of you?

#4 - I see it as being the hand of God being on my parents life
and on my life too.

#5 - I would say the same thing. That God's hand was on my life
and my parents life too. That He knew I needed to be here at
Praise Tabernacle. I didn't play football until my senior year,
but I still got a scholarship to play at the University. That
was not anything I was doing, because I was still learning the
game. That was God moving. As far as the church, it kept me
from hanging out with the wrong crowd.

Michie - Finally, what was the single most important factor in
your educational success?

#3 - My mom. She wasn't as much a factor in high school, but she
started me out so early that later in life I was able to do it
myself. She really got the ball rolling and I've been rolling
downhill ever since.

#2 - I would say it was my friends. Just seeing them strive to
get those grades. We would sit back and compete for grades.

#3 - SAT's.

#2 - Yeah, I mean we would take a history test and they would say "I made a 95" and you would say "Oh, I made a 91". And you would feel bad, even though 91 was a good grade. It served as a great motivator.

#4 - It would be my parents, they stressed that education was important. And the rod.

#5 - I would say my parents. I was in no way focused going through school. When I got into one of those moods, my parents would tell me what I should be doing. Seeing my dad always working, up at five in the morning, taking care of his family, I knew that part of that was for me. So that provided a great motivation. Even though I wondered, "why is this necessary, what is this for?" Seeing him made me realize it was necessary.

Michie - That does it. Thanks you guys a lot, this was a great interview.

Michie - I am four weeks away from finishing my Master in Public
Administration at Southwest Texas. In order to finish I have to
do an Applied Research Project, which is different than a thesis
in that I have to do field research. So what I'm doing is the
effects of public education on Black males, specifically as
compared to Black females. As we begin to start our school, I
thought it was important that we don't make some of the same
mistakes. As I began to study, I found that no one has ever sat
down and asked Black males - what I am doing - what they thought
about public education. I am here to learn from you, so I want
you to be as honest and open as possible. State your names the
first few times you speak, and know that I won't use your names
in the paper. Feel free to discuss between each other, this is
more of a conversation than individual interviews. The first
topic I want you to discuss is how Black male teachers,
counselors, and administrators effected you, particularly in your
younger years.

#2 - I'll start that off. I grew up in a predominantly Black
community in East Austin and went to Blackshear Elementary. I
will always cherish those years. This was before bussing took
place. There were few Hispanics and no Whites. But we had a
Black administration from the principal on down.

Michie - Were they male?

#2 - They were male and female. Predominantly female. But the
love and attention that was given from the administrators was
overwhelming. It had a dramatic effect on me, because they could
relate to me culturally. They were touch-feel people, they would
hug and encourage you and speak highly of you. In fourth grade,
I went to the gifted and talented program. That just blew me
away, it let me know a lot about me and encouraged me to go on
and be all I could be. There were very few Black males, the only
ones I would see were in janitorial positions and that
psychologically had an effect on me, but not initially. Later I
saw that increase as Black administrators decreased.

#3 - I've only had one Black teacher and she was a female. She
was indifferent, she wasn't pro or anti Black, just Black. She
was the only one except for first and second grade, they were
very touch and contact. If you came to school with your head
uncombed they would comb it for you. They made sure you were
never hungry at school, they would feed you in class. This was
the sixties when I went to school, when #2 talks about bussing,
this was pre-bussing. This was before Rosa Parks. Black were
more helpful toward one another. That had a profound effect
because they cared. The classes were small, because there were

only a small amount of Blacks in the town. They cared and shared
with each individual. I broke my arm in the first grade and the
rushed me to the hospital, and took me home. It was a loving,
family school. That changed drastically when we got integrated.

#1 - My experience was in elementary, every thing was perfect.
You played and learned and you got your education. But noticed
that as I got through Junior High and High School, the teachers
seemed to be afraid of the students. There were gangs, students
stealing. The teachers were there for the paycheck. When they
saw a kid with potential, they might go an extra mile to help
that student, but otherwise, you were just there, occupying a
seat. Too scared to talk to you. I've seen students sell
marijuana right in class, but the teacher was too scared to do
anything about it.

#2 - I want to add that as far as White teachers were concerned,
they were kind of distant, because they didn't know how to relate
to them. But in the predominantly Black schools, with Black
administrators, the White teachers worked well. But as the White
teachers became the majority, they refused to have a one on one
relationship.

#3 - When I went to school, there was no such thing as gangs.
There was no disruption in class. The White teachers were
different than they are today. They didn't want to be different
from Blacks. It was like the White teachers said that we've just
been released from slavery - "the poor Blacks, we've got to help
them." This was when the Peace Corps was big, it was a social
type of situation. It wasn't that they looked down on us, it was
like they felt sorry. They would help us along by moving us
through classes. Though they were trying to help us, in the long
run, it hurt us. But today, I would not be a teacher in
anybody's school in the public school system for fear of my life.

Michie - What did you think your teacher expectations were? When
you sat down in a classroom, did you feel like "this teacher
expects too much of me" or did you fell like, "this teacher
doesn't expect enough of me."

#3 - They always encouraged me because I was an underachiever.
To be smart was looked down upon, we were looked on as "White
boy". You didn't have to study to pass. It was totally
different. They knew I could do it. Due to peer pressure, I
would not perform as well as I should have, and they knew that.

#2 - In elementary school, it was overwhelming what the love,
attention, and expectation level was for the students. I think
it was because of the family knit structure. My teachers knew my
mother and also the community. The chances were high that the
teachers knew your parents. Thus, the expectation levels were
very high. In junior high, it was totally different. I wanted
to go to a Black junior high, but I went to Martin junior high.
But the way I was groomed in elementary, I went into junior high

knowing that I was somebody, and that I was not going to be
rubbed the wrong way by any White administrator, teacher,
student, any White anybody. I had my guards up, when I thought I
was being stigmatized. I found my self in the office quite
frequently, they thought I was hyperactive. What it was was that
the school system doesn't know how to direct your energy. They
wanted to calm you down with medicine. I had a lot in me, a lot
of positive stuff in me, but because White society couldn't
relate to it, I found my self in the office with referrals and
with a paddle on my butt. Eventually, my father would come down,
and he and I both came down on them. "I don't want my son to be
stigmatized. I don't want you to think that he is a 'black
thug'. Don't paddle him, I'll paddle him." In high school, a
Black school. I had a Black teacher, and that brother, he
prefaced each class with a motto about Black folk. He would make
references to Black people, he encouraged us all the time.
Expectations were high, in and out of the classroom. We knew we
couldn't deviate from it. The principal, she was Whitewashed,
she was a Black lady. She was controlled by the upper echelon.
Expectations were high, but diminished as we got into high
school.

#4 - Let me interject. When I was in the seven to the ninth
grade in Mississippi, I had a history teacher who was a college
professor. He knew how to talk intellectually. I felt like I
was expected to learn on the level of a college student, when I
hadn't made it to high school yet. It was boring. His
expectations were so high. I had a cousin who was in his college
class. I had him tape record his lecture and it was the exact
same thing. I failed the class miserably, along with the
majority of the class. It was a miserable experience.

