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MINORITY ADMINISTRATORS’ PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP

Minority Administrators’ Perspectives on Leadership in Predominantly White Schools

by

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Department of Leadership and Counseling

Eastern Michigan University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Educational Leadership

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Ypsilanti, Michigan
Dedication

To my beautiful wife, Stephanie; my selfless mother, Lillian (Enu); and my amazing sons, Alexander Jr. (AJ) and Xavier. Stephanie, I truly appreciated your unwavering belief in me to complete this endeavor; you were my muse. Mom, I am so grateful for all the sacrifices you have made and the high level of confidence you instilled in me as a youngster that has served me in all aspects of my adult life. Boys, I hope the completion of this dissertation and the attainment of my Ph.D. will be a source of inspiration to you later in life as you become future leaders…keep this as a reminder as you evolve into strong men—all things are possible with God, a clear focus, and a burning desire to succeed!
Acknowledgments

The journey to complete this scholarly work was arduous; at times I was frustrated, exhausted, and uncertain. I was able to persevere throughout the process because of the support and guidance I received. I thank God for the many blessings I was graced with throughout my doctoral program and the people that were placed in my life to help me accomplish such an enormous task.

I would like to give a special thank you to Dr. Ella Burton, my dissertation chairperson, who pushed me beyond my perceived limitations. She taught me how to “live in the fog” as a writer and the importance of meeting deadlines. Dr. Burton’s tutelage and encouragement to create a story worth hearing were instrumental in the completion of my dissertation. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Jaclynn Tracy, Dr. Theresa Saunders, and Dr. Janet Fisher for providing valuable feedback to me throughout the entire process while serving on my doctoral committee.

I would like to thank the minority administrators who graciously participated in this study and shared their fascinating stories as school leaders. Their commitment to our profession and willingness to support my research were much appreciated.

Finally, I would like to extend a huge thank you to my family, which included my parents Felix and Lillian, who set high expectations for me as an adolescent and were great examples in which I emulated; my siblings Frank, Tiffany, Cindy, who inspired me every day to push myself as I watched them excel in their respected fields; and my loving wife Stephanie and our two sons AJ and Xavier for their patience and understanding as I fully immersed myself into this project, which limited my availability for a significant amount of time.
Abstract

During a period of high expectations and accountability for public schools, some minority administrators have chosen to work in predominantly White schools. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the professional and personal experiences of minority administrators located in predominantly White suburban school districts in one affluent county located in southeastern Michigan. Through in-depth interviews, a focus group, and surveys, participants shared their experiences and perspectives on leadership as minority administrators in predominantly White schools. Using a phenomenological approach, the researcher analyzed the participants’ responses through the lens of the critical race theory.

Four themes emerged from the analysis of the minority administrators’ responses. First, participants embraced the opportunity to change negative perceptions people may have about members of their race through positive daily interactions with faculty, parents, and students within their school communities. Second, participants felt they were closely watched by all members of their school community—unlike their White colleagues—which impacted their behavior as school leaders. Third, participants valued the relationships they established along their journeys with mentors and attributed much of their professional development to the support they received from supportive colleagues. Fourth, the participants all experienced difficult times as school leaders; to overcome their challenges, they relied on their faiths, families, or friends as their sources of strength.

The minority administrators’ experiences were challenging and rewarding as they led schools with faculties and students different from their own race. From their experiences, the researcher created a counter-story highlighting their perspectives on leadership.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Story of One Southeastern Michigan Community/School: Wrestling with Changing Demographics

The number of minority principals in the United States pales in comparison to that of their White counterparts, particularly in predominantly White schools (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2013). The professional experiences and motivations of those minority principals are uniquely formed from their cultural background and racial isolation of working in predominantly White schools (Brown, 2012). All administrators—regardless of race, cultural background, or even location of employment—run their schools based off of their perspectives on and approaches to leadership, which are shaped by their professional and personal experiences. Few studies, however, have examined the experiences of minority leaders—specifically those working in White school districts—and their perspectives on leadership.

To address the gap in scholarly research detailing the phenomenon of minority administrators working in predominantly White schools, and to provide a forum for minority administrators’ “voices” to be heard, qualitative research examining the different experiences of these educational leaders must occur (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011). Of the limited studies that have examined minority administrators leading predominantly White schools, a small sample focused on providing a story that relates the minority administrators’ shared experiences as they transitioned into their new roles. Similar studies are scarce and rarely examine various perspectives on leadership of minority administrators in predominantly White schools. To add to the body of related scholarly work, this study analyzed the experiences and
perspectives on leadership of multiple minority administrators, including those of the researcher.

The role of the researcher in this study was critical to telling the story of a group of minority administrators in southeastern Michigan.

According to Krathwoll and Smith (2005), in qualitative research there are specific qualifications the researcher must meet and which should be included in a study; these are addressed in a later chapter:

- The researcher is often encouraged to disclose his personal perspectives on the groups he is studying with readers of his research, so these readers can be conscious of potential bias in the work.
- The researcher should examine historical accounts of the wide variation of many and varied ways the social issues were dealt with; by maintaining a critical stance towards his own work in the field, he can see beyond his own ideological and practice assumptions.
- The researcher should conduct a preliminary or pilot interview before beginning his study and assess the quality of his questions for future interviews. During the pilot interviews, the researcher should be an empathetic listener, which will establish trust with the interviewee.
- The researcher should complete a qualitative methods seminar to familiarize himself with the different characteristics of qualitative research.

The researcher conducted a qualitative study, which provided a narrative by outlining the experiences of one particular district as its vision on diversity was reformed due to a shift in student demographics. The researcher then utilized multiple inquiry methods to examine the perspectives on leadership of a group of minority administrators within a county in southeastern
Michigan. The study provided a unique perspective on the experiences of those minority school leaders and determined that such literature is lacking in educational research.

The researcher examined the factors that impacted the success of minority administrators employed in predominantly White schools located in southeastern Michigan. The parameters for this study included one affluent county located in southeastern Michigan, placing particular attention on the minority administrators working in one of the highest achieving districts within said county. The researcher told the story of minority administrators leading predominantly White schools throughout this county, using the aforementioned highly achieving district as a microcosm.

In the two decades since storytelling was called the “sense making currency of organizations,” storytelling scholarship has employed a wide variety of research methods. The main paradigms considered in the storytelling model are narrativist, living story, materialist, interpretivist, abstractionist, and practice all as integrated by the antenarrative process (Rosile, Boje, Carlon, Downs, & Saylors, 2013). Storytelling inquiry is especially rich as a vehicle to study processes and material conditions occurring inside organizations, and researchers have long held that storytelling plays a crucial role in creating and sustaining organizational identity (Boje, 1991, 2001, 2008, 2011; Czerniawska, 1998; Gabriel, 2000; O’Connor, 2004; Weick, 2001). The researcher used storytelling inquiry to examine the dynamics of one particular organization, while simultaneously providing a platform for a group of administrators to share their experiences, perceptions, and realities in leading predominantly White schools as minorities. The researcher described storytelling as:

Storytelling is defined as the intraplay of grand (master) narratives (epistemic or empiric) with living stories (their ontological webs of relationship).
Antenarratives make a process connection between narratives and living stories. Here, storytelling is defined as the inclusive broader category and includes the opposition between narrative philosophies and living stories as well as certain antenarrative processes that some scholars suggest are operating in between the storytelling paradigms. This definition of storytelling allows for the study of elite narratives that permeate organizations, both visible and hidden. It also includes the study of marginalized living stories, thus recognizing and giving voice to the voiceless. (Rosile, et al., 2013)

To ensure the quality of the study and substantiate storytelling as a legitimate means of scholarly investigation, the researcher used the storytelling diamond model (Figure 1.0) to guide his story:

- Through the narrative paradigm the researcher recorded participants’ testimonies, focusing closely on their retrospective sense-making of the past (Weick, 1995). From the narrative paradigm, different inquiry methods were used as the researcher unmasked hidden structures that shaped the story’s meaning.

- Through the living story paradigm, the researcher analyzed multiple perspectives to offer greater depth of understanding for the study.

- Through the materialist paradigm, historical accounts that occurred over time within the organization were presented and critiqued—calling into question the grand narratives of macro-history work by collecting “little people’s” stories (Rosile, et al., 2013).

- Through the abstractionist paradigm, the researcher extracted different elements from the stories to reveal generalizable facts and claims to truth. Through this
paradigm, the researcher found the presumed underlying reality beneath each participant’s narrative as the collective story was constructed.

- Through the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher discovered patterns in the administrators’ responses that produced reoccurring themes throughout the study.

![Figure 1.0](image)

*Figure 1.0.* Storytelling diamond model. The arrows represent the antenarrative processes working in-between the paradigm. Adapted from “Storytelling diamond: An antenarrative integration of the six facets of storytelling in organization research design,” by Rosile, et al., 2013, *Organizational Research Methods, 16*, p. 559.

The story began with a brief analysis of one exclusive community and district located in a region of Michigan known for its top-tier school systems. The researcher retrieved information to complete the analysis from data contained in a Plante Moran Cresa audit from 2010 (Chen, 2010). It should also be duly noted that the researcher has an understanding of the district due to his employment record. As for the district itself, it is nationally recognized as a top-performing academic institution in the state, due to its students’ high scores on standardized tests. With newly renovated buildings, award-winning faculty members, and state-of-the art technology, the schools are often said to be “one of the best parts of living in the community” by local realtors.
And families rave about the district’s community education program, which provides after-school activities for children, leisure time courses for adults, preschool for young learners, and dynamic summer offerings for the whole community. Also, the faculty members take pride in the district’s commitment to character education, which is evident in the many awards and points of pride highlighted on the district’s website—97.3% of the students who attend the schools graduate, for example.

The majority of students enrolled in this area come from eight different municipalities that sit within the district’s borders; the bulk of the students reside in a very upscale suburban city that has a population of approximately 20,000 residents and a median housing price of $440,000. The average household income of families who attend the schools is $162,225, which dwarfs Michigan’s average household income of $68,163. The adults who dwell in this area are highly educated, with 29.53% possessing graduate or professional degrees, 36.89% possessing bachelor degrees, 5.37% possessing associate degrees, and 14.50% having some college education. A large percentage of the community members in this area have executive or managerial positions, with 89.34% of the residents’ occupations categorized as white-collar professions. The largest ethnic group in this area is Caucasian: White 85.82%; Black 5.92%; Asian/Pacific Islander 3.30%; Hispanic 2.50%; Other 2.46%.

There are many appealing aspects about this school district, which has historically attracted different stakeholders to the area for a long period of time. Parents, students, and staff members have entered the district hoping to reap the benefits associated with it. Unfortunately, minorities have not always been greeted warmly by their White counterparts in this district.

In the 1990s, a group of students who lived outside of the district were caught using fraudulent addresses specifically in order to enroll in the schools. Many of the confirmed cases of
students using false home addresses involved students of color, which resulted in a racial divide within the schools when news of the fake enrollment issue spread through the community. Resultantly, there was a period of time where minority families who were new to the district did not feel embraced by other community members, and they constantly felt they had to prove the legitimacy of their home addresses to other families so they would be treated with respect. A common concern throughout the community was that the high real estate prices in the area were a direct result of the high-achieving public school system those homeowners’ children were attending, which would be compromised if the “wrong” students entered the schools. Community members also believed it was unfair for families that lived outside the district to get the same educational privileges inherent to living in a highly-priced community. The thought was that the students who were sneaking into the district came from other school districts that were not as academically challenging, and as a result, they would begin to lower standardized test scores; this drop in standardized test scores would likely tarnish the previously established high academic reputation. The frustrated parents were so disgruntled they would regularly make complaints to the Board of Education and the district superintendent regarding the use of false addresses to gain admission into the district. According to district employees, the accusations at the time focused on students from neighboring districts transferring into the schools, particularly one of the high schools, explicitly to participate in sports, which resulted in various athletic roster spots getting taken away from their children. And according to one staff member, another “boiling point” for some parents was when one of the new students, who was eventually dismissed from the district because of residency issues, was involved in a violent fight at one of the high schools. These parents became more concerned that a rise of disciplinary issues might ensue due to these new students’ lack of familiarity with the district’s expectations on behavior.
Residency Policy

All of these concerns became the catalyst for the district’s new residency policy, and the creation of the enrollment coordinator position, which exists to both closely oversee the admission process and vet new students for potential residency issues. This new residency policy was developed out of an ethic of justice (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2013); families were allegedly falsely claiming to live within the district to take advantage of the schools’ offerings, and the district was in need of clearer regulations to prohibit such behavior to avoid the appearance of permitting free-riding students therein. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2013) suggested that schools should teach principles, especially those associated with justice; as a district that has always charged tuition to non-resident students, they were in need of clearer guidelines around enrollment that contained detailed consequences for families attempting to dishonestly enter the district. One staff member asserted, “parents felt cheated that they were making financial sacrifices to live in an area with high home prices and city taxes, while others were not, yet still receiving the perks—a strong public school system…it just was not fair and if we as a district didn’t do something about it, what type of message would that send to the community?” It was becoming apparent to district leadership that some community members wanted stricter guidelines to prohibit students from illegally entering their schools, but they understood there existed a process that must be followed when implementing such a policy.

Before a policy can be adopted formally, it must be addressed in writing (Fowler, 2013). The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) through the School Aid Act clearly defined the regulations of School of Choice:

The State School Aid Act provides each local school board with the option to participate in the state schools of choice program under sections 105 and 105c
[MCL 388.1705 and 388.1705c]. The decision to participate in the program is voluntary. Section 105 allows a student to transfer to another school district within the same intermediate school district. Section 105c allows a student to transfer to a school district that is within another contiguous intermediate school district. A receiving district that participates in Section 105 and/or 105c state schools of choice program is not required to obtain a release from the resident district in order to generate state aid for the student.

The State School Aid Act of 1979 outlined the options to participate in school of choice, which this district has never elected to do in the traditional sense—where non-resident students are allowed to attend without cost. In 2007, the enrollment coordinator and the deputy superintendent decided to revise the existing one-page enrollment policy, which stated that only residents living within the borders of the district were permitted to enroll their children in the district. The revised residency policy, which was rewritten as Policy 5111—ELIGIBILITY OF RESIDENT/NON-RESIDENT STUDENTS, included: exceptions, summer school enrollment, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten options enrollments, other community education programs, enrollment requirements, proof of residence, and false information with respect to residence. The eight-page policy was proposed to, and agreed upon by, the district’s board of education.

**Implementation of a Policy**

Fowler (2013) suggested that the successful implementation of a policy relies on the resources provided to it. According to Fowler (2013), “Within their organizations, school administrators also play a major role in implementing new policies” (p.19). To ensure the residency policy’s success, the district created a truancy and enrollment department that was led by an enrollment coordinator, whose primary responsibilities consisted of new student
enrollment, investigating student residency, and dismissal of illegally registered students. The
enrollment coordinator stated, “To be able to do my job, it is a combination of having a real
strong law background, an investigative technique, the ability to recognize different things, and
unfortunately a skeptical nature…it’s all about facts.” As new families attended the open houses,
or took personal tours of the schools led by building administrators, principals were directed by
the superintendent to have those families meet the enrollment coordinator so they were apprised
of the district’s strict requirements for enrollment and the legal consequences for false
information of residency.

**Evaluation of a Policy**

The district used the ethics of critique, justice, and care (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011) to
evaluate their residency policy and its effectiveness years ago. One exception added to the
residency policy that addressed inequities through the lens of critique as discussed by Shapiro
and Stefkovich (2011) was the way the district treated students who were considered homeless:
homeless students are allowed to attend if the district is the child’s district of origin or district of
temporary relocation. By analyzing the residency policy and adding an exception for a child
who is considered homeless, the district began considering factors that are out of each child’s
control, such as a sudden change in living conditions because of the their family’s financial
hardships.

Noddings (1992) asserted that the primary job of the school through the ethic of care, as
it relates to education, is to proactively promote each child’s well-being. If a school district lacks
the appropriate personnel or procedures to support the needs of their students, their educational
experiences may be negatively impacted. School leaders believed the creation of the new
residency policy and enrollment coordinator position would benefit the district. Before the
district had a residency policy and an enrollment coordinator who actively checked the legitimacy of newly enrolled students’ addresses, racial tension was starting to arise. For example, African American students transferring into the district who happened to play sports, and any student who came in under guardianship, were regularly suspected of committing residency fraud. However, now that the district has a thorough vetting process and a strong investigative arm, the community has accepted the fact that every student enrolled in the district deserves to be there. Prior to the implementation of the residency policy, many African American families who transferred into the district were ostracized by other residents because they were presumed to be “cheating” to get their child into the district. By not having a residency policy and/or enrollment coordinator in place, the district created an environment that was harmful to emotional well-being of minority students. For a child to be viewed and treated as a dishonest person by adults because they supposedly entered a school district unlawfully, it could potentially have a damaging effect on their development: “We are all social beings after all and as the great Robert Merton said, we get our self-image in part by the way other see us” (“Institutional Emotional Abuse,” 2008).

The creation of both the residency policy and the systems to support its success within the school district were developed out of a need to protect the district’s public image with longstanding residents of the community. As the district took the necessary measures to ensure all newly-enrolled students were screened through the admission process, some facets of the community became more accepting, or at least developed a more accepting persona. However, by taking a strong stance on screening new students and not fully participating in the school of choice initiative, the district earned a reputation with outsiders as an unwelcoming environment
for families who did not fit the traditional model of residents who formerly lived within the district—affluent and White.

**Board of Education Takes Action**

Approximately ten years ago, pressure from parents to make sure all students were being treated fairly caused the district leadership to take action. Parent groups formed and actively spoke to district leaders, specifically to voice their concerns about not feeling welcome in the schools, causing the district as a whole to reevaluate their past practices. As a result of the community upheaval, district employees—including central office administration and the Board of Education members—developed a plan to address future student population growth. Student demographics continue to evolve, with a much larger percentage of minority students entering the school than ever before. The charts below represent the increase of minority students enrolled in the district, in stark contrast to the student population makeup from years ago. The diagrams (Figure 1.1) that were recently created by central office administrators in the district represent the student make-up for specific school years. During the 2010–2011 school year, minority students made up less the 18 percent of the student body. In the 2015–2016 school year, minority students represented 20 percent of the student population; although the percentage change was small, certain parts of the community were not receptive to even the modest increase in diversity, which is explored later in this study.
Figure 1.1. Student demographics. The graphs represent an increase in the district’s minority student population and a decrease in the district’s White student population between 2010–2016. Adapted from the district’s homepage data dashboard.
Prior to the 2010 school year, there was a lack of transparency on the district website regarding the racial make-up of the students; similarly, the district could have also provided other student demographic data outside of the information contained in the State of Michigan school data reports, which reflected a much higher percentage of White students compared to the percentage of minority students.

With the district’s change in vision on diversity came marketing efforts to transparently showcase the actual demographic and ethnic make-up of their student body. While the student population to this point had been predominantly affluent Caucasians, the district was now experiencing an increase in diversity. To maintain high student enrollment levels and create a positive culture for all members of the school district—new and existing—executive leadership within the district began to rethink both their school policy regarding, and method of accurately representing on social media, student body diversity. A large majority of the new diversity efforts occurred during an influx of English as second language (ESL) students entering their schools—typically because their parents relocated to Michigan from other countries for executive positions in the automotive industry—as well as a rise in other professional minority parents seeking out alternative educational opportunities for their children than were typically available in their previous districts. As a result, district personnel began to notice a shift in the types of families they were servicing. In order to create a welcoming environment for these new students, district administrators and the Board of Education decided to create a plan that would encourage diverse families to attend this district over pursuing other educational options, specifically schools in neighboring districts or one of the several local prestigious private schools. The most critical part of the district’s plan to make these new families feel welcomed was to diversify the faculty, specifically the administrators. As new minority administrators
entered the district, they were asked to join certain organizations—like the diversity committee, achievement gap committee, or strategic plan committee, to name a few—specifically to provide their insight on ways to improve the conditions for minority students throughout the district. This conscious decision was made by district leadership in an effort to be proactive about creating ideas to positively embrace new families; it marked a huge shift from the manner in which decisions had been made by district leadership in the past in regards to welcoming new families, particularly minority families. To better understand why the district’s vision on diversity changed, one must be aware of the history behind how new students, particularly minority students, were treated as they transferred into the district years ago, which ultimately created a reputation that the district was unwelcoming to minority families.

