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BEAR WITNESS:

AFRICAN AMERICAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF THEIR
TEACHING PRACTICES IN SEGREGATED AND DESEGREGATED SCHOOLS

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by
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DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated in memory of my parents

James and Sadie Walker

who gave me life;

sacrificed so that I might live;

and then loved me enough to give me

wings to fly.

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Although it has been 50 years since the landmark decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, the education of African American children is still in a critical, unresolved state. Delpit, in the forward of Foster's (1997) *Black Teachers on Teaching*, suggested looking "at the past through new eyes in order to determine what we might learn to help address the apparently difficult educational issue of providing an excellent education for all African American children" (p. ix).

The African American teachers who have taught in segregated and desegregated schools have participated in both the past and the present of American education. Their insight into how to educate African American students is therefore valuable. The purpose of this study was to ascertain the perspectives of African American teachers who taught in both segregated and desegregated schools. The main

focus was on their teaching practices in each type of school setting and the critical examination of those practices searching for patterns of effective teaching strategies for African American students.

Using a qualitative ethnographic methodology, this inquiry answered two questions: (a) What do African American teachers report as their teaching practices in segregated schools? and (b) To what extent did the teaching practices of African American teachers change when they taught in desegregated schools? The study revealed 12 practices: using resources effectively, team planning, continuing professional development, dressing in a professional manner, establishing classroom routines, varying instructional strategies, cultivating relationships, using strong classroom management and discipline, providing additional assistance, holding high expectations, embracing cultural sensitivity, and caring. These African American teachers' practices changed to some extent as they moved to desegregated schools. Of the 12 teaching practices, five remained the same: using resources effectively, dressing in a professional manner, establishing classroom routines, providing additional assistance and holding high expectations. Two changed due to schools' organizational structure: continuing professional development and using strong classroom management and discipline. Five practices were modified by the teachers: team planning, varying instructional strategies, cultivating relationships, embracing cultural sensitivity and caring.

Since this study focused only on three African American female teachers, additional studies are needed to include African American male teachers and a large number of African American teachers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

“We have seen it and bear witness”
I John 1:2

Introduction

Prior to the implementation of the Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Topeka, Kansas, the United States maintained distinct and separate public school systems. One system provided educational opportunities for White students and the other served African American students. Although controlled by Whites, The Negro Public Education System had African American teachers and administrators who provided education to millions of African American children. However, the Brown decision brought the dismantling of the Negro Public Education System.

The immediate impact of the Brown decision was the loss of jobs for the majority of those African American teachers. Only a remnant crossed over to educate America’s children, children of all colors. These few teachers had the privilege and burden of teaching in segregated and desegregated schools.

The African American teachers who have taught in segregated and desegregated schools have participated in both the past and the present of American education. Their insight into how to educate African American students is therefore valuable. However, until recently, their stories remained largely untold. These

teachers have seen and can bear witness to what works and does not work in the educating of children, especially African American children.

Overview of the Study

The focus of this study involves African American teachers reflecting on their practices and the conditions that facilitated learning in their classrooms and schools. Teaching in both segregated and desegregated schools presented a unique opportunity to work with African American children in two different settings. By sharing their practices, these teachers are a part of the “crucial bridge between what was, what is and what might be” (Lipman, 1998, p. 245).

This chapter presents the major components of the study, including the statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, and the limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 provides a literature review of the key components of this study, emphasizing the research on African American teachers and their practices, and establishes the theoretical lens through which this study is viewed. Chapter 3 defines the methodology by which this study was conducted. Chapter 4 details the data collection and findings, and Chapter 5 presents a summary of the findings and what conclusions can be drawn from it. The knowledge gained from this study contributes to creating a workable, viable public education system for all children in America.

The Failure of Public Education

In the eyes of many, public education has failed. Armed with statistics, report after report stated the troubling news (Gordon, 2003; Intercultural Development Research Association, 1999; Johnson, 2002; National Center for Education Statistics, 2001; Noguera, 2002; Raywid, 2000; Retana, 2001). News of failure was startling, but it was not new information. Since the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, Americans have been questioning the U.S. educational system. The education agenda returned as lead story in the media with the release of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) report, *A Nation at Risk*. America witnessed educational reform unlike it had ever seen before. Merit pay, extended school year, accountability, vouchers, charter schools, school choice, and teacher certification led the list. During the last decade, the paradigm has shifted from reforming to restructuring. The emphasis now is not how to rearrange what was, but how to create something all together new.

New programs such as alternative schools and virtual classrooms sprung up. These innovative programs failed to improve achievement or close the gap between White students and African American students. The National Center for Education Statistics (2001) reported that one in five 12th graders cannot identify the main idea in what they read, and two in five 12th graders cannot use and compute fractions, percents, and averages. Further research in the area of academic achievement pointed out that African American, Latino, and Native American 12th graders made up only about 1 in 10 of those students scoring at the Proficient level on the 1996 National

Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) math and science tests, although they represented about one third of the population who took the test (Johnson, 2002, p. 4). Lack of academic success is one of the factors that lead to dropping out of school. The Intercultural Development Research Association (1999) found that one in every two Hispanic students and African American students from 1994–1995 ninth-grade class never reached the 12th grade, compared to one of every three White students. Each of these reports directly stated the fact that minority children are not meeting the established educational standards.

The failure of public education is more pronounced when one assesses the status of minority children in the public school system today. Murrell (2002) boldly stated that urban public schools have failed and still are failing African American children:

Nationwide, African American students are disproportionately expelled, suspended, and referred to special education programs in urban schools. African American students lag behind European American students in high school completion and employment....Significant numbers of African American students, and other students of color, drop out of school—as much as one half to two-thirds in some city districts. Fewer than ten percent of African American men go to college, yet they constitute 76 percent of the nation’s prison population. More African American young people drop out of high school than graduate. (p. 7)

The general public has expressed its dissatisfaction with public schools. According to Donavel (1995), “Almost half of Americans (47%) say they do not believe that a high school diploma guarantees that a student has learned the basics” (p. 3). In many cases the focus of their discontentment was the teacher. Turner (2003) elaborated, “There are complaints that many teachers appear not to care about their

students as people, with scant patience for those who cannot keep up with the lesson and little interest in the children's nonscholastic needs" (p. 217). The failure of the teacher is symbolized by academic achievement, or lack thereof, of America's youth. More pronounced, however, is the ever-increasing academic achievement gap between White students and ethnic minority students, with the largest gap between White and African American students.

The NAEP results consistently show a frightening gap between the basic academic skills of the average African American or Latino student and those of the typical white or Asian American. By twelfth grade, on average, black students are four years behind those who are white or Asian. Hispanics don't do much better. (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003, p. 12)

Over the years correcting the failing state of public education has been the task of policy makers and educators. Public policymakers have responded to the public outcry through litigation and legislation. When African Americans wanted equal access and equal protection as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment, *Brown v. Board of Education* was argued in the hallowed halls of the Supreme Court in 1954. According to Wells and Crain (1994), the purpose of *Brown v. Board of Education* was that "by guaranteeing African Americans access to predominately White institutions it would enhance their opportunities for social mobility and thus improve their life chances" (p. 531). *Brown II* (1955) stated emphatically that the integration of schools be implemented with all deliberate speed. By the early 1960s, with integration in the South proceeding at a snail's pace, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which denied federal funds to entities not providing equal access.

This Act forced integration on those school districts that were not achieving the letter or the spirit of the Brown decision.

However, the achievement gap between African American students and White students never closed. Again, legislation attempted to provide a solution. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was hailed as a “landmark in education reform designed to improve student achievement and change the culture of America’s schools” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p.1).

Those in the field of education contributed to ideas to improve education as well. Turner (2003) stated, “Many remedies to the daunting problems surrounding the education of Black youth today have been suggested, including better teacher training, school vouchers, and Afrocentric curricula” (p. 218). Retana (2001), Mendler (2000), and Kuykendall (1991) offered practical solutions for working with minority children. Some efforts were total failures; other efforts were successful, but only for a short period of time. In either case, the achievement gap remained.

Compounding the situation, as the number of African American students increased, the number of African American teachers decreased. “Being a person of color does not in itself prepare one to teach effectively in today’s classrooms, which may have students from as many as 15 different language and cultural groups” (Kitano, Lewis, Lynch, & Graves, 1996, p. 70). The color of the teacher does not necessarily imply academic success for the student. In today’s changing context, many African American teachers are no more patient, understanding, or sensitive to the educational and emotional needs of Black children than their White counterparts,

and many White teachers interact well with Black children (Turner, 2003). Educators support the notion that good teaching leads to student achievement. According to Singham (2003), “It is not hard to understand why good teaching reduces the [achievement] gap. What happens in the classroom—both in terms of what the teacher does and of the relationship that is created between the teacher and student—is extremely important” (p. 589).

The problem is that African American students are more likely to get poor teaching. Kozol (1991) found considerable evidence that students of color in all parts of the country are more likely to be taught by less experienced and less educated teachers. The teacher is essential to the success of students, especially African American students. Singham’s (2003) recent study captured the significance of the teacher in the lives of African American students:

Compounding this gap in teaching quality is the fact that the impact of teacher expectations is three times as great for blacks as for whites and also larger for girls and for children from low income families. Interesting, the ethnicity of the teacher has little effect on student performance: 81% of black females and 62% of black males want to please the teacher more than they do a parent, the comparable figure for whites are 28% for females and 32% for males. In other words, the impact of the teacher is far greater for minority students. (p. 589)

Although it has been 50 years since the landmark decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, the education of African American children is still in a critical, unresolved state. Lisa Delpit, in the forward of Michele Foster’s (1997) *Black Teachers on Teaching*, suggested looking “at the past through new eyes in order to determine what we might learn to help address the apparently difficult educational issue of providing

an excellent education for all African American children.” The search for answers must continue. Failure is not an option.

Statement of the Problem

The current telling of education of Black America is an incomplete story. Little research exists on teachers who taught in segregated schools. According to Conway (2000), in *Central Virginia Dreamkeepers: Narratives of African American Teachers That Taught Before, During and After the Brown v. Topeka Board of Education Decision*, “With the implementation of school desegregation plans following Brown (1955 through about 1968), the ‘colored education system’ (more appropriately the Negro Public Education System) was dismantled” (p. 1). Also abandoned was a canon of nearly 100 years of knowledge about educating African American children. This loss is mainly attributed to the fact that after the Brown decision, many African American teachers were systematically forced out of the teaching profession. Only a remnant remained to teach in integrated schools. These few professional educators have served as witnesses to the systematic education of African American children. They know what has gone on before; they have concrete practical knowledge of what worked and did not work when educating African American children. They have wisdom and insight that can only be gained by experience. Although there is emerging literature on exemplary teachers of African American students (Foster, 1995, 1997; King, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994), more

can be learned from the experiences of African American teachers who taught in both segregated and desegregated schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the perspectives of African American teachers who taught in segregated and desegregated schools. The main focus was on their teaching practices in each type of school setting.

Research Questions

Using the qualitative method of inquiry, the questions addressed in this study are the following:

1. What do African American teachers report as their teaching practices in segregated schools?
2. To what extent did the teaching practices of African American teachers change when they taught in desegregated schools?

Significance of the Study

Achieving academic success for America's future, which includes African American students, runs parallel to America's ability to remain a world power. The education of its citizenry has been an integral part of the democratic bedrock upon which this country operates. The achievement gap must be closed. Murrell (2002) suggested that instead of pursuing performance on high-stakes testing, the real

solution lies in the quality of teaching and learning. Thus, this study begins by recapturing a part of the teaching practices from the days of segregation and move through the transition into integrated schools. Perspectives of teachers who, until recently, have been ignored in the discussion of educating African American children are highlighted. The knowledge and insight of these teachers have pedagogical implications for teachers, teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities. America's teachers must be prepared to effectively educate its diverse student population.

Assumptions

The participants in this study were all African American retired teachers who taught in a segregated school prior to the local implementation of the Brown decision and who taught in desegregated schools following that implementation. The following assumptions were made:

1. Each participant had a choice to accept or decline the offer to participate in this study. They participated of their own free will.
2. Participants were honest in their responses. These selected persons are held in high regard within their community and are considered persons of integrity and trustworthiness. In addition, no monetary considerations were involved.
3. While the passage of time does affect the memory, these teachers could recall their teaching experiences.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions are used:

African American – descendants of persons brought to the Americas as slaves between the 17th and 19th centuries. Throughout the history of the United States, African Americans have called many names, such as colored, Negro, Black and Afro-American. The use of these other names for African American are used in direct quotes, which most often is a reflection of the time period in which it was originally said or written.

De facto segregation – segregation that occurs as the result of decisions by private individuals

De jure segregation – racial separation that is legally sanctioned

Desegregated schools/integrated schools – schools after the implementation of the Brown decision at the local level. The student body is racially mixed. The terms desegregated and integrated are interchangeable in this study.

Minority – people who identify themselves as being of racial or ethnic heritage other than White.

Segregated schools – schools prior to the implementation of the Brown decision at the local level. In the study, all the members of the student body are African American.

Teaching practices – the art and science of teaching, the activities of instructing, and the behaviors teachers use to facilitate learning.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

This qualitative study has several limitations.

1. Only a small number of African American teachers taught in segregated schools and integrated schools. Thus, the first limitation is that the sample size is small.

2. Within that small sample size, the number of living teachers available for interviews is even smaller.

3. The passage of time could have a bearing on the memory of these teachers. For some participants, it has been nearly 20 years since they were actively teaching in the public school system.

4. Lastly, one of the limitations inherent in qualitative research is the limited ability to make generalizations.

Delimitations

This study focused only on the perceptions of African American teachers regarding their teaching practices. Its purpose did not include the evaluation of the reported teaching practices. This study did not address the pros and cons of integration.

Summary

The lack of progress in educating African American children has resulted in staggering statistics that cast the shadow of failure over public education. Clearly, something must be done. Past efforts have not closed the achievement gap that exists between White and minorities. Since the teacher is the primary resource to the student, it is important that teachers be a part of the dialogue. The African American teachers in this study have firsthand knowledge on educating African American children. This study sought to highlight their perspectives of successful teaching practices with African children.

Chapter 1 outlined the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and its significance and the limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature pertaining to the historical context in which the African American teacher worked and the research that has been conducted about those teachers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

“Sometimes you have to look back to get ahead.”

Anonymous

Introduction

The literature reviewed for this study covers five essential topics: (a) educational history of African Americans, (b) segregated schools, (c) significant litigation and legislation that impacted African American education, (d) desegregated/integrated schools, and (e) African American teachers within that history. The history of the African American education is a complex and sometimes complicated story because it is not an isolated story. Interwoven into the historical fabric of African American education are litigation, legislation, and the underpinning of race in American society. Until recently, the perspectives of African American teachers were a silent voice in much of the research. The interconnectedness of the history of African American education and the African American teacher is apparent. Each is a part of the other, as the literature review will reflect.

The History of the Education of African Americans in America

The following is a brief discussion of the history of the education of African Americans in America. The synopsis is divided in two parts: pre–Civil War and post–Civil War.

Pre-Civil War

Originally, there were no laws or regulations regarding the education of African Americans on American soil. After all, slaves were to simply do whatever they were told to do by their masters. For the most part, masters did not see the need to educate their slaves beyond what was required to complete their immediate tasks. Some African Americans did learn to read because they had a more benevolent master or the master's children. Frederick Douglass, a famous African American abolitionist, told his own story in how he learned to read.

I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time, I succeed in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems. I had no regular teacher. My mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to instruct, but had set her face against my being instructed by any one else. (Douglass, 1845/1993, p. 59)

Douglass went on to state how he exchanged breadcrumbs from the dinner table for reading lessons with hungry White boys. "This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge" (p. 60).

In the 1700s as the antislavery movement spread, many churches and benevolent societies began to offer educational opportunities to African Americans. Leading the way was the Presbyterian Church, which opened a Negro school in 1740 in Charleston, South Carolina. The first African Free School was founded in New York City in 1787 by the Manumission Society. In 1824, New York City had seven African Free Schools, which provided a free education to all African American children. States began to establish laws preventing public school accessibility to

African American students. First Ohio in 1829, then South Carolina in 1834, followed by Connecticut in 1839—states began shutting classroom doors to African American children. Despite opposition to educating African Americans, both African American and White teachers forged on. Near the end of the Civil War, Union soldiers found “Miss Deaveaux” still teaching.

One such educator, found in Savannah, Georgia, when the Union Army moved in, was a Negro woman whom tradition knows only as “Miss Deaveaux.” She had been teaching a private school in the same building since 1838. Although quite advanced in years, she was still teaching....Many of her former students, then scattered throughout the South, were ready to join her in organizing a new educational system for the freedmen. (Bullock, 1967, p. 25)

Post–Civil War

With the military defeat of the South came Reconstruction. Reconstruction ushered in legal schools for the former slaves. Most schools were operated as a part of the U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedman, and Abandoned Lands, better known as the Freedman Bureau. The American Missionary Association, which was organized in 1849 and had already formed some schools, was also active. These two organizations worked in concert with one another. The Freedmen’s Bureau provided the building and materials for school and the American Missionary Association provided the teachers, which eventually included African American teachers. In addition, they created opportunities of higher education as well. Results of their labor included Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and Talladega College in Talladega, Alabama.

The South, wishing to maintain its former lifestyle, began to enact Black Codes. These codes led to the closing of many Freedmen Bureau schools. Southern

states began passing laws that would interfere or halt the education of African Americans. For example, the Florida legislature passed “a special tax on all male Negroes, to be paid to into the treasury to be used to establish and maintain schools for Negroes” (Bullock, 1967, p. 40). Just in case the Negro males managed to pay the tax, the law provided that the local superintendent was the sole authority on who was or was not certified to teach. Needless to say, if there were no teachers, there were no classes. Individuals with strong Old South sentiment supported state statutes with ideas of their own. Some Whites would not hire an African American if they went to school or if their children or family members went to school. African American teachers were often asked to leave town and in some cases were run out of town.

During the 1860s, most southern states amended or rewrote their constitutions to create a public education system. For example, the Texas constitution called for a free and appropriate education for its citizenry. In 1896, the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision operationalized the dual school system, one for Whites and one for African Americans.

Segregated Schools

Research on segregated schools articulates the poor conditions of segregated schools (Bond, 1969; Franklin & Anderson, 1978; Walker, 1996). Those conditions included dilapidated buildings, nonworking restrooms, and secondhand books and equipment. The schools were understaffed, and African American teachers received significantly less pay than White teachers doing the same type of work. A few studies

have documented the strengths of segregated schools. When African American communities were asked what they thought of their schools, often the answers did not dwell on a comparison of what the White schools had and what the African American schools did not have; rather, community members recalled their schools as warm, inviting, and nurturing places. While African Americans acknowledged that the conditions were substandard, the school stood as the center of the community.

The role of the school was to serve as the vehicle to imbue impressionable students with pride in acquiring the skills that would afford them greater opportunity in their local communities as well as knowledge that could be utilized throughout the larger community. This role was clearly defined. In many ways the school was the center of African-American life. (Jeffries, 1999, p. 13)

Trenholm High School in Tuscumbia, Alabama, is an example of a segregated school that throughout its history provided a solid educational program for its students and served as the center of the African American community. In a study done by Morris and Morris (2002), members of the community reflected upon the trials and victories of Trenholm, which started as Osborne Academy in 1877. Morris and Morris called their conclusions “lessons learned.” A few of those lessons are the following:

1. African American communities provided a good education for their children long before the 1954 Brown decision and school desegregation.

2. From the beginning of the 20th century, the majority of southern African American educators rejected the philosophy that the training of African Americans should be limited to industrial education.

3. Relationships can mean everything in improving the academic achievement of African American children.

4. What we need most to improve academic achievement in America is a caring, competent, and qualified teacher in every classroom (Morris & Morris, 2002).

The segregated schools were by no means perfect, but two things were apparent: (a) the key role that teachers played and (b) the community's push for better facilities and equipment. The African American community continued in its struggle to improving the conditions of their schools. Protests recorded in newspapers and minutes of school board meetings supported the notion that African Americans were concerned about enhancing the educational conditions and opportunities for their children (Turner, 2003).