Michie - Did you ever feel like you were tracked or labeled,
either positively or negatively? Did you feel like there was a
stamp on you? How did that effect your attitude towards
education?

#4 - Unfortunately, I had the opportunity to sit under a teacher
who taught my father, and all his brothers, and all my brothers
and sisters. I was completed stamped. "Boy, you act just like
your daddy, I taught your daddy." I wasn't expected to exceed my
uncles and aunts. I was the last one in my family, so I was
labeled by my family.

#2 - In elementary, I was stamped positively. My daddy was a
pastor in the community, so they expected me to do well. My work
also showed that I was somebody. From that point on I was
stamped. It was really helpful to me because I was like "Yeah, I
am, I am." It has a positive effect as time progressed. But,
when I entered junior high school, that went downhill. They saw
me as a trouble student and wanted to send me to an alternative
learning center. It was because I was so energetic. I did well
in class, but I always got in trouble. I would get in fights,
thrown down in a hurry. I was sharp, popular, but had a lot of

energy, which was interpreted as being negative. The principal
stigmatized me and watched me closely like I was a criminal. I
had this conversation that was Black, I was just being myself.
In high school, a Black school, I wasn't stamped. You had a
sense of belonging, I was a part of the system. In junior high,
I was a Black spot in the middle of Whites. I saw both sides.
They stamped me because I was Black. I know that. It was
because I was Black and from East Austin that I was associated
with these different characteristics that they had labeled.

#1 - I was stigmatized as the intelligent, nerdy type in junior
high and high school. When you were put in that frame, you were
out on your own unless you went out and found other nerds. It
was like that movie. The teachers saw me as the good student. I
did and didn't like it. I got better teacher from the teachers,
but I didn't have as many friends. Junior high was very violent.
The education in an all-Black school was very different from an
all-White school. It was two different worlds.

#2 - I agree.

#1 - I wondered what it would be like to go to an all White
school. You saw fights, and drugs, and everything.

Michie - Let me ask you about discipline policies then. Did you
feel like, "If I am going to make it through this place, I have
to stay out of trouble." It did think it was important not to be
expelled or suspended? Did you think that the discipline
policies were fair?

#3 - I grew up in the corporal punishment era. They gave you
licks if you looked wrong. I went to the principal's office a
number of times, deservedly so. I got a lot of licks. I was an
actor in class. I thought of being expelled as something
horrible until my senior year. Then I didn't care. My senior
year I got expelled five times for fighting, cussing out a
teacher. I knew I had the grades to pass and I just didn't care.
I wanted to fit in. I didn't fit in with the Whites of course,
and I didn't fit in the Blacks because I was smart.

#2 - In elementary school they were fair, but in junior high and
high school they were very stringent. They had a lower tolerance
for Black students. You act up one time and I'll kick your ass
out. Excuse me, but that's how it was. We got sent out and
those were the same words they used to us.

Michie - When you got sent out were they concerned that you were
able to make up your work?

(Laughter)

#2 - No. I knew that my parents didn't tolerate me acting up in
school. I knew that to think about college I had to get through
this. At LBJ, they understood your energy, culturally, but when

you got to the classroom, work was required. By White
administrators, it was kind of lenient. Either you did they work
or you didn't. Very unconcerned, didn't care at all.

#5 - Personally I was never subjected to the discipline policies
of the school administration, except for some injustices from
individual teachers. I generally was not a discipline problem.
I suffered some indignities from teachers, they would make up
stupid nicknames - of course the kids loved that.

#1 - When I was in Kindergarten, when my father was in the
military, I was a complete nightmare in school. I wouldn't do
nothing if I thought the lesson was stupid. I would get
whoopings everyday. I would just slip home to my mother, since
my father wasn't there to lay down the law. So I could do
whatever I wanted and was just a mess until my father got home.
When he found out how I had been acting he laid down the law in
elementary school, which turned my life around.

Michie - I want to ask you about the existence or extent of any
African-American history component at your schools. If so or if
not, what was it like and how did it make you feel?

#3 - I had no teaching on Black history. My only experience with
it was through National Geographic magazine or maybe every once
in while a history or geography class, you would see picture of
the "great continent of Africa", with the pictures of the
tribesmen. They would be really prolific, they would be the ones
with the bones in their noses, or the long necks with the rings
around them. As far as my experience, everything was like Al
Jolson and blackface, always negative. Never positive. I was
never taught anything, not one thing about Black history in
school.

#2 - In elementary, we had Black everything until bussing came
along and the predominantly White PTA and teachers ran it off.
They put all the Black people in the background, turning them
into janitors. We had Black gifted and talented programs, track
and field events, student organizations, in elementary school.
Because it was my foundation, it was so important to have it.
Now they don't have that Black base anymore. They grow up
ignorant of their culture and who they are. They are immediately
integrated into White society totally isolated to who they are
and what they can contribute to society. Consequently, they grow
up dysfunctional. Elementary was excellent for me. In Junior
and Senior High school, everything was about slavery. The
teacher did not care to make you feel comfortable. Sometimes
they would ask out, "Does anybody remember hearing about a
relative who was in slavery and how it was?" I would say, "Look,
I don't know anything about slavery." In my Black high school,
we would comment on Black history and be protective about it.
But even there, it wasn't emphasized because it was integrated.
We had a science academy that was seen as important to the school
and brought a lot of students in. All the Black events

diminished. They even deviated from the Black band, the Black
music just went out. Cheerleaders - there wasn't a predominate
Black representation on the cheerleaders. There were only two
cheerleaders in a predominantly Black school - I mean what's up?
When I got into college, we had a Black history class and we
swamped to it. Went every day, never missed. It was until
college that I learned about Black history and their
contributions to society. I think that is that is one of the
most fundamental things that you should have when dealing with
Black kids.

#3 - Because I didn't have that exposure to Black history, as an
adult, I still feel disenfranchised from the Black culture. When
things go down in the Black inner city, I feel bad because
they're people, not because their Black. I see color, but I
don't have an identity.

#5 - What #3 says about identity is true. I was raised to be
dysfunctional. I didn't receive any teaching at home about the
history of the family, and I didn't know to ask. I always went
to integrated schools, and there was nothing there about history.
I was out of school before I started learning anything about
Black history.

#4 - I received no training at all on Black history except that
they came on a slave ship. The history I got was Middle East
history, the Dark Ages to the 1800s. The only training I had on
Black history was in my own personal study from encyclopedias and
magazines.

#5 - The way that history was taught left me with the impression
that people like Alexander were European.

#2 - I thought he was White too.

#5 - You can't get around teaching some of those people, so they
make it seem like he was White.

#2 - I just now learned that Alexander was dark skinned. Wow.

#1 - At junior high, a Black school, I got a lot of Black
history. It didn't hit me until just now that if the Blacks
weren't together on anything else they were together on getting
our history.

#3 - Let me ask a question then, since I didn't have it. How do
you feel in Black history class are you moved, motivated,
stirred?

#1 - I feel proud and angry at the same time. It seems like
White society is trying to erase all the great things Blacks have
done in society by not putting it in the textbooks. It like they
don't exist.