Reshaping a District’s Image

To maintain the stellar reputation the district has enjoyed throughout the state as a high achieving, forward-thinking educational institution and to improve the negative perceptions minorities families had about the inclusive nature of the school system, central office leadership began to develop a plan to meet the needs of all students in their schools by helping them become “global citizens” who are prepared and equipped to grow into “future leaders.” Through feedback from community forums, which involved different stakeholders from various places within the district, central office leadership discovered the following information:

1. Student demographic changes were occurring—more minority families were entering their schools.

2. There was a positive, more accepting attitudinal shift of school members towards the changing make-up of the student body.
3. The vision of the school board was becoming more progressive with regard to diversity; members wanted to market the district to all prospective families.

4. The local private schools with which the district was competing for students were celebrating the diversity within their faculty and student population in how they marketed their schools, which was appealing to young families within the district.

To address the changes that were occurring within the schools and support the needs of the newly enrolling students, the district did the following:

- Created a district-wide diversity committee that included administrators, parents, and teachers from different buildings, while requiring each school to have their own diversity committee as well. The director of communications oversaw the diversity committees; each school was responsible for disclosing the diversity work that was occurring within their building with the director, who would report that information back to the Board of Education and the superintendent.

- Central office leadership began meeting regularly with parent groups, specifically the newly formed African American parent network, to discuss their concerns.

- All staff members were given training by outside consultants on culturally responsive instructional practices in order to support the learning styles of all students. The same consultants would provide training seminars for principals that focused on ways to provide staff with development initiatives that support the needs of minority staff/students/parents.

- The district made a concerted effort to seek out more diverse applicants for administrative and teaching positions; they attended historically Black university teacher
fairs, sent minority administrators to job fairs to recruit a wide range of applicants, and held a district job fair specifically for minority applicants.

The key element in the district’s plan to create a welcoming environment for a wider pool of students was to begin hiring more diverse faculty members, specifically highly qualified minority administrators. The superintendent believed that in order for all members of their community to feel welcome in the school system, the population of their leadership had to be reflective of the changing demographics within both the community and our society at large. The superintendent also understood the significant role principals played in shaping the culture of their buildings. Diverse principals create school cultures that accept and embrace a diverse student population. Many scholars have researched the influence of school leaders, specifically the principal’s role, on school reform efforts (Sammons, 1999). Said studies find that principals are critically important to a school’s success; decades of research consistently find positive relationships between principal behavior and student academic achievement (Cotton, 2003).

**District’s Vision Materializing**

The vision of the district’s executive leadership team became a reality as a cadre of minority administrators at both the building level and the central office were hired as a measure to create an inclusive environment for all families entering the district. Soon thereafter, many of the newly hired minority administrators quickly realized that their daily professional experiences and perceptions on leadership varied from that of their White counterparts. Using the critical race theory (CRT), the researcher examined the experiences of those minority administrators in this school district, as well as other minority administrators in the same county who also work in predominantly White schools:
CRT offers us one such race-conscious approach to understanding educational inequality and identifying potential solutions. CRT takes us beyond the traditional approaches and understandings of educational inequality. It foregrounds race as the central construct for analyzing inequality, and it offers educators and students alike with an alternative perspective in identifying more effective solutions to the challenges students of color face in school. (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011)

Through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and surveys, the researcher captured personal testimonies of minority administrators who lead in the predominantly White schools to better understand how their respective races have impacted their experiences as leaders. Critical race theorists all agree that race is a central structure in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gilborn, 2005; Yosso, 2002).

**Rationale for Study**

**Statement of problem—minority administrators working in white schools.** As an African American school leader working in a predominantly White organization, the researcher understands race-specific challenges, successes, frustrations, and pleasures that occur in his own work setting on a daily basis. To better understand the phenomenon of minority administrators working in predominantly White schools, the researcher committed to conducting a study that highlighted the experiences and perceptions of a select group of minority educational leaders that focused on all aspects of leadership; the current lack of scholarly research on this small population of educators also prompted this study. The researcher examined the concept of leadership from a different perspective and gave voice to a marginalized cluster of professionals (Zamudio, et al.,
2011). Statistically, minority principals represent a small segment of school administrators throughout the United States of America, and an even smaller percentage of suburban schools, which may explain why limited research detailing their professional experiences in predominantly White schools persists. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2012) reported that 81.5% of principals in suburban public K-12 schools were Caucasian, 9.2% African American, 7.0% Hispanic, and 2.2% other. The researcher provided a counter-narrative from a group of minority educators—the members of which are rarely given an opportunity to articulate their stories—that will showcase the intricacies of their profession (Zamudio, et al., 2011). By conducting this qualitative study, utilizing different methods of inquiry while attempting to make sense of the findings through the critical race theory, the researcher captured the shared testimony of the minority administrators in this study and discovered themes that better explain this phenomenon:

Qualitative research is in itself a field of inquiry that crosscuts disciplines and subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) identifies five main traditions: a case study, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and narrative research. To that list, we add action research and post-modernism/post-structuralism. (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016)

This qualitative study is unique because of the exclusive location where it occurred: in an affluent, highly populated county with desirable districts and award-winning schools. Through analyzing the professional experiences of the minority administrators who work in this setting, the researcher intended to aid other minority administrators who aspire to work in similar environments by making them aware of the challenges they may experience professionally. The
themes that emerged from the analysis of the study provided insight into a phenomenon that has not been thoroughly examined in educational research. Through the examination of the findings from the study, a clearer picture of the minority administrators’ leadership perspectives was outlined, which included motivations, frustrations, points of pride, support systems, fears, and successes. The researcher examined the findings from the study systematically:

Qualitative research is a systematic scientific inquiry which seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative, description to inform the researcher’s understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993), qualitative research is defined as, “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories” (p.479). This definition implies that data and meaning emerge “organically” from the research context. Qualitative research worked out under a combination of observations, interviews, and document reviews. It gives the importance of looking at variables in the natural setting in which they are found. In the process of qualitative research interaction between variables is important. Detailed data is gathered through open-ended questions that provide direct quotations. The interviewer is an integral part of the investigation. Qualitative research is an umbrella term for a broad range of different approaches and methods, which vary considerably in terms of focus, assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the role of the researcher.

This study provided the historical perspective of one particular district and highlighted their reformed vision on diversity; specifically, the report outlined the measures taken by a school district to address minority parents’ concerns about how their children would be treated
by White school members. Some of these fears stemmed from the negative reputation the district had developed over time that they weren’t warmly welcoming or accepting of minority families in the area, in part because the surrounding communities also developed the same reputation. The study provided guidance to school leaders who have historically lacked diversity in their schools, who are interested in creating a more inclusive environment for their schools’ minority members, by examining the steps taken by one predominantly White school district.

To contribute to what is already known about the topic of minority administrators in predominantly White schools, the researcher reflected and expounded on his own experiences as an African American school leader in a later chapter of this study.

As a minority administrator, the researcher understood the benefits of being reflective in practice and constantly assessing different aspects of his own leadership as a measure to ensure his success as a school leader. This study provided other minority administrators multiple opportunities to be self-reflective on their own experiences and thoughts on leadership through focus groups, in-depth interviews, and surveys. Some minority administrators did not have the opportunity to talk about their experiences in an open and honest way without fear of retribution; this study provided an avenue for honest and open dialogue while providing complete anonymity to all participants. Critical race theorists give voice to the experiences and truths of those without power while simultaneously asking citizens to question the master narratives we have come to believe (Zamudio, et al., 2011). Critical race theorists (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) have identified six principles:

1. Racism is salient or a normalized experience.
2. Racism is addressed only when there is an interest convergence between the White majority and people of color; when it is in the best interest of White people to address it.
3. Race is a social construction rather than a biological or genetic difference.
4. The recipients of racism, not the perpetrators, have the authoritative voice to describe the experience of racism; people of color are the experts regarding their own experiences and the use of narratives and counter-narratives can lend power to these experiences as they oppose the hegemonic stories of our (White people’s) lives.
5. Differential racialization refers to how the dominant society changes the way it racializes different groups of color over time to serve the political and social needs of the White racial majority.
6. Race is only one way in which our identities intersect; no one belongs to only one demographic group.

These tenets are described in more detail in the following sections. As described by the participants of this study, some of their negative experiences as school leaders were because of racism. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), racism is normal; it is so entrenched within our society that it is natural. It is not an atypical social condition; instead, it is the usual way society does business (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

The feedback gathered from the minority school leaders who participated sheds light on current issues minority administrators face, such as changes in the evaluation system; core curriculum; technology; intense parent scrutiny on educators; and the overarching political climate, which can influence the interactions the administrators have with their White colleagues. The findings from the study offered valuable lessons on the leadership perspectives of minority administrators who work in predominantly Whites schools, which can be shared in university educational leadership programs as professors prepare future minority administrators for the challenges they may encounter in the same circumstance.
Significant Prior Research

The researcher critiqued many studies that examined the experiences of minority administrators in a K-12 setting. Of the studies that were examined, the vast majority was gender-specific, focusing solely on participant groups that were exclusively composed of either all men or women. Other studies on minority administrators tended to examine the experiences of the participants utilizing only in-depth interviews as the sole inquiry method. Many studies the researcher discovered involving minority administrators were conducted in urban settings where the preponderance of staff and students were of color. The researcher also reviewed multiple dissertations on minority administrators that focused only on the experiences of participants from one school district. The most common conceptual framework used by other scholars to evaluate the experiences of the minority administrator was the critical race theory, which was described in the previous section. To extend the scholarly research on the topic, the researcher conducted a phenomenological study on both female and male minority administrators in predominantly White schools:

Phenomenologists are interested in how people put together the phenomena they experience in such a way as to make sense of the world and develop a worldview. They assume commonality in human experience and focus on meaning-making as the essence of human experience. The essence is the core meaning mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. The phenomenon under study may be emotions, relationships, a program, an organization or a culture. Bracketing is one of the central ideas in phenomenology. It means that the researcher has to set aside all of his prejudgments and his previous experience
about the phenomena and approach the field with an open mind, imagination, and intuition. (Patton, 2002)

In-depth interviews, focus groups, and surveys were conducted during the study, all of which included both male and female minority administrators in order to gather a comprehensive narrative of these professionals’ experiences as examined by the researcher.

Of the many studies the researcher inspected, the dissertation that closely replicated his own qualitative study was Wilson’s (2006) dissertation entitled Factors Contributing to Career Success: Perceptions from African American Male School Administrators. In Wilson’s (2006) qualitative study, he examined the perceptions of seven minority administrators located in the western region of Michigan. The researcher’s study was an extension of the research Wilson (2006) started over ten years ago, as he continued to explore the experiences and the perceptions on leadership of minority administrators in White schools through the lens of the CRT. To paint a clearer picture of the experiences of minority administrators in White schools than is offered in previous studies, and add to the limited body of scholarly work on this phenomenon, the researcher incorporated several forms of inquiry while examining minority participants of different ethnic backgrounds and gender.

**Trending Issues**

In 2015, there were roughly 928,000 education administrators in the U.S. This extensive group includes administrators at all levels of public and private education, including pre-school and daycare, K-12, technical and vocational training, and post-secondary education (Dorning, 2016). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistic (2013), this figure represents a 10.5 percent drop in the number of education administrators since 2010. It’s worth noting that the number of administrators has changed considerably in the past decade, by as much as 90,000 and as little as
7,000 per year. Many factors contributed to the fluctuating employment numbers of administrators in America, including increased expectations and dwindling resources. For example, Federal policies such as former President Barack Obama’s Race to the Top (RTTT) grant program place heavy emphasis on how the role of educators impact student performance. RTTT was a $4.35 billion competitive grant created by the United States Department of Education to spur and reward innovation and reforms in state and local district K-12 education, based on multiple measures of educator efficacy. And with continued focus on education reform and student achievement, many segments of our society critically examined school administrators and their effectiveness, establishing high expectations for all faculty members to create learning environments conducive to student success. Similarly, principals are not always directly responsible for curriculum-related decisions; however, their ability to effectively lead teachers does impact student performances on high-stakes standardized tests (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2012). According to the MetLife Survey of the American Teacher (2012), 69 percent of principals stated that their job responsibilities were different than those they had five years earlier, and 75 percent reported that they felt their jobs were too complex. As a result, many administrators believed that their responsibilities as school leaders continued to change, making the expectations for them to meet the demands of their jobs unreasonably high because of the confusion around what specifically their responsibilities were. Additionally, funding shortages continued to burden administrators throughout the country. School districts began cutting teaching positions at the start of the last economic recession, and as of August 2013, school districts had eliminated 324,000 positions (Leachman, Albares, Masterson, & Wallace, 2016). As teaching positions were eliminated in schools and many teachers feared the possibility of
losing their jobs because of budget cuts, principals were also faced with the task of keeping staff morale high while completing other daily tasks.

The work of an administrator is vital to the success of any school, but at times the role can be stressful and thankless. The job description for principals continues to evolve and grow, as students are facing new challenges both inside and outside of school. The daily challenges that the minority administrators faced in this study were at times related to the pressures of dealing with unfamiliar challenges as they strived to create an environment of high student achievement. To better understand the nuances of high achieving schools, researchers must examine the perceptions of those individuals leading them. Through this study, the researcher determined the most stressful aspects of minority administrators’ jobs, as well as the tools they used to manage them throughout the school year—support systems, for example. This study added relevant knowledge to scholarly research on minority administrators. The researcher also provided insight from the participants of the study on the aspects of their job they find most enjoyable, as it benefits principals to be aware of their sources of joy in the workplace. This study supported principals by providing strategies used by other principals to navigate the challenges of their jobs.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the professional and personal experiences of minority administrators located in predominantly White suburban school districts in one affluent county located in southeastern Michigan. Through various inquiry methods, the researcher examined the factors that impacted the experiences and leadership perspectives of the participants of the study. And by sharing the perspectives of these educational leaders, the
researcher brought awareness to a subgroup of society for which there is limited research available in educational literature.

Examining one particular district, the minority administrators who lead the district’s schools, and other minority administrators in neighboring suburban districts as a case study allowed the researcher to better understand the shared experiences of minority educational leaders in predominantly White schools. A case study is an exploratory form of inquiry that affords significant interaction with research participants, providing an in-depth picture of the unit of study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The researcher not only analyzed the experiences of the minority administrators, he also examined the institutions in which they were employed to better understand the institutional structures that impacted the experiences of those educational leaders. The researcher understood in order to do a complete analysis for his study he had to examine the leadership perspectives of the participants and their organizations:

Scheurich and Young (1997) suggested that while this individual level is important for analyzing racism, it is incomplete. For them, individual relationships are “nested” within border institutional structures such as those in schools. Thus a second level of analysis is at the institutional level. That is institutional structures allow, permit, and even encourage racist behavior between one or more individuals (Zamudio, et al., 2011, p.99).

**Research Questions**

The primary research questions that guided the research for this study were as follows:

- What factors positively and negatively impact the leadership experiences of minority administrators in predominantly White schools?
How do minority administrators in predominantly White districts describe their daily work?

How does the cultural background of minority administrators influence their leadership?

What are the benefits and challenges of being a minority administrator in a predominantly White school?

Through the principals’ stories, the researcher explored the issues that affect their work environment and have shaped the careers of the minority administrators in the predominantly White schools (Brown, 2012).

**Methodology**

The research design used was a phenomenological study. Phenomenological studies are studies in which human experiences are examined through the detailed descriptions of the people being studied. Understanding these “lived experiences” identifies phenomenology as a philosophy, according to the works of Husserl, Heidegger, Schuler, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty (Nieswiadomy, 1993), as much as it is a method of research. The latter involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Dukes, 1984; Oiler, 1986). Through this process, the researcher “brackets” his or her own experiences in order to understand those of the informants (Niewiadomy, 1993):

Phenomenologists are committed to understanding what our experiences in the world are like; experience (verstehen) is to be examined as it actually occurs, and on its own terms (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Phenomenology does not endeavor to develop a theory or to explain the world; rather, the aim is to facilitate deeper insight to help us maintain greater contact within the world (Smith et al.,
2009; van Manen, 1990). Rooted in the philosophical perspectives of Husserl (1859–1938) and subsequent philosophical discussions by Heidegger (1889–1976) and Merleau-Ponty (1908–1969), phenomenological research involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Moustakas, 1994). In this process, the researcher “brackets” his or her own experiences to understand the participants’ experiences (van Manen, 1990). The notion of bracketing is considered one of the key elements that distinguished Husserlian phenomenology. Heidegger, Husserl’s pupil, moved phenomenology from descriptive to an interpretive endeavor, focusing on her hermeneutic perspective, which recognizes that human existence is always embedded in a world of meanings. Therefore, phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method becomes interpretive rather than purely descriptive (Mills & Birks, 2014). Gadamer (1960) explains the hermeneutic circle, whereby a text is understood by reference to the context in which it is generated; the text, in turn, produces an understanding of the originator and context. (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 48)

Using phenomenological research as the qualitative methodology opened the door for the researcher to form a data collection methodology that included semi-structured interviews, focus groups, surveys, and field notes.

The researcher used the following characteristics to describe the process for the study: a) naturalistic, b) inductive, c) interpretive, d) simultaneous (Figure 1.2). The researcher looked for commonalities and differences between participants; both types were just as important as the other. The researcher also examined the following aspects of the study: a) credibility, b)
confirmability, c) dependability, d) Transferability. The aim was not to come up with a body of work that can be generalized, but rather to discover and discuss the experiences of the study’s participants.

The first qualitative research characteristic to be addressed was “naturalistic,” which means the researcher studied participants in their natural setting. The second characteristic was “simultaneous,” which means the researcher continued to collect data throughout his continued research. The third characteristic was “inductive.” This means all of the information came from the data. The researcher did not set out to prove or disprove a hypothesis in the study, or get a yes or no answer; rather, the researcher distilled recurring themes from the responses of the study’s participants to better understand their experiences and their perspectives on leadership.

To validate the findings of this qualitative study, multiple methods of inquiry were utilized. The researcher used a semi-structured interview protocol, focus groups, surveys, and field notes as the data gathering instruments. During these data gathering experiences, the researcher listened to the stories of the participants’ experiences. It was critical to remember the viewpoint of the participants while conducting the qualitative research; in other words, that there was no one truth and that everyone experienced things in different ways. The researcher looked for and found commonalities and universal things.
A pilot study was administered upon completion of the interview instruments. The purpose of the pilot study was to ascertain the clarity of the interview questions, determine the time it would take to conduct interviews, and to gauge whether the questions needed to be revised. The pilot study was administered to three minority administrators: an African American high school assistant principal, a Lebanese American high school assistant principal, and an African American female elementary principal. The participants of the pilot study provided oral feedback, both about their experiences and regarding ways to improve the questions’ wording. The results of the pilot study were instrumental to creating the questions for inquiry methods used for the study.
Definition of Terms

- **Administrator**—A person responsible for managing a school. This term will be interchangeable with “school leader,” “principal,” “assistant principal,” and “educational leader.”

- **Affirmative Action**—Proactive efforts that intend to prevent discrimination against minorities and promote a genuinely equal opportunity of success by ensuring that selection procedures are fair and using outreach and recruitment to correct past patterns of exclusion (Sanders & Taylor, 2012).

- **African American**—A United States citizen who is described as African American or Black, Non-Hispanic by the United States Census Bureau. This term will be interchangeably used with “Black.”

- **Counter Story**—A story told from the vantage point of an individual within a minority group. This term will be interchangeably used with “counter-narrative.”

- **Critical Race Theory (CRT)**—A conceptual framework that analyzes the influences of race on behaviors, systems, and relationships within educational institutions.

- **Executive Leadership**—District level leadership, which includes: school board members, superintendents, and central office administrators (human resource director, public relations director, etc.).

- **Predominantly White School**—A school in which more than 80% of the student body and staff identify with the United States Census Bureau term White, non-Hispanic.

- **White**—A United States citizen who is described as White, non-Hispanic by the United States Census Bureau. This term will be interchangeably used with “Caucasian.”

- **School Members**—Students, faculty, and parents of a school.
Summary

Statistically, there are far fewer minority administrators than Caucasian in schools throughout the United States of America. The number of minority administrators who lead predominantly White schools is even lower. Consequently, the research needed to understand the shared experiences of this specific group of educational leaders in suburban settings is scarce. On a related note, the need for minority administrators in schools throughout our country is evident and supported by many scholars. However, many scholarly documents focus on minority principals in urban settings, neglecting the experience of minority leaders in White schools. We must examine this phenomenon in order to properly support the efforts of these educational leaders.

This study focused on minority administrators, particularly African American administrators, in predominantly White schools in southeastern Michigan. Critical race theory (CRT) was the scope used to analyze the experiences of the minority leaders. In next chapter, the researcher examined literature related to the conceptual framework and relevant background information that supported the study.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the professional and personal experiences of minority administrators located in predominantly White suburban school districts in one affluent county located in southeastern Michigan. The researcher explored minority administrators’ perspectives on leadership in predominantly White schools—specifically focusing on African American and Middle Eastern principals—and presented his findings to add to the limited research on this topic. This section includes literature related to the study’s theoretical framework and relevant background information that supported it. Additionally, this portion of the document addressed findings from other studies that examined the experiences of minority administrators in predominantly White schools. The review of the literature will be presented as follows: historical perspectives, conceptual framework, and relevant studies.

Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Literature

The researcher limited his reviews of studies to those dealing with minority administrators in a K-12 setting, excluding studies that focused on the experiences of administrators in higher education. Studies on minority administrators were also examined, particularly building principals leading at the building level, excluding documents that focused on the experiences of minority leaders working in central office settings. Nearly all of the literature that was examined came from peer-reviewed journals. The publication dates of the dissertations the researcher inspected varied; however, the majority of the documents were written within twenty years of this study. The following literature were included in this study:

- Dissertations
- Commentary from focus groups
Government reports on education
Educational research journals
Books on race in education
Articles on educational leadership
Transcribed commentary from in-depth interviews
Books on Critical Race Theory
Books on qualitative research

**Review Methods**

To complete the literature review of minority administrators’ perspectives on leadership in predominantly White schools, the researcher used the ERIC, ProQuest, and National Center for Education Statistics online databases; Esearch (the general resource catalog at Eastern Michigan University’s Halle Library); and online educational journals. As documents of interest were listed in the reference sections of other literature that were not accessible in the Halle Library database, the researcher utilized the Google search engine to locate copies for research purposes. The following key terms were used in the databases to collect literature for the study on minority administrators:

- Critical race theory
- Critical race theory in Education
- Minority administrators in predominantly White schools
- African American school principals
- Brown versus Board of Education
- Affirmative Action and K-12 schools
- School administrators
- K-12 educational leaders
- Minority leadership
- School leaders of color
Historical Perspective

Student achievement in American public schools continues to be a highly discussed topic. The ability of our public school systems to produce high-achieving students was brought to the forefront of national debates in the 1980s (McGhee, 2001). In *A Nation at Risk*, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) predicted the demise of our nation if educational reform was not forthcoming. As the American government scrutinized local schools, the general public became more aware of student achievement within those schools and examined school personnel with a more critical lens (Sanchez, Thornton, & Usinger, 2008). Sanchez, et al. (2008) asserted:

As the consensus has moved to the view that all students must attain excellence to compete in a global economy, traditional roles for educators have shifted. None has shifted more than the role of the principal. We now expect principals to be instructional leaders who create conditions and processes that significantly improve student achievement.

Many scholars continue to research the influence of school leaders, especially principals, on school reform efforts (Sammons, 1999). Principals are critically important to a school’s success; decades of research consistently find positive relationships between principal behavior and student academic achievement (Cotton, 2003).

The duties of a principal are extensive and in our ever-changing society continue to evolve as more demands are being placed on educational leaders (Ricken, 2007). Historically, the role of school principals has been held by White males (Beckford-Bennett, 2009). In the 2007–08 school year, only 17.6 percent of principals in the U.S. were minorities (Battle & Gruber, 2009). In rural areas, 9.3 percent of principals were minorities; and in small towns, that
same group accounted for just 6.2 percent (Sanchez, et al., 2008). However, as our society becomes more diverse, more and more school districts are hiring minority administrators; more principals who come from minority cultures is needed to ensure the makeup of administrators accurately reflects the student population in those schools (Sanchez, et al., 2008). In this era, all schools are held accountable for student achievement, which at times can be a daunting task for administrators. Many minority administrators have to deal with the expected demands of leading a school and the challenges related to their race, which is a different experience than their White counterparts (Sanchez, et al., 2008). The researcher will examine landmark events that have shaped the experience of minorities in administrative roles.

**Brown vs. Board of Education**

In 1954, the monumental United States Supreme Court case *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* occurred, which determined that having separate public schools for Black and White students is unconstitutional. Prior to the case, racial segregation did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment, which addresses citizenship rights and equal protection under the law. The case’s ruling overturned another landmark decision in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896), which upheld the constitutionality of state laws mandating racial segregation in public establishments under the policy of “separate but equal.” The ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* was a pivotal moment for both racial equality as a whole and for minorities’ quality of life in America and is still regarded as a significant event in the Civil Right Movement, which sought to improve educational conditions for African Americans. Still, despite this new legislation to end segregation and improve the academic conditions for all members of our society, educational inequality persisted, and persists, for minorities nationally.
As segregation ended and Black students slowly began integrating into White schools, many people were still opposed to the idea of race mixing in academic institutions and communities. In his forceful defense of segregation, North Carolina Senator Sam Ervin in 1956 wrote:

Racial segregation is not the offspring of racial bigotry or racial prejudice. It results from the exercise of a fundamental American freedom—the freedom to select one’s associates…This freedom is bottomed on a basic law of nature—the law that like seeks like. It is one of the most precious of human rights because a man finds his greatest happiness when he is among people of similar culture, historical, and social background. (Clotfelter, 2004, p. 14)

Ervin was adamant that segregation within schools was positive and benefited all races. After the historic ruling, there were a significant number of White families who agreed with Ervin’s sentiments and fled their public schools, seeking more exclusive private school settings to avoid the future influx of Black students (Karpinski, 2006).

Many years after the Brown ruling, students are no longer legally segregated in schools. However, America’s neighborhoods and networks are still racially divided, which greatly impacts the student demographics of school districts and gives rise to differing educational experiences for Whites and students of color (Noguera, 2003). In their book Negroes in Cities, Karl and Alma Taeuber (1966) report high numbers of residential segregation throughout America. Explicit discriminatory acts conducted to racially intimidate people from moving into specific neighborhoods have been reported in communities all over the country. Such discriminatory behaviors are likely a carry-over from previously established mentalities. For example, in 1956 the mayor of the Detroit suburb of Dearborn proclaimed that his city acted
swiftly to prevent Blacks from moving there, stating, “They can’t get in here. We watch it. Every
time we hear a Negro moving in…we respond quicker than you do to a fire. That’s generally
known” (Clotfelter, 2004, p.78). Twenty-five years later, Dearborn—one of fourteen Detroit
suburbs with a population exceeding thirty-five thousand and less than 1% Black citizens—was

Just as many minorities in metro Detroit “generally knew” not to move into the
Dearborn area in the 1970s, some minorities continue to feel unwelcome in certain
affluent White suburbs surrounding predominantly White school districts in southeastern
Michigan. The researcher conducted the study to better understand what motivates
minority administrators to pursue professional opportunities in districts that historically
do not have students or faculty of their same background.

**Affirmative Action**

Affirmative action was introduced to the public in the 1960s as a way to guarantee
professional and educational opportunities for people of color and White women—both groups
who were traditionally closed off from admission into the job market and universities (Wise,
2005). The term originated with the National Labor Relations Board, which required employers
to take “affirmative action” on employees who were treated unfairly through acts such as back
pay or reinstatement to lost positions. In 1961, the term “affirmative action” became a part of the
legal lexicon when President John F. Kennedy signed Executive Order 10925. The purpose of
that executive order was to ensure that employers did not discriminate against job applicants on
the basis of their national origin, race, creed, or color.

Historically, affirmative action has been a controversial topic that has impacted job
interviewing and hiring processes, the admissions process for students in academic institutions,
and the discussions about race throughout the United States of America. Affirmative action is a widely-used term and at times connotes different meanings depending on the context of its use. The researcher defined affirmative action as any proactive efforts that intend to prevent discrimination against minorities and promote a genuinely equal opportunity of success by ensuring that selection procedures are fair, and using outreach and recruitment to correct past patterns of exclusion (Sanders & Taylor, 2012).

Generally speaking, many people are in favor of providing opportunities to support the professional and personal development of marginalized groups within our society. Public opinion suggests that a great majority of Americans favor efforts to dismantle long-standing public and private barriers to opportunity for marginalized people in the United States (Lipson, 2006). Many of these advocates of affirmative action tend to emphasize environmental influences, such as racism—both past and present—and inferior schools in predominantly minority neighborhoods, as roadblocks to the success of certain citizens (Lipson, 2006). Supporters of affirmative action view it as a measure to level the playing field for disenfranchised groups and correct the injustices minorities continue to face, both things that put them at a disadvantage in many different facets of life. However, there is still a large percentage of people who do not support affirmative action, especially if the inherent advantages negatively impact their Caucasian counterparts or the institutions in which they seek admission; this type of thinking typically comes from the non-beneficiary segments of affirmative action practices (Lynch, 2005). Many skeptics of affirmative action refer to such practices as reverse racism. Wise (2005) asserted:

To many Americans, making deliberate efforts to include people of color in jobs, contracting, and educational institutions is unnecessary. After all, existing civil
rights laws prohibit discrimination against people of color, and that, they insist, should be enough to ensure equal opportunity.

Non-supporters of affirmative action also believe that highly regarded positions in law, medicine, business, and education will suffer if people who lack the requisite aptitude or skill set attain them because the proverbial bar was lowered due to race or gender. Len Hellstrom, a participant in a study on affirmative action, stated, “Who do I want cutting me open? I mean, I don’t want a doctor who’s been allowed to slip on through just because of some superfluous issue like race” (Lipson, 2006, p. 36).

Through this study, the researcher examined the actions taken by one particular school district whose leadership intentionally sought out and hired minority candidates specifically to support their vision of diversity. The researcher inspected the perceptions of the minority administrators in this district to better understand how they were treated by various members of their predominantly White schools as they assumed leadership roles.

**Conceptual Framework**

**Critical race theory.** In developing the conceptual framework for the study, the researcher had to distill what the appropriate research questions were and then determine the process by which he would gather the information needed to answer those questions. Based off of the questions used in previous studies that examined the experiences of minority administrators in White schools, and the detailed responses those questions elicited from the participants of those studies, the researcher determined the inquiry methods and questions for this study. As a result of these questions, the researcher investigated the issues surrounding minority administrators working in predominantly White school districts in southeastern Michigan. The established theory that was used to help the researcher make sense of the data in
the study was the critical race theory (CRT), in addition to other literary research findings that informed this study. There are six fundamental principles that critical race theorists (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) have identified:

1. Racism is salient and a normalized experience.
2. Racism is addressed only when there is an interest convergence between the White majority and people of color; when it is in the best interest of White people to address it.
3. Race is a social construction rather than a biological or genetic framework.
4. The recipients of racism, not the perpetrators, have the authoritative voice to describe the experience of racism; people of color are the experts regarding their own experiences and the use of narratives and counter-narratives can lend power to these experiences as they oppose the hegemonic stories of [White people’s] lives.
5. Differential racialization refers to how the dominant society changes the way it racializes different groups of color over time to serve the political and social needs of the White racial majority.
6. Race is only one way in which our identities intersect; no one belongs to only one demographic group. These six tenets are described in more detail in the following sections. Racism is “normal.” Racism is so entrenched within our society that it is natural. It is not an atypical social condition; instead it is “…the usual way society does business…” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7).

The study will include previous research studies and the personal experiences of minority administrators leading predominantly White schools. The researcher examined the transparency around minority administrators’ experiences while capturing shared themes from their personal histories. CRT educators work towards broadening truths to include the history and experiences
of people of color (Zamudio, et al., 2011). CRT educators provide narratives to the experiences of oppressed members of our society so racial injustices are highlighted and possibly addressed by change-agents. Additionally, the study gave voice to the stories of these educational leaders as they related to the working conditions they experience on a daily basis. The researcher—much like other critical race theorists—understood the importance of providing a counter narrative to the master narrative to promote racial equality throughout schools:

Critical race theorists agree that an oppositional voice to the dominant or master narrative (i.e., the dominant story or taken-for-granted truths) is the effective tool in making visible the structures, processes and practices that contribute to continued racial inequality. One of the greatest contributions of CRT is its emphasis on narratives and counter-stories told from the vantage point of the oppressed. Critical race theorists engage in the practice of telling history from a minority perspective. In doing so, CRT exposes the contradictions inherent in the dominant storyline that, among other things, blames people of color for their own condition of inequality. Critical race theorists understand that narratives are not neutral, but rather political expressions of power relationships. That is, history is always told from the perspectives of the dominant group. Minority perspectives in the form of narratives, testimonies, or storytelling challenge the dominant group’s accepted truths. (Zamudio, et al., 2011, p. 5)

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to educational research in an effort to shine a light on the disparities minorities were experiencing in schools due to explicit and implicit forms of racism. Since CRT was introduced in the field of education, many scholars have researched its relevance in schools and gained a better understanding of organizations by
examining them via a cultural lens that permits focusing on the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of employees. CRT has also provided educational researchers a lexicon of issue terminology, which has been utilized to examine schools throughout the United States of America, including the following terms: micro-aggressions (Solorzano, 1998), knowledge apartheid (Bernal & Villalpando, 2005), interest convergence (Bell, 1995), and critical race pedagogy (Lynn, 1999). Of the common terms that are associated with CRT, “counter-narratives” is frequently used by CRT schools. CRT theorist Richard Delgado (2011) affirms the power of storytelling as a mechanism that binds our social understanding of a phenomenon, like race.

The researcher gained a better understanding of the minority administrators’ perspectives on leadership based on in-depth interviews, focus groups, and surveys where the participants provided their own unfiltered narratives about their professional experiences. Through extensive research of relevant articles, books, and dissertations of minority administrators in predominantly White schools, the researcher determined that the critical race theory was a dominant and appropriate theoretical framework used in much of the scholarly work he examined. The researcher also used this framework to navigate his study and examine the testimonies of the minority administrators who participated in the group discussions he conducted. The researcher’s use of CRT as a framework was not meant to imply that race is the only factor impacting the minority administrators’ day-to-day work lives in predominantly White schools; CRT did, however, help the researcher make sense of the experiences shared by the participants of the study.

**CRT limitations.** Any theory or framework has its critics; CRT is no exception. One of the major critiques of CRT is the emphasis it places on narratives. Some scholars do not support the idea of “storytelling” as part of an approach to academic study and believe CRT lacks the
scientific foundation to be considered scholarly. Farber and Sherry’s (1997) *Beyond All Reason: The Radical Assault on Truth in American Law* largely attacks CRT and its theorists for promoting narratives as valid subjects in legal scholarship (Zamudio, et al., 2011). Farber and Sherry worried that storytelling would promote a lack of legitimate analysis or reasoned arguments in legal scholarship. Other detractors of CRT believe that it focuses too much attention on social systems, institutional structures, and master narratives, rather than examining the role in which specific subgroups are contributing to the inequality they are experiencing in society (Brooks, 2009). Additionally, other opponents of CRT believe that its theorists focus too much of their attention on race while explaining inequities in education without giving serious consideration to other dominant factors such as class and gender. Emilia Viotti da Costa stated that CRT’s counter narrative methodology often neglects the concept of class as an interpretive category (Darder & Torres, 2004):

Darder and Torres (2004) also disparage CRT’s use of counter narratives for: (a) a “tendency to romanticize the experience of marginalized groups”; (b) “the tendency to dichotomize and ‘overhomogenize’ both ‘White’ people and ‘people of color’”; and (c) the tendency to exaggerate. These tendencies, according to Darder and Torres, “can result in unintended essentialism and superficiality in our theorizing of broader social inequalities, as well as the solution derived from such theories. (p.103–104)

**Relevant studies.** The researcher examined other dissertations that focus on minority administrators working in predominantly White schools. After extensive research, several pieces were selected due to the inherently shared qualities: conceptual frameworks, themes, methodology sections, and participants. The goals of critiquing the other scholarly reports
included having a baseline to conduct my study and become more knowledgeable about the phenomena of minority administrators who work in White settings.

Carter’s (2013) dissertation entitled *The Influences of Race and Gender on Leadership of African American Female Principals of Predominantly White Elementary Schools* studied the experiences of African American principals in predominantly White elementary schools in the northeast region of the United States. Through semi-structured, open-ended interviews, she was able to capture the narratives of those minority administrators, which she analyzed through the lens of CRT and Black feminist thought. Seven themes emerged from her study, which included knowing the predominantly White community, commitment against race and gender inequality, obligation to the race, leadership for all, image of authority, being race and gender-less, self-empowerment, and empowerment through a support system. The researcher conducted a pilot study and appropriately adjusted her interview questions afterward by changing the wording, which added clarity to her interview process.

Carter’s (2013) study was based on two established conceptual theories—CRT and Black feminist thought (BFT)—which provided her with a solid reference framework to use as she analyzed her findings. She was able to distill direct quotes from the principals to substantiate her claims; in her report, she provided recommendations for school boards, other minority principals, school districts, and educational leadership departments on how they might support the needs of their minority administrators. Her recommendation to future researchers did not outline specifics; it was more of a call to continue performing studies because the research is scarce. Carter provided a very limited description of the participants, which was possibly done for confidentiality reasons. If Carter had provided a stronger description of her participants, their testimonies might become more authentic to the reader which would give more power to their
voice; this is one of the goals of a CRT educator – to provide a “voice” to minorities in a field where they are underrepresented (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Wilson’s (2006) dissertation entitled, *Factors Contributing to Career Success: Perceptions from African American Male School Administrators* is a qualitative study where the researcher examined the perceptions of seven minority administrators located in the western region of Michigan. He interviews and records the participants’ responses, and then analyzes the themes that emerged from the discussions. The five themes that were a result of his analysis were as follows:

- Colleague support is a key mechanism in the success of Black male school administrators.
- Parental involvement is important to the success of Black male schools administrators.
- Connection to the community is important to the success of Black male school administrators.
- Support of higher administrator is critical to the success of Black male school administrators.
- Access to adequate resources is important to the success of Black male school administrators.

Wilson conducted a pilot study to establish the reliability and validity of the research design instrument used in his study. Through this pilot study, he was able to develop his informal interviews through the feedback of the participants.

Wilson (2006) examined several studies and theories in the literature review section of his dissertation, which he also used to analyze his findings. He analyzed Herzberg’s 1959 motivation-hygiene theory, which classified all human needs into two sets: pain avoidance and
growth. The researcher also examined a study done by Maslow in 1954 where human motivation was broken down into five basic categories. Wilson focused his attention on the importance of Black males having role models. To support his research in the critical need for role models in the black community, he included Bryant and Zimmerman’s 2003 study where 679 Black ninth graders from urban environments discussed how their role model choices influenced their academic engagement. He also examined a study by Smith and Mack (2004) that surveyed 38 African American male honor students from Indiana high schools, the results from which suggested that high-achieving African American male students do not see careers in education as a viable option for a host of different reasons.

Wilson’s (2006) study provided a wealth of supporting literature to better understand the plight of African American males in education. He included many excerpts from his interviews that provided a voice for the study’s participants. However, Wilson’s study did not thoroughly describe the participants or the environment from which they come.

Brown’s (2012) dissertation entitled African American Principals in the Midwest: Voices of the Sojourner Principal is a case study of 12 African American principals navigating the challenges of working in the same Midwestern state in predominantly White schools. Semi-structured interviews were used to discover the motivations, perceptions, and experiences of these minority educational leaders. Brown discovered the following information about his participants: many relied on guidance from their faith, others relied on professional training and experience to overcome challenges when they relocated to their White schools, the principals led their building on their own terms. The following themes were consistent in his study:

- The principals relied on their spirituality for guidance and to support them psychologically in their daily work.
They believed that their colleagues and superiors scrutinized them because of their race, yet they recognized that feeling of scrutiny was at times self-imposed.

The minority administrators all made a conscious effort to serve as role models to their students and faculty.

Brown adequately described his participants in his study without breaking confidentially. Participants’ work histories were outlined and educational backgrounds were discussed; certain pertinent geographic details were also identified. Brown delivered accounts of defining moments during the interviews, and also examined the interactions he had with different participants throughout the study. By providing appropriate commentary, Brown created a convincing story of the struggles and triumphs of those principals who participated.

Brown examined the experiences of the minority administrators in his study by critiquing their testimonies through the lens of the Sojourner Effect. Gray (2001) defined a “Sojourner” as being a traveler who moves through areas that are considered foreign. He also examined the experiences of his participants through the work of Leonard and Papalewis from 1987, which provided a basis for comparison that focused on intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors for professionals.

Summary

Historical events in American society have helped to contribute to the educational experiences of minorities in schools. Landmark court cases and executive orders from the government have improved the conditions for minorities in schools throughout the United States of America. With that being said, minorities still lack many professional and educational opportunities that are provided to their White counterparts across the country. Scholarly work
focusing on minority administrators in predominantly White schools is limited, so critical race
educators are committed to providing counter-narratives to articulate their experiences.