Research on African American teachers in segregated schools has focused on salary and the educational background of the African American teachers. Turner (2003) reported that in 1910 the average annual salary for White teachers was \$492, whereas that salary for African American teachers was \$122. This salary difference was to remain for another 50 years. The deficiency of education of African American teachers ended more rapidly. During the 1924–1925 school year, the average education of African American teachers was 4 years of high school, as compared to 1.5 years of college for their White counterparts. Ten years later, the difference was 2 years of college for African American teachers and 4 years of college for Whites. By 1940, the professional preparation of African American teachers began to increase noticeably and in some cases surpassed that of Whites (Walker, 2001, p. 763)

African American teachers considered themselves professional educators and throughout the history of education of African Americans responded as such. During the period of segregation, African American educators formed their own professional organizations, some dating back to the 1880s. As professionals, they accepted the responsibility for educating the African American children in their charge. Jefferies (1999) and Foster (1997) concurred that the teachers of segregated schools saw an inseparable link between the education of the student and social and economic mobility. This philosophical base provided a purpose and a sense of urgency for their work. These teachers went beyond the call of duty.

Jefferies (1999) identified three performance practices African American teachers used to successfully educate students in their charge. These performance practices were labeled trickster, matriarch, and preacher. The trickster maneuvered the student from a position of an inferior, second-class citizen to an empowered state of leadership and responsibility. The matriarch delivered skills that the student would need to be successful in life. The preacher performance strategy instilled respect, honor, dignity, and courage to press onward. These teachers gave students purpose. Students in segregated schools got sense of family and sense of pride.

African American teachers in segregated schools worked in dismal, unfair, discriminatory positions, but they viewed themselves as trained professionals. They were an integral part of the African American community and were a part of the process that led to significant change in the education of African Americans in America.

Significant Litigation and Legislation That Impacted African American Education

The judicial and legislative branches of the U.S. government have played an integral role in the history of the education of African Americans. Most scholars believe that the case that had the most impact on the education of African American was *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka, Kansas, which ended de jure segregation. The legislation that propelled the significant implementation of the Brown decision was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Analysis of these two events is best approached in chronological order for two reasons: (a) The historical backdrop of the Brown decision adds power to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and (b) it allows one to glance into the political and social context in which these two decisions were arrived at.

Fife (1996) stated, “Beginning with the tragic *Plessy v Ferguson* decision in 1896, the justices have been responsible for both the reinforcing the American system of apartheid and for dismantling it in *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka, Kansas in 1954” (p. 46). The Plessy case did not involve education, but its ruling directly impacted schools. Basically, the Plessy case made “separate but equal” the law of the land. The lone dissenter, Justice Harlan, however, set the stage for the Brown decision. Harlan stated in his dissenting opinion that “this country [has] no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here” (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896).

Six other Supreme Court cases brought to the forefront the issue of separate but equal: *Cumming v. County Board of Education*, 1899; *Gong Lum v. Rice*, 1927;

Gaines v. Canada, 1938; *Sipuel v. University of Oklahoma*, 1948; *Sweatt v. Painter*, 1950; and *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*, 1950 (Fife, 1996). In each of these rulings, the initial Plessy rule—separate but equal—remained unchanged. The Brown case was actually a compilation of cases from the states of Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware. The commonality of these cases was that African American children had been denied access to state supported public schools attended by White children. With a unanimous decision, on May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Warren read these words:

We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of educational opportunities? We believe that it does....We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, 1954)

Any simplified explanation of this ruling is inaccurate. “Black schools were bad and White schools were good” may be a short explanation, but it is an incorrect one. The Brown case was much more complex. The fundamental issue was the equal opportunity to an education, and anything that is “separate but equal” is inherently unequal. The Brown case was not about moving from one bad school to a good school. It involved a fundamental right to equal access to an education, and obtaining that right improved a person’s life chances.

This significant ruling ended de jure segregation, not de facto segregation. Brown II, which came a year later, established the guidelines by which federal district

courts would oversee the responsibility of the implementation of desegregation. The key words of “with all deliberate speed” fell on deaf ears in many local school districts. The self-imposed deafness abruptly ended when the loss of federal funds became a real threat. Prior to 1964, African American children in the majority of the Southern states attended segregated schools (Mawdsley, 2004). In fact, creative and innovative ways to resist integration were the rule of the day. Schemes such as integrating only one grade per year and freedom of choice and tuition to Whites to attend private schools were pervasive in the South. According to Mawdsley, “The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the first national systemic step to eradicate discrimination in a number of protected areas, including race” (p. 245). Beginning with the Brown decision as the philosophical base and leading up to the implementation of the ideals, which was forced by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the education of African Americans students and the lives of African American teachers significantly changed.

Abrupt change came in the form of a letter. The actual letter (Tillman, 2004, pp. 280–281) began with “Dear Miss Buchanan,” but “Dear Negro teacher” would have been sufficient. Similar letters were sent to thousands of African American teachers.

Dear Miss Buchanan:

Due to the present uncertainty about enrollment next year in schools for Negro children, it is not possible at this time to offer you employment for next year. If the Supreme Court should rule that segregation in the elementary grades is unconstitutional our Board will proceed on the assumption that the majority of people in Topeka will not want to employ negro teachers next year for white children.

Sincerely,
Wendell Godwin, Superintendent of School
Topeka, Kansas

An immediate impact of the Brown decision was the wholesale firing of African American teachers. A National Education Association study found that 30,000 African American teachers lost their jobs as an aftermath of the Brown decision (Jackson, 2001, p. 53). Tillman (2004) stated that prior to 1954, 82,000 African American teachers were employed in the United States. They taught 2 million African American students. Between 1954 and 1965 (the year massive integration took place in the South), 38,000 African American teachers lost their jobs in 17 southern states. This number does not include those that had a career change, retired, or died. By 2001, African American teachers represented only 6% of the teaching force, while African American students represented 17.1% of the student population. Just as tragic as the loss of African American teachers were the implementation plans in the southern states and the vastly different world that awaited African American students and the few African American teachers.

Desegregated/Integrated Schools

Desegregation was slow in coming to many locales. The Supreme Court ruling of 1954 was not implemented in some school districts until 10–20 years later.

Most desegregation in this country did not occur until after 1968, when white resistance was finally overpowered by additional federal court orders and legislation. In fact, the late 1970s through the early 1980s were the peak years of school desegregation in the U.S. (Wells, Holme, Revilla, & Atanda, 2004, p. 671)

Finding that substantial elements of a dual school system still remained [in Texas], Judge Justice placed virtually the entire state under court order, threatened severe sanctions against recalcitrant school districts, and assigned the implementation of the remedial order to the state's department of education, the Texas Education Agency. (Schott, 1982, p. 1)

African American teachers' and students' lives were directly and sometimes adversely affected by it. In a study done by Wilson and Seagall (2001) on the Austin Independent School District, Austin, Texas, African American teachers were forced to do cross-over teaching. Cross-over teaching consisted of reassigning Black teachers to White schools. Teachers mandated to cross over were met with hostility from the White students and White staff. In a similar study done by Davis (1999) of East Baton Rouge Parish, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, over 600 teachers both African American and White were a part of the cross-over process during the 1970–1971 school year. African American teachers were met with hostility. Although African American teachers put forth extra effort in their preparation and delivery of instruction in their cross-over classroom, they were openly challenged by White students and closely monitored by administrators and parents. African American teachers had to prove they were good teachers.

Following the cross-over of teachers, African American students were bused to White schools; that meant the closing of Black schools. Shircliffe (2002) researched the history of one such school in Tampa, Florida. To prevent the closing of Blake High School and to receive abundant federal dollars, the district converted it to a magnet school, which was the case in many areas. African American schools were either closed or reconfigured in some manner. In some cases, African American

students were either prevented from attending or had to apply to attend what they considered their own school.

The implementation of desegregation was a bittersweet victory. In addition to the massive firing of African American teachers, African American children were sent to schools that were foreign and sometimes hostile to them. This was further compacted by the fact that African American parents were unaware of how to navigate the predominately White school system.

Some educational researchers such as bell hooks actually experienced integration as a student and are able to articulate what this bittersweet victory meant to them.

School changed utterly with racial integration. Gone was the messianic zeal to transform our minds and beings that had characterized teachers and their pedagogical practices in our all-black schools. Knowledge was suddenly about information only. It had no relation to how one lived, behaved. It was no longer connected to antiracist struggle. When we entered racist, desegregated, white schools we left a world where teachers believed that to educate black children rightly would require a political commitment. Now we were mainly taught by white teachers whose lessons reinforced racist stereotypes. For black children, education was no longer about the practice of freedom. Realizing this, I lost my love of school. (hooks, 1994, p. 3)

African American Teachers

Extensive research has been conducted on teachers and teaching pedagogies, but for the most part, the African American teacher is invisible in these studies. Over the last 15 years, there has been an emerging body of knowledge about African American teachers and their practices. Lisa Delpit (1995, 2002), Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994, 2001), and Michele Foster (1997) have strongly supported the African

American teachers' right to be heard. They have maintained that the African American teachers' voices have been silent or minimal in the discussion of educational policies and practices for far too long. Delpit (1995) has focused on the skills of Black teachers that create success for students. Foster (1997) allowed African American teachers to tell their own story about teaching. Ladson-Billings (1994) has focused on culturally relevant teaching that has led to academic success for African American students. Others have contributed to this body of knowledge.

In a case study in the contextual setting of a segregated school in Tennessee, Savage (2001) provided an opportunity for African American teachers to explain in their own words what they did and how they did it. For example, George Northern, a science teacher, shared his thoughts in a personal communication:

If we didn't have specimens in the lab, we went out to that creek down behind the school and caught frogs....Exposure....I think maybe what I did to supplement my youngsters....I took a major field trip every year. We'd go to Oak Ridge one year....The next year we'd go down to the wind tunnel at Tullahoma. (pp. 193–194)

Savage described these teachers as ones who “spent long hours instilling in Black children not only academic skills but also life lessons of resiliency, self-reliance, service, faith, and morality” (p. 187).

Milner (2003) also did a case study; however, his study involved a single African American female English teacher in an integrated school setting. Milner's purpose was to understand the decision-making practices as she planned her classes and lessons. He also allowed the teacher to speak for herself:

I consider the kids in this planning. I work hard to make all my students feel like they are a part of the learning environment. This might be because I

haven't been made to feel like I am accepted in this school...I have been hurt here, and I don't want my students to feel hurt for being different—you know, we need to celebrate our differences. (Milner, 2003, p. 186)

Milner (2003) and Savage (2001) focused on the African American teacher. These studies are attempts to understand what pedagogical practices are used by the teachers who are successful with African American students.

Several scholars, Delpit (2002), Irvine (2002), and Foster (1997), focused on African American teachers or teachers who were successful with African American students and concluded that teaching practices should be reflective of the students. They further noted that the cultural relevant teaching practices of the African American teacher and others are clues to the academic success of African American students.

One theoretical framework that was built from the practices of teachers who were successful with African American children is sometimes referred to as *cultural responsive cultural congruency* or *culturally relevant teachings*. Ladson-Billings (1994), in her seminal work, *The Dreamkeepers*, established that “the primary aim of culturally relevant teaching is to assist in the development of a ‘relevant Black personality’” that allows African American students to choose academic excellence yet still identify with African and African American culture (p. 17).

Under the umbrella of culturally relevant teaching practices, Ladson-Billings (2001), Beaufoeuf-Lafontant (1999), Jeffries (1999), Stanford (1998), and Foster (1995) have explored various aspects of this phenomenon. Gay (2003) stated, “These emphases on ethnically specific cultural characteristics and learning styles symbolize

a new paradigm for educational equality and excellence—that is, pedagogy of plurality, grounded in cultural knowledge of ethnic and racial differences” (p. 211). Gay strongly urged continued research on this paradigm shift of using the cultures and experience of different ethnic groups as filters for teaching knowledge and skills.

Another recent study focused on culturally relevant teaching by asking African American teachers to recall practices and strategies of their teachers who were also African American (Stanford, 1998). The narrative inquiry found that those remembered teachers “focused on student’s strengths and sought ways to build it; had the capacity to see unrecognized potential; refused to accept mediocrity; and gave generously of their time” (p. 241). Beaufoeuf-Lafontant (1999, p. 703) reviewed ethnographies and autobiographies in search of a common theme among “politically relevant teachers.” The emerging theme from their narratives was that they valued the relationships that the teachers established with the students. Culturally relevant teachers feel personally, and not simply professionally, invested in educating children of color (Beaufoeuf-Lafontant, 1999).

According to Irvine and Armento (2001), culturally responsive educators exhibited seven characteristics:

1. Held high academic and personal expectations for each child and believe that each child can learn and is able to develop to the maximum level of his/her potential.
2. Provided equitable access to the necessary learning resources and sufficient opportunities for each child
3. Insured that learning outcomes are meaningful, relevant, useful and important to each child
4. Nurtured learning- support communities for each child

5. Facilitated the maximum growth of each learner by making informed academic achievement adaptations that match and build on the learner's prior knowledge, experiences, skills, and beliefs
6. Built positive and supportive classroom learning environments that are grounded in mutual and genuine respect for cultural diversity
7. Promoted classroom climates built on social justice, democracy and equity. (p.23)

It is in the classroom, with a teacher, that students spend most of their waking hours. The teacher–student relationship is critical to academic achievement (Hollins & Spencer, 1990). Howard (2002) conducted a 2-year study of African American students. The students were asked their perceptions and interpretations of the characteristics of effective teaching. One of the most frequently mentioned practices by the students about their teachers' effectiveness was their teachers' ability to structure their classrooms in a manner that mirrored family and community practices, beliefs, and values—in one student's words, to “make school seem like home” (Howard, p. 431). The lack of the teacher ability to “make school seem like home” is echoed in Delpit's (1995) book, *Other People's Children*. Citing examples of the miscommunication between teachers and “other people's children,” Delpit contended that this inability on the teacher' part has resulted in the continued failure of schools to educate African American children. The old adage is true: “They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

Historically, the African American teacher has exhibited the characteristics that have connected African American children to school. The African American teacher is a “critical figure in a web of caring adults who placed the needs of African American children at the center of the school's mission” (Walker, 2001, p. 752).

Extending the notion further, Savage (2001) stated that the strength of the African American teacher

lay in their preparation of their students for life....These teachers dressed a little bit better than the rest of the Black community. They were professionals. They had a higher standard to maintain. For this standard, and the work they did, teachers were respected not only by their students but also by the entire community. (p. 200)

Summary

The history of education of African Americans in America is a tumultuous one. It is a story of struggle embedded in the social and cultural aspects of race in America. Yet throughout this history, there have been two constants, the teacher and the student. For much of the history, it has been African American teachers and African American students. Until recent years, the research on African American teachers had been minimal.

Chapter 2 provided a brief synopsis of the history of African American education. In addition, the topics of segregated schools, the litigation and laws that impacted the education of African Americans, and desegregated schools were discussed. Chapter 2 concluded by providing the historical context in which African American teachers have addressed the challenge of educating America's future. Their practices are the focus of this study. How the study was conducted is the focus of Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

“Everybody has a plan until they’ve been hit.”
Old boxing saying

Introduction

This chapter details the major components of methodology of this study: the theoretical framework; the restatement of the purpose and the research questions; the research design, procedures, and data collection; data analysis; and summary. Approaching this qualitative study from the interpretive paradigm, the goal was to understand the phenomenon being studied through the eyes of the African American teachers who lived it. Critical Race Theory, a branch within the interpretive paradigm, asserts that the participants are a valued part of the dialogue.

Critical Race Theory takes on the issues of race, gender and class oppression. Lynn and Adams (2002) stated, “Critical Race Theory originated as a discourse within legal scholarship in the 1970s in response to the failures of traditional civil rights litigation to produce meaningful and lasting racial reform” (p. 87). According to Lynn (1999), Critical Race Theory appears to be quite a natural place for situating the study of critical African American teachers because it is an analytic discourse that explicitly addresses issues of racial, ethnic and gender inequality in education. Researchers on African American teachers, such as Delpit (2002) and Lynn (2002), often framed their studies in Critical Race Theory.

The core ideas of critical race theory are that race is a social construct, that racism is a central part of American democracy, and that race and racism are reflected in policy and law. Therefore, to dialogue fully about African American teachers and their practices, race and racism must be a part of the discussion. Lynn's (2002) expanded definition of Critical Race Theory further supported this study's basis in that theory.

Critical race research and theory:

- 1) offers a systematic critique of the legal and social system in the United States
- 2) calls attention to the enduring legacy of racism in past and contemporary American society
- 3) adopts a postmodern stance with regard to Western claims of neutrality, objectivity, rationality and universality;
- 4) is theoretically driven but experientially-based because of the extent to which it grounds its analysis within the racialized narratives of peoples of color;
- 5) is interdisciplinary because of its reliance on philosophical, historical and sociological traditions in academe; and
- 6) calls for the elimination of racial oppression in the United States through a multilayered examination of race that explores the links between race, gender and class. (p. 120)

Critical race theory can be used to approach the study of any minority group in America. However, this study focuses specifically on African Americans. This inquiry is embedded in a strand within critical race theory called Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity, a term coined by Molefi K. Asante (1987), rests on the belief that the participants—in this study, the African American teachers—are the most valid authorities on themselves. That was the basic premise of this study. The teachers were the primary voice in determining meaning in this study.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the perspectives of African American teachers of their teaching practices in segregated and desegregated schools. These perspectives were used to see if, and to what extent, their practices differed in desegregated schools.

Research Questions

This inquiry sought to answer the following questions:

1. What do African American teachers report as their teaching practices in segregated schools?
2. To what extent did the teaching practices of African American teachers change when they taught in desegregated schools?

Research Design

An often-used method in qualitative educational research is the ethnography. Mertens (1998) defined ethnography as research that is designed to describe and analyze practices and beliefs of cultures and communities. This study was designed to provide a descriptive account of the teaching practices of African American teachers within a sociohistorical context. The strength in approaching this study from a qualitative ethnographic stance was that it allows for the development of a rich description of the phenomenon, rather than to just determine a cause-effect relationship. Within ethnography, a case study is a methodological strategy that

fosters the development of a rich description of the phenomenon. Creswell (1998) defined a case study as “an exploration of a bounded system or a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (p. 61). Patton (2002) described case studies as “the gathering of comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information about each case of interest” (p. 447). This multiple case study involves three African American teachers whose teaching careers included working in segregated and desegregated schools. The intent of this study was to describe and interpret the teaching practices of these selected teachers.

The ethnographic multiple case approach was best suited this study for two reasons. First, the teachers in this study were not presumed to be using any specific pedagogical practices, such as cultural relevant teaching, and the data was not to be collected and analyzed within a specific framework. The analysis might identify a framework, but only come from the meaning the teachers make of their work. Second, the researcher was a subjective, not objective, participant in this study.

The researcher lived in the community that is the site of this study for almost 40 years. As an African American and a teacher, the researcher is familiar with most of the participants in the study. The familiarity ranges from name recognition only to a trusted elder in her personal life. The researcher was not the student of any of the participants. In general, the participants viewed the researcher as either the daughter of a friend or a teacher who entered the profession when they were seasoned veterans.

Participant Selection

Qualitative research calls for purposeful sampling. The goal of purposeful sampling is to identify information-rich cases. Patton (2002) noted that purposeful sampling provides the logic and power to select rich cases for in depth study. The goal of purposeful sampling in this study was to find three teachers who could provide detailed information of their teaching practices in segregated and desegregated school setting. Although there are many types of purposeful sampling procedures, such as homogeneous samples and typical case samples, this study used snowballing or chain sampling, which will be described later in this section.

The three participants in this study met the following criteria:

1. The teacher was a retired public school teacher.
2. The teacher had taught for at least 10 years.
3. The teacher had taught in both a segregated school and a desegregated school.
4. The teacher is of African American descent.

For the purpose of triangulation, additional participants were interviewed. These persons were former students, colleagues, parents, or community members. The sole criterion for these persons was that the person had firsthand knowledge of the teacher participant's teaching practices.

The process used to select the teachers for this study was as follows:

1. Community nomination – This is a term used by Turner (2003) that means to simply ask members of the community to name African American teachers who

taught in segregated and desegregated schools. Patton (2002) referred to this strategy as *snowballing*. Snowballing is defined as identifying cases of interest from sampling people who know people who know people who know what cases are information rich, that is, good examples for study, good interview participants (Patton, 2002, p. 243) Starting with key informants, retired teachers and administrators, current teachers and administrators, church leaders, and elders in the community, I sought names of persons who fit the criteria.

The community nomination began in earnest in August 2004. I began by contacting retired African American teachers and administrators. I branched out to making contact with current school district employees and community members. The contacts included telephone calls to their homes and conversations at professional or civic organizational meetings. At the initial contact, I explained the purpose of my inquiry and solicited their help. A trusted elder, who is a retired instructional supervisor, took the 1970–1971 staff directory for the district in which she was employed and highlighted all of the names of the African American teachers.