#2 - Hispanics, they get Cinco de Mayo day, Blacks, we get one
month, and Whites, they get the rest of the year. Public
schools, they give us that one month to put our pictures on the
wall and that's the extent of it. Don't show me pictures, sit
down with me, show me some things, let's have forums - teach me
about these people. It's a tragedy when you're Black and you
know very little about Black contributions. I could tell you
about White contributions for days, but very little about Blacks.
That's not because of lack of effort, but because there has been
very little emphasis on Black history.

Michie - Let's move outside the school to home. What was your
family environment, parents, and siblings effected your
education. Also, speak a little about your peers and how they
effected your education.

#3 - I grew up in a household of 9 kids. My mother and father
would take in strays, so we would have up to 15 kids in the house
at one time, of all nationalities. By the time I was 5 my mother
taught me how to read and write. After teaching me that, she saw
that I could do well in school with little help. That was good
and bad, since she would spend less time with me than with the
other kids in the house at the time. Since I was on my own, I
did sufficiently well but I could have done better. I wish they
would have stayed on me and said "look, you gotta study." My
peers saw me as a nerd, I was an introvert, unlike the way I am
now. The military bought that out. I was ostracized by my peers
because I could not study, hang out with them, and still pass.
So I was not accepted outside of my family.

#5 - You took the words out of my mouth. I've been a loner most
of my life, because I was smart. My parents did the best they
could, they gave me the idea that we were smarter and that we
were better. The first time I got beat up, they didn't tell me
to not let that happen again. They came to protect me, I always
felt protected, but I was never encouraged to take care of
myself. I wasn't happy being a loner.

#2 - I came from a poor family, but I had an educated family. My
dad was a preacher, and my mom was a housewife, she didn't use
her degree. We had 7 kids. My dad was highly educated and gave
me the defense mechanism to get through the system. He taught me
how to survive in White and Black society. We were a tight knit
family. A lot of my friends came from dysfunctional homes.
That's why my dad would say that "you all are the richest kids on
the block." We just couldn't see it, because our house was a
raggedy house. We weren't advantaged economically, but we were
advantaged spiritually and academically, and that is showing
fruit today. As far as my homeboys, they were from dysfunctional
families. Some of them are dead, before they were 20. It's only
because of my background that got me through the system. I would
probably be a statistic just like them if it weren't for that.
I'd be either dead, in jail or on drugs. That's why it's so
important to keep the focus on the kids to help them get through

the system. But because the way society is, they are focusing on
trying to get their bills paid, rather than on the kids. Their
lack of attention is manifested in them getting on drugs, in
jail, and in gangs. So it stems from the family.

#4 - I was raised in a family of four in the country. Every on
my road was family - cousins, uncles and aunts. In Mississippi,
it was a hardship, everyone was in your family, and everyone got
on your nerves. When you leave it was a great relief. Not the
immediate family, but the ones surrounding. I was expected never
to walk in the house with a bad report card or I was dead. I
never got assistance from my parents. There was a gap in
communication, as a child I could not understand anything he
said, especially in history. My dad was great in history, now
that I'm older.

#1 - My father was a strict disciplinarian, he was in the
military. I couldn't walk in the house with a bad report card
either. He was very mathematical, which is why I'm so good at
engineering.

Michie - We've talked about a lot of stuff. I want to know what
else was there that you see as being important in succeeding
educationally.

#2 - The spiritual emphasis carried me a long way. My dad was a
pastor, and even though it was a dead church, at the time I
didn't know it was dead. I was intricately involved in bringing
the Sunday school lesson and being the pastors son you thought to
be something. It had a dramatic effect on me. I had a personal
relationship with Jesus Christ in Fourth Grade. I would walk
through the neighborhood in circles talking to God. How could I
do that in the fourth grade? It was the spiritual emphasis I got
growing up. It got me to focus on the better things in life and
striving for better things. Not because I'm involved with Jesus
Christ now, but that was real. It was the real deal. A lot of
my peers weren't like that. Consequently their lives are as they
are now, shot. Because Jesus was the focus, we were destined to
be morally correct and have a conscience.

#1 - For me it was my mom, because she was very spiritual. She
taught me how to treat people. She would take no mess from
nobody. That's where I got my strength from. My father was very
discipline and that's what got me through college. I would
remember the things he said when I was younger that I now
understand.

#5 - This is therapy. On the one hand, my home environment
convinced me that I could perform and attain. On the other hand,
it was not all spiritual, I was supposed to get whatever I got
out of myself. We went to church, but did not get any spiritual
influence at home. The most important factor for me was that I
wasn't taught at home how to have tolerance for other people and
be among my peers.

Michie - If you can look back, what was the single most important factor in your educational success? Or was their one?

#2 - I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it. To prove to myself and to my daddy that I could do it, that I'm going to make you proud   .

#1 - I wanted to prove to my father that I could do it, I wanted to make him proud, because he was my hero growing up.

#5 - I wanted to get out on my own and see if I could get my life going in a different direction from the way it was when I was growing up.

Michie - Thank you guys.

Michie - I'm getting my Master in Public Administration from
Southwest Texas. In order to do that, I have to do an Applied
Research project, which involves field research. My project is
on the effects of public education on Black males. The
literature suggests that Black males and females are treated
differently, so I wanted to test that through these focus groups.
The first few times you speak, please state your name, but know
that I will not use your names in the paper. The first thing I'd
like to talk about was what school was like. First of all I'd
like for you to recollect on what your interaction was with Black
female counselors, teachers and administrators, and what their
effect was on your education.

#1 - I had a wonderful role model in high school. She was always
pushing me towards school. My interaction with Black females was
jealousy envy and pride, always trying to outdo each other. In
California it was more competitive, out to beat each other.

Michie - I'm especially interested in elementary school, did you
have any interaction with Black female educators and what was
their effect.

#2 - I had two Black teachers and my experiences were the
opposite of #1. They were always harder than the White teachers,
maybe because they knew what they were doing. They treated me
unfairly. I remember they wouldn't let me go to the bathroom.
One time I had to do a problem on the board and I had an accident
in front of the whole class. She didn't show any sympathy or
anything. They gave me lower grades than I thought I earned.
They were more harsh.

#3 - I didn't have any Black administrators in elementary school,
but I did in junior high, a female. To me she was very positive.
Her husband committed suicide. But she was very positive, she
never was harsh, or treated me differently because I was Black.

#4 - I didn't have any Black teachers in elementary school. In
high school my principal was a Black female who knew my family
and was fond of my sister. She pushed me in a way but it wasn't
overbearing. She wanted me to succeed in whatever it was that I
tried.

#3 - I want to bring out one thing. I graduated in 1975 and was
educated in the 60's and on the East Coast. We didn't
experiences the prejudices in the South.

#1 - My family was the only Black family in the whole school, so
I was too young to even know prejudice.

#3 - I was in a Black and White community where everyone got along. It was small where everybody knew everybody's business.

Michie - Staying with teachers , what did you feel like your teachers expectations were of you, did they expect too much or too little?