This study explored the experiences and perspectives on leadership of minority
administrators working in White schools in southeastern Michigan. The next chapter outlines the
research design used for this phenomenological study.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the professional and personal experiences of minority administrators located in predominantly White suburban school districts in one affluent county located in southeastern Michigan. The following sections will describe each methodology used for the study of minority administrators in White Schools. For this study, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, surveys, and field notes were utilized to investigate the experiences of the minority educational leaders who participated. The researcher along with other minority administrators in southeastern Michigan were part of a minority administrator network within their county of employment. As a member of the minority administrator network, the researcher had access to a large number of other minority administrators outside of his own district. Membership in the minority network was helpful to the researcher as he selected participants for the different portions of the study that were outlined throughout this chapter.

Semi-Structured Interviews

To conduct a semi-structured interview, every participant in the study was asked a list of open-ended questions, as it was imperative to cover the same points with every participant in this study. The use of semi-structured interview protocol ensured that the researcher asked the same questions and covered the same areas, making the approach more systemic. Semi-structured interviewing is best used when there will only be one chance to interview someone, according to Bernard (1988). Semi-structured interviews are also conducted with a fairly open framework that allows for focused, conversational, two-way communication and can be used both to give and receive information. In fact, one of the major benefits of a semi-structured interview is that it
encourages two-way communication and inherently provides opportunities for confirmation and clarification. It also confirms what is already known while providing an opportunity for learning and optimizing the chance for learning on the part of both the interviewer and the interviewee. A set of interview questions was developed to ensure consistency in the information gathering session. The researcher conducted a pilot study to assess the feasibility of the design instrument (Appendix A).

Focus Groups

Focus groups can reveal a wealth of detailed information and provide deep insight. When executed properly, a focus group creates an accepting environment that puts participants at ease, allowing them to thoughtfully answer questions in their own words and add meaning to their answers. Focus groups, or group interviews, are facilitated group discussions that possess elements of both participants’ observations and individual interviews while also maintaining their own uniqueness as a distinctive research method (Liampittong, 2011). Participants are usually selected because of shared social or cultural experiences, or shared concerns related to a study’s focus. A focus group is essentially a group discussion concentrated on a single theme (Kreuger & Casey, 2015).

Focus groups usually consist of between six and twelve people. One of the advantages of conducting a focus group is that the participants will naturally build on others’ ideas and thoughts, producing details and information that otherwise might not have come out. The focus groups required extensive planning prior to gathering data, during which the researcher considered the selection of participants, the intent of the study, and the budget—as it pertains to time and money (Morgan, 1988). The researcher also paid close attention to the incentive that would attract participants, the appropriate location to promote honest dialogue, and the level of
involvement of a skilled moderator to facilitate the meeting. As an incentive, the researcher gave participants $50 to participate in the focus group. The researcher recruited a moderately sized group of male and female minority administrators of varying ages to ensure multiple perspectives were provided during the focus group. When prescribing the size of a focus group, it should be pondered that the group be small enough to provide all participants an opportunity to share their perceptions and big enough to provide a diversity of perceptions (Oppenheim, 1993; Kruger, 1994; Morgan, 1988; & Matter, 1994).

Merton (apud Morgan, 1988) presents four aspects to be observed in a Focus Group interview. They are: (a) to cover the maximum number of important topics, (b) to provide as specific as possible data, (c) to promote interaction that explores the participants' feelings in some depth, and (d) to take into account the personal context in which the participants generated their responses to the topic (Freitas, Oliveira, Jenkins, & Popjoy, 1998).

One strength of focus groups is that this method is socially oriented, studying participants in an atmosphere that is often more natural and relaxed than a one-to-one interview. The goal is to create a candid conversation that addresses, in-depth, the selected topic—Minority Administrators’ Perspectives on Leadership in one Predominantly White County in Southeastern Michigan. The underlying assumption of focus groups is that, within a permissive atmosphere that fosters a range of opinions, a more complete and revealing understanding of the issues will be obtained. Focus groups are planned and structured, but are also flexible tools (Liamputtong, 2011). Kreuger and Casey (2015) list various uses of focus groups: (a) elicit a range of feelings, opinions, and ideas; (b) understand differences in
perspective; (c) uncover and provide insight into specific factors that influence opinions; and (d) seek ideas that immerse from the group (as cited in Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 156).

Environmental Scanning

An environmental scan was used to divide and interpret relevant data for the study; the information gathered was particularly helpful in the fact-finding stage. The focus of this environmental scan was to identify what the participants thought about the critical trends of minority administrators’ perspectives on leadership in one predominantly White county in southeastern Michigan, specifically including age, educational level, gender, and personal/professional histories (Lencioni, 2005). The personal history step included the following request: “Please describe a unique or interesting challenge or experience that guided you towards your profession.” When conducting an environmental scan, a variety of methods can be used to collect data. For this study, participants completed surveys and a SWOT analysis.

Field Notes

Field notes refer to qualitative observations recorded by the researcher during and after witnessing the specific phenomenon they are studying. The intention is that they are seen as evidence that gives meaning and aids in the understanding of the phenomenon. Field notes also allowed the researcher to record what he observed in an unobtrusive manner. There are two components of field notes: descriptive information and reflective information—descriptive information includes factual data that is being recorded including time and date, the state of the physical setting, social environment, descriptions of the subject being studied and their roles in the setting, and the impact the researcher may have had on the environment. Reflective information refers to the researcher’s reflections on the observation being conducted, including ideas, questions, concerns, and other related thoughts. Field notes can also include sketches,
diagrams, and other drawings. Visually capturing a phenomenon requires the researcher to pay more attention to every detail so as to not overlook anything.

This researcher kept a journal throughout the study to capture his thoughts and emotions, so his personal feelings would not impact participants’ responses; the journal also increased the credibility and the conformability of the study. The value of a well-documented study that uses field notes is that it provides data transparency, and also that it helps with bracketing because the journal is a free place in which to write whatever thoughts, feelings, or biases manifest. Field notes help when beginning to analyze the data by preventing extraneous information from cluttering, and provide a place to store scraps of information and/or observations (e.g. restlessness, sadness, fatigue) that did not become part of the data analysis. Field notes can also include scanned materials that have been discovered, such as photographs or transcripts from interviews—it all adds to the richness of data that is being collected.

**Concept Map**

Phenomenology explores the “lived experiences” of participants by describing the meaning that individuals assign to their experience. It illuminates commonalities of experiences between individuals, and distills descriptions to find the “essence” of the phenomenon of study.

Through the interview process, the researcher distilled the essence of the phenomenon of the study. The researcher analyzed, coded, and categorized the data to make themes; he then explained how everything interacted. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher explained exactly what the participants experienced as school leaders. The figure below defined the conceptual framework of the study, which has many integral parts; also included are the essential components considered in developing the methodology.
Figure 1.3. Concept map. This map represents the conceptual framework of the study.

Adapted from The figure is adapted from Methodology—The Cornerstone of Research Webinar: http://www.statisticsolutions.com/webinar/free-webinar-methodology-the-cornerstone-of-your-research/

The road map in Figure 1.3 delineates each step of the methodology used in the research for the study. The researcher began by stating the research question, then provided a rationale for using the qualitative approach. This included a brief overview of the study in which the participants were identified as minority administrators in one predominantly White affluent county in southeastern Michigan. The data was collected using a face-to-face approach, and the materials and instruments used for data collection were semi-structured interviews, surveys, and
a focus group that included a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis as the centerpiece.

**Limitations/Delimitations**

Limitations are external conditions that restrict or constrain the study’s scope, or may affect its outcome. In this qualitative study, the small number of participants was a limitation; as a result, the researcher was able engage in deep dialogue with the participants, which provided a richness to the findings of the study. Another limitation is that the study is not transferable—it lacks the ability to apply findings to similar context or settings. Other limitations include the following:

- Limited research was available on the experiences of minority administrators who work in predominantly White schools.
- Limited to one county in southeastern Michigan.
- Limited by researcher subjectivity and potential bias because the researcher is also a minority administrator.
- The familiarity between the participants and the researcher might make for guarded and therefore less candid responses.

Delimitations are conditions or parameters that you as the researcher intentionally impose in order to limit the scope of your study. Delimitations are those characteristics that define and clarify the conceptual boundaries of your research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 165). The delimitations of this study were as follows:

- This study was limited to K-12 minority administrators working in one predominantly White affluent county in southeastern Michigan.
- The researcher also participated in the conversations.
• This study was conducted in a single setting.
• The methods of investigation were: interviews, a focus group, and surveys.
• The time period for my study occurred during the 2016–2017 calendar year.

For the data analysis plan, the researcher used a phenomenological approach to analyze the data and then coded the data to identify themes, which provided supportive excerpts in the narrative. The sample was determined through the interview and focus group processes; the point at which the information gathered reached saturation determined the sample size. A pilot test for the interview process was developed—the researcher interviewed three participants using the battery of questions he developed, which provided feedback to finalize the interview questions. The researcher interviewed 12 people. See Figure 1.4 for the process in a visual format—the arrows represent the directionality of the data gathering process.

### Process of Data Gathering

| Collecting Data | Interviews          |
|                | Field Notes         |
|                | Focus Groups        |
|                | Surveys             |

| Preparing Data | Transcription of the Data |
|               | Get a general sense of the Data |

| Reading Data | Identify segments of Text |
|             | Assigning a level of “code” for Report |

| Coding Data | Identifying text with thematic value for Report |
|            | Coding for Description |
|            | Coding for Themes |


*Figure 1.4. Process of data gathering. Adapted from Qualitative Analysis-Phenomenological, Grounded Theory and Case Study Webinar:*
Issues of Validity, Reliability, Bias

To ensure the reliability of the qualitative research, an examination of trustworthiness is crucial. While establishing good quality studies through reliability and validity in qualitative research, Seale (1999) states “trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability” (p.266). In qualitative research, the idea of discovering truth through measures of reliability and validity is replaced by the idea of trustworthiness (Mishler, 2000), which is “defensible” (Johnson, 1997, p. 282) and establishes confidence in the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). If the issues of reliability, validity, trustworthiness, quality, and rigor are meant to differentiate good research from bad, then testing and increasing the reliability, validity, trustworthiness, quality, and rigor will be important to the research process in any paradigm. The researcher was aware that the topic of study is very personal for him, so his measures to ensure his actions not influence the study were deliberate. The researcher did the following to ensure his own biases, arising from his working as a minority administrator in a predominantly White school, did not influence the responses of the study’s participants:

- The researcher utilized a moderator during the focus group who had no connection to the participants. The researcher selected an experienced impartial moderator who made sure questions were worded and asked appropriately, so participants’ responses were never influenced throughout the process. The moderator also assisted the researcher in the analysis of the participants’ responses for all inquiry methods.
• A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis was also conducted during the focus group to provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on multiple aspects of their professional experiences. The questions for the in-depth questions and surveys were open-ended and non-leading to ensure the authenticity of all participants’ responses.

• The researcher utilized a personal journal to reflect on his own emotions throughout the study. The use of the journal by the researcher helped him be aware of his personal thoughts that surfaced throughout the study; the journal supported him as he made a conscious effort not to insert his feelings into the stories of the participants.

Legal, Ethical, and Moral Issues

The legal, ethical, and moral issues have been addressed in this study in the following manner. Ethical considerations include the reduction of risk of anticipated harm by ensuring complete confidentiality. Further, the researcher has protected the interviewees’ information through the use of a consent form, which clearly delineates the scope of the study and how the data will be used. A copy of this consent form is included in Appendix B. Furthermore, the researcher provided participants with a thorough overview and explanation of the study to reduce the risk of exploitation. The second ethical issue considered by the researcher was anonymity. During the interview, the interviewees shared information that could jeopardize his or her position and negatively impact relationships they had with their colleagues. This information will remain anonymous and protected from certain individuals whose interests may conflict with those of the interviewee. A third ethical issue the researcher addressed was adequately communicating the investigation’s intent. At all times, the procedures and processes used in this research design were transparent to the participants. A research plan was developed to
acknowledge the contributions that the participants made to the success of the research process, and participants were given a $50.00 stipend for their efforts. Finally, the researcher considered the implications of his own research and used his experiences as a guide to enhance his own ethical standards as well as those of the participants in the research. It is the view of this researcher that the standard ethical practices that guide qualitative research were represented in this process.

**Summary**

The researcher used multiple inquiry measures to distill information from the participants of this study. The participants who were selected fit specific criteria outlined by the researcher. To ensure reliability of the study, all of the minority administrators were asked the same questions during the data-gathering phase. As the researcher was constructing the outline for the study, a pilot study was administered so he could become more familiar with the interviewing process and was prepared to address the limitations of the main study. Issues of trustworthiness and legality have been addressed by the researcher to support the defensibility of this phenomenological study. In the next chapter, the findings from the different inquiry methods are presented.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the professional and personal experiences of minority administrators located in predominantly White suburban school districts in one affluent county located in southeastern Michigan. Minority administrators in predominantly White schools are underrepresented in educational research, even though they face leadership challenges unique to their circumstances (Zamudio, et al., 2011). By bringing more attention to said race-related challenges, school districts and education administration programs may discover valuable insights regarding ways to support them professionally (Carter, 2013). Similarly, by sharing the distinctive leadership perspectives of minority administrators a “counter-story” was created, exposing the realities minority educational leaders face in predominantly White suburban schools (Delgato & Stafancic, 2001).

There were 17 minority administrators who participated in this qualitative study. Figure 1.5 shows a demographic breakdown of the participants.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>9 Male</th>
<th>8 Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 yrs. – 39 yrs.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 yrs. – 55 yrs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 yrs. – 65 yrs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Highest Level of Education</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Central Office Administrator</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Level of Administrators</td>
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<td>Elementary</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averaged Amount of Years in Current Position</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Yrs.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.5: Participant demographics.

In this chapter, the researcher examined the leadership perspectives of the minority administrators through semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and surveys that were used as the inquiry methods for this study.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

The interview instrument used in this study was a researcher-composed protocol that consisted of six open-ended questions:

1. Tell me how you became a minority administrator in a predominantly White school district? Share your personal history (age, education, family influences) and professional history (previous positions, networks, organizations).
2. Reflecting on your past experiences, have you benefited because of your race in your current role?

3. Why did you decide to become a minority administrator in a predominantly White school and what impact, if any, does your race have on your decision making in your leadership role?

4. Tell me about your most successful and challenging experiences leading in predominantly White school.

5. What are the benefits and challenges of being a minority leader in a predominantly White school? Share any supports (e.g., organizations, mentors, and parents group) that have helped you in your current role.

6. What has been the biggest surprise for you as minority administrator in a White school?

Following the development of the interview instrument, the researcher conducted a pilot study on three minority administrators to establish the validity and reliability of the instrument. Upon completion of the pilot study, the participants provided feedback for the researcher on their experiences and offered suggestions for ways to improve the wording of questions for future interviews. A letter of invitation was then emailed to all of the minority administrators who participated in a county-wide minority administrators’ network in 2016. Twelve minority administrators positively responded to the letter of invitation; these respondents formed the group of administrators the researcher interviewed for this study. The researcher met the participants at private locations of their choice to ensure confidentiality and to maximize comfortability for the minority administrators. Due to scheduling conflicts, three of the interviews were conducted via telephone; two of the interviews were also completed by the participants and then emailed back to the researcher.
Participants

All of the participants of this study met the following criteria:

- Participants were employed in a predominantly White K-12 public school in southeastern Michigan.
- Participants identified as a minority – non-White.
- Participants agreed to sign a consent form to participate in the study.
- Participants held building level administrative positions – assistant principal or principal.
- Participants were a school leader for at least three years.

Pseudonyms were assigned to all of the participants, and identifying information about them was removed to protect their privacy. Participants in the study were referred to as Otis, Adam, Elvira, Natalie, Ryan, Rick, Derrick, Dennis, Shelly, Aiden, Apollo, and Nancy.

Otis was an African American man in his mid-thirties with a great sense of humor and inviting personality. He was a former athlete with a coaching background who occasionally used sport references to describe his work as an administrator. As an undergraduate student he did not aspire to be an educator, but he always gravitated to summer jobs working with children. He decided to pursue a career in education on the advice of his mother, who was also an educator. Otis had a Masters of Arts in Educational Leadership.

Adam was a proud Muslim man of Lebanese decent who was also in his mid-thirties. Adam was a high-energy school leader who attributed his direct leadership style to his upbringing as a Middle Eastern man. Adam was in his family’s business before he decided to pursue a career in education. As he trained to become an educator, his family members in the Middle East were surprised he did not enter a more lucrative field. Adam had a Masters of Arts in Educational Leadership.
Elvira was an African American woman in her early forties who found guidance personally and professionally from her Christian faith. She was a soft-spoken woman who was very reflective in her thinking, and her presence exuded warmth. She, too, did not set out to be an educator as an undergraduate student, but felt called to the profession after she took the advice of her mother-in-law, who was also an elementary principal, to substitute teach for an extended period of time. Elvira had her Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Policy.

Natalie was an African American woman in her forties who was inspired by her family legacy—many of whom were influential school leaders who embraced challenges and advocated for those without a voice—which led her to become an educator. She was a very principled administrator who spoke with conviction. She believed being a Black woman is powerful, especially in her role as her school’s first minority female principal. She found courage during tumultuous times in her Christian faith, and the support from a wide range of her professional mentors who she highly respected. Natalie had a Specialist of Arts in Educational Leadership.

Aiden was a biracial man—Black father and White mother—in his forties, who decided to become an administrator because he was not happy with the direction his district was moving in under the guidance of former administrators; he believed by becoming a principal he would become more influential in the decision making processes in his district. He valued the relationships he established with his parents, students, and faculty as a building leader. He also attributed the trust he developed throughout his faculty from the many years he worked beside them as a teacher in his building. Aiden had his Specialist of Arts in Educational Leadership.

Ryan was an African American in his fifties who has held an array of professional positions, both within public schools and in the private sector. He realized that some of the professional opportunities presented to him primarily came out of a need for more diversity
within the different organizations of which he was a member. However, he considered his ability to connect with all people as his biggest asset, particularly in attaining and thriving in jobs where he was the only minority. Ryan had his Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership.

Rick was an African American man in his fifties who decided to work in a predominantly White school district after he discovered the need for diversity within the district due to the rise of minority students. He was the first in his family to go to college and credits both his academic success and that of his siblings to his parents for instilling a high value on education at a very young age, as they referred to it as a vehicle for social mobility. Rick believed his race was an obstacle throughout his career, and he was constantly mindful of how he was be perceived by his White counterparts, which greatly impacted his communication style as a leader. Rick had a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership.

Derrick was an African American man in his thirties who exhibited a great deal of humility throughout the interview. He referred to the his current position as a blessing, which he was surprised to have received because of the rigorous interviewing process he went through to get the job and the many candidates who applied for the position – over 200! The toughest part of his job was dealing with racist students and parents, but he knew he would encounter those obstacles before he accepted the position. He prided himself on his ability to lead with consistency and build relationships with all students. Derrick had a Masters of Arts in Educational Leadership.

Dennis was an African American man in his forties with a sports background and a wide range of administrative experiences working in different school settings. He was outspoken, opinionated, and had a very positive demeanor. However, he was frustrated that he had successfully led many district-wide initiatives and was well respected throughout his district by
different stakeholders, yet was not a principal after many years of working in his district. He believed he was an asset to the different organizations he had worked for because he understood what his colleagues, specifically his White peers, expected of him—he believed they wanted him to be a leader with a strong presence, someone who would support the cultural changes that occurred within his district as more minority students enrolled. Dennis had a Masters of Arts in Educational Leadership.

Apollo was an African American man in his forties who held building level leadership positions and central office level leadership positions in multiple high achieving predominantly White school districts. He was unapologetic for his beliefs as a school leader; he looked through a lens of race as he made decisions that impacted students. He refused to ignore the reality that many students, particularly minority students, lack advocates who speak up for their needs in schools throughout our country. He was also committed to supporting the needs of all students in his role as a school leader; in doing so, he understood that what works for one group of students may not necessarily work for another group of students. Apollo had a Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction.

Shelly was an African American woman in her forties who was greatly influenced by her high school teacher in her decision to become an educator. As she transitioned into an administrative role later on in her career at a predominantly White school, she had to navigate different forms of racism as she fought to be accepted in a district full of people she believed had a very different perspective from her own. She found it hard to leave her first job, where over 90% of the students were of the same ethnic background as her and had a 99% college acceptance rate, but she left that position to go to a predominantly White school so she could
provide a new perspective to people who were not used to interacting with a minority school leader. Shelly had a Masters of Arts in Educational Leadership.

Nancy was an African American woman in her forties, who believed that she had benefited from being a Black woman professionally. She also experienced challenges because of her race as a minority in a predominantly White school district. Nancy embraced her role as the voice for minority students and families within her district, as she was often called on to be a part of district-wide committees. She enthusiastically offered her perspective while serving on those committees; she provided her insight to her colleagues on a wide range of topics, and she never shied away from opportunities to challenge her staff’s thinking in respectful way—she viewed those moments as opportunities to promote critical thinking amongst her colleagues. She attributed her flexible leadership style and empathetic approach in connecting with different schools members as a key to her success. Nancy had a Masters of Arts in Educational Leadership.