Of the approximately 50 people who were asked for names, 12 people actually gave names of persons that they thought fit the criteria. Most of the 50 people could not think of any names of persons who fit the criteria, but they did give names of other people to ask. The 12 people included a retired school administrator; a retired school counselor, three retired teachers, three current school employees, and four noneducators. This group of 12 generated 59 names. Five names were removed from consideration after it was confirmed that they were deceased. I then contacted 10

additional people—seven retired teachers and three community members—for names, but they produced no new names. Therefore the 54 names formed the potential participant list.

2. Initial contact by telephone - The potential participants list was scanned to ascertain which of the persons met the stated criteria. Documentation from school districts and personal memoirs of retired teachers confirmed that 40 names met the criteria. Six names were deleted because the documentation showed that they were office staff or library staff, not actual classroom teachers. The other eight were contacted by telephone for verification. I identified myself, the purpose of my call, and the purpose of my study. The end result of the call was to ascertain if they met the basic criteria. Of the eight people contacted by phone, only two did not meet the criteria. Both of those persons had begun their teaching career at a state specialized school that served students of all ethnicities.

3. Handwritten notes of thanks were sent to all contacts.

4. Purposeful sampling – Reviewing the revised list of 46 names with the aforementioned trusted elder, it was determined that a significant portion of the list had left the classroom and finished their careers in other positions in education. Seven potential participants retired as administrators, three retired as counselors, one retired as a librarian, and one as an athletic director. The trusted elder shared that this shift in job assignment may have been affected by the Black Power movement of the 1970s in which the Black community insisted on Blacks in all positions in the schools, “not just the custodian.” Assessing which participants would share the most information

about the classroom experience, I determined that I would focus on the 34 who had spent their entire career in the classroom. Further research identified what they taught and at what grade level. Setting aside those who taught physical education, art, or music or who coached the majority of the day, I was left with 16 possible participants who were traditional classroom teachers. Two names were removed from consideration due to ill health. One name was removed because he had just placed his wife in a nursing home, was visiting her each day, and felt he did not have the time to participate.

Of the 13 possibilities, I made the final selection of the participants based on the three persons whom I thought could and would provide a detailed account of their teaching experience. In the course of the study, it was discovered that the selected teachers knew each other but had never taught in the same school. Because they knew or had knowledge of the researcher prior to the study, rapport was easily established. On the condition of confidentiality, the three teachers agreed to participate (see Appendix A for the participant consent form). Therefore, fictitious names are used in this study. The three teachers are Ms. Phyllis Science, Mrs. Melody Elm, and Mrs. Cleo Metric.

5. The three teachers identified others who had firsthand knowledge of their teaching practices. These other persons who had firsthand knowledge of the teacher's classroom practices could be former students, colleagues, parents, or community members. The teacher was first asked to give names of persons who had knowledge of her work in the segregated school. I selected the name of the person to be

interviewed. The other names would be used only if I could not get in contact with or obtain the permission of the first person I contacted. In all cases the first person I contacted agreed to participate in the interview process. Then the teacher was asked to give the names of people who had firsthand knowledge of her practices in desegregated schools. I selected the person to be interviewed. Again, the other names would only be used if I could not get in contact with or obtain the permission of the first person I contacted. In all cases except one, the first person I contacted agreed to participate in the interview process. The exception was a former student of Ms. Science. The former student felt that she would not remember enough information to, in her words, “share anything meaningful” so she declined. The second person contacted was a former colleague who readily agreed to participate.

6. The six additional participants, selected using purposeful sampling, are diverse in age, background, and experience. Five are African American and one is Hispanic. Only one participant is male. The primary purpose was to interview a person who witnessed the teacher in a segregated classroom and to interview a different person who witnessed the teacher in an integrated classroom. Listed below is a description of each of these six persons who had firsthand knowledge of the teachers’ practices.

Ms. Phyllis Science’s teaching practices in a segregated school setting was witnessed by a teacher who was on her interdisciplinary team. This former colleague is an African American retired educator who spent 15 years in the classroom teaching English. Moving into instructional supervision for a few years, she returned to the

classroom where she retired. She met the criteria of the teacher participants in this study but was not selected. Of average build, she spoke in a clear, resounding voice. She used her hands to express herself and showed a quick wit. She was a beginning teacher at the school where Ms. Science was a seasoned teacher. The two of them served on the grade-level interdisciplinary team that planned lessons, conducted conferences, and team taught. A few years after that experience, this teacher followed Ms. Science to the desegregated junior high school.

During Ms. Science's teaching experience at the desegregated high school, she worked closely with another teacher. This person is a veteran educator who is still teaching at the school from which Ms. Science retired. This person teaches science; for many years she taught the same subject as Ms. Science: ninth-grade physical science. The two of them met in a summer training session prior to the opening of the new high school where they would work together for more than a decade. This active teacher has been and continues to be a vocal advocate for the minority students. She is Hispanic and because of her personal background, she has a deep compassion and commitment to ensuring the academic success of immigrant and migrant students.

Mrs. Melody Elm's teaching practices in a segregated elementary school were experienced by a former student in her class. The former student is an African American male. A 20-year veteran of the local fire department, he now works in law enforcement. He is passionate about the plight of minorities in America. He is well versed in the educational issues of the day, as his wife is a teacher. His commanding presence in his uniform (complete with gun), his wicked sense of humor, and his gift

of storytelling extended the time of the interviews. He was a student in Mrs. Elm's fourth-grade class in one of the city's two segregated elementary schools. He credits Mrs. Elm with "turning on the light in me." Currently he is applying for law school. He kept up with Mrs. Elm over the years, finding out where she was teaching and visiting her.

Mrs. Elm was sent to a desegregated predominately White school where she remained for many years, until this participant persuaded her to come back to the desegregated predominately minority school. The person who witnessed Mrs. Elm in a desegregated classroom is an African American retired elementary school teacher. She is a tall woman with an inviting spirit and wonderful smile. She openly displays affection and has a cheerful, contagious laugh. She served as the other half of Mrs. Elm's multigrade teaching team. Mrs. Elm taught fourth grade and this participant taught fifth grade. They first met at a gifted and talented workshop many years before they taught together. When the dynamic duo finally hooked up, their students received the highest scores on the standardized tests year after year. They each attribute their success to the other. Mrs. Elm's colleague is now retired but they are still good friends.

Mrs. Cleo Metric's classroom teaching practices in a segregated high school were witnessed by a former student who now is a state government worker in accounting. She is an African American with three grandchildren of whom she is very proud. She comes from a small rural community where Mrs. Metric began her teaching career. This former student had Mrs. Metric for math in the ninth and the

11th grades. The segregated high school closed at the end of her 11th-grade year, so she finished in the first desegregated class of the once all-White high school. Moving to the city to attend college, she married and stayed. She and Mrs. Metric now attend the same church.

Mrs. Metric's teaching in a desegregated high school was witnessed by another student. This former student is now a high school teacher in a large urban area. She also coaches basketball and track. She was one of Mrs. Metric's geometry students at the desegregated high school. She made a conscious choice to attend the desegregated high school during the early days of desegregation. By doing so, she believed it would increase her chances of receiving a college scholarship. Mrs. Metric was the only African American teacher that she had during her high school year. This former student, now a teacher, is a contradiction of terms. Her loud, commanding voice does not fit her five-foot-two petite frame. Her height does not fit the leading basketball scorer records she set in high school and college. While she was a gifted student in mathematics, she chose to teach physical education.

Procedures and Data Collection

Once the study was approved by department dissertation committee, I requested permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Following The University of Texas at Austin regulations, I submitted my proposal to the IRB, clearly outlining my research design and purpose. My proposal was approved.

Interviews were the primary form of data collection. The purpose of the interviews was to gather first-person accounts from the selected teachers of their experience and practices in each school setting. Interviews allow the researcher an opportunity to understand. Patton (2002) stated, “The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (p. 341). Weiss (1994) concurred, “Interviewing gives us access to the observation of others. Through interviewing we can learn about places we have not been and could not go and about settings in which we have not lived” (p. 1).

In this study, the three teachers were asked to participate in two interviews. The first interview was approximately 2 hours in length. The first interview sought to detail the actual factual account of the teaching career, recall practices and procedures used in the classroom, and ascertain the personal reflections of the school setting and the people in the schools. The second interview was shorter, ranging from half an hour to an hour. The purpose of the second interview was to confirm the data received at the first interview and to seek points of clarification where needed. The former student, parent, or community member interviews were originally scheduled to be approximately 30 minutes in length each. However, the first interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes. The second interviews ranged from 15 to 45 minutes. All interviewees were assured that identifying information would be strictly confidential and would not be used in the study.

A preliminary set of questions for the teacher interviews was generated and shared with the trusted elder who has mentored the researcher for the last 30 years.

The questions were refined based upon her input (Appendix B). The additional participant (former student, colleague, parent, or community member) interview questions were generated and shared with the elder also (Appendix C). Interviews consisted of open-ended questions and were semistructured (Patton, 2002).

All interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participant. The teacher interviews were conducted in the teacher's home or at the teacher's church. The teachers were asked the same initial questions. Questions were expanded based on their responses. Patton (2002) referred to this concept as "probing". He defined a probe as "a follow-up question used to go deeper into the interviewee's responses. As such, probes should be conversational, offered in a natural style and voice, and used to follow up initial responses" (p. 372). It was important that the teachers had the opportunity to tell their story; therefore, some of the interviews appeared to be an ongoing conversation rather than a point-by-point interview. Field notes were taken throughout the process. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. The teachers received a copy of the transcription to check accuracy of their comments. Transcriptions were then edited and coded for analysis.

The interview process for the additional six persons followed the same format. The interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the person. All participants were asked the same initial questions. Questions were expanded based on their responses and on data that had been shared by the teacher. Field notes were taken throughout the process. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Participants received a copy of

the transcription to check for accuracy of their comments. The transcriptions were then edited and coded for analysis.

Data collection and data analysis are an integrated process in ethnographic studies. As data were being collected, I began to analyze it.

Data Analysis

To shape the study as it progressed, data analysis is an ongoing process throughout the data collection period. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated, “Coding is analysis. To review a set of field notes, transcribed or synthesized, and to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relations between the parts intact, is the stuff of analysis” (p. 37). This process allows the researcher to gauge the effectiveness of the interview questions and refine and adjust as needed. Multiple readings of the transcriptions and field notes allowed me to begin highlighting common themes. Transcripts were coded manually; with acute awareness of similarities and differences of teaching practices in segregated and integrated schools.

A three-step process (Mertens, 1998) was used to code the data. Step 1 was open coding. This step involved the naming and categorizing phenomena as the data is intently studied. Basic questions during this phase were Who? When? Where? What? How? To what extent? and Why? Step 2 was axial coding. To complete this phase, I began to make connections and sought to determine relationships as they began to appear. Step 3 was selective coding, which involved conceptualizing the data into main categories. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), selective coding is

similar to axial coding but is done at a more abstract level of analysis (p. 117). While the definitions of the steps of coding are similar, Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to them as descriptive, interpretive, and pattern codes.

Analysis moved the data from organization to meaning. Analysis is the identification of key factors in the study and the relationship among them (Wolcott, 1994). Interpretation occurs when the researcher begins to make meaning.

Evaluative Criteria Applied to Qualitative Research

The traditional research tools that are used to insure validity and reliability are not appropriate for qualitative studies. Traditional quantitative studies seek the one “true” reality. This qualitative study, like others, was based on the assumption that realities are constructed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) offered alternatives to establish validity and reliability. These alternative evaluative criteria were used in this study.

Credibility

Credibility seeks to determine if there is a correspondence between the way the teachers actually perceive their teaching practices and the way that the researcher portrayed their viewpoints. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 278) asked the researcher to raise the following questions in order to determine credibility: Do the findings of the study make sense? Are they credible to the people we study and to our readers? Do we have an authentic portrait of what we were looking at? Several techniques were used to establish agreement between the realities of the teachers in this study

and the reconstruction of those realities. These included triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Triangulation was used as a process of checking information. Two detailed, long interviews were conducted with the teachers. Shorter interviews were conducted with former students or community members who had firsthand knowledge of the practices used by the teachers. In all interviews, the goal was to use as much time as needed to obtain a rich description. According to Glesne (1999),

Although multiple data-collection methods are the most common form of triangulation in qualitative research, triangulation in order to increase confidence in research findings may also involve the incorporation of multiple kinds of data sources (i.e., not just teachers, but students and parents as well), multiple investigators and multiple theoretical perspectives. (p. 31)

In addition to the interviews, transcripts, personal observations, and field notes were used. The purpose of these field notes was to capture and represent the lived experiences of the participants (Goodall, 2000).

Member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used to verify the data. I provided each participant with the written transcription of the interview. Participants were to check for accuracy of their perspectives. In addition to the transcription verification, member checks were conducted orally during and at the end of an interview to clarify the data being presented and to clarify or confirm my interpretations.

Peer debriefing was the third major credibility component. The role of the peer is to provide feedback as a questioner and clarifier for the researcher's ideas and interpretations, test hypotheses proposed by the researcher, and to suggest and test

emerging themes, and at the same time be a supporter and debriefer for the research throughout the process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the trusted elder served in this capacity. The trusted elder is a retired public school educator. After 24 years in the classroom as an elementary classroom teacher, she moved to central office of a large urban school district and served as an elementary instructional coordinator for 9 years. Although she has been retired 15 years, she is still very active in educational endeavors in the community. Her extensive volunteerism in church and community has won her many awards and accolades. Throughout this study, the trusted elder provided feedback, asked questions to challenge my thinking, and made suggestions as to next steps throughout the process.

Transferability

In order to assure transferability in qualitative studies, the researcher is charged with providing a detailed description on the phenomena so that the reader may be able draw similarities with other works. Guba and Lincoln (1989) defined the researcher's task as providing sufficient thick description about the case so that others can understand the contextual variables operating in that setting. For this reason, I provided the widest range of information possible without breaching the confidentiality of the participants so that a thick, rich description of the participants, their perspectives, and the contextual setting of their experiences would emerge in this study.

Dependability

In qualitative inquiry, dependability is used to attest to the quality and appropriateness of the inquiry process (Mertens, 1998). In this study, it was the intent of the researcher to remain true to the rules of engagement involving ethnographic studies. Remaining true to the rules of engagement in this qualitative study ensured that the results were consistent with the data collected. If the data had suggested a change in focus and I deviated from this protocol, it would have been documented. The data did not dictate a change in focus. The following techniques were utilized to address dependability in this study: (a) The researcher's role and perspective were explained to the participants, and (b) a clear plan for the data-collection process was implemented. By adhering to standard qualitative methodology procedures of recording interviews, personal observations, and reflections and having the interviews transcribed by a professional transcriber who did not know the participants, I minimized the effects of researcher bias.

After the initial transcription and based on input from the participants, I edited some of the dialogue to clarify any ambiguous meanings and misspoken phrases. In addition, field notes were compared to interview transcriptions. All notes, tapes, and transcriptions were organized and securely stored.

Conformability

Conformability is established by noting possible researcher bias at the beginning of the data-collection process. To this end, I stated my knowledge of the

community and the participants at the beginning of the study; I recorded my personal feelings and assumptions during the process and referred to those notes during the analysis. In addition, a review of the interpretation of the findings by the trusted elder was conducted.

Summary

The purpose of chapter 3 was to provide a detailed description of the design and procedures that were used to conduct this study. This is an ethnographic multiple case study that was guided by critical race theory. This methodology recognized the importance of the African American teacher as a valuable informant in researching classroom teaching. Chapter 4 focuses on the research findings.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

“If he didn’t learn it, you didn’t teach it.”
Trusted elder

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover the teaching practices of African American teachers in two distinctive different school settings—segregated and desegregated—and to ascertain if and how those practices changed. The three teachers selected as the main participants were asked to share their stories with the researcher. Detailed interviews were conducted with the three teachers as well as shorter interviews with six additional participants who knew the teachers and their practices. Chapter 4 outlines the context of the study, provides descriptions of the teachers, and presents the findings of this study.

Research Questions

The essence of the study centered on two research questions:

1. What do African American teachers report as their teaching practices in segregated schools?
2. To what extent did the teaching practices of African American teachers change when they taught in desegregated schools?

Context of the Study

This study was conducted in a southwestern state of the United States. The experiences of the teachers covered both rural and urban school settings. In this particular state, most of rural school districts desegregated earlier than the urban school districts. Most of the urban school districts did not desegregate until forced to do so by court order. Urban school districts in this state did not implement the 1954 Brown decision until some 15 years later; thus, one of the teachers taught in segregated and desegregated schools in both a rural and urban school districts. The teaching experiences of these three teachers took place in various parts of the state and in seven different school districts. The three teacher participants ended their teaching careers in the same large urban school district. Currently, this school district has a large achievement gap between White students and minority students, including African Americans.

Profiles of Teacher Participants

Ms. Phyllis Science, Mrs. Melody Elm, and Mrs. Cleo Metric are the three teacher participants in this study. The following sections provide their profiles.

Ms. Phyllis Science

Ms. Phyllis Science was born in the city where she ended her teaching career. She was an only child. Her parents were middle class by the standards of those times and stressed education as a means to a better life. She attended all segregated schools

and graduated from the only colored high school in the city. Although the school no longer exists, she still attends annual alumni reunions. Throughout her education she excelled. “Anything else was unacceptable,” Ms. Science said with a smile. Her initial ambition was to be a science researcher. She had a great love for chemistry. Although she met the requirements for admission to the university a few blocks from her home, she was unable to do because “coloreds” were not admitted. Many years later, she did gain admittance for graduate work, but the bitterness of that earlier experience remains today. She remarked,

Those schools don’t care about us. When someone asked me to interview or answer a survey, I said no. I would never do anything like that for them [large formerly all-White universities]. I am only doing this [participating in the study] for you. For you, you hear me.

In light of the times, her college choices were limited. Attending the church-affiliated colored college in her hometown, she majored in chemistry and minored in math. Her classes were small and mostly male, but she forged ahead. During her 3rd year of college, when it appeared that she had not come to her senses, both her teachers and her parents began to press her about the current state of the real world. “A colored person had a very slim chance of becoming a chemist and a colored girl had even less chance than that.” Ms. Science, rationalizing her decision to change her major, stated,

At that time that was not something that was very favorable for ladies. So after some parental influence and others who agreed with them, I decided then that another way that I could utilize my work and still do lab work would be to go into the teaching field. And I went on the high school level because I knew there would be experimentation on that level.

Ms. Science began her 35-year teaching career in a small town in the eastern part of the state. Her first assignment was teaching algebra at a segregated high

school that served African American students in the county. She struggled to tell of the difficulty of teaching the students who would leave school to pick cotton for 2 months and then return to school. The students were so far behind that it was difficult for them to catch up with the class.

After 8 years she moved to the western part of the state where she taught for 3 years. During the 2nd year of that teaching assignment she was able to teach chemistry. Finally in the early 1960s after many attempts, she landed a job in her home town. She taught ninth-grade physical science at the segregated junior high school. One year she taught eighth grade; at the end of that year she decided to quit. “I taught one year—an eighth-grade class—and I was going to quit. Those little eighth graders just—I don’t know what it was—they could get to me,” she quipped. That year she discovered that her forte was only ninth grade and up.

A few years after Ms. Science discovered her forte for ninth grade, the segregated junior high school where she taught closed. The mandated desegregation resulted in a district plan that closed the all-Black schools. Although most of the teachers lost their jobs, Ms. Science was transferred to one of the desegregated junior high schools. The arrival of African American teachers and African American students was met with open hostility. During the interview, Ms. Science paused for a moment, reflecting; then, slowly shaking her head, she stammered, “Our kids rode the bus an hour and a half to get to that school....They [Black and White students] would have free-for-all fights a lot of the times....Those boys would come with [brass] knuckles.”

One of Ms. Science's colleagues also remembered a particular dangerous fight.

I can remember an incident in the hallway, that shaky time in the 1970s, there was a huge fight. Phyllis [Ms. Science] and I were the only ones down there separating the kids. and other kids were saying, "Don't get in it, don't get in it." We could have gotten hurt, but our concern was not so much for us, as it was for the kids who were involved in the fighting. It was "Mom" mentality for Phyllis. She did not want anybody to get hurt.