#4 - My teachers had a total standard that was above what they are down here in the South. I didn't really think of it like they were asking too much of me, but now that I talk to other people, I guess they had higher expectations. It wasn't overbearing, but they did push us. They didn't let you sit back and get a C, when and A is in your range of capabilities. There was more of an interest in your achievement. They had a standard they wanted to uphold. They took a personal interest in your success.

#2 - I remember it being real repetitive. The expect you to get so much, but you repeat the same things over and over. I remember taking Spanish for six years and we would learn the alphabet and numbers each year. It wasn't like #4.

#4 - Even within the context of the educational system there were different levels. The lowest level they had for college bound students was college algebra. If you couldn't function on that level, they had a basic program.

Michie - Did any of you ever feel tracked or labeled? Did you feel like you were stuck in a course during school?

#1 - I didn't but my sister did. Her Kindergarten teacher didn't do anything but let the kids color all day. Because she was behind in first grade, they labeled her special ed. Even now, she feels she has a problem in learning. She uses that as an excuse even now.

#4 - Mine was just the opposite. I was pushed through school. I had all honors classes. It was like, you will go to college. You will be doctors and lawyers. If I wanted to be a hairdresser, that wasn't so much an option. No that's not for you, you're going to be a doctor. You're more than that.

#3 - I can identify with #4. I was labeled positively by my teachers not my parents. My father wasn't there for one thing, and my mom didn't motivate me educationally but was supportive. I just always wanted to be in the smart classes. I had to struggle like heck, but I always wanted to be in the honors classes.

#2 - To be in the honors classes, kind of made you be ostracized by your peers. Some people took Consumer Math, or just enough to get by. You're not in that same social group, and you might try to hide your academic achievement to blend in.

#3 - But I didn't because we were all in band or choir outside of
school. Even though my girlfriend wasn't at the same level
academically than me, we were in baton corps together so we were
"ace boom coon", we were thick.

#4 - In some ways I felt like my set was chosen with me. I saw
the same people first through seven people. It was like, these
people are going to be successful in life, and these are the
people you need to be with. Even in band, it was like a clicky
thing. These are the honors kids, and these are the others.

#3 - I didn't hang around the honors kids too much because most
of my friends were Black. It wasn't a racial thing, it was just
that they were who was in my immediate neighborhood.

Michie - Do you think that your peers were a positive influence
on your education or a negative one?

#3 - Negative. They skipped, got high.

#1 - Mine were negative.

#4 - In a way, some were positive and some were negative. I
remember one guy, he was the smartest guy. He knew he was smart
and that he could skate with stuff. He would dabble in things he
didn't have any business with - he would drink, do drugs. It was
like - hey, I'm still making Bs. He would just kind of gravitate
toward the stuff he knew would kill him if he got too mixed up in
it. Nothing was ever talked about. Our honor society had people
who would drink or do drugs on a regular basis, but it was never,
reprimanded.

Michie - What was discipline like at school? Did you feel like
it was important to stay out of trouble? Did you feel like it
was fair?

#3 - In my days, they still had corporal punishment. Some guys
were macho and could handle it. But I remember my high school
assistant principal didn't play. Once you got a swat from him
you got a different attitude.

#4 - I went to school on the East Coast and that was not allowed.
People were taken to court and sued lump sums of money. You did
not touch anybody's kid. All you do is teach my kid math,
English and spelling, but you do not beat my kid.

#3 - I think it was good for us, personally. If we had it today
we wouldn't have a lot of the problems we have.

#2 - It was the same kids that got in trouble over and over
again. Especially at the high school level. Those were the same
ones that ended up dropping out, getting pregnant, getting the

same discipline staying the same trouble. I don't think it was much of a deterrent.

#1 - To me, I didn't agree with it. In elementary school they still did it. But in sixth and seventh grade I saw what prejudice was. We heard Black kids getting hit harder than Whites. The White kids wouldn't even cry, but the Black were broke down. They tool frustrations out on those kids and it wasn't fair. I remember I got hit one time, and I told my mom as soon as I came out the door. She went back to the school. It was more embarrassing to me than anything.

Michie - Did you think that the school and the community was behind you getting an education? Or was school more of a fight and something you had to get through.

#1 - It depends on the environment you grew up in.

Michie - Right.

#1 - This is the first time I realized that I felt like it was something I just had to do. My academic pilgrimage was just something I had to do. College was talked about but not pushed on me. If I failed a class, I just had to go to my room. I never felt anything like that.

#4 - While I was there, it was kind of like go to school. In other ways I felt they were here to help me. We had counselors tell you what you were going to take. That's what I would take. They had in their minds where I needed to be when I finished. My job was to get these grades and these classes to get where I supposed to be. Looking back, I felt like they were there to help me, but going through I felt like they were telling me what to do. I wanted to take a cooking class, and they were like, "No #4, you can't take cooking, you take Biology II. Do cooking at home, but you need to learn biology to get where you wanted to be."

Michie - What was the African-American history component like at your school? (Laughter) How did it presence or absence effect your self-esteem and confidence going through school?

#3 - We had nothing in elementary and junior high school. But in high school, you celebrate Black history month. But we also had Black history. It was taught by a Black administrator who was very positive and everybody wanted to take his class. I never did because I hated history. I don't care if it's Black history Ju-Ju history, whatever. We had a Black student union, a Black choir. We had a tight Black unit. When the Martin Luther King stuff broke out, we did riot, cut White girls hair and stuff like that. But I was always active in choir and academics, and was a good little girl. We had a strong Black core for that period of time.

#2 - I didn't have any Black history until I got to college. We didn't even know Martin Luther King got shot until we got home that evening. There was no emphasis on Black culture. I just wanted to assimilate. I didn't want to be too Black. I was almost ashamed - if you saw someone Black doing something it was embarrassing. I had no Black pride until I got to college.

#3 - We were so united we wore red, black, and green and made a flag by sitting in sections. Everyone wore Afro puffs, a lot of Black pride. That was attributed to Martin Luther King, Malcolm X was never popular up North. But King brought a lot of pride to the schools up North.

#4 - In some ways, I'm like #2. I didn't have any Black history. It was hard for me in some ways, I went to an all White neighborhood and went to all White schools, it was just normal. I didn't think anyone was keeping anything from me...

#1 - She didn't know to want to know.

#4 - A fourth grade history teacher gave me a book about Black Americans in history. I was like, I didn't need this book to tell me I'm B, I know that already. It was just life to me. I had no concept of what racism was until college.

#3 - What was the ratio of Blacks when you went to school #4? Less than 10 percent?

#4 - Way less.

#3 - What was yours #2?

#2 - My was pretty equal. I went to a military school. The Blacks were NCO kids and the Whites were the officers kids.

#1 - We were the only Blacks in the school, my dad taught P.E. class. The realization only hit me in the sixth, seventh grade. I wanted to flip flop and be known as a Black woman. In high school I was BSU president.

Michie - Leaving the school, and going home. I'd like to know about what your parents involvement was in your education, your siblings, and what home was like. Did it have a positive or negative effect.