Participants during the interviews appeared to be very thoughtful and selective about their choice of words as they answered questions about race. The researcher noticed that all participants became more comfortable as the interviews progressed, which was evident by the participants’ body postures and the smiles displayed by them as they responded to several of the questions. The participants were very open about their viewpoints on race and the impact it had on their leadership style. For example, when Shelly was asked, “what impact, if any, does your race have on your decision making as a leader?” she said, “I want to say that it never has an impact, but that would not be true.” The participants were very candid with the researcher as they revealed their experiences leading in predominantly White schools, which may have been the result of their similarities in professional positions and cultural backgrounds; the researcher was
also a minority administrator who worked in a predominantly White school, so there was a sense of familiarity between them. The connection between interviewer and interviewees was evident as Adam compared the Muslim experience to that of the African American experience. Adam says, “Whenever there is an incident from a worldly standpoint I feel like I have to defend myself; with the Paris attacks…I’m sick of explaining myself; I’m tired of it—it’s no different than what occurs in the Black community!”

The participants in this study had a wide range of experiences, personalities, and perspectives on leadership as minority administrators in predominantly White schools. Although the participants’ professional and personal journeys were all unique, which directly influenced their responses to the interview questions, the researcher noticed that there were common themes that emerged as the interviews were analyzed.

**Emergent Themes**

Participants openly shared their experiences and discussed their perceptions of being minority administrators in predominantly White schools. The administrators discussed their attitudes about race; they also explored how their interactions with community members, students, and staff have shaped their views on being school leaders. From this study a counter-story was created, which consisted of four main themes:

- **The Positive Impact of Being a Change-Agent**
- **The Feeling of Being Held to a Different Standard**
- **Supportive Guidance**
- **Sources of Strength**

The researcher used two techniques to identify the themes from the in-depth interviews (Bernard, 2000): 1) pawing and 2) cutting and sorting. During the pawing phase, the researcher read
through the transcribed interviews of the participants multiple times, and marked them up with different colored highlighters as patterns began to appear. Sandelowski (1995) believed that analysis of texts begins with proofreading the material and simply identifying key phrases. As patterns began to crystallize, the researcher then transitioned in the cutting and sorting phase of the data analysis. In this phase, the researcher read through the text and identified relevant quotes that addressed the primary research questions. The researcher then cut out each quote — maintaining the context in which the quote occurred—and pasted the material on small index cards. On the back of each card, the researcher then wrote down the quote’s reference—who said it, and where it appeared in the text. Finally, the quotes were put randomly on a table and sorted into piles of similar quotes. Then piles of quotes were then categorized and named; the pile names became the themes of the study.

The first theme established from the interviews outlined how participants positively impacted their schools as change-agents. The minority administrators recognized the influence they had as school leaders to change the behaviors and perceptions of their school members. The school leaders believed by representing their race in a positive manner, and having critical conversations with different stakeholders about race, they could alter negative thoughts of their school members. Through the minority administrators’ conversations about race with their school communities, and by consistently conducting themselves in a professional manner, they positively shaped their school cultures.
The positive impact of a change-agent. The school leaders expressed clear beliefs that through their daily interactions with members of their school community, they positively impacted perceptions about different minority groups. The school leaders also believed that they were able to have conversations with members of their community due to their cultural backgrounds, which positively impacted their schools. Without counter narratives available, White students will become dependent on stereotypes and other racist assumptions as they form opinions about different minority groups (Willis, 1996). The participants asserted how their presence working in an environment with people of different cultural backgrounds positively impacted changes in perceptions and school practices involving race.

The minority administrators all experienced moments when they embraced the power they had to influence their student populations. Otis discussed a realization that occurred for him as minority administrator in a predominantly White school:

The other thing that I have begun to wrap my head around is that I’m not only here for the Black kids; I’m here for the White kids who may eventually become CEOs, politicians, doctors, and have other prominent positions. They can have a counter narrative to what is being spun in the media, which paints negative stereotypes of African American males. By seeing me as living breathing example they’ll hopefully be able to reflect back on their experiences with me and have positive thoughts.

Otis believed that his behavior as a minority leader would be a reminder to White students that not all African American men fit into the negative stereotypical norms that are occasionally portrayed to the public in mass media.
Adam also described how his feelings about being a minority administrator in a White school evolved once he recognized the power he had to change negative perceptions people have about Muslims:

I actually disliked it at first, but after different experiences, it turned out to be more of a blessing because I am providing people the opportunity to learn more about my culture—not from a book, or CNN, or Fox News—as a primary source, which is way more powerful… I can actually share my perspective in a fashion that omits or dismisses stereotypes and breaks down profiles.

Adam found joy in imparting knowledge about the Muslim culture on to his school members, as he provided a different perspective about his faith that many students in his building were unfamiliar with. Adam also described another benefit of being a minority school leader in a predominantly White school:

I think being a minority—having a slight accent, walking a little different—perks people’s curiosity a little bit. As a result it provides an entry to have conversations about a wide range of things. For example, we have a rather large Jewish population; as an Arab man if you study the history of both groups they’ve been feuding for years. However with our students, when I sit in the hallway and religion comes up, I’m able to talk about how close we are…everything is almost identical; so why can’t we get along? Conversations like that take place in the hallway with my Jewish students – I ask them what are we going to do to create peace in the Middle East? The kids love these conversations with me because they have never had them with a Muslim man…we’re having real conversations about Arab Israeli conflict, it’s beautiful!
Adam understood that his behavior and appearance as a Middle Eastern man intrigued members of his school community, which he used to his benefit by having conversations about race with school members.

Nancy, much like the other minority school leaders, embraced opportunities to have discussions about race with her White colleagues because she knew many of them had limited opportunities to interact with minorities in a professional setting. She explained:

I have benefited as well as been critiqued as a result of being the only minority administrator in my district. I have become the Black voice for the district and I am consulted to serve on many committees. While I know many times this is because I am the only African American, I also know that without my skill set I would not have made it to secure the position I’m in. Therefore, I oblige at the opportunity to educate others on African Americans, who would not typically have the opportunity to interact with someone of color.

Through daily interactions with her colleagues, Nancy was able to provide a perspective many of her staff members were unfamiliar with. Nancy valued her interactions with her White coworkers because the majority of them had limited access to the perspective of a minority school leader, as she was the only one in her school district.

Much like Nancy, Elvira valued talking to members of her school community. She understood that some parents were more comfortable opening up to her about discriminatory behavior because of her race. She described a group of parents confiding in her during a meeting because they felt comfortable talking to a minority administrator:

When I first started, there were a number of Jewish parents who came to see me to discuss some of the discriminatory practices that were going on in our PTA group; they
said that they could relate to me, they also thought I would understand how they felt because I am an African American…I don’t think those parents would have had those conversation with my predecessor.

She knew that some parents in her building would say things to her that they would not say to her predecessor, because he was a Caucasian male.

As a school leader, Natalie made a concerted effort to empower all of the students in her building. She was motivated to provide a rich academic experience to her students because of her personal experiences as an African American student years ago:

I knew what it was like to never experience an African American teacher, counselor, or administrator during my K-12 years. I knew what it was like to be the only Black girl in an entire school. I am diligent in my approach to leading and learning. I have been intentional about ensuring that all students have access to rigorous courses; especially African American students based on my own experiences and research. A student will not rise to the occasion if he or she is never invited. All students deserve a seat at the table.

Natalie committed herself to creating rigorous educational opportunities to all students. She believed that before students can prove themselves, school leaders must strategically provide opportunities to them, specifically marginalized student groups.

Otis, much like many of the other school leaders, thrived in situations that involved conversations with students in his building about behavior and race. He shared the benefit of being a minority administrator in changing student behavior:

As I talk to minority students I tell them it doesn’t make it right, but this is the way your behavior is perceived by some teachers. By being a minority administrator, minority
students tend to be more inclined to listen to me as I have conversations about race with
them.

Otis knew that African American students were more receptive to him, than his White
counterparts, regarding conversations about race and behavior in classroom because of his race.

Dennis also embraced the influence he had on his minority students. He found joy in
having serious conversations with them, which he believed improved their behavior. He asserted:

I’m able to explain to Black students the negative stereotypes that some people have of
them that might make them unapproachable by their White teachers. The cultural
competency that I have helps me to connect with my minority students—my White
colleagues hear these conversations, initially they appear surprised, but I believe they see
the value in these conversations.

Dennis saw himself as an asset to his school community because he was able to have
conversations about race with his minority students, which he though positively impacted the
culture of the school.

Ryan championed hiring practices that diversified his staff. He saw value in having a
wide range of teachers on his faculty to influence his students’ perceptions on life. He shared:

I believe that everyone brings a variety of experiences to their decision making processes,
and I look at decisions that are good for my school and my students. I do believe in hiring
a diverse staff of educators for my school, because through diversity you get a wider
range of opinions which I believe is beneficial to the culture of a school under the right
leadership.
Ryan was confident in his hiring practices because they created a diverse staff within his building, which he believed positively shaped his school culture. By hiring teachers of different backgrounds, he believed he created a rich learning environment for his students.

The participants benefited in different ways from being minority administrators in their buildings. The minority leaders influenced different school members’ behavior in large part due to their race; their ability to articulate their views on race was well received by adults and students.

The second theme that emerged from the interviews was that the minority administrators felt they were held to a different standard than their White counterparts; specifically, that they had to always perform at a high standard because they were being closely watched which impacted their daily decisions as school leaders.

**The feeling of being held to a different standard.** The minority administrators felt they had to always perform at a high level because all members of their school—parents, students, and staff—were closely watching them. They also felt a self-imposed pressure to succeed because of their race; they believed because of the racial differences between them and the members of their school community, at times school members were more critical of their actions than they were of their White counterparts. When the major institutions in a society are constructed within the culture and interests of one group instead of another, those organizations may systematically favor the culturally constituted performances of one group (Gould, 1999). The minority administrators felt fortunate to be school leaders in their respected districts, but at times they felt they were being held to a different standard than their White peers.

Although Rick enjoyed his experience as a minority leader working in a predominantly White school, he was occasionally frustrated because he was self conscious about his actions due
to his race. He regularly thought about how he would be seen negatively as a leader by his school community if he did not communicate with them in a certain manner. He explained:

My race did impact my decision making as a leader. I was always forced to consider how my communication would be perceived, especially as it related to the parents and predominantly White female teaching force. I consciously made certain not to assert myself too vigorously, in order to avoid appearing threatening. Often times, I had to prove that my every decision was anchored in research, data, and sound theory. I also noticed that the most routine decisions would be subject to subtle scrutiny from parents, teachers, and central office personnel.

Rick regularly spoke to his White counterparts about the responses they received from their teachers and parents regarding similar leadership decisions and actions they all made within their schools; they often had different experiences than Rick, which led him to believe that race may have been a factor.

Elvira, much like Rick, was mindful of her behavior at work because of her race. She behaved cautiously because she was worried that any errors she made at work would be seen as flaws attributed to her race. Elvira shared an example of what occurred on a typical work day:

You feel like you always have to be on your p’s & q’s; when I’m typing something if an error is made, I’m worried it will be attributed to my race. I want to make sure I’m always working even though you may hear stories of other administrators leaving early because you never want anyone to attribute you being a slacker or being lazy to your race. I’m not saying that anyone has ever said that to me, but I feel like I have to be a model for my entire race, which may be ridiculous but that is how I feel.
She understood that her feelings of anxiety were self-induced, but she was committed to behaving in a manner that would be seen in positive a light at all times. Elvira also discussed challenges she has experienced as a minority administrator:

I know I have been questioned about things because I have done them differently than my predecessor—now, whether that is because of my race or gender, I’m not sure. I do believe that there is a different response when I or one of my fellow minority administrators does something at the district level, but again I’m not sure if that is because we are women or due to race. When I first started, the HR director—who was also a former principal here—actually sat me down and told me that there were comments being made about my name and the district I was coming from…Some people were saying she doesn’t know what she’s doing and I’m going to send her an outline of her job duties and those emails were circulating by a few parents.

Elvira believed that parents and central office administrators responded differently to her than other White administrators; she was not sure if that was because of her race or gender.

Natalie, similar to Elvira, expressed feelings of pride about being a minority administrator leading a high achieving predominantly White school. She felt very fortunate to have her position, but she also believed that some people were more critical of her because of her race. She stated:

The benefits of being a minority leader here is the direct impact that I have on my staff, students, and parents whom I am blessed to serve. I am a role model to many and I take this awesome responsibility very seriously. Being an African American woman is powerful. I believe it is a benefit to be who I am and to stand up for what I believe in.
The road is not always an easy one. It can be a tumultuous journey, especially when you find yourself working much harder than your peers who represent a different race. As Natalie reflected on her experiences as a school leader, she embraced the great responsibility attached to her position. She felt fortunate to serve her school community but also felt at times that she had to work harder than some of her White counterparts because there were people within her school community who were more critical of her due to her race. Natalie identified her biggest challenge as a leader to be the constant scrutiny from members of her school community—she also recognized that severe scrutiny of a school leader is a common practice in high-achieving districts regardless of the race of the principal. She explained, “The biggest challenge I faced is the hourly, daily, weekly, monthly scrutiny that any principal in a high-achieving suburban high school would face.” Natalie was a very strong school leader who understood the demands of being a principal in a high-achieving school district. As a minority school leader, she experienced additional stress knowing that some facets of her district were more critical of her because she was an African American woman.

Otis also believed that members of his school community made comments to him that they did not make to his White counterparts. He discussed how he was treated differently than the other White administrators in his building:

I thought my competency was questioned a little bit more because I am Black; I can’t say there is something blatant, but I can say from a day to day there is always an extra burden or an extra watch that is placed on me. I might hear little comments about the time I walk into a place, or the time I spend monitoring the cafeteria or even my visibility in the hallway…the way I dress or the way I talk; I feel I am under a certain scrutiny that my colleagues aren’t under. I wouldn’t say that people are overly critical of me, but people
make comments about not seeing me for a couple of days, which I never hear made about my White counterparts.

He believed that his faculty was aware of his every move, and made remarks to him they did not make to the White administrators in his building. Otis also described his constant need to be seen by his staff:

I can’t sit too long in my office, even though some of my colleagues might sit in their office all day. Now maybe that is paranoia—that I might be described as being aloof or that I’m not working hard enough. So I’m always moving; I’m always hustling; I’m walking around; I’m always showing my face, staff is always feeling my presence…this drives me. It’s tough because I’m on a hamster wheel all day; it is what I have to do because the previous principal who was also Black got criticized for not be active enough. I don’t want to say it is because of race, but that does sit in the back of my head.

Adam had similar a professional experience that resonated with him because of his race. He had moments where he thought he was treated differently than his peers due to his minority status and was surprised by comments made to him by members of his school community. Adam discussed an incident where he was viewed differently because of his race:

A defining moment for me was when a person of a different ethnic background asked me, ‘How does it feel to be outnumbered?’ I said to him your father is Abraham and so is mine; help me understand how I am outnumbered. He then said, ‘You know what I mean.’ I told him if you want talk politics set up a meeting. At that point I realized that he was taking a shot at me, but I also understood that it was an opportunity to let him know that regardless of what someone’s religion is or their culture, I’m going to support all kids, which I did…more than he ever anticipated.
Adam embraced the opportunity to treat someone with respect in spite of rude comments made by that individual.

Dennis, much like Adam, experienced moments where he too responded respectfully to individuals he perceived as rude. He decided early on his career that he would always conduct himself professionally as a school leader, which at times was challenging to do as he faced blatant disrespect from members of his school, who he viewed as racist. He explained:

The most challenging thing I face is dealing with the few students that are racist. It’s a reality for me; there are students out there that are simply racist. Certain students don’t take me seriously. I say one thing to the majority of students and they do what I ask and then a small group of students don’t. You might think those students who don’t respond appropriately are just defiant, until you watch them respond appropriately to a directive from a White staff member. Some students and parents just don’t believe in me. Some parents come looking for me, and when they see me they’re completely taken back that an African American male is in a position of authority. Those same parents often come off more hostile and aggressive when we first speak; but I treat them with respect, refuse to back down, and clearly articulate my plans…I do my job consistently so parents can never question how I operate.

Dennis experienced moments where members of his school were resistant to his leadership because he perceived them to be racist. Although some members of Dennis’ school treated him negatively, he always conducted himself in a positive manner because of his own professional code of conduct.
The school leaders all understood that they were watched more critically by members of their schools than their White counterparts—this was a source of anxiety and a motivating factor for them to behave professionally at all times.

The third theme procured from the interviews’ analysis was that the minority administrator truly valued the supportive guidance they received from mentors and colleagues. The participants attributed much of the direction in their careers to the guidance of supportive colleagues and mentors along their professional journeys.

**Supportive guidance.** The school leaders credited much of their career development to supportive colleagues and mentors who offered guidance to them as minority administrators in White schools. The minority administrators all cherished the assistance they received or the lessons they learned from more experienced mentors in and out of their districts who were willing to provide help to them as they transitioned into administrative roles in their predominantly White schools. Principals who developed mentor-mentee relationships with other principals have benefited professionally (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). The participants in this study benefited from the mentors they had throughout their entire professional careers; several of the minority administrators credited their mentors for guiding them into the field of education.

Shelly attributed much of her decision to become an educator to her mentor, who she held in high regard; she also discussed the value of being part of a minority administrators’ network. She stated:

One of my greatest influences was my high school English teacher, mentor, and friend. She passed away several years ago, and my career selection and decision to become an administrator is largely related to my relationship with her. I had no intention of
becoming a teacher, and eventually becoming a principal, but I was encouraged by her to try it and it became a game changer for me…I currently have an administrator mentor supporting me in my current role. I’m looking forward to my continued work the minority administrators’ network for support.

Shelly’s mentor influenced her professionally through encouragement and advice; Shelly held her mentor in high esteem, and believed her life was changed for the better because of the advice she received from her. She continued to accept guidance from mentors and she appreciated the connection she had to other administrators through her professional network.

Adam also expressed much admiration for other administrators who supported him as a young administrator. He discussed how he has grown as leader because of the guidance provided by the mentors in his district:

These two individuals have challenged my thinking a lot. They have really played a huge role in my leadership style and my confidence as a leader, helping me do my job with fidelity. They both saw something in me—sometimes people see something in you that you don’t see yourself. I’ve learned to live into what they’ve seen in me. They both allowed me to take risks; they’ve allowed me to take chances; they’ve allowed me to give presentations on a wide range of diversity issues. The district diversity committee also helped me grow as a leader by allowing me to give presentations on many different things versus other districts that say, but don’t do.

Adam was motivated to do well in his professional role because he did not want to disappoint the administrators that supported him in the early stages of his career.

Natalie, much like the other minority administrators, raved about the mentors in her life that supported her through her professional journey. She asserted:
I have an amazing network of mentors who have inspired and encouraged me over the years to be better…they have had a profound impact on my leadership. I am at my best because of their unwavering support and unconditional friendships!

As she reflected on the ups and downs of her work as school leader, she found support from the guidance of other more seasoned administrators who advised her professionally.

Otis developed as a school leader by closely watching and talking to another administrator that he respected. He discussed the lessons he learned from watching another minority principal lead a predominantly White school:

I was able to study the moves he made and the moves he didn’t make…He was actually criticized more harshly by Black parents because they wanted him to do more and the White parents for the most part loved him. He was astute enough to understand the domino effect his decisions had on so many things and he knew that things could eventually come back to bite him…so he would error on the side of caution.

Otis gained wisdom from watching his mentor lead; he was able to avoid certain pitfall and imitate behaviors of his mentor that were well received by his faculty.

Derrick valued the support of the minority administrators’ network he was a part of, but he really appreciated the former principal who he still reaches out to for advice years after his retirement. He stated:

The network has helped me tremendously, but my biggest support has been the former principal who retired years ago. He was an African American man and left a very strong legacy behind. When I arrived, a lot of people said he was a great man, and if anyone mentioned his name everyone in the room began to smile. If he attends a football game they always make an announcement. It’s funny because the students don’t know who he
is because he’s been gone for years, but his reputation lives on. As a mentor he has helped me a lot because I can call on him for anything, if I need to.

Derrick benefited tremendously from the guidance of the other minority administrators in his network and the tutelage of a former principal in his building.