Several years later, a new high school opened and was given the name of the segregated all-Black high school that was closed, although it was located in the White, affluent part of town. Ninth grade was moved from junior high to the high school, so Ms. Science was moved to the new school. Again, with a predominately White student body, her ability to teach was initially questioned. Ms. Science announced with disdain,

There would be times that someone would be planning to display or create an atmosphere where it would show that I didn't know what I was doing. I tried to keep my cool, tried to display my intelligence and then respond to the best of my knowledge.

However, by this time, the teachers had learned to work together. Sharing equipment and planning lesson plans together, Ms. Science did not feel alone. In addition, she had the support of an African American principal. After short period of time, the students learned what the students had learned at her other schools. A fellow science teacher stated it in simple terms: "Ms. Science was going to teach and you were going to learn. Case closed."

After 35 years, Ms. Science left the classroom to care for her ailing mother. As I sat across from this immaculately dressed, silver-coiffured lady, I saw no regret

in her eyes. She simply smiled at me and said, “I expected the best out of the children and I didn’t settle for less.”

Mrs. Melody Elm

Reflecting back, it seems Mrs. Elm was destined to be an elementary teacher, although she originally had other thoughts. Born in the city, instilled with a love of music, Ms. Elm grew up wanting to help others. She attended segregated, all-Black public schools. Her initial quest at the Negro college she attended was to become a missionary. In her words, “That lasted about 15 minutes.” She next chose to major in commercial education, but she would not type, so that lasted a semester. She finally settled on music education. She wanted to be a high school choral director. After graduating, she took a job in a tiny rural area on the opposite side of the state.

Before I went out there the principal came to the college to interview us, and I was under the impression that I was going to teach music because that was my undergrad major. When I got out there, instead of teaching music I taught first and second grade. I wasn’t prepared to do that.

However, with the help of upper grade teachers—all two of them—and summer courses at a segregated college in the southern part of the state, Ms. Elm expanded her teaching repertoire. One of her remembrances of her first years of teaching was that her classes changed in size depending on the time of the year. Classes would range from 20 to 40.

The conditions out there were such that although I started work in August, they closed school for harvest. We would work August, September, and we would let out whenever the cotton was ready for picking or chopping or whatever they did. At that time I came back home. When they came back, I would go back out there.

Thinking back about class size, she remarked, “I remember there were two seniors in the class. I will never forget them. There were two seniors in the whole school.” The students and parents showed their appreciation for the teachers by bringing fresh vegetables to them each Monday morning; each Monday that school was open, that is.

Marrying the band director of another small town, Mrs. Elm moved there and taught fourth grade. After teaching 5 years in three small, rural school districts, Mrs. Elm moved back to her place of birth because her husband got a job there. Although she had tried every year since college, jobs in the three segregated schools in the city were hard to come by, especially music teaching positions. As a former teacher in that school district surmised, “Teachers at the all-Black schools died out of their jobs.” Mrs. Elm became a fourth-grade substitute teacher. The ailing teacher she replaced did not return and Mrs. Elm was hired permanently. She spent the next decade there, but got caught in the district’s cross-over plan. At that time, because Ms. Elm did not have a master’s degree, she was not selected when the first African American teachers were sent to the White schools. The second phase of desegregation plan at the elementary level took place when the district paired one White school and one Black school. The plan called for all first-, second-, and third-grade teachers and students of both schools to be assigned to one of the schools. All fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade teachers and students were assigned to the other school. Mrs. Elm’s fourth grade went to the White school.

Although well received at each of her other four teaching assignments, that was not the case at the White school.

It was a very hostile atmosphere. I think there was this thing that Black teachers were very strict and very hard. So they wanted to make sure that wasn't happening. I had parents visit my class a lot. They would come and visit and stay in my class to see if I knew what I was doing, if I knew how to teach. They would come and sit in my class for a couple of hours. For me, I guess that was a good thing, because then I would just make sure I was really prepared and everything went well.

That is Mrs. Elm's spirit, always upbeat and uplifting; always looking for the positive in everything. When the massive cross-over plan failed, students were allowed to return to their school of choice. Although most of the Black teachers and students went back to their original school, Mrs. Elm was begged to stay at the White school, so she chose to stay.

After a decade at the predominately White school, she moved to a predominately Black school, still teaching elementary. When the new predominately minority elementary school opened up, she was selected to lead the multigrade-level team. Only after she retired from that school, after 41 years of traditional classroom teaching, was she called back to teach music. She taught music part time for a few years and then, in her own words, "called it quits."

When I originally entered Mrs. Elm's home, I noticed two things immediately: multiple music instruments and hundreds of Black figurines. As I smiled and took my seat, I asked her if she played. She said, "A little." And the end of the first interview, I looked at the organ, piano, and keyboard and wondered about the

accuracy of her statement. Shedding light on the subject, the teacher who team taught with Mrs. Elm stated,

Melody [Mrs. Elm] is extremely modest. She does not brag and does not like to be bragged on. Melody plays beautifully. She has played for her church for many years. After she left the classroom and went into the music room, our kids were singing all over town. They even sang for the governor's inauguration. She took those kids everywhere.

The second interview was even more enlightening. My field notes reflected my encounter at the second interview.

I arrived at Mrs. Elm's house at 1:30 pm. When I rang the doorbell, I heard the patter of little feet and a petite, "Who is it, please?" I said, "Brenda Burrell, here to see Mrs. Elm." The door immediately opened and a young girl about 8 years old just stood there staring at me with this look of awe on her face. Before I would get a word out, her brother (I later learned) appeared and he, too, just stood and looked. "Is Mrs. Elm home?" I asked. Mrs. Elm's voice was heard and she soon appeared. I gathered from the children that Mrs. Elm was their grandmother. She wanted them to meet a real doctor who was a woman and who was African American. The little girl seemed in awe as I shook her hand. However, her manners quickly kicked in as her grandmother began to talk directly to me. When I turned both children were gone. They were raised under the "when grown folks are talking you need to leave the room" philosophy. Mrs. Elm said as a way of explanation, "They need to see possibilities. They needed to see you, not just hear about you."

When I shared what her colleague had said about her musical talents, Mrs. Elm just smiled. However, she did share her passion for collecting Black figurines. She has so many pieces that they replaced the dishes in the china cabinet, which were removed to the garage. I watched as the stylishly dressed woman began to glide from case to case telling stories of the small statuettes. She was wearing a white-and-blue top with blue Capri pants and slip-on sandals; her hair was cut into a style to match the shape of her face, and her makeup was flawless. With perfectly manicured nails, this grandmother of three introduced me to 10 of her favorite pieces. She knew

intimate details of each piece and the sculptor. Being an avid collector of All God's Children figurines, she had every piece ever made. My field notes recorded the scene:

As she walked to the organ, she paused and picked up a large statue. "Do you know who this is?" she asked. "Mary McLeod Bethune," I responded. We spent a few minutes talking about the great African American woman educator. I had never met Mrs. Elm before this research study started; I had only heard her name in passing. But when she handed me the statue and leaned in close, I felt like we were two friends sharing thoughts with one another. She said, "Do you see anything wrong?" I looked the statue over. Nothing. I looked again. I knew she would not ask unless there was indeed something wrong. Then I saw it. Bethune was misspelled. I pointed to it. She reached on top of the organ and pull out the same piece. Bethune was spelled correctly on it. She remarked, "When the error was caught, they immediately withdrew the piece and reissued it. The one you hold is worth 20 times what I paid for it. Brenda, she turned a city dump into a school!"

While standing on her front lawn at the end of the second interview, she shared that she took classes at a local college—calligraphy, genealogy, and knitting. She shared the importance of Black people recording their history. She shared some of the information she had found out about her family. She was heading to a genealogical center in Houston for more research on her family, and she was going to take her oldest grandchild with her to Salt Lake City to the Mormon's Genealogical Center. Then she hugged me, squared my shoulders, looked me in the eye, and said "You will make it." She walked me to my car, and I left feeling like the interview started after the tape was turned off. Further, Mrs. Elm was wrong—she did not call it quits; she is still teaching.

Mrs. Cleo Metric

They said when I was born, I was real dark. My dad was real dark; my mom was about your color, a little lighter. But I was real dark and my nose was all

over my face, I had an extra finger hanging on each hand. Mother said when my dad looked at me he said, “She’s got to get a good education.” So they made sure I got one. It was very important in my family, education. We read. I read everything. Nothing was censored from me. So I read and read and read all the time.

Not hindered by the extremely poor economic status of the family, Mrs. Metric had learned to read and add by age 4. She credited her grandmother with teaching her to read. She learned her ABCs from grocery boxes. While there were not a lot of books in their home, they got “magazines from the lady that grandmother worked for.” Her father taught her math.

When we flipped the calendar every month, we would add up the numbers. I could add two-digit numbers, rows of two-digit numbers before I started school. My dad was one of the brightest people I know, didn’t get to go to college, he might have finished ninth grade. He’s the one who if you give him three-digit numbers, 386, 597, 795, etc., by the time you call out five or six numbers, he could give you the sum as soon as you finished.

Mrs. Metric’s family was fanatical about education. So much so, that when it was discovered that she would have to wait a year to start school because her birthday came too late, she was sent to the next town where a friend of the family was a teacher. Mrs. Metric started first grade there. Attending all-Black segregated schools, Mrs. Metric was skipped several times and finished high school at age 15.

Barely turning 16, she started at the local segregated college in the city where her family had moved when she was in elementary school. She majored in biology and doubled minored in math and chemistry. While her degree plan never changed, her career goal did. She originally wanted to be a doctor. However, she met the love of her life, who was not pro-education. “He pulled me down a bit,” she explained. She still managed to secure a full scholarship from the local White university to

attend the segregated medical school in the southern part of the state. Her retelling of her experience with the local all-White university was accompanied by a frown and bitterness in her voice. Her words were short and as she finished, she waved her hand as if to wash the memory away. Instead of attending the segregated medical school, she chose to marry. When she did return to school, her career focus was teacher, not doctor.

After receiving her degree she worked odd jobs such as making beds at the large White university because no teaching jobs were available in the city. Applying to the smaller surrounding communities, after several years she finally secured a job in a town 40 miles away. She was the math and science teacher at a small-town, all-Black high school. Employment rules required residency in the town. Mrs. Metric explained how she did it.

I had to pay for a residence there. I had to go to church there. I had to go to all the football games. I had to work at the football games—gates and concession stands. At that particular time, it was interesting, my family and I were living in three different places because my husband was pastoring in another small town 30 miles in the opposite direction from the city where my children went to school. My children lived with my parents. So on the weekends, I would go home [parents' house]. We would go by and pick up the children and then we would go to the town where my husband pastored a church. On Sunday night, we would come back to the city and leave the children with my parents, and I would go back to my teaching assignment. We did that for several years.

After teaching 8 years at the segregated high school, Mrs. Metric lost her job when the school closed. Desegregation in this community was accomplished by closing the all-Black schools, moving the African American students to the previously all-White schools, and dismissing all of the African American teachers. Fortunately, a late evening interview of Reverend and Mrs. Metric at an International

House of Pancakes (IHOP) by the White superintendent and two of the White school board members landed Mrs. Metric a job teaching math at the desegregated middle school.


So they called and asked to meet us, my husband and me. We met them at IHOP, late one night. They wanted to see what I looked like. This was the superintendent, the assistant superintendent and the principal of the middle school, all White. They met to see if I would, I guess, to see how I looked or how I talked, whether or not I would fit in. I got the job. There were two math teachers, and I was chairperson of the two-person department.

Mrs. Metric, like the other teacher participants, routinely applied for a teaching job in the city, usually to no avail. After teaching 10 years in the small town, Mrs. Metric secured a math position at a segregated high school in the city where her parents lived. With a history of success in the small town, the principal of the city school was grateful to have her. But 2 years after her arrival, she got a call from the city superintendent.

It must have been in late July or early August, when I got a call from the superintendent who said, "Cleo, this is . . ." I said, "Yes, how are you doing, sir?" He said, "I'm fine. How are you doing?" "Fine." He said, "Well, you've been doing such a good job I'm going to put you in a good school." "I beg your pardon?" "You've been doing such a good job I want to put you at a good school. I want to put you at [an all-White school]." I was mad, my family was mad. If we could have afforded it, I would have stopped teaching. They picked the best teachers out of the minority schools and took them to the other schools. That's what cross-over meant. That's exactly what it meant.

Mrs. Metric taught Algebra and Geometry to all-White students. The next year African American students arrived. Beginning her 4th year at the all-White school, the principal asked her to serve as department chair. The math department became known throughout the city and state. Mrs. Metric wrote the Honors Geometry curriculum that the district adopted, and her students placed first in math competitions

locally and statewide. In spite of that illustrious history, Mrs. Metric was hesitant in sharing some stories with me. She originally asked that her comments about praying with her students be deleted from the record. She was concerned that a school district official might read this study. I gave her repeated assurances that her name or any identifiable information would not be used. Eventually, she seemed not to care what the district official would think, and she openly shared her story. Her cross-over experience lasted 22 years. She retired in 1993 but was asked to come back several times.

Although Mrs. Metric taught in two very different school districts and four different schools, her faith in God remain constant. Her husband became the pastor of a church in the city where she had grown up. We met in this church for our interviews. Her husband died many years ago, and the church has grown significantly since then. It has relocated twice and is now a large edifice with a church membership of 4,000. Even in this new, large edifice, Mrs. Metric looked like she belonged. She did volunteer work at the church 3 s a week. At the time of our interviews she was in charge of the annual Thanksgiving basket drive, which more correctly could be described as the annual Thanksgiving groceries-for-a-month drive. Mrs. Metric organized the drive from her Sunday-school classroom. Prior to her arrival for our first interview, the custodian showed me a large walk-in storage closet attached to her classroom. Everything was neatly stacked. All the cans of corn were together, all the cans of greens beans were together, and the cooking oil was organized by brand name. The custodian explained that Mrs. Metric set the goal of feeding 60 families;

the prior year her goal was 40. I stated that I believed she would make her goal. The custodian chuckled and said, “Saint Cleo always does.”

This was not the first time that I had met Mrs. Metric. In fact, I had heard of her long before I met her. At teachers’ meetings when we were analyzing schools’ standardized test scores and determining our next steps, someone would say, “We need a Mrs. Metric.” Then the table would launch into a discussion about “if you had Mrs. Metric, these kids could learn math.”

While serving as a high school assistant principal, I attempted to reach a parent concerning a developing truancy problem. After 3 days of leaving messages with no return phone call, I called the next name on the student’s card—Mrs. Cleo Metric, grandmother. She was very pleasant on the phone and assured me that the message would get to the mother of the student. One hour later, Mrs. Metric appeared in my office with mother and daughter in tow. She was a quiet-spoken lady with determination in her eyes. She kept stressing to her granddaughter that school was important. At the end of the conference, she thanked me for calling and said that she would take a more active role in her granddaughter’s life. And she did. In addition to transporting the child to and from school, she made surprise visits. We would talk from time to time. One afternoon I saw her sitting in a classroom to help a student, not her granddaughter. She had found out that the young man had not passed the standardized test and was tutoring him. She worked faithfully with that student and he passed.

I had heard many stories about how she tutored kids who had failed the standardized tests and helped them pass. Money was never involved; she tutored the children for free. Young and old offered comments like, “Best math teacher I ever had” and “She’s so smart she knows what you are thinking.” No one ever called her by her first name; it was always “Mrs. Metric.” It was always said with respect for authority and personal reverence.

Similarities and Differences Among Teacher Participants

Common threads bind these three teacher participants together: Born to Bible-believing parents, raised on two foundational truths—Trust God and get an education—and embedded with a desire to help others. Although there is a 15-year gap in their ages, they are more alike than different (Appendix D). All attended segregated public schools and attend a segregated college. All began teaching in rural communities because they were unable to access city school districts. Each participant began her teaching career outside of her college major. Ms. Science majored in chemistry but taught math her first year. Mrs. Elm majored in music but taught first and second grade her first year. Mrs. Metric majored in biology but taught math and chemistry her first year. After more than a decade of teaching in segregated schools, each participant moved to desegregated schools. During the forced move, all participants received training on how to teach Black students but no training on how to teach White students.

All of the participants have received numerous awards and recognitions, but none referred to these honors. Mrs. Metric mentioned that she was the first African American department chair in the district, but only in reference to her “mother hen personality” towards the teachers in her department. All three participants continued their own learning. Each teacher participant earned a master’s degree. Each teacher participant participated in countless hours of professional development throughout her career. Staying informed and current seemed to be the driving force for these unpaid professional development opportunities. All three teacher participants demonstrated a passion for teaching and are held in high regard in the community. All have retired from public school teaching, yet each teaches Sunday school.

The differences are apparent. They taught different subjects and different grade levels. Between the three of them, they taught at the elementary, junior high, and high school levels. Over the course of their careers they taught first grade, second grade, fourth grade, junior high math and general science, high school algebra, chemistry, physical science, and geometry. The teaching included both honors and regular level. “There was no special education in the segregated schools,” remarked Mrs. Metric. The schools and the school districts in which they taught varied in location, size, and resources. Additionally, although all three are very religious women, they belong to different denominations and churches. The following table (Table 1) provides a condensed view of the similarities and differences of the three teacher participants in this study.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON CHART OF THREE TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

Attributes	Ms. Science	Mrs. Elm	Mrs. Metric
Born in the city	Yes	Yes	No
Strong family bond	Yes	Yes	Yes
Religious/spiritual foundation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Attended public segregated schools	Yes	Yes	Yes
Initial ambition	Chemist	Missionary	Medical doctor
College major	Chemistry	Music	Biology
College minor	Math	Education	Math & Chemistry
First teaching job	Rural – high school math	Rural – Grades 1 and 2	Rural – high school math and chemistry
Initial urban teaching experience	Segregated jr. high school teaching ninth-grade physical science	Segregated elementary school teaching fourth grade	Segregated high school teaching math
Initial desegregated teaching experience	Mandatory cross-over – reassigned to jr. high school	Mandatory cross-over – school reconfigured – her grade level moved to White school	School closed – had to reapply for new position at desegregated jr. high school
Year of retirement	1985	2000	1993
Teaching career	35 years	41 years	36 years
Graduate Work	Masters degree	Masters degree	Masters degree
Continued education	Extensive professional development	Extensive professional development	Extensive professional development

Findings

The communities and schools in which the teachers began their careers varied greatly. The location and levels of teaching assignments had the greatest range of difference. Pay scale, type of community, and resources had the smallest range. The teachers began their experiences in opposite parts of the state and from elementary to high school teaching assignments. Rural communities, low pay, and limited resources were common among all participants. The teaching practices they developed during the early part of their careers stayed with them. However, as the teachers moved from segregated to desegregated schools, their practices varied in intensity.

Research Question 1

The first question of this study was: What do African American teachers report as their teaching practices in segregated schools? As the teachers shared their experiences, 12 themes emerged: (a) using resources effectively, (b) team planning, (c) continuing professional development, (d) dressing in a professional manner, (e) establishing classroom routines, (f) varying instructional strategies, (g) cultivating relationships, (h) using strong classroom management and discipline, (i) providing additional assistance, (j) holding high expectations, (k) embracing cultural sensitivity, and (l) caring.

Using Resources Effectively

A number of studies have documented the substandard conditions of segregated schools. The teachers in this study echoed similar sentiments. Barren classrooms, worn-out books, and limited or no equipment and supplies are the norm. Because of the very low economic status of the students, financial support from the parents was extremely limited. In fact, the economic conditions of the home often interfered with school. Both of the secondary teachers in this study spoke of the interruption the educational process to pick cotton. The average daily attendance during cotton picking time was extremely low. Some students did not enroll in school until the cotton had been picked. Ms. Science shared her frustration with the situation:

A large number of the students did not enroll until harvest season was over. When the students came to your class they're way behind already. And then you had to try to work with those who already knew the material and certainly didn't want to hear that same thing again, and those who couldn't possibly move on because they didn't have the necessary groundwork

However, missing school to help the family was a fact of life. Mrs. Science stated,

In some cases, the rural communities were almost like little plantations in a sense. Even though parents were working, they would have to get advances on money. And then sometimes the children would have to pitch in to help pay the indebtedness.

A former student of Mrs. Metric stated that the choice for her was to pick cotton the rest of her life or get enough education to get out of the cotton field. With Mrs. Metric's help, she achieved the latter. Even the young children missed school during cotton-picking season. Mrs. Elm's first graders were absent so often that the school eventually shut down during this season.