#1 - The emphasis in my household was church. We lived, breathed, slept ate church. We would be out until four in the morning and had to go to school the next day. My sisters and I are all trying to go back and get the stuff now that we missed. My parents always wanted us to go to school, but didn't push us. No one in my father's family went to college.

#2 - I always got encouragement from my parents for getting As. But when there were PTA programs they wouldn't go.

#1 - Only when there was a bad report card...

#2 - Or a teacher conference. I remember my senior year in high school, they told me that they didn't have the money to send me to college. I was like, "If you're going to give me all this build up on college..." They were always glad I got good grades, but when it came time to support, they weren't there.

#4 - In my house, grades and school were very important. As and Bs were expected. Cs were not appropriate in my home. My sister was in sports, so they were more tolerant of Cs from her. But when it came to me, you don't get Cs. In fourth g, I got two Cs. I was like, "What are my parents going to do when they see my report card?" It was like "you're smarter than that. You can do better than that." My dad has a Masters in Chemistry, and my mom went to trade school. Grades were like a badge of honor for my parents. It was more for them than for me. They would take my grades to church and show the grades to their friends. And I was like, "What about the other stuff I like to do?" For my sister, they paid attention to her thing, sports, but I was kind of like good in school and the other stuff was kind of there.

#3 - I was the great Black hope for my family. My mom, dad, brothers didn't graduate. I was the last hope for my mom. But she didn't push me though. I'm sure he encouraged me to stay in school, she came to my choir concerts and stuff. She did use me as a brag board, though. I remember my first year of college, when I wanted to drop out and get married, it wasn't a big deal to her. I would have a fit if my child cam to me with that. All I remember her saying was "Oh, #3, you'll never finish if you drop out." To this day, because my parents were so lax, I am very stern with my children. They are going to college. They're going. I don't care if I have to get three jobs. It's not an option. My parents never came to a PTA meeting, all she did was come to my fund thing. My dad did absolutely nothing. Nothing.

Michie - How did you personally value education growing up? Was going to college always important to you, or was it a hoop you had to jump through?

#2 - It was more of a duty, but going to college was more than education, it was a way of prospering. It was important to get that job making 30 40 thousand dollars a year. It was a financial stepping stone.

#4 - For me it was both. In some ways it was an obligation to my family. In other ways it was for me, because at that time I wanted to be a pediatrician.

#3 - It was important to me until I was sixteen when I got saved. I moved from a Baptist church to a Pentecostal church, and I just wanted to be in church every time the doors opened. If you know anything about those Pentecostal churches they stayed in church

till all hours of the morning. I'd have a test the next morning, and just pray to get a decent grade. I would, God bought me through, but grades took a back seat. I wanted to go to college because I knew I should, not because I wanted to. That's why when I met who I thought was Mr. right at a church convention, it was easy for me to drop out of college. I was in a fantasy world. I knew I wanted to work for God, and I didn't need an education for that.

#1 - I didn't even consider college until mt senior year, and then it was a fleeting thought. I knew I had to get through high school. Somebody took an interest in me because I was interested in fashion merchandising. A counselor shared with me about a scholarship at a school. My parents found out about it because it was in a different city. "Oh no, you can't leave the city. If you go to college it will be right here." I was like, OK, I just won't go.

Michie - Who were the most important female role models for you? What was their effect on your education?

#1 - My mother. In anything she's done, she's been consistent. And that's something I've always wanted to be. If she said she was going to do something she did it. I'm not saying it was flawless, it was just consistent. She got a two year degree, raised all the kids, and in some ways supported our whole family. She didn't have time to push us in school.

#4 - Honestly, I really can't think of anyone in academics. It was something I was pushed to do and I did it. It was a must.

#3 - My mom. My parents divorced when I was young. She was supportive, always made me feel good about myself. I was always tall and had big feet - I would walk with my head down. She would put her hand under my chin and tell me to never walk with my head down and be proud of who I am. She supported the household, always stayed real positive.

Michie - We've talked about a lot of stuff. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you see as important in your education.

#2 - As a Black person, I knew education was essential in life. If you were to rise above the lower class you had to have an education.

Michie - Nothing? If you had to identify the single most important factor to where you are right now educationally, what would it be.

#1 - Funny, but it's Pastor Carson. I remember I got bored and went to junior college in Kilgore. When I got interested in it, my parents wanted to move and I had to go with them. I dropped out, and said I'd never go back again. I meant it. In my mind I

thought I didn't need it.   Until I came to Praise, I would have never considered it.

#4 - For me it was my parents, because it was a given.   This was just it.   We expect you at least to function here.   It was an unspoken thing, you do well in school.   I'm not going to ride your back, but you just do whatever you have to do and give me the grades I want to see.

#2 - It was always my source of self-esteem.   If I didn't like the way I looked, if I didn't have the right boyfriend, I always made good grades.

#3 - I'd say my mom.   She always expected me to make good grades. Like I said, I was the great Black hope for my family, and that I would really disappoint her if I wasn't a success.

Michie - Well, that's it.   Thanks a lot.

Michie - I am getting my Masters in Public Administration from
Southwest Texas. To complete it, I must do an Applied Research
Project which involves field research. I am doing focus groups
on both males and females so that I can compare your experiences
in public education. While my focus is one the effects of
education on Black males, your opinions will give my some
valuable insight. Please state your names the first few times
you speak, but know that I will not use your names in the paper.
The first thing I want to throw out there is your experiences
with Black female teachers, administrators, and counselors,
especially in your younger years.

#1 - I can go back to my first experience I remember which was
Head Start, a public education program for kids of low income
families. Down the street was the school, where Kindergarten
was. The lady that ran the program was a straight arrow kind of
person. She lived in the part of town that had all the beer
joints for Black people. She had a real nice house in that area.
She ran the program. My sister went to it, then I went to it.
She pulled me out into the more serious program. I already knew
how to read because I was the youngest person in my family. She
taught me to read all the time, read catalogs, whatever. She put
me in some kind of reading program, like the Zip program or
something, that got me to read everything. She would single you
out and put you in a group of people that thought like you did.
She ran the place and was serious about education.

#2 - My third grade math teacher would give me extra stuff to do
because I was good at it. The music teacher knew my mom who was
also a music person. She wouldn't accept anything low from me.
They were both strong women, both tall.

#1 - They seem tall, don't they?

#2 - They would speak their mind and be in control of their
classroom. In junior high there was a math teacher who was more
soft spoken. My high school counselor was very instrumental in
my making it to college. I was in a magnet high school, and my
mom was real concerned because the school was 30 miles away from
where my mom worked. This counselor called my mom and told her
that "I will be your baby's parent while she's here, because she
needs to be in this program." I had 99 percentiles in all the
testing, so she really took an interest in me. So my mom let me
go there.

#3 - The only experience I had with Black female was in my
family, because I come from a family of teachers . My

grandmother was a teacher in a public elementary school. I would
go to her classes before I started school, so I already knew how
to read from being around the older kids. The propelled me above
the level of the rest of my peers. I didn't have any Black
female role models in elementary school. My next experience was
in a public magnet high school, where I counselor helped me pick
out a college, what to do, and study my SATs.