Elvira, just like Derrick, greatly appreciated the support she received from her predecessor who met with her in her first year as principal in her district. She shared how she benefited from the support of her human resource director who was also the former principal of her building:

After sitting me down and talking to me about issues I was going to face, he set up a group of parents and staff to help me; he told me these people are on your team, so no matter what they are going to be supportive. They were so supportive that one of the parents in that group, who was also very influential in the community, would forward me emails written by parents throughout the community. She would give me a heads up and tell me exactly what certain parents were going to try to attack me on.

Aiden discussed the importance of having mentors as a school leader. He explained:

Having mentors and peers that either going thru what you are experiencing or have experienced what you are going thru is vital to your success. Also do not make important decisions in a vacuum, bounce the decisions off of your mentors or peers in similar positions.

Aiden believed administrators should never work isolation. He saw value in collaborating with his peers and learning from his mentors’ mistakes.

The minority administrators all benefited as school leaders by observing and listening to supportive faculty members. They developed a roadmap for success as minority leaders by
learning what to do and not do as school leaders, guided by the tutelage of other veteran administrators.

Another theme that was identified from the data analysis was that all of the administrators found unique sources of strength they used to conquer adversity in their daily work. The minority administrators experienced different challenges as school leaders; they all relied on some source of strength to help them overcome their obstacles

**Sources of strength.** The minority administrators referenced their faiths, families, or friends as their sources of strength during those difficult times.

Although Natalie was thrilled to be her school’s first Black female principal, she believed the path she took to get the position was very difficult. Her primary source of strength during challenging times was her faith. She reflected on challenging time early on her leadership career:

> When I reflect on the leadership courage that I exercised through the grace of God, in becoming the Principal here, most people would have given up and thrown up the white flag. When I served as Interim Principal for three months, applied for the position and rose to the top; having received the recommendation from my superintendent, I was told it would be a 4-3 vote at the board meeting that night. I was encouraged not to attend and not bring my family. This conversation was had at 10:00am. Around 5:00pm, I received a call that it did not look good. Did I want my name to be as the recommendation? My response: “Do you want me to be the next Principal of the school?” He replied, “Yes.” I said, “I will see you in a couple of hours with my family and friends beside me.” Over 40 members of my staff attended that board meeting. 15 individuals spoke on my behalf. It was like living through a public eulogy. I exceeded every qualification of the job posting yet the following statements were uttered: “Do you want her to be the face of our high
school?” That was very telling what the end result would be. I was not approved. A break was offered where I was intentional about walking around that board table, looked each member in the eye, shook their hands and stated, “Thank you for the opportunity.” God’s grace and the Holy Spirit carried me through that night. I did not shed a tear. I held my head up high as I was greeted with hugs from my family and friends who were present. The most poignant statement of the night came from the mouth of my son. He said, “Mom, you know you were qualified for that job, the only reason you did not get it was because you are an African American women.” Shortly after the board meeting, I started to field calls from attorneys, notifying me that I had a case. I would have to risk my entire career if I pursued legal action against my school district for discrimination. I chose to take the high road and continue to pursue greatness. I exercised true grit and never allowed others to host a pity party on my behalf. For the year as Interim, I had a target on my back. Every spoken and written word had to be flawless. Every interaction with a student, parent or member of the community had to go well. Every publication from the school was scrutinized with a fine-tooth comb. None of the aforementioned is different than how I have approached every single day of my career. I cross my t’s and dot my i’s because that is simply me. In the spring, the Board of Education voted unanimously to have me become the high school principal. The entire experience was humbling. I found myself reflecting daily on some of my favorite people in history who overcame adversity and hardship for the betterment of our people. Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, Dorothy Height, Mary McLeod Bethune, Diane Nash, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the list goes on…
Natalie showed true professionalism and grit after her disappointing board meeting and throughout her tenure as the interim principal. Through her faith in God and the support of her loved ones, she persevered and was rewarded with the distinction of being her district’s first high school African American female principal.

During challenging times, Apollo relied on the support of his fellow minority administrators. He was well aware of the benefits of meeting with his colleagues to get helpful professional advice, but he recognized that many of the minority administrators felt the meetings had to take place in secrecy. He explained:

The biggest advantage of working in this area as a minority school leader is that the minority administrators have coalesced as a group and have come together. In district we do it underground, but we continue to communicate; we support one and other to make sure each one of us has the proper information because sometime it feels as if information is held from us. In a larger sense, our colleagues across the county have been able to come together and discuss things that are specific to our roles as minority administrators—this is especially important during times of controversy. The challenge for the minority school leaders is overcoming the feeling that we have to do things underground or the feeling that we have to hide what we communicate about because of the fear that there might be some type of retribution.

Apollo acknowledged that meetings with minority administrators were helpful to them to overcome challenges; however, there was still a feeling of uneasiness in both parties because they were worried about how the meetings were perceived by their White peers.

Elvira had similar feelings as Natalie on the importance of her faith. She shared, “My faith is everything…I don’t know if I could made during challenging times if I didn’t have such a
close relationship with God!” Elvira recognized her belief in God as the number one source of strength that she turned to during times of stress.

The minority administrators were all reflective in reviewing their craft, and understood that their work could be stressful at times. In order to cope with the stressful nature of their work, the school leaders all relied on specific sources of strength. The sources of strength varied between the school leaders, but they all knew how important it was during times of conflict to tap into something that would strengthen them.

In addition to the analysis of the in-depth interviews, the researcher analyzed the findings from a focus group of nine minority administrators leading predominantly White schools.

**Focus Group**

The researcher conducted a focus group as part of the research study on minority administrators’ perspectives on leadership in predominantly White schools. The purpose of the focus group was to capture the experiences and perspectives of minority administrators in predominantly White schools in southeastern Michigan. The focus group was an effective inquiry method to ascertain the perspectives of the minority educational leaders, because participants were able to analyze and evaluate the leadership perspectives of other minority leaders in predominantly White schools, as they all reflected on their professional experiences. The underlying assumption of focus groups is that, within a permissive atmosphere that fosters a range of opinions, a more complete and revealing understanding of the issues will be obtained. Focus groups are planned and structured but are also flexible tools to help make sense of a shared experience (Liamputttong, 2011).

The focus group was held in a private setting to ensure the confidentiality of everyone involved in the study. The private location of the study also allowed participants to speak openly
and honestly, in a safe setting, about their experiences as minority school leaders without fear of offending members of their schools. All participants signed consent forms to participate in the study, acknowledging and agreeing not to compromise the confidentiality of the study by divulging what was discussed with anyone outside of the focus group. Participants were offered a $50.00 cash stipend for attending, fully participating, and staying for the duration of the focus group. All participants qualified for the $50.00 stipend.

Joining the researcher was a skilled moderator, who helped facilitate the focus group. The researcher and moderator met several times to design, plan, and analyze aspects of the focus group. The focus group consisted of the following:

1. Greetings: The researcher greeted all participants, offered them refreshments as they entered the room, and casually socialized with them to create a sense of comfort.

2. Introductions: The researcher formally introduced himself and the moderator to the group. The moderator then explained the expectations for the focus group and the purpose of the study. The researcher passed out the consent forms, which were signed by all participants. After the consent forms were collected, participants were put into a circle and each participant shared their personal/professional history.

3. Surveys: All members of the focus completed leadership surveys, which consisted of 17 open-ended and multiple-choice questions (Appendix C).

4. SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat) Analysis: Participants worked individually then collectively to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of their predominantly White schools.
During the focus group, the moderator asked participants questions while the researcher recorded their responses electronically; the researcher also wrote down relevant observations. The researcher and the moderator spent a significant amount of time having conversations about the participants before and after focus group.

**Participants.** The researcher recruited participants for the focus group by emailing an invitation, which outlined the nature of the focus group, to members of a minority administrators’ network in southeastern Michigan. From the email, nine minority administrators accepted the invitation to participate in the focus group. There were two female administrators and seven male administrators who participated in the focus group. Six of the administrators led middle or high schools, and three of the minority leaders led elementary buildings. Eight of the minority leaders were African American, and one of the minority leaders was Lebanese. Two of the participants from the focus group were retired from school leadership.

The minority administrators were very respectful of the other participants, listening attentively as each member spoke throughout the activities. The administrators appeared to find joy in hearing about the experiences of other professionals who were having similar daily experiences. The researcher noticed a lot of laughter from the school leaders as the participants shared common experiences. Many of the participants shared the same experiences, frustrations, joys, and motivations as minority school leaders in White schools. Although participants had similar experiences, on several occasions different administrators emphasized the importance of not over-generalizing the experiences of all minority administrators, because they all knew of other minority administrators who had different experiences and views on leadership. The participants affirmed their fellow colleagues throughout the activities with constant head nodding.
as different administrators shared their stories. The researcher captured the perspectives of schools leaders through a SWOT analysis and surveys.

**SWOT analysis.** The culminating activity for the focus group was the SWOT analysis. Mike Morrison (2010) describes a SWOT analysis for schools as a tool that can provide prompts to governors, management teachers, and staff involved in the analysis of what is effective and less effective in school systems and procedures. A SWOT analysis can be used for any planning or analysis activity that could impact future finance, planning, and management decisions of the school or establishment (Morrison, 2010). A SWOT analysis is also a process that identifies and examines four elements: *Strengths*—factors that are likely to have a positive effect on (or be an enabler to) achieving the school’s objectives; *Weaknesses*—factors that are likely to have a negative effect on (or be a barrier to) achieving the school’s objectives; *Opportunities*—external Factors that are likely to have a positive effect on achieving or exceeding the school’s objectives, or goals not previously considered; *Threats*—external factors and conditions that are likely to have a negative effect on achieving the school’s objectives, or making the objective redundant or un-achievable (Morrison, 2010). The participants of the focus group were asked to complete a SWOT analysis of their school districts, placing specific attention on the predominantly White schools led by minority leaders within their organizations.

During the focus group, the minority school leaders were first asked individually to reflect and record the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats inherent in their positions at predominantly White schools. The moderator gave specific examples for each category of the SWOT framework, and then allowed participants to work independently for a period of time. After participants reflected on their own experiences, the moderator put each participant in a small group to record their responses collectively. After the responses were all recorded,
members from the small groups shared their findings as a full group and were encouraged to provide specific instances to clarify their responses to the other participants. Figure 1.6 shows the responses from the participants during the SWOT analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths (internal)</th>
<th>Weaknesses (internal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Counter-story is established</td>
<td>• M.A. may experience negative feelings of loneliness, isolation, being perceived as a sell-out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• M. A. may develop a sense of personal uniqueness as pioneers in their work setting</td>
<td>• M.A. may question whether their race was a factor in perceived act of disrespect or defiance by a school member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• M.A. may be used as a resource for discussions on race</td>
<td>• Racist schools members may respond negatively to M.A., which could create a poor school culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• M.A. may provide an alternate perspective to the decision making process</td>
<td>• M. A. may experience added stress to their jobs due to feelings of being held to a different standard than their White counterparts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Minority students may at times feel more comfortable speaking to a minority administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A district’s vision for inclusive hiring practices may provide a sense of comfort and support for M.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Opportunities (external)
- Diverse hiring practices support a district’s vision of inclusion – may help marketing of schools
- Diverse faculty may widen the opinions of thought in school setting
- Diverse faculty may attract new families to enroll in a school
- Fiscally responsible districts have the resources to support their school members

### Threats (external)
- Racist school community members
- Lack of support from central office: no mentoring, no networking, limited dialogue during stressful times

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**Figure 1.6. SWOT analysis. M.A = Minority administrators.**

**Strengths (internal)—**
- Minority administrators may provide a counter-narrative to other members of their school community that might offset negative stereotypes that permeate popular culture about minorities. The school provides minority role models to its members, who have limited interactions with people of different cultural backgrounds.
- Minority administrators leading predominantly White schools may establish a personal sense of uniqueness as pioneers in their work setting.
- Minority administrators may be a first-hand resource to their colleagues as issues of race are addressed within their school.
• Minority administrators may provide an alternate perspective from their White counterparts during the decision making process within a school.

• Minority students within a building may respond differently to messages coming from a minority administrator regarding race-related topics.

• Decision makers within the predominantly White districts might be progressive in their thinking to hire qualified administrators regardless of their race, which might provide a feeling of support to the minority administrators.

Weaknesses (internal)—

• Minority administrators in predominantly White schools may experience negative feelings of loneliness, isolation, or being perceived as a sell-out, which could negatively impact their leadership.

• Minority administrators may occasionally feel frustrated in predominantly White schools, as they might question whether race was a determining factor in a perceived act of disrespect of defiance from a school member.

• School members who are uncomfortable with a minority leader may not respond appropriately to his/her directives, which may create negative school culture.

• Minority leaders may experience additional stress due to feelings of being held to different standard than that of their White counterparts by members of their district.

Opportunities (external)—

• By hiring minority administrators, a school district’s staff would be diversified, which could help them to effectively market a vision of inclusion to community members.
By having a more diverse population, district leadership could potentially have a wider pool of opinions on district-level committees that could potentially shape district-level decisions.

Families looking for schools with more diversity among their staff members may feel more inclined to enroll their children in schools with minority administrators.

Financially strong school districts have the resources to support the needs of their staff, students, and families through professional development and mentoring programs.

Threats (external)—

Racist community members may not support the decision to hire a minority school leader. As a result, members of the school community oppose decisions made by the minority school leaders or withdraw their children from the school.

Central office administrators may not provide the necessary support – mentors, minority professional networks, or candid advice to navigate the challenges of the new position – to the minority building leaders to ensure their success in their new roles.

The researcher used multiple inquiry methods to triangulate the findings and better understand the professional experiences of minority administrators in predominantly White schools. The third source of inquiry for this study consisted of surveys which were completed by a group of minority administrators in southeastern Michigan.

Surveys

Leadership surveys were completed by participants of the focus group and members of a minority administrators network in southeastern, Michigan. The survey consisted of seventeen open-ended and multiple-choice questions (Appendix C).

Figure 1.5 is repeated below to show the breakdown of the results that were completed:
Figure 1.5. Participant demographics.

**Results.** The researcher analyzed and categorized the participants’ responses from the survey (see Figures 1.7 through 2.5):

Figure 1.7 shows the participants’ responses to the question *what knowledge did you have of the school district prior to accepting the job?* The participants’ responses were as follows: no knowledge—3; limited knowledge—11; very knowledgeable—3.
Figure 1.7. Survey Graph 1.

Figure 1.8 shows the participants’ responses to the question *have you changed or received a promotion in position(s) since your initial hire to this district?* The participants’ responses were as follows: no—7; yes—10.

Figure 1.8. Survey Graph 2.
Figure 1.9 shows the participants’ responses to the question *when you applied for this job, what was it that attracted you to the role?* The participants’ responses were as follows: district’s reputation—5; career advancement—4; job stability—3; diversity within administrative ranks—1; become a difference maker within the district; the minority administrators believed they could positively impact perceptions, behaviors, or attitudes of school members within their predominantly White schools—4.

![Figure 1.9. Survey Graph 3.](image)

Figure 2.0 shows the participants’ responses to the question *why do you think you were hired?* The participants’ responses were as follows: qualifications/skill-set—11; district’s need for diversity—4; recommendations—1; familiarity with the district—1.
Figure 2.1 shows the participants’ responses to the question *tell me about your experiences in this organization and how your minority status affects your daily work?* The participants’ responses were as follows: The minority administrators believed they had different perspectives on some school issues than their White colleagues, which included: leadership communication styles, methods to motivate students of their own race, and the value of having professional dialogue about race with staff. Some of the participants believed they had to speak to their staff in a “softer” manner because they might be seen as intimidating or aggressive if they were too “direct.” A few of the participants believed they were able to motivate their minority students through conversations about racial stereotypes—conversations their White colleagues did not feel comfortable having with the minority students. Several of the participants believed they valued professional development as a staff on cultural competent instructional practices, the achievement gap, and micro-aggressions in a school setting more than their White peers—6; the minority administrators believed, at times, that school members responded differently to them or their decisions as leaders than they did to those of their White colleagues. They felt that
staff members and/or parents occasionally challenged them on simple requests or directives, which didn’t happen with their White administrative peers in their districts—6; the minority administrators believed their minority status had no effect on their daily work—3; the minority administrators believed in order to be well-received by their school communities, they had to behave differently than their White colleagues, including: working longer hours so they would not be perceived as being lazy, and conducting themselves professionally at all times so they would not be perceived as being unprofessional—2.

5. Tell me about your experiences in this organization and how your minority status affects your daily work?

Figure 2.1. Survey Graph 5.

Figure 2.2 shows the participants’ responses to the question what challenges or conflicts do you experience in this administrative position? The participants’ responses were as follows: The minority administrators experienced negative feelings of resistance from staff, isolation, disrespect, being held to different standard than their White counterparts, micro-aggressions, and being the voice for an entire race—8; student achievement—4; maintaining or creating a positive school culture—3; meeting the high expectations from staff and community members—2.
Figure 2.2. Survey Graph 6.

Figure 2.3 shows the responses to the question during challenging work-related times what is your source of strength? The participants’ responses were as follows: faith—11; family—9; myself (personal reflection, personal beliefs, sought out researched based strategies to problem solve)—4; friends—3; mentors or professional relationships with other minority administrators—2.
7. During challenging work-related times what is your source of strength (participants had multiple responses)?

![Survey Graph](image)

**Figure 2.3.** Survey Graph 7. Participants had multiple responses.

Figure 2.4 shows the participants’ responses to the question *what have you learned from these challenges?* The participants’ responses were as follows: The minority administrators identified the following leadership skill they learned from challenges in their work settings: perseverance, integrity, transparency, patience, being reflective, self-confidence, determination, being goal-orientated and student-centered—8; the minority administrators selected the following rules for success within their organizations: always look to collaborate with your colleagues; seek to understand before making decisions; do not overreact when someone says something offensive—often times they are not aware of their actions…teach them, know what is important to your supervisors and do it, be prepared, communicate effectively, act professionally—8; one of the minority administrators discovered the importance of students being exposed to different people and perspectives through his work in the district. He often received compliments from members of his school thanking him for providing a unique perspective to staff conversations, which ultimately impacted the student-centered decisions they made as a faculty—1.
8. What have you learned from these challenges?

- Leadership skills
- Organization rules for success
- The importance of students being exposed to diversity

Figure 2.4. Survey Graph 8.

Figure 2.5 shows the participants’ responses to the question in what ways will your experience as a minority administration working in one predominantly White school district in southeastern Michigan impact this study? The participants’ responses were as follows: provide a different leadership perspective on leading a predominantly White school—11; provide insight to other administrators on the professional challenges and joys of working in an environment where demands and expectations are high—4; provide insight to the executive leadership of other school districts on the perceptions of minority administrators to help support them as they enter their schools—2.
The findings from the surveys determined that the majority of the participants had limited knowledge about their district before they accepted their jobs. They were drawn to their school districts primarily because of the organizations’ stellar reputations and career advancement. They believed they were hired specifically because of their unique skillsets; however, some of the participants perceived their minority background as a benefit to them during the interviewing process because they understood their school districts were experiencing a rise in minority student enrollment and were in search of a more diverse faculty. Some of the participants also believed their status as a minority leader impacted their daily work because they were more aware of and willing to discuss race-related school issues than their White staff members. The top challenges or conflicts that minority administrators experienced were negative feelings they internalized:

- Resistance from staff to respond to directives
- Isolation
• Being held to a different standard than their White counterparts
• Micro-aggressions
• Being the spokesperson for their race

The top sources of strength for the participants during stressful times were their faith, family, and themselves. As they turned inward during times of conflict, they found solace in personal reflection, remaining true to their professional beliefs, and utilizing research-based strategies to problem solve. The top things learned from the challenges the minority administrators experienced were leadership skills, which included patience, resilience, self-confidence, and the importance of integrity to name a few. The other skills that were learned from the challenges experienced by the participants were categorized as rules for success within the organization. The participants described the rules for success as important daily behaviors or responses to members of their school that helped them be seen in a positive light by their school community; these rules included the following:

• When possible, collaborate with members of your school to make decisions.
• Seek to understand what school members are asking of you before making decisions as a leader.
• Do not over react when someone offends you with a comment you consider ignorant or insensitive; occasionally, the person that has made the comment does not intend to be offensive. In those moments, when you find a comment made by a colleague to be offensive, have a conversation with that colleague to help them understand how their comment made you feel.
- Document your actions, conversations, and decision—and then archive them as a reference tool. As you document your actions, you can refer back to them, with clarity, if you have to explain an incident to a school member.

- Understand what tasks are important to your supervisors, prioritize those tasks accordingly, and complete them. Many of the participants believed the administrators who did not understand this rule in their districts were seen as incompetent school leaders by their colleagues.

- Be ready and able to respond to a wide range of daily problems. The minority administrators believed they had to be flexible and willing to adjust their daily plans to address problems as they occurred.

- Communicate effectively and regularly with all members of your school to maintain a pulse of what is occurring under your leadership. The minority administrators believed members of their school valued their importance they placed on open dialogue to address school issues.