In spite of the hardships on home, the teachers did the best they could in providing the necessary materials needed at school. Ms. Science described her classroom as containing typical desks, a blackboard, and few, if any, extra aids. Shaking her head in disgust, she remarked, “By no means were they adequate.” However, Mrs. Science’s colleague had a different perspective of Ms Science’s inadequate classroom:

I remember seeing her go early and make sure that everything was taken care of. She would do the experiment herself before she taught it. She worked with limited equipment, but she made sure the kids could do the things that they needed to. She stayed late, too, helping whoever needed help. She was always around.


Mrs. Metric identified with both the spare classroom and the low-income students. She had grown up in a very poor family in another rural part of the state. Even though her parents had little education, they emphasized the value of education and sacrificed so that she could achieve one. Thus, even though her teaching wages were low, she sacrificed and brought supplies and materials that she felt were needed for her classroom and her students.

Mrs. Elm’s first classroom was much like her teaching expertise—barren. She had majored in music and wanted to be a high school choral director, so her first job of teaching first and second grade was totally new to her. Her classroom held a few desks and a chalkboard. There were no bulletin boards or storybooks. “I taught in the rural—no library, no books. A bulletin board wasn’t a thing that we did or really were expected to do.” Even without storybooks, Mrs. Elm taught her first graders to read. She used the textbooks in the class and she created other learning materials.

Audio visual (AV) equipment was nonexistent in the rural, segregated schools where these teachers began their teaching careers. Mrs. Elm stated, “At that time there were no AV materials, so it was just you, your desk, and your 30 student desks, except sometimes there were 40 students. As each of the teachers moved to a city segregated school, they found minimal equipment. Ms. Science recalled one movie projector for the whole school and one overhead projector per department. “You just had to sign up way in advance”, she said. City segregated schools had more books and bulletin boards, which were nonexistent in rural schools. Ms. Elm remembered cutting letters freehand. She stated, “Bulletin boards were a big thing. You could not use anything store bought. It had to be your own original work.” “There was a friendly competition among the teachers as to who had to best bulletin boards, and Mrs. Elm always won,” stated a former colleague. The teachers in this study used the bulletin boards as instructional materials. Mrs. Metric often displayed the student posters and projects. Using their work, she extended the lessons about shapes and angles. Mrs. Elm changed her bulletin boards with the unit of study. Ms. Science used her bulletin boards to post instructions for experiments and to emphasis vocabulary terms. The teachers became skilled at using what they had to provide a satisfactory academic experience for the students in their classroom. When they needed something, they first looked to their colleagues.

Team Planning

Working together as a team was a significant part of the experience of teaching in a segregated school. The teachers shared both formal and informal channels through which they planned lessons, shared materials and teaching techniques, and discussed students and parents.

During the early years of their careers each teacher in this study was the only teacher at that grade level or subject area, so the team planning was ltigrade level or interdisciplinary. Mrs. Elm depended on the upper elementary grade teachers for help with everything. “I had no experience teaching elementary school kids. So they helped me with lesson planning, materials and how to teach elementary school age children.” In addition, Mrs. Elm and her upper grade level teachers had to prepare lunch for the students. Lunch preparation was on a rotating schedule. While Mrs. Elm was away preparing lunch, another teacher taught her class. Because they had planned the lessons together, the transition was easy. Mrs. Metric was the only math and science teacher at the segregated high school for 2 years. She remarked, “When they finally hired another teacher, he took science and I kept the math, but we worked together.”

A beginning teacher on Ms. Science’s interdisciplinary team reflected on both the formal and informal team planning:

One thing that we really did was work together. There were interdisciplinary units that we planned. And sometimes, we did team teaching, modeled what was to be done to help the other. I can remember coming together—either in called meetings or the ones that you just decide to have. Can you help me? Can you give me some insight on how I can do this? What do you think I can do to get this mother to work with this child? Sharing was really good.

Often the team planning at school would spill over to home. Mrs. Elm remembered getting help with her attendance sheets while sitting around someone's kitchen table. Later in the day, the team would play basketball with neighboring Black teachers. Ms. Science, Mrs. Metric, and Mrs. Elm have long friendships that evolved from team planning sessions.

At school and in their homes, the teachers in this study met with other African American teachers to plan lessons and coordinate the use of the limited resources. They shared information about students and parents. They shared what strategy worked best and what failed. They shared knowledge and questioned their work. In addition to the formal meetings scheduled by the administration, they met on their own. The mutual support of the African American teachers for one another served as one of the foundational tenets for the three exceptional teachers in this study. The practice of continued professional growth served as foundational tenet as well.

Continuing Professional Development

At different times and in different ways, the teacher participants continued their professional development throughout their careers. Early in their careers, professional development opportunities were created and implemented by the teachers themselves. These self-initiated learning opportunities came in the form of extensive reading on educational issues and college coursework. Mrs. Elm recalled borrowing books on educational issues from teachers in other counties. Her school nor the town where she worked had a library. Mrs. Metric, who was an avid reader at

an early age, also read current literature to keep informed. Mrs. Science would search books and magazines for math problems, and later, experiments that she could use in her classroom. Neither teacher could recall subject area staff development opportunities provided by the rural school or the rural school district for them. They recalled only one on one or informal small group exchanges of information and ideas. At the segregated city schools, there were a few professional development opportunities offered by the school. The leadership at Mrs. Elm's first city segregated school assignment expected teachers to have great bulletin boards. "We were expected to have beautiful, homemade bulletin boards. So that's when I learned how to do bulletin boards." Mrs. Elm took the workshops offered. As an acknowledgement that she had master the technique of cutting letters and borders freehand and designing creative, crafty bulletin boards, Mrs. Elm remarked, "If you came in my room, I would have had a very colorful bulletin board and it had to relate to something I was teaching." Mrs. Metric took any math workshop offered. If the teacher attended a workshop, she would pick up two sets of everything to share with a colleague.

In addition, all three teachers returned to a college for additional coursework or training during the summer. Originally, Mrs. Elm returned to college not for enrichment but for the basics. She stated, "The following summer after that first year, I went back and took some method courses so when I went back out there I would at least know what I was doing." Because Mrs. Metric had majored in biology and minored in math, she returned during the summer to take additional math classes.

When presented with the opportunity of teaching all math or all science courses, she chose math. “ I chose math because by that time, I liked math better and I always took math courses, every summer,” she stated. Ms. Science continued her college courses to stay abreast of the changes in her field. Although she was teaching math during the early days of her career, in addition to math courses, she took science courses so that she remained current. When she moved to teaching all physical science courses, she was prepared. All three teachers earned master’s degrees.

Each teacher took advantage of professional development opportunities that allowed her to grow. Each teacher attempted to stay current in her field. Summer course work and personal reading were two methods to accomplish such a goal. During the days of segregation, the annual teachers’ association meeting was also an opportunity to learn the latest trends in education. The association meeting was also a fashion show.

Dressing in a Professional Manner

The practice of dressing in a professional manner emerged from the data. In the interviews, all three teachers strongly emphasized that dressing professionally was one of the things they did as a teacher. In some districts the dress code was a written policy; others had no formal policy, but an informal policy that was enforced by the teachers themselves. Mrs. Metric worked in a district that did not have a written dress code but rather had an unstated one that everyone followed. She stated, “I wore heels every day and I dressed every day.” A former student concurred, “She was always

dressed nice.” Ms. Science often could be seen in a lab coat on the days the students were doing experiments, but was never seen in pants. Pants were not allowed. Both Mrs. Metric and Ms. Science taught in rural small town schools, but Mrs. Elm’s school was more rural. Laughing, she said that it was so rural that it was not even on the state map. Mrs. Elm weighed in on the practice of dressing professionally:

This is going to sound strange, because even though I taught way back up in the country, in the rural area, we had a dress code. We had to wear suits and tailored clothes, stockings every day. I wore a pair of heels. I can remember wearing lizard shoes because that was the big thing, my lizard shoes and my purse and wearing suits to school. The principal and the coach wore a shirt, tie and jacket every day. That was year round. That was the way you could tell that you were a professional.

Hearing the excitement in their voices as they shared why dressing professionally was so important to them, it was no surprise to find out that the annual teacher association meeting was as much of a fashion show as it was a professional development opportunity. Mrs. Elm nearly giggled when she said, “If you really wanted to see some teachers dress up then you went to the association [meeting] . . . everybody dressed. They would wear mink coats. It was like a big fashion show. You dressed in a very professional way.”

Dressing professionally was so much an ingrained practice that Mrs. Elm reflected with disdain, “I remember the first teacher that wore some pants to school, I thought that was just awful.” It was awful because it did not show professionalism in her eyes. The other teachers in this study agreed that dressing in a professional manner set them apart from others and gave them authority in the classroom and respect in the community.

Each of the participants wore dresses or suits, stockings, and heels in the classroom. Mrs. Elm explained, “We looked like teachers.” They took great pride in their appearance and dressed up even out of the classroom. “We would get faster service in the stores because we were dressed up. They knew we were either a teacher or a preacher,” laughed Mrs. Elm. The teachers believed that dressing as a professional was a part of the respect that the community had for them as teachers. However, dress was not the only practice used by the teachers to establish a learning environment in the segregated schools.

Establishing Classroom Routines

In the classroom, each teacher had established routines that were followed each day in class. It began outside the classroom. “I’d stand at the door until all the students got into the classroom. As they came in, I’d greet them.” said Mrs. Metric. Her former student agreed, “Mrs. Metric was always at the door when we came in.” Mrs. Elm met her students as they got off the bus. Ms. Science stood at her classroom door and spoke to the students as they arrived. The teachers followed up the initial greeting with a ritualistic opening once they were inside the classroom. Mrs. Elm stated,

Every morning began with the pledge of allegiance and a patriotic song, “God Bless America” or “My Country ‘Tis of Thee.” And prayer. Kids had to recite a lot. They learned poems and speeches and said them aloud in front of an audience.

The other teachers began class with a little “gab” (small talk), as Ms. Science called it. “After we got in, I may take a few minutes to kind of gab with them, but I’ll be

honest. Most of the time, it was business with me. So we would move to checking homework.” Both secondary school teachers mentioned that work would be on the board for students to do prior to the ritualistic opening of the class by the teacher. The teacher’s expectation was that students came prepared for class with pen, pencil, and paper and that students began to work when they arrived. Mrs. Metric’s former student recalled “a bit of borrowing” before Mrs. Metric came into the room. Mrs. Metric stated, “By the time the kids came in to classroom they knew the problem they should be working on was on the chalkboard. They knew they were to come in quietly, they were to have their materials, and they were to start to work”.

The next established routine was homework. Speaking emphatically in support of homework, Mrs. Metric stated,

I gave homework every night. I don’t think you can teach a math course . . . I teach a high school math course, I don’t even think you can teach an elementary math course without having homework every, every night. You need to reinforce concepts.

Mrs. Metric’s former student testified to the daily homework. “Sometimes the problems would be from the book, sometimes there was stuff that you had to copy off the board, but there was always homework.”

Ms. Science placed a great emphasis on homework as well. She, like Mrs. Metric, assigned homework daily and held some sort of accountability to ensure that it was done. Sometimes students were called to the board to display their answers; sometimes students exchanged papers and graded them, and other times the teacher took up the papers and graded them. Each day, the homework was acknowledged in some way. At the elementary level, Mrs. Elm used the last part of the school day for

homework. In either case, homework was done without the assistance of the teacher to see if the students understood and could apply concepts that had been taught in class.

Mrs. Elm's former fourth-grade student playfully stated that he "had slept a few nights since then" and he could not remember anything about homework but he did remember the total use of the instructional day. Each teacher expressed that instructional time was precious time that had to be used to its fullest. The former fourth-grade student explained,

Mrs. Elm believed in getting everything done there. No time for foolishness. I'll give you an example. One year we had a Clean Sweep all over the city. The students were to take a day and go out and up trash around the neighborhood. Ms. Elm was like, "Go out and quickly pick up something than let's come on back and get to work." She had something better to do. She had to teach. So, that was the type of teacher she was. She believed in investing every bit of time toward learning. There was no time for foolishness. She would say, "You have all the weekend long, and you have all day after school to play and act and clown. When you come to my classroom, this is my time. We are going to learn."

The teachers acknowledged that establishing routines in the classroom helped facilitate the learning. The routines of greeting the students; a ritualistic opening; homework, and effectively using the entire instructional period were facets of their teaching practices. The established routines gave order and stability to their classroom. In addition, they used various instructional strategies to keep the students interested and engaged in the learning.

Varying Instructional Strategies

The teachers used the effective techniques of oral response/reading, one-on-one instruction, peer coaching, real-world application, group work, projects, guest speakers, and direct teaching/lecturing. The teachers shared similar strategies on how they unfolded the lesson for their students. The unfolding process or development of the lesson usually followed this pattern: presenting the new concept to the students, allowing the class to work through the concept together, then allowing time for individual work with the teacher monitoring and assisting and then homework. Mrs. Metric's outlined her process:

We would begin the new material with me lecturing or by a student reading. I learned a long time ago even people who read well can't necessarily read math material. So I would ask for a volunteer to read. I know this is old fashioned and they don't do that anymore. I would ask for somebody to read the material from the book, the new material we were introducing for that particular day, and then we would talk about it, we would discuss it. I would ask, "What is this actually saying? Say it in your own words." After we understood the material, then we would do the practice exercises. Everything was done on the chalkboard. That's probably what's wrong with my lungs today, all that chalk I held over the years. Anyway, after that they would begin their homework.

Ms. Science followed a similar pattern:

I'd introduce the assignment for the day, and I would make a point to go over as much of the material as I felt like they needed in order for them to work them the remaining of the class period or at home. And sometimes I did have them—if it was something that had possibilities of creating greater problems once they got home—to work some of them in the classroom. And others that I felt like I had explained thoroughly and they seemed to understand it, well, then it would be homework.

Mrs. Elm had her students for the entire school day so she had a more global approach to the unfolding of the lesson:

We would do math first thing in the morning when their minds were fresh. There were no audio visual materials. We just used the textbook, pen, and paper. I used the pictures in the book. We moved from one subject to another. There wasn't a lot of independent learning. I think the students at that time . . . they were not very inquisitive about the world around them, just whatever you told them, they just accepted that. They did not challenge what we said. In math, you showed them the one way we knew how to do, and they learned it that way.

Monitoring students during the instructional period was also mentioned as very effective strategy. Knowing what the students were doing, what they understood or did not understand was critical to the teachers shaping the lesson for maximum learning. Monitoring consisted of more than just questioning for understanding. For the teachers, it meant being near the student. "Even though we had on heels and everything, we were expected to be up at the front of the room," stated Mrs. Elm. But each of the teachers moved beyond the front of the room. Mrs. Elm spoke of kneeling at a child's desk or sitting in a circle with a group of readers. One of Mrs. Metric's colleagues stated, "Cleo was always at work, walking around and dealing with the kids." Likewise, Ms. Science's colleague stated that Ms. Science never sat down. To emphasize the point, the colleague added, "If you entered her room, you had to look for her. She was always in the midst of the students."

Cultivating Relationships

The teachers wanted to build strong, positive relationships with their students and parents. They used class time, before- or after-school sessions, and attendance at extracurricular events to foster these relationships. Often, the physical structure made the task easier. Ms. Science's first 19 years of teaching were spent in segregated

classrooms. In the rural areas, the entire school system, Grades 1–12, was housed on the same campus; only when she moved to the city were the elementary grades housed on another campus. Being on the same campus allowed her the time and presented her the opportunity to get to know the students before she actually had them in class. Mrs. Metric also taught in a school with all grades sharing the same physical space. She knew the younger brothers, sisters, and cousins of her students. These younger siblings eventually would be her students.

In the classroom, there were many opportunities to get to know the students better. Reading and commenting on their work and having short individual conversations or large group discussions also were ways to get to know the students. Outside the classroom, the teachers would attend events such as sports events and choir concerts in which their students were performing. Working the concession stand at the football games, attending church, or shopping at the local market were opportunities for the teachers to visit with parents and grandparents.

Even in a rural area where school was a long way from where parents worked and parents did not come to school very often, teachers maintained a good relationship with parents. Mrs. Elm remarked, “The parents were very trusting of teachers and they just expected you to take care of their children and do for them and give them the best education possible.” Parents acknowledged the positive relationship between teacher and parents weekly.

On Monday morning when the kids would get off the school bus, they would all come on buses; they would have bags of food for us. There would be fresh peas, corn, tomatoes, and squash and stuff like that. Just their way of saying thank you, and we are in this thing together.

Positive relationships were demonstrated in the mutual respect that existed between teachers and students. Each of the teachers expressed respect for the student as an individual. The student was valued. All the teachers agreed that it was acceptable to laugh with one another but it was never acceptable to laugh *at* one another. The teachers tried to create a sense of family in the classroom. Colleagues of each of the teachers in this study shared that the teacher was always willing and ready to help a student. “Students would share things with Mrs. Metric that they were afraid to tell their parents,” said one colleague.

Years later, evidence of those positive relationships are still exhibited. As Mrs. Elm was shopping in the mall one day, a former student grabbed and hugged her. The former student is no longer in the fourth grade; in fact, she was married and had two children. The former student thanked Mrs. Elm for teaching her so much. “You were my favorite teacher,” the former student exclaimed. “You remember that day when I . . . [the student told a long story] and you gave me those licks.” The former student laughed. Mrs. Elm did not remember but she nodded her head. “Oh no, I would never hit a child. You are kidding! That did not happen, did it?” Mrs. Elm said in mock surprise. The two of them, teacher and student, burst into laughter. Ms. Elm finished the story by saying, “We [my students and I] had good feelings for one another.” The other teachers shared similar incidents of reminiscing into former students and the sharing that took place.

Using Strong Classroom Management and Discipline

The use of strong classroom management and discipline emerged as a practice shared by all three teachers. Most lessons unfolded with few, if any discipline problems. If there was a discipline problem, it was handled by the teacher. The teachers were viewed as strong disciplinarians and corporal punishment was allowed and used when necessary. “Parents had the expectations that the children would behave. Plus, at that time you could use corporal punishment. That might have had some effect on the way students behaved, too,” stated Mrs. Metric.

Corporal punishment was still used when Mrs. Elm taught fourth grade in the city segregated school. Her former student had vivid memories of the day Mrs. Elm used corporal punishment on him.

I was high yellow to start with, and kids didn’t like me because they said I was trying to be White. One day we were in the classroom and Mrs. Elm says, “I have to leave the classroom, stay in your seat, do your work, and I will be back shortly.” Mrs. Elm leaves the classroom and the telephone rings in the classroom. I said, “I ought to answer that phone. I used to answer the phone when I was at my other school.” Frederick goes, “You didn’t answer no phone.” “Yes I did.” He goes, “No you didn’t.” “Yes I did.” The fight was on. I’m fighting in front of the classroom, lo and behold; another classmate comes and assists Frederick.

Then all of the sudden the fight just quit and we go back to our seats. Mrs. Elm comes back in the classroom and goes, “What’s going on in here? What went on in here?” Nobody says anything. However, there is one child who takes the courage and says, “Mrs. Elm, they were fighting.” There’s always one in there. “Mrs. Elm, they were fighting, Frederick and that new boy.” Mrs. Elm says, “Fighting over what?” “The telephone.” “Okay, let’s go.”

Off to the principal’s office we went. She said, as we entered the principal’s office, “I have a problem I need to remedy here.” So he says, “Take care of business.” So she goes in there, she gets the belt, it’s a small strap, and she gives Frederick about four swats. I looked at Frederick and Frederick didn’t cry. I went, “Oh man.” So she gives me four swats and I

swallowed every tear that I could. I fought it back. I didn't shed a tear. It was burning though, burning real bad.

When the teacher and the boys returned to class, Mrs. Elm used class time to talk about what had happened and why. The class discussed what other choices could have been made. Life lessons were taught intertwined with math and English. She taught her students about telling the truth and about doing what was right. She had a story that she read. "It was called 'The Whipping Boy,'" recalled the participant with a smile.

Another student also commented on life lessons taught with the discipline in Mrs. Metric's class. "She was hard because she cared about us. She taught me math and so much more." Honesty, respect, integrity and responsibility were intermingled with the subject being taught.

Discipline problems were handled indirectly and directly by the teacher, depending on the situation. Mrs. Metric described her direct discipline techniques:

Kids don't learn any math out of the room. Handle the problem yourself. Don't hear everything kids say. Don't see everything unless it is really distracting for the other students. And don't take everything personally that kids say. Tell them what you expect, they will do it.

Ms. Science also described how she would handle a discipline problem.