Michie - Did you feel like your teachers expectations of you
were too high, too low, or about right?

#2 - I don't remember expectations being too high, because they
all had creative ways of dealing with me. My social studies
teacher would give the option of social studies of playing
softball. We'd play softball, and make teams and do social
studies the next day. I also remember him seeing those students
who could do more and him giving me more stuff to do. We would
have spelling bee contests in class, and those that would succeed
he work try and instil positive things in us. I remember even in
math, those teachers that saw a student excel would give us more
to do. The expectations were just right initially, but they
would give you more if you could excel so you wouldn't become a
behavior problem.

#3 - I don't think I had a lot of expectations. As soon as my
third grade teacher found out I was good at reading, she would
give me extra stuff to do to keep us busy. We would just sit
there bored, me and my friend, because we were ahead of the other
students.

#1 - In elementary school in the first grade I had a sister who
was the standard. I had a school that had bilingual teachers.
In San Angelo, there was a large Hispanic population. For some
reason, my sister and I were placed in these classes. As result,
I knew more Spanish that I know now. A lot of the Hispanics
would act like they didn't know English but they could. I had a
discipline problem in the third grade. In the second grade I
remember when I learned to write a sentence with a conjunction,
my teacher praised me so much that I wanted to write longer
sentences. But I was a discipline problem in third grade and my
teacher told me that my conduct caused my other grades to be low,
even when I could do the work. I decided to do better, and
correct my discipline problem, so that my other grades wouldn't
suffer because of penalties.

Michie - Are you saying that in order to get through, you had to
stay out of discipline problems?

#1 - No, it wasn't so much that, as I decided, "Oh, let's do it
like this now." It wasn't until somebody actually sat me down
and told me that I could really get some good grades that I
improved my discipline problems. In junior high, it was more
personality clashes with teachers .

Michie - Did you all ever have any discipline problems? Were the policies fair?

#3 - I knew what my problem was, I was a chatterbox. I wouldn't act up to the teacher, but I grew out of it. It was a personal thing, wanting to be accepted.

#2 - My discipline problem wasn't with the teachers it was with the students. In the second grade I had this gang mentality like I owned the school and so I had henchmen with me. If somebody told on me, I would send my henchmen out to beat somebody up. Because I was smart, I could get away with it. It was a manipulation thing. My teachers were like, "No, not #2." I could work the teachers . I remember in the third grade I got my mouth washed out with soap, but it was never a question of not being able to do the work. My conflict was with the students and the need to conquer and be a leader.

Michie - Did you feel like you were tracked or labeled, positively or negatively? What was its effect on you?

#1 - I was definitely labeled. I was considered in the top 10 percent. I remember crying because I was put in the bilingual class, and she took me out of class and told me she was going to tell my sister. My sister had set the precedent because she was very well disciplined. I was harder to control, but well above her academically. Tracing it through high school, no one took care of me in junior high. Not until high school when my counselor made sure that I was taken care of, that I got into UT. She made sure that when the college counselors came, the UT lady knew who I was. She made sure I was identified.

#3 - I was positively tracked but rebelled against it. I felt like I was being pushed ahead of where the other Black students were. I was trying to be accepted by them, while still trying to get a good grade. There is a perception problem that when you're trying to get good grades, you're trying to be W. I would just get the B's when I could get A's. I still deal with that motivation problem. There was big racial dynamics going on in elementary school, being in a predominantly White school.

#2 - My tracking started with my mom. My mom put me in some school setting at the age of two. I had to be taken out because I began to stutter, since I was learning more information than I was able to talk since I was at such a young age. Because I could handle it, my mom labeled me like a genius. No one at school did until I took the end of the year tests and scored in the 90s. It wasn't until I started the magnet program when I saw what my scores where and what they meant that I was really labeled as potential engineering IQ and ability. Then I was labeled as a magnet kid, "Oh, you know so much."

Michie - Was there any type of African-American history component at school? If there was or wasn't how did that make you feel?

#2 - I don't remember one, so I don't think I was effected. Even when I got to UT, I had no concept of literature or anything. It wasn't until I ran into #1, that I knew it existed. You had Black history at church and your school talks about it, Harriett Tubman and stuff like that. I'm probably one of the few Blacks who doesn't know anything about Malcolm X or Martin Luther King outside of what I've heard on TV. I always thought that Black history was negative, since if I learned it, I was always going to be in conflict with somebody. If I don't learn it, I won't have to be in conflict with anybody. I didn't want to be Back to Africa or anything like that.

#3 - I had no Black history classes. I was from Detroit, the whole city is 60% and my high school was 99.8% Black, so I still had an identity with the people around me. I didn't learn anything about Black history until I went to college, a predominantly White college, Oberlin, which was very liberal. They had an African Heritage house, I thought "This is great." That was the reason I went to Oberlin.

#1 - My education began when I was very young. My older brother was in the Civil Rights movement as much as you could be in the early 70's. If you see pictures of me and my sister from back then, we would be holding of the Black power sign with our fist. All of that was put in to me. All I knew was that "I'm Black and I'm proud, say it loud." We were all into that Afro's, Afro-Sheen, Blow Out Kits, that was just around me all the time. I didn't know who was who. Soul Train - we would move the furniture! In elementary school they were active, they would have Black talent shows. But I developed an interest on my own, I would find Black encyclopedias and read them on my own. So whatever I really knew I learned on my own.

Michie - What do you think your family's involvement was in your education? Did they reinforce it or not?

#3 - My family reinforced it all the time, they were on me. I was always a bookworm. Coming from a family of educators, education was it. Coming from a matriarchal family, all Black females, the only way to be empowered was to... My great-grandmother was the matriarch, she had a domestic job. We learned that the way you got ahead was not to depend on men, but to get an education and get a good job.

#2 - The women in my family were educators also. My mom encouraged me and has a Master's degree. My dad was a dropout and went to the Air Force. All my siblings graduated, but I am the first to graduate from college. It was an expectation from my mom that we all do that. I was the one that did whatever my mom wanted me to do. It was up to me to make my mom's dream come true.

Michie - What were your peers like growing up? Were they a
positive or negative influence?

#1 - I had a real positive family environment. I had friends
that were a positive effect, because there were other Black
females in the honors program. I had a best friend who had a
very different background, but we just encouraged each other and
decided to do well in school and just ran the neighborhood. She
was a very positive influence.

#3 - I didn't get good positive reinforcements. The ones I kept
in contact from the magnet school have been successful, but no
one from elementary school has done well.

Michie - How do you remember you personally valuing education?

#2 - I had a value for education because I had a desire to know.
It made me get in trouble sometimes, because I would question
what goes on in the house. My mom always made sure we had
encyclopedias in the house. So when she made this bold statement
about a punishment tool she was going to use, I looked it up and
told my younger sister not to worry because it wouldn't hurt us.
When she found out, I got in more trouble. In the school setting
it was positively reinforced. It started at home and went on.

#3 - I really don't know. School was never a struggle, but I
never really studied. College was just the next thing. I never
had any particular goal in mind.