- Act professionally regardless of how others are behaving. The participants believed in a social setting when others were conducting themselves in an unprofessional manner, it was important for them to maintain a high level professionalism in order for them to continue to be respected as leaders.

In large, the participants of the surveys believed their contributions to this study provided a counter-narrative to the experiences of administrators leading predominantly White schools.

**Conclusion**

Multiple inquiry tools were used to triangulate the data for this study, which included in-depth interviews, a focus group, and surveys. The findings from the different methods of inquiry
were consistent and provided a counter-story for minority administrators leading predominantly White schools. The open-ended questions given to the school leaders during their interviews, the SWOT analysis conducted during the focus group, and the surveys the filled out allowed them to share perceptions about their experiences. As highlighted in the findings, four prominent themes emerged in the analysis of data: the power they felt they had as change-agents, the feelings of being closely watched by their school community impacting their daily decisions, the important role supportive colleagues had on their success as school leaders, and the different sources of strength minority administrators relied on during challenging times. The SWOT analysis revealed that the participants felt fortunate to work in districts with open-minded and supportive supervisors. From the interviews, the participants viewed themselves as role models who provided a unique perspective to their districts. The participants also believed their schools benefited from hiring diverse administrators as it supported their districts’ visions of inclusivity, which the minority administrators believed was an important marketing tool for their schools as student demographics continued to change throughout southeastern Michigan. The school leaders occasionally struggled with negative feelings as a result of being minorities in predominantly White organizations, but they believed the professional and personal opportunities far outweighed the challenges, which supported their decision to work in a setting where they were the minority.

In this chapter, the researcher examined the findings from the different inquiry tools used to explore the experiences and perceptions of minority administrators in predominantly White schools in southeastern Michigan. In the next chapter, the researcher explores the implications of the findings, makes recommendations for action and further research and provides a personal reflection as the study concludes.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the professional and personal experiences of minority administrators located in predominantly White suburban school districts in one affluent county located in southeastern Michigan. The researcher conducted a phenomenological case study that examined the professional experiences and leadership perspectives of the participants; the study also highlighted the evolution of one predominantly White school district as the student demographics changed over a period of time. Through multiple inquiry methods, the researcher developed patterns and relationships of meanings from the minority school leaders’ shared experiences. The theoretical framework used for this study was the critical race theory (CRT), which provided a lens the researcher used to examine the professional journeys of the participants—and their institutions—as they shared their professional stories as minority administrators in predominantly White schools. The final chapter consists of a discussion of findings, implications on practice, recommendations for future research, and a conclusion.

Discussion of Findings

The primary research questions that guided the research for this study were as follows:

- What factors positively and negatively impact the leadership experiences of minority administrators in predominantly White schools?
- How do minority administrators in predominantly White districts describe their daily work?
- How does the cultural background of minority administrators influence their leadership?
• What are the benefits and challenges of being a minority administrator in a predominantly White school?

The researcher used multiple inquiry tools to answer the research questions and triangulate the findings for the study. As the researcher analyzed the participants’ responses the Critical Race Theory provided a framework which helped themes emerge.

The inquiry instruments that were used to explore the research questions for the study were: in-depth interviews, a focus group, and surveys. The in-depth interviews consisted of six open-ended questions (Appendix C), which were given to twelve minority administrators of predominantly White schools. From the in-depth interviews, four main themes emerged that described the experiences of the minority schools leaders:

1. **The Positive Impact of Being a Change-Agent**—the participants recognized and valued their roles in changing negative behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes of members of their schools through their leadership as minority administrators.

2. **The Feeling of Being Held to a Different Standard**—the participants felt they were closely watched by all members of their school community, more so than their White colleagues, which impacted their behavior as school leaders.

3. **Supportive Guidance**—the participants appreciated the relationships they established along their professional journeys with mentors. They attributed much of their development as leaders to the support they received from mentors and supportive colleagues.

4. **Sources of Strength**—the participants all experienced difficult times as school leaders; to overcome their challenges they referenced their faiths, families, or friends as their sources of strength.
The themes that emerged from the interviews were supported by the findings from the other inquiry methods: a focus group, and surveys.

The focus group was conducted in a private location with nine minority administrators. An experienced moderator led the focus group, which allowed the researcher to take notes and record the participants during the activities. A SWOT analysis was the culminating activity for the participants of the focus groups, which captured the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the predominantly White schools—the feedback from minority administrators during the focus group was similar in nature to the themes captured from the in-depth interviews.

During the focus group, the participants discussed their personal and professional experiences as minority leaders. The minority administrators discussed their unique perspectives on leadership during the focus group, which were in line with the findings from the surveys that were completed for the study.

Seventeen minority administrators completed surveys for the study, which consisted of seventeen open-ended and multiple-choice questions (Appendix C). The surveys revealed the challenges, motivations, successes, sources of strength, and different leadership perspectives of the minority administrators in the predominantly White schools. Although there were many commonalities from the surveys, which were consistent with the findings from the other inquiry methods, the surveys also exposed a wide range of beliefs on leadership from the minority administrators that were duly noted by the researcher during the focus groups.

The different inquiry tools used exposed similarities and differences of the minority school leaders’ experiences, which created a distinctive set of perspectives on leadership that will add value to the existing body of research. It should be noted that there is very little in the existing research that directly impacts the employment of minority administrators in
predominantly White school districts in educational research. The leadership perspectives of the minority administrators in this study were shaped by their personal and professional experiences; from those experiences, a counter story was created by the researcher that highlighted the role that race can play in school leadership.

This study examined the factors that impacted the successes of minority administrators employed in predominantly White schools located in southeastern Michigan. The findings from this study presented valuable leadership perspectives of minority administrators, and highlighted both the positive and negative aspects of leading predominantly White schools as a minority. Through the different inquiry-methods, the researcher provided avenues for the participants’ voices to be heard, which produced a counter story to school leadership. The researcher successfully examined the “lived experiences” of the participants through the detailed description of the participants being studied, which is the intent of a phenomenological study (Nieswiadomy, 1993). The researcher analyzed the experiences and leadership perspectives of the minority administrators, from which implications on school leadership were formed.

**Implications on Practice**

The following implications on school leadership were derived from the findings of the study. These implications are expounded on via the four main themes that emerged from the findings of the study. In this section, the implications on school leadership are discussed in relation to the primary research questions for the study.

**Theme 1: The positive impact of being a change-agent.** As a result of the data from the study, it was clear that the minority administrators embraced the positive impact of being change-agents in their predominantly White schools. The data supported this emergent theme; the findings also support the feeling of belonging for the minority administrators in the county as
they enjoyed their work, because they were clear about their purpose as school leaders and understood how their decisions positively impacted members of their organizations. The minority administrators had clarity of their motivations and purposes as school leaders, which gave them job satisfaction.

Some of the participants were motivated to apply for their positions because they were excited by the opportunity to work in an environment where there was little or no representation of their race in the administrative ranks. Participants believed by working in an environment which lacked diversity, their unique leader perspectives would positively influence negative behaviors and thoughts of some school members as they related to race. Once they arrived at their schools, the minority administrators began their work to change negative behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes of members of their schools through their leadership; they did the following:

- Had thoughtful conversations with their school members to enlighten them about racial issues, which provided unfamiliar perspective to many of their colleagues.
- Actively participated in different district committees—diversity, achievement gap, strategic planning—to impact decisions and advocate for marginalized groups.
- Led professional development sessions for their staff on race related topics.
- Modeled positive behaviors to dispel negative stereotypes about their race.

In relation to the primary research questions, the following conclusions were derived from Theme 1—The Positive Impact of Being a Change-Agent:

- What are the benefits and challenges of being a minority administrator in a predominantly White school? The participants recognized the opportunity to positively
change negative behaviors and attitudes of their school members through their leadership as a benefit of being a minority administrator in a predominantly White school.

- **What factors positively and negatively impact the leadership experiences of minority administrators in predominantly White schools?** The leadership experiences of the participants were positively impacted by the emotions they felt as they shaped the views of their school members as change agents.

- **How does the cultural background of minority administrators influence their leadership?** The cultural background of the participants influenced the conversations they had with different members of their school and the committee work they championed as they tried to bring about change throughout their districts.

- **How do minority administrators in predominantly White districts describe their daily work?** Some of the daily leadership decisions described by the participants were influenced by the motivation of the participant to change the behavior of their colleagues.

**Theme 2: The feeling of being held to a different standard.** As a result of the study’s data, it was obvious that the minority administrators were at times frustrated by the perceptible feeling that they were being held to a different standard than their White counterparts; the data supported this emergent theme. The minority administrators’ negative feelings of being treated differently due to race were result of responses they received from members of their respective schools, which they believed were different from those of White administrators in their districts. The administrators valued opportunities to discuss the negative feelings they experienced due to their beliefs that they were treated differently than White co-workers as a result of their race. Opportunities to discuss their professional experiences, which the participants found therapeutic, took place most often in minority administrator networks and with fellow minority
administrators working in similar settings. The feelings of being closely watched and critically examined started as soon as the school leaders began interviewing for their positions.

The participants felt they were watched very closely by school members because of their race; from the initial stages of the interviewing process, to their daily activities once they were hired into their districts, they felt that they were watched and judged more critically than their White counterparts. Not only did the participants feel closely watched, they also felt they were held to a different standard which influenced their leadership. Due to the feeling of being scrutinized by members of their school, the minority leaders did the following:

- Were very intentional about the positive manner in which they spoke to school members, so they were not perceived as being overly aggressive or intimidating.
- Dressed in professional attire regularly to work, rarely dressing casually due to the fear of losing respect or not being taken seriously by members of their schools.
- Worked longer hours than their White counterparts to prove they were hard working to their colleagues.
- Made sure they were visible to their staff throughout the school day to ensure they were not seen as lazy or ineffective.
- Were meticulous in their written communications to members of their school; being hyper vigilant in the style and accuracy of what they wrote to avoid being seen as incompetent or unskilled.

In relation to the primary research questions the following conclusions were derived from Theme 2—The Feeling of Being Held to a Different Standard:

- What factors positively and negatively impact the leadership experiences of minority administrators in predominantly White schools? The participants’ feelings of being held
to a different standard than their White colleagues were a source of stress and frustration, which negatively impacted the leadership experiences of the minority administrators in predominantly White schools.

- **What are the benefits and challenges of being a minority administrator in a predominantly White school?** The participants of the study viewed the negative feelings they associated with being held to a different standard than their White peers as a challenge of being a minority administrator in a White school.

- **How do minority administrators in predominantly White districts describe their daily work?** Many of the daily leadership decisions described by the participants were influenced by the feeling of being held to a different standard than their White colleagues.

**Theme 3: Supportive guidance.** As a result of the data from the study, it was evident that the participants benefited from the supportive guidance of their mentors and fellow administrators they’d befriended during their professional journeys. Participants of this study described the positive influence their mentors had on their professional decisions and their perspective as leaders. The data supported the desire that certain school administrators have for professional support from more experienced administrators. Creating a supportive environment for minority administrators to bond and discuss different aspects of their work proved to be beneficial to the professional development of the participants. To seek out guidance from mentors and more experienced colleagues the participants did the following:

- Had regular scheduled meetings or phone conferences with mentors or colleagues to discuss different aspects of their jobs.
• Joined organizations, committees, or attended workshops to create professional networks with other experienced administrators.

• Sought out new professional relationships with other administrators through graduate courses.

In relation to information sought for addressing the primary research questions, the following conclusions were derived from Theme 3—Supportive Guidance:

• What factors positively and negatively impact the leadership experiences of minority administrators in predominantly White schools? The participants of this study viewed the guidance they received from their mentors, and the friendships they established with supportive colleagues, as a factor that positively impacted their leadership experiences as minority administrators in predominantly White schools.

Theme 4: Sources of strength. As a result of the data, it was apparent that the participants all experienced challenging moments in their careers and were clear about the sources of strength they turned to for help to navigate those difficult times. The minority administrators recognized that having a person to speak to or a spiritual presence to turn to during tumultuous times was comforting to them as leaders. The data suggested that the participants were stronger as leaders as a result of the confidence they gathered from friends, family, and their faiths. Conversely, the participants admitted if it was not for the different sources of strength – which they quickly identified early on in their tenures – they would have failed as minority administrators in predominantly Whites schools.

In relation to the to the primary research questions, the following conclusions were derived from Theme 4—Sources of Strength:
• What factors positively and negatively impact the leadership experiences of minority administrators in predominantly White schools? The participants’ family, friends, and faiths were top sources of strength that positively impacted the leadership experiences of the minority leaders.

• How do minority administrators in predominantly White districts describe their daily work? The participants tapped into a different source of strength daily; which included: daily prayer, debriefing with a spouse after a stress-filled day, or asking a trusted friend for professional advice.

The implications from the findings suggested that school districts can create a positive environment for minority administrators if they intentionally help to create partnerships for the minority administrators with other school leaders, where professional discourse occurs and advice is given. As the partnerships between school leaders are implemented within districts and the minority school leaders articulate the individual challenges they are experiencing, specific supports to aid them can then be offered from superintendents. In the next section, the researcher provides recommendations to benefit minority leaders in predominantly White school districts.

Recommendations

In this section, the researcher provided recommendations for school districts to create a supportive environment for their minority school leaders. The researcher also suggested ideas for further scholarly research of minority administrators in predominantly White schools.

Recommendations for school districts to create a supportive environment. The findings from this study support the following recommendations for superintendents of predominantly White school districts who desire to create a supportive environment for minority administrators:
• Provide a mentoring program for minority administrators, which includes the following:

1. **Mentor-Mentee Assignment**—carefully match a more experienced administrator with a newly hired minority administrator as a mentor. Require that the mentor and mentee meet regularly throughout the year. The superintendent should only match the minority administrator with a mentor who has expressed a desire to be part of this program to increase the chances of success for the mentor-mentee assignment.

2. **Minority Administrator Network**—encourage minority administrators to participate in county-wide minority administrator networks. If a network does not exist within your county, partner with local schools to create a network where minority administrators can form a fellowship with one and other to discuss the intricacies of their daily work.

3. **Individual Guidance**—superintendents should periodically meet with minority administrators to provide advice for success within the district and allow time for dialogue about the professional experiences of the minority school leaders. To create a trusting relationship with the minority administrators where they feel comfortable speaking freely, the superintendent should consider having the initial meetings occur in less formal settings where the topics of discussion are more casual and provide opportunities for them to become better acquainted. These interactions may create a bond early on in the relationship that will cultivate trust within the minority school leader, which will lead to a willingness to speak honestly in future encounters.
• Partner with local universities to help prepare future minority administrators for positions in predominantly White school districts. As school officials meet university faculty members they should discuss current trends, professional expectations within their districts, and provide feedback from minority administrator networks about the experiences of minority administrators.

• Provide culturally responsive professional development opportunities for all school members to address: cultural sensitivity, racial bias, and micro aggressions. In providing culturally responsive training to schools members negative attitudes and behaviors towards diversity may be eliminated.

• Provide the minority administrators self-awareness leadership training so they can discover what motivates them and their decision-making process. In doing this training, the minority administrators may also realize their sources of strength, in which they can turn to during times of difficulty.

**Recommendations for further research.** The results of this study suggest the following recommendations and provided opportunities for further research:

• Research should be conducted on minority teachers in predominantly White schools to compare and contrast their experiences and leadership perspectives to that of minority administrators.

• Research should be conducted on minority superintendents in predominantly White school districts to compare and contrast their experiences and leadership perspectives, to that of minority administrators at the building level.

• Research should be conducted on White administrators who lead predominantly Black, Hispanic, or Asian schools.
The findings from this study suggest recommendations and considerations that can create a positive environment for minority administrators in predominantly White schools. In the final section of this study, the researcher summarizes his findings and discusses his role in the research.

**Conclusion**

As the study concludes, the researcher has spent an extensive amount of time examining the leadership perspectives, experiences, and related literature of minority administrators working in predominantly White schools. The participants of this study were all dedicated, compassionate, strong school leaders who deserved to have their unfiltered professional stories heard. After analyzing the leadership perspectives of the minority administrators in predominantly White schools, the researcher firmly believes the following:

- **There are many challenges and rewards of being a minority administrator in a predominantly White school district.** Although many of the participants’ experiences in this study were similar, one cannot over generalize the leadership perspectives of all minority administrators because there are many factors—personal and professional—that shape their mindsets.

- **Conversations about race can at times be polarizing and uncomfortable to have in a professional setting; however, they must occur if schools intend to create a positive environment for everyone.**

- **As school leaders meet to discuss their shared experiences, fellowship can form, which can be a source of inspiration, guidance, and comfort.**
References


MINORITY ADMINISTRATORS’ PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP


Institutionalized emotional abuse: Putting an end to the cycle of violence. (2008) Retrieved from:


Plessy v. Fergusson (1896).


Appendices
Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Tell me how you became a minority administrator in a predominantly White school district? Share your personal history (age, education, family influences) and professional history (previous positions, networks, organizations)?

2. Reflecting on your past experiences, have you benefited because of your race in your current role?

3. Why did you decide to become a minority administrator in a predominantly White school and what impact, if any, does your race have on your decision making in your leadership role?

4. Tell me about your most successful and challenging experiences leading in a predominantly White school?

5. What are the benefits and challenges of being a minority leader in a predominantly White school? What supports (organizations, mentors, and parent groups) have helped you in your current role?

6. What has been the biggest surprise for you as a minority administrator in a White school?
Appendix B

Consent Agreement

**Brief Information**

I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at Eastern Michigan University. To gather data for my dissertation I will conduct an interview-based qualitative research study in which I explore minority administrators’ perspectives on leadership in predominantly White schools. The Study involves one audio-taped interview of approximately one hour in which I will ask you questions about your perceptions and experiences of being a minority administrator in a predominantly White school and with your agreement, I may request to meet with you for a second short follow-up interview for further clarification. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you will be assured of complete confidentiality if you choose to participate.

**Benefits of the Project**

This interview will provide me with valuable perspectives to promote the success of minority administrators working in predominantly White school districts. The benefits to you as a participant may be an opportunity to reflect on your own perceptions and experiences of being a minority administrator as you describe them in this study.

**Dissemination of Results**

Findings from the interview will be completely confidential. Each interviewee will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of my findings. If you would like to participate in the research study, please read and sign the consent form on the following page:
I agree to participate in one or more interviews conducted by Alex Ofili as part of a research project about Minority Administrators’ Perspectives on Leadership in Predominantly White Schools. I understand that the interview(s) will last approximately 60 minutes and that the interview(s) will focus on my perceptions and experiences of being a minority administrator in a predominantly White school. I will be asked questions about my personal experiences being a minority administrator in a predominantly White school and any other issues that I would like to discuss about career as a minority administrator.

I understand that my participation in the interview is completely voluntary; that I may choose not to answer certain questions, and that I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time with no negative consequences, no penalty, nor loss of benefits. I further understand that my confidentiality will be protected at all times and that a number will be assigned to me after the interview(s) are completed, and that any identifying characteristics about me will not be revealed. The transcripts of the tapes will be assigned a numerical code and kept in a locked filing cabinet and in a password protected computer file.

Interview Respondent’s Name: ____________________________________________________

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ________________________________

For further questions or concerns, please contact:
Alexander C. Ofili
Tel:(734)_________
ofilialex@_________
Leadership Survey

Research Study: This study investigates challenges that face minority school administrators employed in predominantly White school districts located in the second most populous county in Michigan.

Researcher: Alex Ofili

Thank you for agreeing to participate. I am very interested to hear your stories and record your experiences as a minority school administrator in one southeastern school district in Michigan.

The information you will give me will be completely confidential, and I will not associate your name with anything you say in the focus group.

I understand how important it is that information be kept private and confidential. I ask that participants to respect each other’s confidentiality.

Screening Questions

1. Gender Determination:
   - □ Male
   - □ Female

2. Age Range Determination:
   - □ 18-39
   - □ 40-55
   - □ 56-65
   - □ Over 65

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   - □ Bachelor’s degree
   - □ Graduate school
     - □ Masters
     - □ Specialist
     - □ Doctorate

4. What knowledge did you have of the school district prior to accepting the position?

5. Position Determination:
   - □ Elementary
   - □ Middle School
   - □ Secondary
   - □ Central Office
   - □ Assistant Principal
   - □ Principal
   - □ Central Office Position __________________________
6. How long have you held your current position? ______________________________

7. Have you changed / or received a promotion - in position(s) since your initial hire to this district?

8. What administrative experience did you have prior to accepting a position in the school district?
   □ Elementary     □ Middle School     □ Secondary     □ Central Office
   □ Assistant Principal □ Principal □ Central Office Position:

9. How much experience did you bring to the district when you were initially hired?

10. What attracted you to your current job in this county?

11. Why do you think you were hired?

12. Tell me about your experiences in this organization and how your minority status affects your daily work?

13. What challenges or conflicts do you experience in this administrative position?
14. During challenging work-related times what is your source of strength?