If there was someone who, for whatever reasons, had an attitude and they weren't working while the others were doing their work, I'd take that student over to the side and try to see if I could find out what the problem was. If it was something that I could solve, then I would. If it got so they got disruptive that I couldn't handle it, I'd inform that student they weren't supposed to impede the progress of the others. I'd send them to talk to somebody and see if they could get them back on the right track. But I would try to solve the problem if I could.

And then sometimes if it wasn't anything real major I'd tap them on the shoulder each time they did something, and then before they left ask them

to come back and let's talk about what went on. And sometimes that worked, too.

Mrs. Elm remembered a time when she did not exercise good classroom management. She was substituting part time for a teacher. The teacher taught the class in the morning, and Mrs. Elm came and taught the class in the afternoon. The students were loud and rowdy, Mrs. Elm recalled. Her attempts to bring order to the class were met with continued rowdiness, so Mrs. Elm did nothing because she thought that this was just the way they acted. One day she noticed the custodians standing outside her window watching the class. After school she asked the custodians what they were looking at. They explained that the students were so well behaved in the morning, they were wondering what she was doing to make them act up so.

Mrs. Elm learned a valuable lesson. "The students will behave the way you expect them to," she said. The teachers agreed that expectations and rules must be established on the first day of school and that the teacher must be consistent and fair with all students.

Providing Additional Assistance

Acknowledging that all students do not learn at the same pace, the teachers provided additional assistance to anyone who needed it. Each teacher shared that the work day was not determined by the contract but by the needs of their students. Come early and stay late was the key to creating time to help students individually or in small groups.

Coming in for extra help was not mandatory but was strongly encouraged by the teachers. The teachers would work with whoever showed up; sometimes the student who needed help was not a student in their class. Students who were having trouble with the homework or students who had failed a test usually would come in individually. Pairs and trios would come in to discuss a concept or a technique. Right before a major test, groups of students would come in for additional review, for reteaching of a major concept, or just to get the teacher's personal assurance that they were capable of passing the test. Mrs. Metric used the before- and after-school sessions to get to know her students better. Using the student's suggestions, she would design the problem and they would work through it as a group. Ms. Science also used the time to cultivate relationships. The atmosphere was less formal than the class period and the conversations were more relaxed and personal.

Both in the classroom and in the before- and after-school sessions, peer coaches were used. Ms. Science used peer coaches to work with students who were struggling. "A lot of times that really made a difference, because they [peer coaches] could understand and talk to them [struggling students] on their level much more than what I was doing." Ms. Science added that in the classroom the use of peer coaches also prevented the student who had already mastered the concept from becoming a behavior problem.

One of Ms. Science's interdisciplinary team colleagues recalled that the team would rewrite materials for their low-level students as a way of providing extra assistance. Other schools approached those students differently. Mrs. Elm's school

hired a teacher to come in and work with students who had difficulty reading. Mrs. Elm would plan with the teacher, and then the teacher would come into her classroom several times a week. The additional assistance took place in the classroom at the direction of Mrs. Elm. Mrs. Elm, unlike Ms. Science, refused to rewrite the curriculum. Her expectation was that if students were not on grade level, it was her job to get them on grade level.

Holding High Expectations

Regardless of the initial knowledge level of the students upon entry into their classroom, the three teachers held high expectations for their students. These teachers believed and showed their students that they could and would master the subject. They communicated their high expectations consistently to all students.

Praise often was used to communicate that expectation and motivate the student. After signing the consent form for this study, I commented to Mrs. Elm's former student about his excellent handwriting. He quickly stated.

Ms. Elm taught me cursive writing. I remember the day she told me that my handwriting was good. From that day to this one, I don't write sloppy. When I sign my name to something that is meaningful, I don't like to scribble. I want you to know who I am. . . . I don't want any second guesses."

In addition to praise, pushing also worked. Pushing was closely monitoring, constantly challenging the students to be sure that they were working and that the work was quality. Mrs. Elm shared a funny story about her attempts to push a student.

Teaching was always very important to me and I always expected the most out of my students. I had one little girl who wanted to do only enough to get by. I would stay on her all the time about doing her work and trying to succeed and get ahead. One day I was really pushing her, she looked at me in frustration and asked, “Do your children like you?” She was letting me know that she had had enough.

Mrs. Metric established the high expectations in a threefold package: (a) bring your textbooks to class every day, (b) do your homework every night, and (c) all of you can and will learn what I am teaching. Mrs. Metric was relentless in challenging her student to reach the next level. One of her former students stated, “She was hard, but you learned math.” Regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity, Mrs. Metric held high expectations for all her students. “I let them know at the very beginning that this is what I expected of them.”

Mrs. Metric did not believe in teaching to the middle. She believed that that notion caused you to lose students at both ends. So she individualized the lessons when needed. “If the book stops with teaching a kid how to add decimals and you see this kid can do negative numbers, I think you ought to take those kids to negative numbers.” She expressed disappointed in teachers who did not share her philosophy.

I think teachers ought to have high expectation of students. They ought to go in with the thought that any kid is capable of working at the highest level. Some of our smartest people have come out of the projects. That’s no excuse for seeing that kid gets the best that you have to offer.

Likewise, if students were not working up to par, she would pull them aside for a private conversation. “This isn’t you. You can do better than this,” were her usual phrases in those conversations. She then would encourage the student to take advantage of the before- and after-school tutoring.

Ms. Science stated her philosophy succinctly, “You expect the best of the children and don’t settle for much less.” Holding high expectations in regard to student work and behavior was interrelated with other practices the teachers used to advance the student achievement.

Embracing Cultural Sensitivity

The practice of embracing cultural sensitivity emerged as a common practice of the three teachers. Acutely aware of the world in which they lived, each teacher shared what it was like to live in a segregated society. The teachers felt compelled to help the students not only survive in the world that existed, but also navigate the world to come. Walker (2001) stated, “The best characterization of the teachers is that they were preparing students to compete in the desegregated world that did not yet exist” (p.38). Access to a better life was achieved through education. Their passion for teaching was more of an inner drive to make the world a better place.

Sharing similar cultural backgrounds as their students, the teachers were easily accepted into the communities in which they taught. The teachers had the ability to connect with the students, to use commonly shared customs in the real-world application of the lesson, and to use a common language phrases and idioms when talking with parents and students.

The harsh realities of a segregated America compelled the teachers to be a culturally sensitive participant in a dual America. Mrs. Elm said with passion,

We all knew we were black. We all knew that racism existed. So we instilled in them that they must do better, do the very best that they could, because it was harder being Black in America. And the only way a Black person was

going to get out of poverty was through education. The only legitimate way. So we taught more than the three Rs. We had to teach them how to survive.

Ms. Science unknowingly repeated the same words. She said,

We taught them more than the three Rs. We had to teach them how to make it. We knew what it was like to be Black in a White man's world. They [the students] needed to be the very best they could be and that meant they needed to get an education.

Caring

The teachers stated that they did love and care about their students. They called their actions “the mother instinct.” At times it was intangible. A former student of Mrs. Metric said, “She was just always there for us.” However, the teachers demonstrated caring in very tangible ways. Other former students talked of the teachers’ buying supplies and giving them lunch money. A former colleague shared how Mrs. Metric had bought clothes for a student so she could participate in graduation.

The teachers showed caring in indirect ways as well. All of them stayed current in their teaching field so that they could bring the best they could to their students. The cost of college course and some professional development session were borne by the individual teacher. The teachers made personal sacrifices of time and money in order to provide the best education possible to their students at the segregated all-Black schools in which they taught.

Ms. Science’s former colleague at a segregated junior high school stated,

The faculty came together and we were like family for the kids when they left home. Mrs. Science, who is not a mother, displayed her mother instincts

openly at school. She hugged the students and when necessary, she fussed at them.

Ms. Science further explained, “The youngsters reacted or displayed in their appearance that something was wrong. I’d ask them about it and when they shared it we’d work together to make everything all right.”

A former student stated adamantly that Mrs. Metric cared about them. When I asked her how she knew that, she responded,

I associated caring with that board. (laughing) She was going to make sure you learned math. One way or another. And Mrs. Metric would come in early or stay late to help you. All of the teachers at [the segregated school] were always ready to go the extra mile to make sure we got as good an education as we could.

Soon after this comment was made in the interview an unexpected thing happened. This participant had Mrs. Metric twice for math, in Grades 9 and 11. She talked repeatedly about how Mrs. Metric really cared about them. At the end of her 11th-grade year, her all-Black school was closed. She began sharing how the classmates that she had been with since first grade were broken up by the desegregation plan in their town. She began to cry. She attempted to stop, but did not succeed. She placed her hands over her chest and began to rock back and forth. As she gulped for breath, she tried to talk. No words came out. The tape was stopped for 15 minutes. She put her hand over her face and just leaned down and wept. As the tears began to slow, I talked softly to her and shared tissues I had found. “I didn’t now how much that hurt me, hurt us. We were so close and they just sent them back,” she said almost at a whisper but very bitterly. When I started the tape again, she continued.

Those teachers [at the desegregated school] didn't really care about us. We were just there. I was picked to take Geometry because of my grades in the math class [with Mrs. Metric]. But, it was really hard taking that geometry class, I almost failed it. I remember we had to do a poster—you were to draw geometric shapes and the posters that the White kids brought in, you could tell that the work they had been doing was totally different than what we had been doing. There were things that we didn't get that obviously those White kids did, because the work that they brought in, I mean, I was actually embarrassed. Their home experiences, their total experiences were different than ours. It's almost like seeing it in black and white. My house, it would have been just black and white, but at their house they were in living color. I know Mrs. Metric taught us well. She was a good teacher. I still use stuff she taught us in my work today. It was just different than what the White kids got.

The former students and teachers who participated in this study agreed that the teachers genuinely cared about their student. Mrs. Metric's former student summarized it best. "The teachers were willing to go the extra mile for you."

In summary, the identified teaching practices of the African American teachers in segregated schools were using resources effectively, team planning, continuing professional development, dressing in a professional manner, establishing classroom routines, varying instructional strategies, cultivating relationships, using strong classroom management and discipline, providing additional assistance, holding high expectations, embracing cultural sensitivity, and caring. The teachers themselves best summarized their work. Ms. Science in her concise manner stated, "You are a professional no matter where you go. You do what is necessary to get the job done. You expect the best of the children and don't settle for much less." Over the course of 41 years, Mrs. Elm imparted knowledge and wisdom to hundreds of elementary-age students. She stated, "It was my responsibility to give them what they needed to succeed." Her students were most appreciative. One of her former students ran in to

her at a J. C. Penney's and he thanked her: "Thank you for what you taught me. You will never know how much I appreciated it." He hugged her, and Mrs. Elm's eyes watered up. One of her colleagues shared the following comment: "Melody [Mrs. Elm] was awesome. She was a genius at getting almost anything out of those kids. Awesome, awesome. I wish my child could have had her for a teacher." If Mrs. Elm had heard that comment, I think she would have cried. Mrs. Metric summed up her teaching philosophy in simplistic terms: "I think learning is the most important thing in the world. I taught because I wanted to help people learn." Mrs. Metric's passion for teaching was evident as she shared two important points that she followed as a class room teacher. "First, it is imperative that students learn. For them to learn, I have to know what I am talking about. Second, it is wise that the teacher not show favoritism." Comments given during the community nominations supported her stance: "Mrs. Metric is strong willed." "Mrs. Metric demanded a lot of you, but would do anything to help you achieve." No one in the community ever calls her by her first name; it was always Mrs. Metric. It is always said with respect and reverence." Mrs. Metric said, "I still consider myself an educator. I will be an educator until I die. I'm still learning. I will be a learner until I die." Failure is not an option, according to Mrs. Metric's mantra in the classroom as well as in life.

Research Question 2


The second question posed in this study was: To what extent did the teaching practices of African American teachers change when they taught in desegregated

schools? Given their extended teaching experiences in segregated schools, the teachers in this study carried their practices to the desegregated schools. The following table (Table 2) provides a condensed view of the extent of the changes in teaching practices of the three teacher participants in this study.

TABLE 2: CHANGES IN TEACHING PRACTICES

Practice	Segregated	Extent of Change	Desegregated
Using resources effectively	Responsible Care	No Change	Responsible Care
Team planning	Close knit group	Changed	Isolation → collaboration
Continuing professional development	Self- initiated	Changed	Campus Driven Participant → Provider
Dressing in a professional manner	Heels and dresses	No Change	Low heels and dresses
Establishing classroom routines	Greetings, rituals, homework	No Change	Greetings, rituals, homework
Varying instructional strategies	Communal group work Teacher made	Changed	More independent learning Commercial
Cultivating relationships	Supportive, warm, personal	Changed	Distrust → Professional
Using strong classroom management and discipline	Use of corporal punishment	Changed	Abandonment of corporal punishment
Providing additional assistance	Before and after school	No Change	Before and after school
Holding high expectations	Expect the best	No Change	Expect the best
Embracing cultural sensitivity	Communal, homogenous group	Changed	Multi-cultural
Caring	Openly displayed affection Listening ear Passion	Changed	More reserved Cautious listening ear Passion

Using Resources Effectively

The practice of using resources effectively did not change when the teachers moved from the segregated schools to the desegregated schools.  The teachers used the resources and equipment available in each school setting to enhance the learning in the classroom. Because the quantity and type of resources changed dramatically from segregated to desegregated schools, the teachers no longer had to do much coordination of usage. Ms. Science was shocked by the difference in equipment.

Well, number one, when I walked into my classroom [at the desegregated school], I had an overhead projector. I just got curious and kind of walked around, and I saw that not only did I have an overhead project, but the classrooms on my wing—each of them had one. At the segregated school, we had one for the department.

The other thing [at the desegregated school] is that we had a movie projector for the department. So every discipline had a movie projector, whereas at [the segregated school], we had two for the whole school.

A former colleague of Ms. Science agreed with the assessment of resources available and offered an explanation of the difference in equipment.

Supplies were very limited [at the segregated school], and it was like that so much so that we bought a lot of stuff on our own. If you knew somebody who worked at a print shop, they would give you duplicating paper to use. But, the principal at the desegregated school said that the money that Black principals worked hard to not spend, so that they would be seen as good administrators, the principals on the other side of town got that money and spent it. So that partly explained the great disparity in terms of supplies.

I remember we had to sign up for the overhead projector [at the segregated school]. If you got paper or whatever, the secretary had to give it to you, and she would say, “You don’t have anymore, your partners used all of it.” It was just a great disparity in terms of when we went to the integrated school and you went into the work room because whatever you wanted was there—construction paper, there was duplicating paper, there was mimeograph paper, there was various kinds of machines, and there were globes for every room—just all kinds of things I had not had [at the segregated school]. We had the scarred-up desks and the books that had no

place for you to write the kid's name because they were hand-me-downs. The highway was the dividing line.

Nevertheless, the increase in materials and equipment bought about the same responsible care as the limited equipment did. The desegregated schools also brought an increase in the number of faculty members. Although there were more teachers with which to collaborate and plan, the practice of team planning which was prevalent in segregated schools decreased in the desegregated schools.

Team Planning

In the segregated schools, teachers were accustomed to working with a close-knit group of people on a regular basis. Desegregation brought with it more professional isolation. "You were on your own" said Ms. Science. Although there were teachers teaching the same subject, there was no expectation of planning or executing a lesson together. "Everyone just closed their door and taught their own thing" stated Mrs. Metric. The teachers at the desegregated schools planned and executed lesson plans in isolation. In addition, parent conferences were held with teacher, not the team. For many years, there was no team. The passage of time and the implementation of some subject area collaborative projects did return the teachers to team planning. Ms. Science and her colleague at the desegregated school were trained to implement a new science curriculum adopted by the district. The curriculum called for teachers to plan together, share equipment and space and on occasion, to team teach together. Ms. Science's colleague stated, "We worked very close together. We were very close knit, sharing equipment, sharing ideas and sharing test questions. We

got together and wrote the final exam together.” The increasing use of interdisciplinary teams as a national trend brought team planning back into the lives of the teachers. At the elementary level, the teachers worked on grade level teams. Mrs. Metric enjoyed the experience of planning and sharing ideas with others. However, she was ecstatic about the multi- grade level teaching experience she had near the end of her teaching career. Mrs. Metric shared a 4th/5th grade class with another teacher. The other teacher was African American and the students were all high poverty minority students. Mrs. Metric stated, “We had the best time.” The other half of the team concurred. “We had a great time. Our kids were just great. We learned so much. They learned so much. They had the high scores in the district. Thanks to Melody (Mrs. Elm). She was awesome.” On the topic of team planning in desegregated schools, a former colleague of Ms. Science remarked, “We eventually worked together but it was never quite to same as back at the segregated schools. We got to know the people on our team sort of like family, but it was never the whole faculty and some times not even the whole team.”

Continuing Professional Development

The practice of professional development shifted from self –initiated to more campus driven when the teachers moved from segregated to desegregated schools. From the first years of their teaching careers, the teachers participated in furthering their education. Although they had to bear the burden of financing their own

professional development, they continued to take summer college courses and participate in seminars, workshops, and conferences.

As the desegregation plan unfolded, the district required training, known as crossover training to teachers involved in the plan. Mrs. Metric did not like these training sessions. “They were one sided. Although the cross-over teacher groups were Blacks, Browns, and Whites, the training was how to work with Black students. There was no training on how to work with White students” she stated.

Desegregation provided many more professional development opportunities both at the campus level and at the district level. Usually district or campus leadership determined the focus and provided opportunities for teachers to attend workshops and conferences exploring that topic. Some trainings were required; others were voluntarily. The teachers in this study took full advantage of these opportunities. When the district focused on raising the scores of African American children, Mrs. Elm was a part of a team that visited the renowned Westside Preparatory School, headed by Marva Collins. This school is known for its high-achieving African American students. Ms. Science was a part of the first group of teachers to implement the new hands-on, 40% lab science course that was adopted by the district.

Always attending workshops, returning to college for advance coursework, participating on district, state and national committees, the teachers stayed abreast of the emerging trends in the field of education. In time, they became the ones with the extensive knowledge and wisdom—the experts. In the practice of professional development, the teachers in this study moved from participant in a workshop to

provider of the workshop. Using Mrs. Metric as an example, she began by attending the district math in-service days. As her work became more widely known through student competition and test scores, she was asked to explain how she did it.

Conducting these workshops lead to working on curriculum writing teams. Eventually, she was asked to write the district curriculum for Honors Geometry and to act as support during the implementation phase. Many years after she retired, the district still called to ask her to return for a season to teach students or teachers. She shared, “They called me last year and I said, ‘Do you realize that I’m 74 years old?’ They said, ‘We don’t care, but your name keeps coming up, will you do this for us?’”

Dressing in a Professional Manner

The practice of dressing in a professional manner remained the same. In the segregated schools, the teachers had worn heels and dresses. When the teachers moved to desegregated schools, they continued to dress in a professional manner. The urban district had a dress code for teachers that, eventually, allowed them to wear pants. The code originally required that it must be a pantsuit not just a pair of pants and a blouse. The teachers in this study continued to wear dresses or suits for many years in spite of liberty to wear pants. Ms. Science’s colleague remarked, “I’m ‘old school’. Pants just did not seem professionally. But eventually everybody was wearing them, so every now and then, I’d wear a pair.”

The teachers’ dress changed with the fashion trends of the day, but the concept of professional dress never faltered. Mrs. Metric remarked that she wore low heels as

she grew older but she still wore heels. Ms. Science showed her perfectly manicured nails and said, “Dressing professionally was about how you were supposed to look as a teacher; clothes, hair and even nails.” The fashion show at the annual meeting of black teachers ended when the black and white teacher organizations merged. However, Mrs. Elm still dressed professionally for the classroom and for the annual meeting of the merged teachers’ organization.

Establishing classroom routines

The practice of establishing classroom routines held fast as well. Each teacher continued to greet students at the door and expected students to come prepared to work. Standing at the classroom door took on a new meaning during the early days of desegregation. Fights between black and white students was a common occurrence during the passing periods at the schools where Ms. Science and Mrs. Metric taught. So, in addition to greeting students, they often were the first on the scene of a fight. They broke up the fight, got students in the room and began class. Once inside the classroom, the established daily routines were followed. Mrs. Metric shared,

Students were given a syllabus, class rules and consequences, and the assignments for the 6 weeks on the first day of class. I sent tests home to be signed. I had always done this. If you made a 100, I sent your test home to be signed. If you made 40, I sent your test home. Everybody had to take their test home to be signed and bring it back to me the next day.