#1 - I definitely had personal reasons because I loved the
written word. I loved to read and write. In third grade I
started my autobiography. I always like words and that naturally
spilled over into my education. I remember doing better with
word problems than with numbers. I was good at following written
directions.

Michie - Did you feel like school was a nice place to be? Did
you feel like the people in the school and the community wanted
you to succeed?

#1 - By the time I realized what was going on, it was high
school. The counselor was important, my English teacher was of
course important. She was a good teacher. All my teachers were
good in high school. Everybody that knew me wanted me to
succeed. My junior high school teacher made sure I got the local
newspaper student of the year award. They all wanted me to
succeed.

#2 - By the eighth grade and junior high, people became to be
instrumental in helping me, academically and emotionally. In
high school all of the teachers were very instrumental in making
sure my freshman year in college was the same. I would say that
by the time I got to high school, everyone was there to help me.

Michie - Who was the most important female role model in your life?

#1 - My mother, simply because I love her more than any other female in my life. My mother and my grandmother combined. They were always there no matter what. I remember her telling me, "You are going to college if I have to work two or three jobs." I think she did, because my freshman year I had money everywhere. She was determined.

#3 - I would also say my grandmother and my mother. My mother was always so smart to me. I always wanted to be like them, other women paled to them.

#2 - Same for me.

Michie - Are you all talking about your maternal grandmothers.

All - Yes.

Michie - We've talked about a lot of things. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you think is important?

#1 - We didn't talk about the males in our lives. I had male teachers, and friends who were very encouraging. I remember my male friends never discouraging me and my girlfriends who were smart. I remember an admiration. There was never a Black male in my honors program, but they were always encouraging. My brother was always encouraging to me. My father was always encouraging, he would give me $5 for every A. My pastor was encouraging to me. They were the ones who were working, they were the support that you might take for granted. Black males and males in general were always important.

#3 - Has to be money, economics. I don't think that if my mother was all alone she would have been as successful. I don't think I could be where I am now if I didn't have that underlying level of money.

Michie - If you had to put your finger on one factor as being the most important thing in your educational success, what would it be?

#3 - Family.

#2 - It's kind of abstract, but it was purpose. I had some kind of motivating factor within myself that if I was all by myself I would still want to learn. I wanted to make it to the same level that my mom made, but it was an indescribable drive that I'll call purpose.

#1 - What was practical for me was my love for words. You could call it a love for knowledge, but I just loved to read. It

didn't matter if it was fiction or non-fiction, I could read the encyclopedia A to Z.

Michie - That does it and I appreciate your time very much.

Michie - I want to first start out by finding out what it was like at school. I'm interested in knowing what your experiences were with Black male teachers, administrators, counselors, coaches.... Also, remember to state your name the first few times you speak.

#1 - As far as the influence of Black teachers, most of my teachers were White. I remember having a Black teacher in elementary school, but I never had a Black male teacher in school at all.

#2 - Shoot, there wasn't a Black male coach or teacher that was influential for me until high school. I would say that they weren't because I was not on the sports track. The basketball coach taught government and his thing was get the brothers through. The influence didn't come from him. I was participating in sports just to fulfill the P.E. requirement.

#3 - I didn't have any Black male teachers in elementary school, they were all female and White females. In high school, we had two Black coaches. I went to a small high school in Mississippi. I had a Black coach who also taught government. As far an impact, it was not really academic. They just taught a class to say that they were teaching. The other coach was in no way someone I wanted to pattern myself after. He would slip notes to the girls and stuff like that. He favored the brothers that played on his team and were good or had good looking sisters.

#1 - My first encounter with a Black male teacher was also in high school. He had no impact on me, the only thing I could relate to with him was his color.

#3 - There was a young man that was a band instructor. He graduated from a Black university, Jackson State. He was familiar with the Black experience and knew the challenges that Black youth would face in the rural environment. He was instrumental in showing me that there were alternative methods of education. After only a year, he established the band, had a good rapport with the students.

Michie - Did your teachers have too high or too low expectations of you going through school? Or were they just about right?

#2 - I think they were too low. We were in urban minority school systems. These school systems were a way to get bad teachers out of the system. If they had teachers who were not doing well in the mainstream school, they would route them to the Black schools.

Michie - Especially White women?

#2 - Right. They tended to be very down. The reason why
minorities have not done well in math and science, is that in the
teaching relationship, there has to be an element of trust.
You're bringing me to levels that help me identify my ignorance,
you're dealing with a very threatening part of me. And if I
don't trust you.... My math instructor, when I was learning
multiplications, and I fault her to this day for not liking math,
she would give us pop quizzes the day after we learned it. If
you didn't do well she would put you down in front of the class.
So, I was like, "I don't even want to be up in here." So to this
day, I don't like math, and how can you like science if you don't
like math? For the most part, it was that type of thing. There
were some good instructors, but the school system was below
standard.

#3 - I moved to a very rural system that academically was 20
years behind everybody else in Mississippi. The old school way
of teaching - you had to say yes sir and yes ma'am. I had to
correct my teachers sometimes, because their diction was so bad.
I didn't understand a lot of the terms they would use sometimes,
they would say like "How much you lack?" after we take tests. I
had to decipher that to mean how much did you miss. It wasn't as
challenging. The kids had poor reading skills, and they didn't
emphasize reading skills, because their diction was so bad. The
White female instructors did not know how to direct the energies
of the Black students. They went to White Southern universities
and didn't know how to deal with minority children. The
instructors from Northern cities were different. There was one
lady who taught a gifted group that I was in. She broadened us
culturally and academically. She would take us to the zoo and
stuff like that.

Michie - Did you ever feel like you were tracked or labeled,
either positively or negatively in school?

#1 - I really wish that I could have had teachers that would have
showed more interest in me and pushed me to do better. This one
English teacher I had in seventh grade, the way she taught, it
was so easy. I made a "B" in that class because she was so good,
I expected to do good. She was strict on her rules, but she
applied her material so you could grasp it. Sometimes I felt
labeled because of the system. If you didn't function at a
certain level they would put you in a special class and label you
as slow. If you got in one of those classes, there would be so
much ruckus in the room, you had to be slow, because you couldn't
learn nothing. All the way to junior high school, I didn't feel
labeled, I didn't think about it.

#2 - We didn't feel labeled but we probably were because of our
school's skin color. I felt labeled looking back because you can
feel the expectations, my school was labeled. It seems like it

permeated throughout the atmosphere, "If they go to college good, but let's just try to get them through these 12 grades. If they learn something, good, but let's just get them out of our hands."

#3 - That was exactly our predicament. Until we got to high school, the bad class was on their way down. They sent the high school principal down, who was the principal when my dad went to school. You were labeled because of how your parents were.

#2 - The orchestra instructor, he was Jewish I think. He inspired me, because he believed in me. We liked his class because he was the most positive influence.

#1 - I didn't get that academically, I got it in sports. They showed a special interest in me only if you won district or state in track. I wonder what the difference would have been if I had had that. Right now, I'd like to run a little slower and read a little better. I thought about how this comedian said how terms have changed from queer to homosexual. The bad class is now hyperactive. We realize now that their energies need to be redirected.