A former colleague of Mrs. Elm shared that even in elementary school, Mrs. Elm gave the students a syllabus. “They had objectives for the 1st six weeks. Just like college.”

The teachers continued to have a ritualistic opening to the lesson followed by checking to see if homework had been completed. “One of things I said over and over, if you don’t know yesterday’s concept you aren’t going to be able to do it, because geometry and algebra are consecutive, you have to learn yesterday’s concept,” stated Mrs. Metric. Over the years in the desegregated school, Mrs. Metric said that the students did not do the homework so teachers stop giving it. She still assigned homework and expected it to be done.

Continuing practices began in segregated schools, the teachers would introduce the new materials, offer opportunities for guided assistance and finally allow students time to work independently. One former student explained, “ She (Mrs. Metric) walked around to make sure that you were doing the problem correctly – if you had the necessary steps you had to go through the steps. She was not one of those teachers that would sit down.” A former colleague of Mrs. Elm also stated, “She was always walking around. She would walk up whispering something in a student’s ear...usually words of encouragement or posing a question to make the student think.”

Use of the entire instructional period continued as a practice. “We had so much to do, there was no time to waste,” stated Mrs. Metric. “Melody’s (Mrs. Elm) kids were able to move about the classroom, when they finished one activity they would move to another station. She had a wonderful system of checking,” stated a former colleague. Ms. Science also used the entire period . Especially on lab days,

she was strict about time on task. Students had to complete the experiment, note their findings and clean up within the time allotted.

Varying Instructional Strategies

The teachers in this study revealed that the practice of varying instructional strategies was modified as they moved into the desegregated setting. The segregated classroom was a more cooperative, communal setting. Lots of discussion and students helping other students contributed to the success of the class. The sense of family permeated the class. However, the family-like classroom did not transfer to the desegregated classroom. As a result, the teachers increased the number of independent learning assignments, which the White students preferred. Contracts covering unit of study and criteria requirements for each possible grade to be earned were presented in writing to the students at the beginning of the assignment. Because many of the White students were extremely well read, the teachers were able to expand the breadth and depth of the choice of assignments that student could choose from for the independent learning opportunity. The teachers felt that the decrease in discussion negatively impacted the African American students. “At [segregated schools], discussion led to richer, deeper understanding,” stated Mrs. Metric.

Mrs. Metric noticed that she used different examples as ways of explanation. In the segregated schools, she used money for real –life applicaton lessons. It always held the students’ interest and they always got the concept she was trying to teach. At the desegregated school she would use a variety of things to demonstrate the lesson,

including some very abstract conjectures. Understanding who the audience was and adjusting the lesson to fit their interests were a part of the process of varying instructional strategies.

Because the life experiences of the students varied so greatly in the desegregated schools, the teachers used a plethora of strategies to make the learning relevant and meaningful to them. In addition, commercially produced units of study were used by the teachers. “We got boxes and boxes of manipulatives” stated Mrs. Elm. According to a former colleague, Mrs. Elm did not always use the commercially made materials.

Mrs. Elm used her bulletin boards for academic things. She had one for creative writing, another for social studies. She did not believe in ditto masters. She was able to be creative. If her kids were going to write a book, they had to create it. She didn’t run off a copy and say, “Here, write on this.” They created their own books. She had a board for math too. Her room was extremely organized and She had center and her kids were always busy.

“The science adoptions contained the textbook and all of the experiments and extended activities to go with it. You just followed the book”, stated Ms. Science. Ms. Science did note a change in one aspect of teaching. “ The experimentation was about the same, but I have might have stressed written research more at the desegregated school. I think the students were ready for it. They had a stronger foundation, especially in the depth of their reading,” she stated. The teachers embraced the educational trends as they arrived. “In the segregated schools we had reading groups (with no hierarchy), then at the desegregated schools, we went to red birds and blue birds(ability reading groups) to reading circles. We also had learning stations and the kids moved from one station to another,” Mrs. Elm stated.

“Remember new math? I did that too. But the kids did not learn very well so I had to teach them the way they needed it, so they could learn it,” stated Mrs. Metric. The teachers were trained in the current strategy and used the best of it and the old proven strategies to enhance the learning in the classroom. Because the audience had changed, they selected the strategies that best fit their students and that worked best in the learning environment that existed at the time.

Cultivating Relationships

In the communities where the teachers in the study taught, the implementation of desegregation mandate was met with open hostility. The teachers were unwelcomed and unwanted at the previously all-white schools. Initially, it was difficult to cultivate relationships with parents and students in such an environment.

Previously, in segregated schools, the teachers had the support of the parents. Although the parents were rarely at the school (because of the long distance to the school or because the parents worked), the teacher and the student knew that the parent supported the teacher wholeheartedly. A former student shared that her teacher, Mrs. Metric would talk with her parents at the football game and at church about her work and behavior at school. She also shared a story about the day Mrs. Metric called home because she was talking too much in class. “I got a whipping. I was in high school. I got a whipping. They (her parents) never asked me my side of the story. They just believed Mrs. Metric.” This type of support was not exhibited at the desegregated schools. The relationship between parent and teacher was one of

distrust and in some cases disdain. In the early days of desegregation, parents were constantly at the schools, often sitting in their classrooms for hours. Parents regularly questioned teaching practices and grading procedures. Each year, throughout most of the teachers' careers, they would have to prove to the parents that they were qualified teachers. This was usually done through sharing their educational background and their professional accomplishments. Even with excellent credentials, one parent requested that her child be removed from Ms. Science's class: "I want him out of your class because he already had a Black teacher last year, now he has you. I don't want him in there. I want a White teacher."

In light of the strained relationships with parents, the teachers took extra precautions. Mrs. Metric described the experience of failing the local banker's son. "Actually," she said, "I didn't fail him, he failed himself, I just gave him what he earned." However, knowing the possible ramifications of such action; however, she had all of the documentation to support the grade earned. Ms. Science stated that she kept a file of the students' homework. She said, "I thought that it was protection for me. In the event that some questions were raised, I'd have evidence there to verify whatever the grades reflected."

"We were under a microscope for a long time until we really established ourselves over there," Mrs. Elm explained. Parents would come and visit her classes a lot. Parents would come and stay for hours. They wanted to see if she knew how to teach. Mrs. Elm pointed out the fact that she had been teaching more than a decade by then, so she felt she knew how to teach. On the other hand, Mrs. Elm felt that the

new, inexperienced White teachers who were sent to her formerly all-Black school should have been the ones the parents questioned. However, when faced with the challenge of daily visitors, Mrs. Elm went on the offensive. She overprepared. She spent hours designing lessons and creating materials for her class. Since she did not know when they were coming or how long they would stay, every minute was over-the-top quality instruction. The other teachers spoke of extended preparation time. If they failed to win over the parents, they did not want it to be on the grounds that they were poor teachers.

Although teachers were concerned with the lack of positive relationship with parents, it was the strained relationship with students that most distressed them. At the secondary level, the White students questioned everything the teacher said or did. Ms. Science stated that students would ask questions that they knew the answer to just to see if the Black teacher knew the answer. It was disheartening. Continuing to try to build relationships, the teachers would respond as best as they could. If, by chance, the teacher did not know the answer, she would let the class know that she did not know but would research the topic and get back to them. Honesty appeared to be the best policy.

With tears in her eyes, Mrs. Elm described the initial relationships with the elementary students.

The children were spies. They would tell the principal or someone in the afternoon what we said, what we did, what the other children said, what they did. The students were always saying, "I'm going to go home and tell my daddy that you said."

Over the years, the initial hostility waned and teachers were able to build better relationship with students and parents. The process was gradual, and a different type of relationship evolved. In the segregated schools, the atmosphere was more personal. There was a warm and friendly relationship between the teacher and the students. In the desegregated schools the atmosphere produced a more professional relationship. Mrs. Elm noted the change in her interaction with students during recess.

At recess at the desegregated schools, the White girls would sit around her at recess and talk with her. I had those White girls in my class who really didn't like, dig me, or whatever, but they know that I was their teacher. They know that I gave the grades. They buttered up to me. I knew they were buttering up to me. How much they loved me, I don't know. But I knew. . . . "Mrs. Elm, you are so nice." . . . I knew they didn't always believe that. . . . They knew that they said those things to get your attention and to get into your good graces, because they knew that you had to give them a grade. At fourth grade, they can't play the game that well. So somebody at home was telling them what they needed to do in order to get by.

Those little girls at [the segregated school], they couldn't care less. They would get with their friends and go play.

Even at the desegregated schools, the teachers continued to attend the extracurricular activities and visited with the parents at those events. Eventually, the teachers were invited to bar mitzvahs and Eagle Scouts ceremonies. Each teacher shared a story of a parent who eventually thanked her for being their child's teacher. The teachers shared several stories of students whom they still maintain a warm and positive relationship.

Using Strong Classroom Management and Discipline

Corporal punishment was quickly abandoned in desegregated schools. Mrs. Elm believed it was because White parents did not want Black teachers spanking their children. The other teachers in the study agreed. In addition, the teachers felt that they had to outline clearly their rules and expectations so that there were no questions about procedures and consequences.

Ms. Science continued to run a structured classroom couched in explicated written and stated rules for behavior and conduct during experiments. Ms. Science and a colleague who taught with her at both the segregated and the desegregated schools both recalled a story of a young man at the desegregated school who was seriously hurt when he did not adhere to the strict, explicit instructions outlined by Ms. Science. The White student had challenged Ms. Science's knowledge and ability to teach since school had started.

In one of my science classes, one young man got hurt seriously, because I don't think he thought I wasn't telling the truth about what not to do. And I told them, "Do not heat the contents of this test tube rapidly, for if you do and it comes in contact with the rubber stopper, we will have a serious explosion." Well, apparently, this student was one that, you know, always challenged me. I guess I shouldn't have let him over there, but anyway I did because I thought, well, he deserves a chance too. And when I knew anything that little boy had spots all over him where that stuff had exploded all over him. And do you know that baby went to the office and told the truth. Told them that I had told them not to do it and the he did it anyway. Because, otherwise, I would have been in a world of troubles . . . that wasn't nothing but the Lord. That wasn't anything but the Lord that that young man told the truth.

After sharing the same story, the former colleague added, "Ms. Science would have lost her job if that kid had not told the truth. Luckily, his parents were well off and after several months of doctor visits, his skin cleared up completely. Thank the Lord."

Minus the corporal punishment, Mrs. Metric used the same techniques to manage her class and administer discipline in her desegregated classroom. Clearly stated rules and consequences for infractions were the bedrock of her method. A former student who was also a star athlete shared that Mrs. Metric “gave no grace” just because she was in the starting line up on Friday. Mrs. Metric treated all her students the same. In both the segregated schools and the desegregated schools, students shared that Mrs. Metric was firm, fair, and caring. The former star athlete, now a teacher, stated,

You had to know your math. You had to do your work. If you didn’t have your work, you were dealt with. I use her discipline techniques today in my classes. Mrs. Metric set up her class so that you didn’t want to get in trouble. You didn’t want to disappoint her.

Even though many things were going on in the classroom at the same time, Mrs. Elm’s colleague remarked about the orderliness of the classroom. “She is a very soft spoken person, but her discipline was almost perfect. She was very calm.” Mrs. Elm’s classroom management and discipline techniques held true outside of the classroom. While walking in the halls with another teacher, Mrs. Elm spotted a young man whose pants were hanging down showing his underwear. She quickly left the teacher she was walking with, walked up alongside the young man and said something very low. The young man immediately pulled up his pants, smiled and said, “Yes, ma’am,” and moved quietly down the hall. When asked what she had said to the young man, Mrs. Elm responded, “I told him that respectable young men don’t show their underwear, and that I had a rope if he needed one.”

The practice of strong classroom management and discipline transferred from the segregated schools to the desegregated schools. Corporal punishment did not.

Providing Additional Assistance

In addition to daily homework, the teachers continued to provide before- and after-school help to any student who needed it. A former student shared her magical moment in a before-school session with Mrs. Metric:

I had never failed a course. My expectations of myself and the expectations of my parents was that you didn't get below a certain grade. When I found out that I was really going to get a C, I decided I've got to go in there [before-school tutoring]. So I made a point of going in every morning. I went in there every morning and she left me at that board by myself. And she would be doing stuff and she would say, "Do you see it?" I could not figure it out. It was so abstract; I could not figure this out. What is she looking at—what does she see? She left me in there several mornings. And she would come back, I would be still standing at that board with that chalk in my hand like I don't know—I don't even know what I'm looking at. And then finally she says, "When that light bulb goes off, you're going to see it." And I remember the morning that the light bulb went off. The light—I saw it. I saw it. And it was from that point on—it was like, geometry, no problem.

A former colleague who is still teaching commented on Mrs. Science's insistence on providing extra help to students.

Ms. Science was so full of energy. She wanted to do well; she wanted to do right by the kids. We used to stay after school many times to do make-up labs with our students. Now it's unheard of for the kids to stay after school to make-up labs. We used to have kids in the afternoon on a regular basis doing make-up work or helping them with their work. Phyllis [Ms. Science] never sat down.

Additional assistance was also given during the instructional day. The teachers would provide one on one instruction during the class period as need. "Some time they just needed help to get started, then they could do it," stated Mrs. Elm. The

teachers expressed a commitment to using whatever time was needed in order that their students might learn.

Holding High Expectations

The teachers in this study held on to their belief that all children could and would learn under their tutelage. In the early years of desegregation not all teachers believed that. Some teachers would not give black students grade level work because they thought the students could not do the work. Others watered down the curriculum to make it easier for the Black students. A colleague of Mrs. Elm witnessed Mrs. Elm's rebuttal to such practices.

Mrs. Elm was constantly moving around the room. She stopped at a student's desk, watched him work for a while, and then whispered in his ear, 'Great job'. She moved to another and whispered "Keep trying. You can do it. The next student was new to Melody's (Mrs. Elm) class. As she approached his desk, her eyes said 'Why are you not working?' Before she could utter the words, the student said, "Are you going to rewrite the book for us?" Apparently at his other school, the teacher had rewritten the book on a lower reading level to make it easier for him to read it. Mrs. Elm replied, Oh no, no, no. You are in the fourth grade, so you are going to read a fourth grade book. The student appeared shocked at her expectations for him. But Mrs. Elm just patted him on the back and said, "You are in the fourth grade and you will do the fourth grade material. The boy said, "I don't know how." Mrs. Elm's smiled at him and said, "That's what I'm here for. I'll show you how. Later that year, the area superintendent visited her class. He asked this same student where he wanted to go to school. The boy replied without blinking an eye, "Harvard or Southern Cal, sir."

Mrs. Metric set the standard on the first day of class. "I would tell them that it did not matter who they had for math last year. They had me now and we were going to do math and we were going to do it well," stated Mrs. Metric. Her former student concurred.

Whether you were on the first team, whether you were on the bench, whether you didn't play at all, you were first of all a student. She gave you the syllabus, she gave you the rules, she gave you her expectations, she gave you the whole grading procedure. If you had special circumstances, you could go by and talk to her. But basically, she expected you to do your work, all of it. She expected you to learn it.

Continuing her mantra from a segregated school to a desegregated school, Mrs. Science stated, "They will do what you expect them to do. I expected the best."

Embracing Cultural Sensitivity

Shifting from a communal, cooperative setting of a segregated school to the competitive nature that existed in the desegregated school was a major difference acknowledged by the teachers. Although the shift was more noticeable at the secondary level, it also took place at the elementary level. Mrs. Elm noted,

At [the segregated school], if someone didn't know something you were expected to help them. But at [the desegregated school], they were more competitive. They were interested in getting high grades or the highest grades. I also ran into students cheating.

The diversity in the desegregated classroom required the teachers to expand their cultural awareness. A concrete example of change in this practice was how Mrs. Elm used her bulletin boards. She described the bulletin board at the segregated school as follows:

There would be a bulletin board that was informational, and then the big board was your subject-area board. If we were teaching fractions, that would be up. The third board was seasonal . . . Halloween and Christmas. There weren't that many ethnic groups that you had to worry about . . . they basically all had the same religious beliefs.

At the desegregated schools, things were very different. Mrs. Elm explained, “My first year there, I started to do Christmas. I think I put up red and green, but no nativity. Then with parents’ input I put up blue and silver and told Hanukah stories. After a few years, I stopped doing the religious thing all together.”

Even Mrs. Elm’s choice of instructional materials was influenced by the diversity of students in the school. One of the books she used was *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. A parent would not allow her child to read it because one of the characters is a witch. Mrs. Elm had to develop an alternative assignment, which the student had to complete out in the hall while the other students studied the first book.

The change in culture also altered how Mrs. Metric used her words. She said that at the desegregated school, she had to be more careful about what she said. “In the segregated school I didn’t have any trouble worrying about people suing me for something I said.” She talked to student about themselves and the White world in which they would have to live. If a student came to her with a problem, she often prayed with the student. “I believe in prayer,” she said unapologetically. At the desegregated school, she did not often pray with the student. Everyone was no longer of the same faith or belief. When she did broach the subject, she would tell the student that she believed in prayer and that she would pray for the student, and if the student wished to do so, they could pray right then. Mrs. Metric reflected on her days at the desegregated school and said,

If a kid comes to me crying, I’m going to hug that kid. But at the same time I’m thinking, “Am I going to get in trouble?” I never thought about that

before, that's a natural mama thing for me to do. I'm going to listen. I'm going to pray.

Ms. Science mentioned the need to prevent racist statements from being said in her presence. So she stopped racial slurs and inappropriate jokes before they got started. She had to break up too many fights over an inappropriate comment.

All the teachers noted that the discussions held with Black students about understanding the world and their place in it and reminding students of their responsibility to work harder, get an education, and succeed in life no longer took place. As a result, as the years passed, the teachers noticed increasingly fewer African American students holding leadership positions at school. Ms. Science and her colleague would beg African American students to run for a student council office or for cheerleader. Ms. Science and Mrs. Metric remembered the days of segregation when all of their students were expected to participate in some extracurricular activities. The change in culture altered those opportunities for young Black students. Despite tremendous effort on the part of the teachers to persuade Black students to get involved, only a small portion of the students responded.

Caring

The practice of caring emerged as change in practice from segregated to desegregated schools. The change was in context not in the concept of caring. The teachers cared deeply for their students in segregated and desegregated schools. The teachers noted differences in the ways they exhibited their care. Always concerned about what the reaction would be, teachers were hesitant to openly display signs of

affection at the desegregated schools. While they did continue to hug students, it was neither as frequent nor as intense as in the segregated schools. Having no comparison, the former students of desegregated schools only echoed that the teacher cared. A former student of Mrs. Metric stated, “She really cared. She was genuinely concerned about whether you got the information and whether you could apply it. She would come to the game, too.” Ms. Science cared about her students at the desegregated school and would often lend a listening ear if the student needed to talk. Ms. Science shared that she would leave the door open when talking with students. She said she did that “so there would be no question about what went on in there.”

“She was just always there for us” was a common reframe that described each teacher in this study. Participants talked of the teachers buying supplies and giving students lunch money. A former colleague of Mrs. Elm shared a story of school choir’s invitation to sing at the governor’s inauguration. One child did not have the white shirt, black pants attire needed for the performance. Mrs. Elm bought the needed clothes so the youngster could perform.

The teachers spoke with heartfelt passion about their students both in segregated and desegregated school settings. Each relayed a story about a recent encounter with a former student. A former student from Mrs. Elm’s segregated classroom saw her in a department store. He called out her name, grabbed her and hugged her. He introduced his family and thanked her for being his teacher. A former student from Mrs. Metric’s desegregated classroom saw her as she was going to visit a friend in the hospital. He called out her name, shook her hand and thanked

her for being his teacher. Ms. Science's story was similar to Mrs. Metric. The teachers cared deeply about their teachers. The caring manifested itself in different ways.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the context in which this study took place. Detailed profiles of the teachers and the findings of the study were presented. Twelve teaching practices emerged as practices used by the teachers in segregated school setting. No change was noted in five practices. The practices remaining the same were: using resources effectively, dressing in a professional manner, establishing classroom routines, providing additional assistance and holding high expectations. The teacher revealed modifications in the practices of team planning, continuing professional development, varying instructional strategies, cultivating relationships, using classroom management and discipline, embracing cultural sensitivity and caring when they shifted to desegregated schools. In conclusion, the teacher participants in this study used a variety of teaching practices that embraced the students' culture to ensure both academic and personal success for each of their students in segregated schools. Many of these practices were transferred to the desegregated schools. Some were modified to fit the cultural experiences of the students in the desegregated schools. Chapter 5 contains further discussion and conclusions from these findings.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

“And I still rise.”
Maya Angelou

Introduction

Chapter 4 provided a detailed analysis of the interview data regarding the teachers involved in this study and their teaching practices. As patterns began to surface, emerging themes were discovered. The study revealed 12 common practices used by the teachers in segregated schools and how those practices transferred to the desegregated school setting. Chapter 5 will draw conclusions for the data analysis, discuss the implications this study has for practice and research, and suggest avenues of further study.