Michie - Did you feel like the school was provided for you to learn? Did you feel like you had a school and community behind me who want me to learn?

#2 - No, school was a place that I simply had to go. I don't feel a part. I didn't feel ownership or a co-participant.

#1 - I would have gained more from school if it had been more culturally sensitive. People talk about Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Booker T. Washington - looking back at school, that could have been somebody living out of the country as far as I know. I could do the Pledge of Allegiance and knew who George Washington was.

Michie - Was there any type of African-American history component at your school?

#3 - I had one history teacher who tried to teach everything. I think he was more into history, than trying to do something deliberate. There was no emphasis on it. A lot of the instructors participated in the Civil Rights movement, but they were still living in the 60s educationally. They knew your parents, but they knew no new techniques.

#2 - I'm sitting here trying to remember even a Black history program.

#1 - You're like, "I know there had to be something."

#2 - In elementary, it was predominantly Black, but even then I don't remember it. In junior high, the teacher would speak directly out of the history book. What was in there was what

they taught. It was a shock to me to go to college and realize
that there were someone here before Christopher Columbus.

Michie - Let's talk about discipline problems. Did you feel like
it was important to stay out of trouble to get through school?
Did you feel like the discipline policies were fair?

#2 - I knew I had to get hooked up to academics because that was
my way out. I had strong support from my parents, which bought
tension from my mother and stepfather, because she wanted to make
sure that we would get what she didn't. My stepfather was like,
"Let these boys do whatever they want."

Michie - So you didn't get in a lot of trouble in school then?

#2 - No, I was a good kid. I guess you could have called me
teacher's pet.

#3 - I still haven't found a person that shares what my high
school was like because it was so unique. We always got in
trouble in groups, and my principal would sit us all down and
say, "Now, your daddy..." He'd have us all laughing. And then
he'd say, "now bend over and let me get me some." I wish some of
that could still be used. It was fair, because there was a
reward system intact. There could have been more of an emphasis
on positive rewards. Like if you make good grades, you could be
over a committee, or read the announcements over the intercom.

#1 - I was never in trouble that much, but I had my share. I
thought it was important to stay out of trouble. Most of my
trouble was in high school, and it was mostly for skipping. The
vice principal, a Black guy, was my father's friend. He would
always ask me what he thought my father would say. I didn't
agree with some of the disciplinary actions. Some of the
punishment techniques, like our coaches would have a sawed off
bat that they would give licks with. Like they were trying to
hit a home run. Sports were some of my better classes, so I
never got in trouble.

#2 - I always lived in fear of mom. I wasn't so much worried
about what the school would do as what my mom would do when I got
home.

Michie - What was your parental involvement in education? Also
your siblings and your whole family situation. Was it a positive
or negative influence?

#3 - My grandfather was a schoolteacher. None of his kids even
went to college. It was a different day and age. The Korean
war, Southern migration of minorities to the East, you could
actually get by without education. They bypassed it. They
stressed a need for it, because they knew times had changed. But
they didn't know the ins and outs of college education.

#2 - It was both positive and negative pressure. My mom was very supportive. She didn't know how to make sure we went through the right loopholes, she just knew it was important. Peer pressure, stepfather - education for a Black male was looked down upon. You were called a bookworm, sissy. They was a lot to overcome if you embraced education. You caught a lot of flack. But my family was like, "If that's what you want to do, do it."

#1 - My dad finished sixth grade and my mom finished high school. high school was the cycle everyone went through, but it was not like a vital thing. But now, I feel like it aint over until after college. My parents didn't know any better. It was in their history to give to me. But I should have been able to get it from the system.

Michie - Were your peers a positive or negative influence?

#3 - A lot of them hadn't been out of the state. A lot had high aspirations, but none of them knew how to do it. The counselors didn't even give us financial aid papers. It blew me away when I saw that in the movies. That was unknown to me. I had a cousin that got his doctorate, and it really inspired me. One cousin. A lot of the Black universities came to college day and it showed me what college might be like.

#1 - I can't think of one of my family members that actually went to college. I was the role model for my peers.

#2 - I had a few peers that went on to school. They either went to the service and few went to college. On both sides of my family, I'm it. Having two advanced degrees, they thought education had made me mad. When I told them I was going on to get my masters, they were like "What do you need with that?"

#1 - Even before I came to Praise, my mindset was not to go to college, but to trade school. To teach you how to work. I can't remember even going to a counselors office. I think that everybody across the board should be able to do that. If one student gets it, everyone should get it, no matter what your grades were. I took out of my high school English class and got put into typing.

#2 - There was a very influential counselor at high school. He went to my church and knew my family and was able to tell me what I needed to do.

Michie - Who can you identify as the most important male role model in your life? Or was there one?

#2 - For me it was my high school orchestra director. Sad to say, I grew up under a stepfather. I told him to his face that he was the best example of what I did not want to be. He was a negative role model. A positive role model didn't come until high school.

#1 - I'm kind of embarrassed to say this, but it was this guy that I kind of took on as my godfather. He was a local weed dealer. But the reason why our relation was like that was because he showed me a kind of interest. He taught me a lot of the ropes on the street scenes. Even now, he's a part of my past. The relationship we had, I hate to see that he is in the same situation. He had the most influence, even over my dad. It's sad, but I wasn't searching for identity.

#3 - For me, it was my dad. He was a survivor. He taught me how to grow up hard and have fun doing it. He taught me how to roll with the punches and use the punches to your advantage. He was the kind of person who could do anything, and he always gave me that kind of encouragement. He knew a little bit about everything, whatever route I chose he was going to support me. Academically, it was the music instructor.

Michie - We've talked about a lot of things. Is there anything else that you see as important to where you are right now educationally?

#3 - My church life. I met some other people who were serious about academics, but were also in touch with their environment. My pastor was a positive influence like that. He showed that education doesn't have to change your essence, but it can enhance your essence.

#2 - I'd have to agree. I was the church boy as well. I'd have to leave basketball practice, and had to give it up, to be the assistant director of the choir. I can see that it was God's hand on my life that He had something to do with me. I could have easily been a statistic. I fight labeling it like this, but my family was a dysfunctional family. So I could have easily been a statistic.

#1 - I wish my family would have had more direction. My parents made me go to church and stuff, but I wish I could have had more direction.

Michie - What do you identify as the single most important factor to your educational success?

#1 - For me, I don't think I would have had an educational future if it weren't the encouragement I've gotten from Pastor Carson. This is a new revelation I'm operating under now. That's why I make the statement that Jesus is the author and finisher of my faith, because I couldn't have stumbled this way.

#2 - It has to be the spiritual aspect. How I ended up liking Austin, I just came here and fell in love with it. The way I was able to get it school, come up here and graduate from UT. The ways the doors opened for my Masters program, and the ways the

doors will open for my doctoral degree, it has to be the hand of God, without a doubt.

#3 - It has to be God. There's no way these pieces could have been put together. My parents were probably unemployed almost 10 years, but we never did without. They invested so much in me, so I wanted to do something so that could at least say that they got their sons through school.

Michie - I thank you guys very much. This was a good group.

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