Summary of the Study

The continuing achievement gap between White and Black students in America has been a festering sore on the face of public education. As educators and policymakers search for answers, Delpit (1995, 2002) suggested that we look at the past with new eyes. One hundred years of knowledge and practice of educating African American children was either never recorded or distorted by racism.

Seeking to provide a rich detailed description of past years through the eyes of those that lived it, this qualitative multiple case study was conducted for the purpose of answering two questions:


1. What do African American teachers report as their teaching practices in segregated schools?

2. To what extent did the teaching practices of African American teachers change when they taught in segregated schools?

Approaching the study from an ethnographic stance with a tical Race Theory frame of reference allowed for the development of a rich description of the phenomenon. The criteria for the teacher participants were the following:

1. The teacher was a retired public school teacher.
2. The teacher had taught for at least 10 years.
3. The teacher had taught in both a segregated school and a desegregated school.
4. The teacher is of African American descent.


Using Patton's (2002) snowballing technique, also called community nomination, the researcher sought out the best candidates. The potential pool of candidates was limited from the beginning for two reasons. First, most African American teachers lost their jobs when the schools desegregated. Second, a significant amount of time had elapsed since the implementation of desegregation in the southern states, thus many of the teachers who did move to desegregated schools had died. The three teacher participants were selected from a final group of 13. Six additional participants who were former students, colleagues, or community members with firsthand knowledge of the teacher participants were also a part of this study. A total of 9 participants were interviewed.

Although field notes and observations were a part of the data collection, interviews served as the primary source. Interviews were  structured with a set of initial questions. The researcher expanded the interview based on the participants' responses. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Participants received a copy of the transcription to check for accuracy and intent of their comments. Data coding and analysis were ongoing throughout the study. Coding began with the naming of individual components. As common themes emerged, they were grouped into categories. Through multiple readings, relationships began to appear and in the final analysis, the conceptualization of the data into twelve main categories occurred. Triangulation was supported by the interviews with additional participants and the researcher's field notes and personal observations. Moving the data from analysis to meaning, the two research questions were answered.

Summary of the Findings

The dissertation sought answers to two questions posed at the beginning of this study. The following are brief synopses of the findings:

African American teaching practices in segregated schools

The participants identified 12 common  ctices: (a) using resources effectively, (b) team planning, (c) continuing professional development, (d) dressing in a professional manner, (e) establishing classroom routines, (f) varying instructional strategies, (g) cultivating relationships, (h) using strong classroom management and discipline, (i)

providing additional assistance, (j) holding high expectations, (k) embracing cultural sensitivity, and (l) caring. Viewing these practices holistically, a three dimensional perspective of the African American teacher appeared. The teachers in this study were professional educators, practitioners of the art and science of teaching and persons of care and concern for their fellowman.

The professional educator attributes was identified in the practices of team planning, continuing professional development, and dressing in a professional manner. With a mindset that they were professional educators, these teachers in rural segregated schools dressed for work. Not only did they look professional, they acted professional. Collaborative work groups, both formal and informal, existed in segregated schools. The teachers continued to build the knowledge base in their subject area but also continued to add more tools and techniques to their arsenal of teaching skills and strategies.

Practitioners of the art and science of teaching were revealed in the areas of using resources effectively, establishing classroom routines, varying instructional strategies, cultivating relationships, using strong classroom management and discipline, providing additional assistance, and holding high expectations. On a daily basis, these practices were an integral part of their classrooms. Using these practices, the teachers established a culture and climate for learning in a positive and safe environment.

The teachers exhibited the characteristics of caring, concerned individuals in the practices of embracing cultural sensitivity and caring. They were acutely aware of

their heritage, the state of the country and the world, and the challenges their students would have to face. The teachers felt it was their responsibility to ensure that those students would be successful in that world and the world to come. The teachers were proud of their African American heritage and did not view themselves as victims in a segregated society. They reached for higher ideals of truth, integrity, and responsibility, and they taught these values to their students. While academia refers to it as the ethic of caring, the teacher participants called it “Mom mentality.” They cared, comforted, and protected their students. They were also hard on them. As Ms. Elm said, “I loved them enough to push them.”

Changes in teaching practices in desegregated schools

The extent to which teachers changed their practices varied among the practices. Continuing the practice with no change occurred in five practices: using resources effectively, dressing in a professional manner, establishing classroom routines, providing additional assistance and holding high expectations. The practice of team planning shifted from a close knit, regular meeting group to professional isolation and eventually it shifted back to both partner and small group planning. Although the teachers are lifelong learners, the practice of continuing professional development also changed. At the segregated schools, the teachers created and supported their own professional development opportunities. The move to desegregation schools shifted professional development from self-initiated to campus driven endeavors. A second change in continuing professional development was also noted. The teachers in this

study moved from participant to provider of professional development opportunities. Change was also revealed in the area of varying instructional strategies. Teachers shifted from cooperative group work at the segregated schools to more independent contract work at the desegregated schools. Group discussion which was valued in the segregated schools decreased in desegregated schools. The move from segregated to desegregated schools changed the practice of cultivating relationships. Originally, the relationships between teacher and student and parent were ones of positive mutual support. The lack of trust, fear of the unknown, and racism prevent positive relationships for being established during the early days of desegregation. Over the years, the relationship did become more positive. Relationships were warm and personal at the segregated school; the relationships at the desegregated schools were professional. The change in the practice of using classroom management and discipline was the abandonment of corporal punishment. Segregated schools had one homogenous group and the teachers shared similar backgrounds as their students. The diversity of the student and teacher groups at the desegregated schools called for the teachers in this study to become more multicultural. The practice of embracing cultural sensitivity shifted into a much more complex practice. The teachers also noted the shift from a communal school setting to a competitive school setting. The data revealed change in the practice of caring. The change was noted in the context of demonstrating caring; not in the concept of caring. The teachers truly cared for their students but the move to desegregated schools changed the demonstration of that care.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the teaching practices of African American teachers in segregated schools. The teachers revealed 12 teaching practices that they used in segregated all-Black schools. Further, the study sought to discover to what extent did these practices changed when the teachers moved to desegregated schools. The data revealed that five practices remained the same while seven practices were modified in the desegregated school setting. Analyses of the data lead to the following conclusions:

1. African American teachers' practices reflect the attributes of professional educators.

Throughout the history of the dual education system in America, there was a prevailing myth that African American teachers were not as good as; not as professional as White teachers. Factors such as lower wages and less years of formal education were cited as reasons for those beliefs. Soon after those discrepancies no longer existed, the country's "separate but unequal" system was dismantled, leaving some with the thought that the weak, inferior one was shut down. Contrary to the myth, the teachers in this study reveal that during the years of segregated schooling as well as during the years of desegregated school, they were professional educators.

The attributes of professional educators are clearly defined in the work of Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002). In an attempt to aid supervisors as they work with developing teachers, attributes of professional educators were delineated and

explained. Using a framework developed by Charlotte Danielson, the authors shared four components of professional practice: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. The detailed description of planning and preparation included demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy, demonstrating knowledge of the students, selecting instructional goals, demonstrating knowledge of resources, designing coherent instruction, and assessing student learning. The teachers in this study repeated exhibited these attributes.

The first component of framework was planning and preparation. The teachers in this study demonstrated this component through the practices of continuing professional development and team planning. Throughout their careers, the teachers were learners. Both formal and informal avenues were used to stay abreast of educational issues. In addition, working with a team or working alone they planned and implemented instruction to meet the needs of the students. In the early days of desegregation, they actually over prepared. The second component of classroom environment was described as creating an environment of respect and rapport, with procedures for the classroom operations and expectations of behavior in an organized space so that students can learn. The teachers in this study revealed this component by their use of strong classroom management and discipline, their unequivocal high expectations of their students and in establishing classroom routines. The teachers created caring classroom where students could and did learn. The third component of the framework was instruction, described as actively engaging students in the learning by using a variety of techniques; providing feedback

and adjusting the lesson as necessary. The teachers in this study used the practices of providing additional assistance, using resources effectively, varying the instructional strategies used to demonstrate this area of professional practice. In addition, in order to know and be able to relate to their students the teachers embraced the cultures of their students and cared for them. Using Sergiovanni and Starratt's wording, the teachers in this study were "responsive" and "persistent" with their students. The last component is professional responsibilities which included reflecting on teaching, maintaining accurate records and dealing the parents and the larger community. The teachers in this study were exemplary models in this area. Respected by the parents and in the community, the teachers throughout their careers dressed in a professional manner, cultivated relationships with students, parents, colleagues and the greater community and continued to be learners themselves.

2. The teaching practices of African American teachers reflect culturally responsive pedagogy.

Ladson – Billings' (1994) foundational work on cultural relevant teaching established the basic tenets of a growing field known as culturally responsive pedagogy. Prior to her work, there was emerging literature concerning African American teachers in segregated schools. Most of the literature focused on the conditions of the schools with very little emphasis of what actually occurred in the classroom. Over the last decade, several scholars had focused their attention in the classroom and studied both segregated and desegregated school. Within this field, Irvine and Frasier (1998) have developed the concept of warm demanders, or "tough

mindful, no-nonsense teachers” (p. 56). The term adequately describes the teachers in this study. The teachers were committed to academic excellence and to educating the whole child.

Further, Irvine and Armento’s (2001) expanded work on culturally responsive pedagogy shared similar characteristics with the participants in this study. They listed six beliefs and strategies of culturally responsive teachers: (a) high expectations, (b) provided materials and opportunities for learning, (c) provided relevant instruction, (d) adapted to meet student’s need, (e) established mutual respect, and (f) promoted a climate of higher ideals. These are similar to the teaching practices revealed by the teachers in this study. Each teacher participant held high expectations for each student. They expected the best and would not settle for less. Because of that expectation, the teachers in this study would spend time planning relevant meaningful instruction and collaborating with colleagues to ensure lessons that were meaningful to the students. In addition to the regular classroom help, the teachers would come early and stay late to assist individual students. These interactions allowed the teachers and students to get to know each other better. The teachers in this study taught honesty, integrity, and responsibility along with the subject matter.

Caring, identified in this study as the Mom mentality, also has been identified in several other studies (Delpit, 2002; Foster, 1997; Irvine, 2002, Savage, 2001). Demonstration of caring was identified as a major component of the practices of African American teachers. The old adage that “students don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” held true. Knowing that the teacher cared

gave license to the teacher to push and to challenge their students. Walker's (1996) study of segregated schools as well as Ladson Billings' (1994) work in integrated schools found that caring was a strong attribute of cultural responsive teachers and that caring contributed greatly to the academic success of ethnic minority students.

3. The practices of African American teachers are more similar than different in segregated and desegregated schools. However, the depth and the intensity varied.

Sound basic teaching practices carried the teachers throughout their careers. The teachers had spent more than a decade in segregated schools refining and perfecting their practices. These practices were transferred to the desegregated schools. Although there is limited documentation, a discovery of 276 pages of data from six teacher interviews that were conducted immediately after desegregation support the concept of continuing practices. The teachers revealed similar practices to those captured in the most recent oral histories (Walker, 2001). Narratives of twenty African American teachers, many who taught in segregated and desegregated schools concurred that they continued many of the practices throughout their careers (Foster, 1997). In addition to continuing some practices, teachers in this study revealed that some practices that were modified during the initial stages of desegregation returned in the later years. For example, team planning gave way to professional isolation during the early days of desegregation but returned to team planning years later. The practices of cultivating relationship was stifled during the early days of desegregation Relationships are two way streets and the cultivation of positive relationships can

only occur if both parties are willing. Such was not the case during the early days of desegregation. The teachers did, however, become more multicultural with the increase diversity of the student population. In view all 12 teaching practices, one element in one practice did not transfer to the desegregated schools. Corporal punishment was not used by the teachers in the desegregated schools.

4. The practices of African American teachers are applicable to all grade levels.

In this study one teacher taught at the elementary school level, which serviced grades one through six. The other two teachers taught both at the junior high school level which was mainly grades six through eight and at the high school level which was grades nine through twelve. Yet their descriptions of their practices were interchangeable. Not one of the twelve practices revealed were grade or age specific but universal teaching practices effective at any grade level. This concept of teaching practices applicable to all grade levels is supported by teacher narratives (Foster, 1997) which cover all grades levels and different types of school settings. The narrative of E. Plummer stated, "Teachers have to be prepared to teach every day from the time they walk into the classroom until the day ends... Have something significant for them to do... work them hard...Expect something of them." This teacher had taught several grade levels and this was his method for teaching all of them.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications to both practice and research. The issues of providing quality education for all students and closing the achievement gap between White students and African American students remain on the forefront of the educational forum. Solutions must be found.

This study suggests that classroom teachers need specific strategies in order to be successful in today's diverse classes. Data reveals that culturally responsive teaching practices have been successful in meeting the needs of students, especially ethnic minority students. Educational leaders must provide opportunities for classroom teachers to gain, not only insight into their own cultural identities but also garnish the tools and strategies necessary to understand and educate students with a different cultural identity.

This need for cross cultural experiences is even more urgent when the demographics related to America's schools are reviewed. According to Irvine and Armento (2001), 44% of all schools do not have any ethnic minority teachers on their faculty. Yet, the student population is quickly becoming majority minority. In 1988, seven of ten children in America's classrooms were white but projections reveal that by 2020 only one of two children will be white. The increasing number and percentage of ethnic minority students in classroom taught predominately by white teachers raises concerns. Coupled with the declining number of African American teachers, the call for professional development opportunities in culturally relevant teaching strategies is even more apparent. This study does not conclude that only

African American teachers can successfully teach African American students. However, it does support the premise that teachers who use culturally responsive teaching practices are successful with African American students.

The study suggests that current professional development be reviewed. Are the current offerings producing the intended results? Are the current professional development trends providing the tools needed by teachers? What elements should be added, deleted, or changed? The study further suggests that using veteran African American teachers as mentors to the beginning teachers would provide the necessary support for these new teachers, especially if their teacher education programs did not prepare them for the task of educating a diverse population. If we are going to have schools that provide quality education for all students resulting in high academic achievement in each identified group, change must take place. One of the basic places of change must be the classroom. This study offers insight to school administrators and teachers who are seeking ways to effectively educate students, especially African American students.

The findings of this study lead to several areas of future research. First, we must expand the knowledge base of African American education. A comprehensive study of the separate Negro Public Education System might be done to ascertain the various facets of the system. Such components as organization, leadership and teaching practices should be considered. Effective elements of this system could inform educational leaders today as they make decisions regarding the schooling of African American children. This suggestion should not be viewed as a return to the

dual system of education. There is mounting evidence that the recent resegregation of schools has resulted in the continued decline of scores of African American students on standardized tests. (Borman et al., 2004)

In addition, this study focused on African American female teachers. Studies on African American males who taught in segregated and desegregated schools would provide additional insight.

A second area for future study would be the area of teacher education. Over the next decade, there will be a need for 2 million new teachers. What kind of teacher will be needed to ensure success in the classroom? How might teacher education programs be restructured so that they are producers of quality, caring teachers who can achieve success in a very diverse classroom?

More research is need in understanding the pedagogical practices that were and are successful in educating African American students. There is no silver bullet that will fix the ills of public education in America. We must be committed to a concentrated sustained effort of continued dialogue and seeking solutions. There is much to learn about African American teachers and even more to learn about the African American students. This study was not meant to provide the answer but to add to the discussion; to raise the question of African American teaching practices and to consider the use of those practices as an avenue for raising achievement level of African American students. It has been 50 years since the landmark decision *Brown v Board of Education* and the education of African American children is still in a critical, unresolved state.

APPENDIX A

SHORT CONSENT FORM for TEACHER PARTICIPANTS **AFRICAN AMERICAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF THEIR TEACHING PRACTICES IN SEGREGATED AND DESEGREGATED SCHOOLS**

Conducted By: Brenda Burrell IRB PROTOCOL # 2004-08-0027
Of University of Texas at Austin Educational Administration; (512) 832-8945

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of anything to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time by simply telling the researcher.

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the perspectives of African American teachers who taught in segregated and desegregated schools. The main focus will be on their teaching practices.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- allow me to conduct two interviews with you (one approx 2hrs in length; one 30 minutes in length)
- provide names of former students or community persons who had first-hand knowledge of your teaching practices in each school setting

Total estimated time to participate in study is 2.5 hours

Risks and Benefits of being in the study

- A primary risk involves the loss of confidentiality.
- There is a slight risk of psychological or emotional stress.
- There are no benefits.

Compensation:

- Unfortunately, I will not be able to provide you with remuneration or pay for your participation in this study.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept private. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. The tapes will be destroyed after they have been transcribed and the information has been coded. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later or want additional information, call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are listed at the top of this page.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects 232-4383.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in the study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

SHORT CONSENT FORM for ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS
**AFRICAN AMERICAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF THEIR TEACHING PRACTICES
IN SEGREGATED AND DESEGREGATED SCHOOLS**

Conducted By: Brenda Burrell
Of University of Texas at Austin Educational Administration; (512) 832-8945

IRB PROTOCOL # 2004-08-0027

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of anything to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time by simply telling the researcher.

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the perspectives of African American teachers who taught in segregated and desegregated schools. The main focus will be on their teaching practices.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- allow me to conduct two interviews with you (each one will be approximately 30 minutes in length)

Total estimated time to participate in study is 1 hour.

Risks and Benefits of being in the study

- A primary risk involves the loss of confidentiality.
- There is a slight risk of psychological or emotional stress.
- There are no benefits.

Compensation:

- Unfortunately, I will not be able to provide you with remuneration or pay for your participation in this study.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept private. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. The tapes will be destroyed after they have been transcribed and the information has been coded. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject.

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Statement of Consent:

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Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

Tell me about your own personal educational experience. Where you went to elementary, high school, college, your preparation to teach?

Give me an overview of your teaching career. Where you taught? When? What you taught?

These questions are centered on your teaching in segregated schools:

From your experience as a teacher in segregated schools, describe what they were like.

If I were to walk into your classroom at the segregated schools, what would I see?

Do you feel that there were certain instructional practices in the segregated classroom that work really well for African American students? Some that were not so successful?

Describe your relationship with the students in your classroom in the segregated school.

What, if anything, do you miss about the segregated school?

These next set of questions are centered on your teaching in desegregated schools:

From your experiences as a teacher in desegregated schools, describe what they were like.

What would a typical day in your classroom look like?

Do you feel that there were certain instructional practices in the integrated classroom that work really well for African American students? What did not work well?

Describe your relationship with the students in your classroom in the desegregated school.

Was teaching different for you in the segregated school? In what ways?

How would you describe your philosophy of education?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS

Tell me about your own personal educational experience. Where did you go to elementary, jr. high/middle school, and high school?

Tell me how you came to be in _____'s classroom.

If I were to go to _____'s classroom with you, describe what would be happening. What would the teacher be doing? What would the students be doing?

Describe the relationship between the students and the teacher.

Can you tell me about the school?

Is there anything else you would like to share with me about _____ and her/his class?

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VITA

Brenda Joyce Burrell was born in Dayton, Ohio on July 21, 1950, the firstborn of Sadie Corene Walker and James Cook Walker. Attending elementary school in Germany and high school in Japan, she returned to the United States and graduated from Del Valle High School, Del Valle, Texas in May 1968. She entered the University of Texas at Austin and received a Bachelor of Science degree in education in December 1971. She has been employed Austin ISD, Austin, Texas for twenty-eight years. She has also taught in St. Louis, Missouri. She returned to graduate school at UT – Austin. She earned a Masters in Education with an emphasis in curriculum and instruction in 1985. In 1990 she entered Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, TX where she earned her administrator certification. Educational honors include Teacher of the Year for her local campus and High School Principal of the Year.

Brenda Burrell has served as an administrator at every school level. She has held principalships at the elementary and high school level. Under her leadership, her school was ranked 41st of the Top 100 high schools in the nation. She has also served as the Assistant to the Superintendent in San Marcos, TX. She was named to Who's Who Among America's Teachers and The Chancellor's List. She is a keynote speaker on educational issues and an advocate for children.

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This dissertation was typed by the author.