15. What have you learned from these challenges?

16. In what ways will your experience as a minority administration working in one predominantly White school district in southeastern Michigan impact this study?
Appendix D

Participant Sign In for Focus Group

Research Study:  This study investigates challenges that face minority school administrators employed in a predominantly White school district located in the second most populous county in Michigan.

Researcher:  Alex Ofili

Date of focus group:  TBD       Time:  TBD

Location of Focus Group:  TBD

Thank you for agreeing to participate.  I am very interested to hear your stories and record your experiences as a minority school administrator in one southeastern school district in Michigan.  The information you will give me will be kept completely confidential by me, and I will not associate your name with anything you say in the focus group. I understand how important it is that information be kept private and confidential.  As a participant of this focus group the expectation is that you respect each other’s confidentiality at all times.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Mobile Number</th>
<th>Email</th>
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Appendix E

Focus Group Invitation

Greetings –

I am conducting a focus group as part of a research study on minority administrators’ perspectives on leadership in predominantly White schools.

The purpose of this study is to capture your thoughts and perspectives on being a minority administrator in a primarily all White suburban school district in southeastern Michigan.

Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interviewee will be assigned a pseudonym to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of my findings. As a participant of this focus group the expectation is that you respect each other’s confidentiality at all times. By agreeing to participate you will be asked to sign a form assuring the researcher that you will not compromise the confidentiality of the other participants.

Your participation is critical to advancing successful opportunities for minority administrators working in districts where the student population and the administration is primarily Caucasian. Your gift of time will uncover valuable perspectives to promote the success of minority administrators working in predominantly White school districts.

The date for the event is __________ from __________. This meeting will be held________________. Snacks will be provided and a $50.00 stipend will be paid in cash to everyone who participates.

I look forward to working with you at this time.

Sincerely,

Alex Ofili
Appendix F

Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews Template

This attached document will be used as the prototype for my focus group work:

Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews

Richard A. Krueger
Professor and Evaluation Leader
University of Minnesota
1954 Buford Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55108
rkrueger@umn.edu
October 2002
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger

Characteristics of Focus Group Interviews

• Participants
  ➢ Carefully recruited
  ➢ 5 to 10 people per group, 6-8 preferred
  ➢ Similar types of people
  ➢ Repeated groups

• Environment
  ➢ Comfortable
  ➢ Circle seating
  ➢ Tape recorded

• Moderator
  ➢ Skillful in group discussions
  ➢ Uses pre-determined questions
  ➢ Establishes permissive environment

• Analysis and Reporting
  ➢ Systematic analysis
  ➢ Verifiable procedures
  ➢ Appropriate reporting
### Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select the right moderator</th>
<th>Use pauses and probes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exercise mild unobtrusive control</td>
<td>5 second pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate knowledge of topic</td>
<td>Probes:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appears like the participants</td>
<td>&quot;Would you explain further?&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;Would you give an example?&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I don't understand.&quot;</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use an assistant moderator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handles logistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Takes careful notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitors recording equipment</td>
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<tr>
<th>Be mentally prepared</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alert and free from distractions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has the discipline of listening</td>
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<td>Familiar with questioning route</td>
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<tr>
<th>Use purposeful small talk</th>
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<tr>
<td>Create warm and friendly environment</td>
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<td>Observe the participants for seating arrangements</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make a smooth &amp; snappy introduction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Welcome</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Overview of topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Ground rules</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. First question</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Control reactions to participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal and nonverbal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Head nodding</td>
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<td>Short verbal responses</td>
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<td>(avoid &quot;that's good&quot;, &quot;excellent&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Use subtle group control</th>
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<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
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<td>Dominant talkers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shy participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ramblers</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>Use appropriate conclusion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three Step Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Summarize with confirmation,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Review purpose and ask if anything has been missed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Thanks and dismissal</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger**

**First Steps With Focus Group Studies**
1. Decide whether focus groups are appropriate
2. Decide who to involve
3. Listen to your target audience
4. Put your thoughts in writing

**Bulleted Outline**

**Welcome**
Introduce moderator and assistant

**Our topic is ...**
The results will be used for ...
Your were selected because ...

**Guidelines**
No right or wrong answers, only differing points of view

We're tape recording, one person speaking at a time

We're on a first name basis

You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views

Rules for cellular phones and pagers if applicable. For example: We ask that your turn off your phones or pagers. If you cannot and if you must respond to a call, please do so as quietly as possible and rejoin us as quickly as you can.

My role as moderator will be to guide the discussion

Talk to each other

**Opening question**
Beginning the Focus Group Discussion

The first few moments in focus group discussion are critical. In a brief time the moderator must create a thoughtful, permissive atmosphere, provide ground rules, and set the tone of the discussion. Much of the success of group interviewing can be attributed to the development of this open environment.

The recommended pattern for introducing the group discussion includes: (1) Welcome, (2) Overview of the topic (3) Ground rules and (4) First question. Here is an example of a typical introduction:

Good evening and welcome to our session. Thanks for taking the time to join us to talk about educational programs in the county. My name is Dick Krueger and assisting me is Tom Olson. We're both with the University of Minnesota. Sara Casey, who is with the local extension office, asked us to help the staff get some information from county residents about your perceptions of local extension efforts. They want to know what you like, what you don't like, and how programs might be improved. We are having discussions like this with several groups around the county.

You were invited because you have participated in some extension programs, so you're familiar with what extension does, and you all live in this section of the county. There are no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that we're just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.

You've probably noticed the microphone. We're tape recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. People often say very helpful things in these discussions and we can't write fast enough to get them all down. We will be on a first name basis tonight, and we won't use any names in our reports. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The reports will go back to the county extension staff to help them plan future programs.

Well, let's begin. We've placed name cards on the table in front of you to help us remember each other's names. Let's find out some more about each other by going around the table. Tell us your name and where you live.
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger 5

Recorder (Assistant Moderator) Skills

• Help with equipment & refreshments
• Arrange the room
• Welcome participants as they arrive
• Sit in designated location
• Take notes throughout the discussion
• Operate recording equipment
• Do not participate in the discussion
• Ask questions when invited
• Give an oral summary
• Debrief with moderator
• Give feedback on analysis and reports
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger 6

Asking Questions that Yield Powerful Information

• **Use open-ended questions**
  What did you think of the program?
  How did you feel about the conference?
  Where do you get new information?
  What do you like best about the proposed program?
  Be cautious of phrases such as "how satisfied" or "to what extent"

• **Avoid dichotomous questions**
  These questions can be answered with a "yes" or "no"

• **Why? is rarely asked**
  Instead ask about attributes and/or influences. Attributes are characteristics or features of the topic. Influences are things that prompt or cause action.

• **Use "think back" questions.**
  Take people back to an experience and not forward to the future

• **Use different types of questions**
  Identify potential questions
  Five Types of Questions
  1. Opening Question (round robin)
  2. Introductory Question
  3. Transition Questions
  4. Key Questions
  5. Ending Questions

• **Use questions that get participants involved**
  Use reflection, examples, choices, rating scales, drawings, etc.

• **Focus the questions**
  Sequence that goes from general to specific

• **Be cautious of serendipitous questions**
  Save for the end of the discussion
Ending Questions

• **All things considered question**
This question asks participants to reflect on the entire discussion and then offer their positions or opinions on topics of central importance to the researchers.

Examples:
"Suppose that you had one minute to talk to the governor on merit pay, the topic of today's discussion. What would you say?"
or
"Of all the things we discussed, what to you is the most important?"

• **Summary question**
After the brief oral summary the question asked is:
"Is this an adequate summary?"

• **Final question**
The moderator reviews the purpose of the study and then asks the participants:
"Have we missed anything?"

**Strategies for Focus Group Questions**

• Choose among alternatives
• Make a list
• Fill in the blank
• Rate with blank card
• Semantic differential
• Projection, fantasy and daydreams
• Draw a picture
• Develop a campaign
• Role playing
• Questions that foster ownership
  What can you do...?
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger

Generic Questions

Example #1

1. How have you been involved in _____?
2. Think back over all the years that you've participated and tell us your fondest memory. (The most enjoyable memory.)
3. Think back over the past year of the things that (name of organization) did. What went particularly well?
4. What needs improvement?
5. If you were inviting a friend to participate in (name of organization), what would you say in the invitation?
6. Suppose that you were in charge and could make one change that would make the program better. What would you do?
7. What can each one of us do to make the program better?

Example #2

Here is a sample set of questions that could be used for many consumer products. Modify and adjust the questions as needed. The questions might be /applicable to such categories as: soap, breakfast cereal, fast food restaurants, automobiles, golf clubs, fishing equipment, cosmetics, deodorant or a variety of other products. These questions could be used for practice focus groups to allow moderators a chance to lead the discussion, for assistants to take field notes and provide oral summaries. You may want to have five to seven people in each focus group and then sitting slightly back from the table could be a number of assistant moderators.

1. How and when do you use XXXX?
2. Tell me about positive experiences you've had with XXXX?
3. Tell me about disappointments you've had with XXXX?
4. Who or what influences your decision to purchase a particular type of XXXX?
5. When you decide to purchase XXXX, what do you look for? Take a piece of paper and jot down three things that are important to you when you purchase XXXX?
6. Let's list these on the flip chart. If you had to pick only one factor that was most important to you, what would it be? You can pick something that you mentioned or something that was said by others.
7. Have you ever changed brands or types of XXXX? What brought about the change?
8. Of all the things we've talked about, what is most important to you?
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger

Note Taking

Note taking is a primary responsibility of the assistant moderator
The moderator should not be expected to take written notes during the discussion.

Clarity and consistency of note taking
Anticipate that others will use your field notes. Field notes sometimes are interpreted days or weeks following the focus group when memory has faded. Consistency and clarity are essential.

Field notes contain different types of information
It is essential that this information is easily identified and organized. Your field notes will contain:

Quotes
Listen for notable quotes, the well said statements that illustrate an important point of view. Listen for sentences or phrases that are particularly enlightening or eloquently express a particular point of view. Place name or initials of speaker after the quotations. Usually, it is impossible to capture the entire quote. Capture as much as you can with attention to the key phrases. Use three periods ... to indicate that part of the quote was missing.

Key points and themes for each question
Typically participants will talk about several key points in response to each question. These points are often identified by several different participants. Sometimes they are said only once but in a manner that deserves attention. At the end of the focus group the assistant moderator will share these themes with participants for confirmation.

Follow-up questions that could be asked
Sometimes the moderator may not follow-up on an important point or seek an example of a vague but critical point. The assistant moderator may wish to follow-up with these questions at the end of the focus group.

Big ideas, hunches, or thoughts of the recorder
Occasionally the assistant moderator will discover a new concept. A light will go on and something will make sense when before it did not. These insights are helpful in later analysis.

Other factors
Make note of factors which might aid analysis such as passionate comments, body language, or non-verbal activity. Watch for head nods, physical excitement, eye contact between certain participants, or other clues that would indicate level of agreement, support, or interest.

Consider using a standardized recording form
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger 10

Systematic Analysis Process

1. Start while still in the group
   • Listen for inconsistent comments and probe for understanding
   • Listen for vague or cryptic comments and probe for understanding
   • Consider asking each participant a final preference question
   • Offer a summary of key questions and seek confirmation

2. Immediately after the focus group
   • Draw a diagram of seating arrangement
   • Spot check tape recording to ensure proper operation
   • Conduct moderator and assistant moderator debriefing
   • Note themes, hunches, interpretations, and ideas
   • Compare and contrast this focus group to other groups
   • Label and file field notes, tapes and other materials

3. Soon after the focus group—within hours analyze individual focus group.
   • Make back-up copy of tapes and send tape to transcriptionist for computer entry if transcript is wanted
   • Analyst listens to tape, reviews field notes and reads transcript if available
   • Prepare report of the individual focus group in a question-by-question format with amplifying quotes
   • Share report for verification with other researchers who were present at the focus group

4. Later—within days analyze the series of focus groups
   • Compare and contrast results by categories of individual focus groups
   • Look for emerging themes by question and then overall
   • Construct typologies or diagram the analysis
   • Describe findings and use quotes to illustrate

5. Finally, prepare the report
   • Consider narrative style versus bulleted style
   • Use a few quotes to illustrate
   • Sequence could be question by question or by theme
   • Share report for verification with other researchers
   • Revise and finalize report
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger

Focus Group Analysis Tips
When analyzing focus group data consider . . .

WORDS
Think about both the actual words used by the participants and the meanings of those words. A variety of words and phrases will be used and the analyst will need to determine the degree of similarity between these responses.

CONTEXT
Participant responses were triggered by a stimulus— a question asked by the moderator or a comment from another participant. Examine the context by finding the triggering stimulus and then interpret the comment in light of that environment. The response is interpreted in light of the preceding discussion and also by the tone and intensity of the oral comment.

INTERNAL CONSISTENCY
Participants in focus groups change and sometimes even reverse their positions after interaction with others. When there is a shift in opinion, the researcher typically traces the flow of the conversation to determine clues that might explain the change.

FREQUENCY OR EXTENSIVENESS
Some topics are discussed more by participants (extensiveness) and also some comments are made more often (frequency) than others. These topics could be more important or of special interest to participants. Also, consider what wasn’t said or received limited attention. Did you expect but not hear certain comments?

INTENSITY
Occasionally participants talk about a topic with a special intensity or depth of feeling. Sometimes the participants will use words that connote intensity or tell you directly about their strength of feeling. Intensity may be difficult to spot with transcripts alone because intensity is also communicated by the voice tone, speed, and emphasis on certain words. Individuals will differ on how they display strength of feeling and for some it will be a speed or excitement in the voice whereas others will speak slowly and deliberately.

SPECIFICITY
Responses that are specific and based on experiences should be given more weight than responses that are vague and impersonal. To what degree can the respondent provide details when asked a follow up probe? Greater attention is often placed on responses that are in the first person as opposed to hypothetical third person answers.

FINDING BIG IDEAS
One of the traps of analysis is not seeing the big ideas. Step back from the discussions by allowing an extra day for big ideas to percolate. For example, after finishing the analysis the researcher might set the report aside for a brief period and then jot down the three or four of the most important findings. Assistant moderators or others skilled in qualitative analysis might review the process and verify the big ideas.
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger

The Old Fashioned Analysis Strategy: Long Tables, Scissors and Colored Marking Pens

Equipment needed:
- Two copies of all transcripts
- Scissors
- Tape
- Lots of room with long tables and possibly chart stands
- Large sheets of paper (flip charts, newsprint paper, etc.)
- Colored marking pens
- Stick-on notes

1. Prepare your transcripts for analysis. You will save time and agony later if you are careful in preparing your transcripts. Be sure they follow a consistent style. For example, single spaced comments and double spaced between speakers. The comments of the moderator should be easily identifiable by bolding, caps, or underlining.

2. Make two copies of each transcript. One will be used to cut up and the other one stays intact for later reference.
   **TIP:** Consider printing transcripts on different colors of paper and color coding by audience type, category, etc.

3. Arrange transcripts in an order. It could be in the sequence in which the groups were conducted, but more likely it will be by categories of participants or by some demographic screening characteristics of participants (users, non-users and employees, or teens, young adults and older adults, etc.). This arrangement helps you be alert to changes that may be occurring from one group to another.

4. Read all transcripts at one sitting. This quick reading is just to remind you of the whole scope and to refresh your memory of where information is located, what information is missing, and what information occurs in abundance.

5. Prepare large sheets of paper. Use a large sheet of paper for each question (sometimes several questions are integrated together into a theme). Place the large sheets on chart stands, on a long table or even on the floor. Identify the question or theme at the top of the sheet. If you have several categories of groups you might draw lines to divide the paper into sections and then group comments within these sections. For example, on one part of the page you might place comments from teen focus groups, in another place there will be comments from parent focus groups, and in a third place there will be comments from teacher focus groups.
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger

6. Cut and tape. Read responses to the same question from all focus groups. Cut out relevant quotes and tape them to the appropriate place on the large sheet of paper. Look for quotes that are descriptive and capture the essence of the conversation. Sometimes there will be several different points of view and you can cluster the quotes around these points of view. The quality and relevance of quotes will vary. In some groups you might find that you can use almost all quotes, but in other groups there will be few useable quotes. Set the unused quotes aside for later consideration. Also remember that some comments are better placed in other sections, such as when an individual gets "off topic" and responds to a different question.

TIP: Develop a strategy for documenting the source of the quote. Later you may want to go back and examine the context of a particular discussion and this source information will be vital. You could use colored markers, stick-on notes, or a coding letter or number to represent the source of the comments. For example, you might use different colors of highlighter marking pens and use a specific color for each category of respondents. Draw a vertical line from top to bottom of each page of the transcript. Then when you cut up this transcript that color will be present as a marker for the source. Or, you use a code number for each group and place that code number at the end of every quote in the transcript.

7. Write a statement about the question. Look over the quotes and prepare an overview integrating paragraph that describes responses to that question. A number of possibilities may occur. For example, you might be able to compare and contrast differing categories, you might have a major theme and a minor theme, you might discuss the variability of the comments, or even the passion or intensity of the comments. Following the overview paragraph you may need several additional paragraphs describing sub-sets of views or to elaborate on selected topics. When you are finished, to on to the next question.

8. Continue until all transcripts are reviewed. Some analysts like to prepare the descriptive summary immediate after the quotes for a question are placed on the large sheet of paper, but other analysts like to wait until all sheets are filled before writing. The benefit of delay is that it allows you to rearrange quotes to places where they really belong.

9. Take a break. Get away from the process for a while. Refocus on the big picture. Think about what prompted the study. It's easy to get sidetracked into areas of minor importance. Be open to alternative views. Be skeptical. Look over the pile of unused quotes. Think big picture. Invite a research colleague to look over your work and offer feedback.

10. Prepare the report.
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger

Systematic Notification Procedure

1. Set meeting times for group interviews
2. Contact potential participants by phone or in person
3. Send a written personalized invitation
4. Phone (or contact) each person the day before the focus group

Selection Strategies

List
Piggyback
On location
Nominations
Snowball samples
Random telephone screening
Screening and selection services
Ads in newspapers and bulletin boards

Incentives for Participation

Money
Food
Gifts
Positive, upbeat invitation
Opportunity to share opinions
Enjoyable, convenient and easy to find meeting location
Involvement in an important research project
Build on existing community, social or personal relationship
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger

Transcribing Focus Group Interviews

• Use quality play-back equipment
The typist should avoid tape players with small speakers and awkward buttons. Earphones might be considered. Focus group interview tapes always have background noise and participants will speak with different tones and voice levels—therefore these tapes will require concentration and the best quality play-back equipment that can be obtained. If possible, use equipment with a tape speed control and foot operated back space.

• Minimize distractions
Type transcripts in a place with minimal distractions or interruptions.

• Identify moderator statements
Use bold print for the moderator's statements and questions. If possible, type the name of each speaker followed by his or her comment. Single space the comments and double space between speakers.

• Type comments word for word
In real life people do not talk in complete sentences and when typing the transcripts avoid the temptation to add or change the words, correct the grammar, etc. If some of the words are unintelligible then type three periods ... to indicate that words are missing from the transcript.

• Note special or unusual sounds that could help analysis
For example, if there is laughter, loud voices, shouting, etc. be sure that these are noted in the transcript in parenthesis. Make note if someone was interrupted.

• Allow sufficient time
Typically it takes about eight hours to type one hour of tape. But the time will vary with typist speed, the quality of the tape recording, the length of the session, the experience of the typist with focus groups, and the complexity of the topic.
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger 16

Reporting Focus Group Results

• **Use a communications strategy**
Rather than thinking of "a report", think of what type of communication strategy is needed. A variety of reports might be used to keep people informed. Consider: email messages, postcards, phone calls, bulleted summaries, selected quotes, moderator comments, mid-project or final project reports, personal visits by members of the research team, etc.

• **Use an appropriate reporting style that the client finds helpful and meets expectations**
Ask users what kind of report would be helpful to them. What information are they looking for? What are the expectations and traditions of reports within the organization?

• **Strive for enlightenment**
Reports should raise the level of understanding of the client. The purpose is more to enlighten and convey new insights as opposed to repeating common knowledge which is already known by the sponsor of the study.

• **Make points memorable**
Help client remember the key points by limited the number of points you highlight. Too many points diminish overall impact. Begin with most important points and follow with lesser important points.

• **Use narrative or bulleted format**
Written reports can follow either a narrative format or a bulleted format. Don't surprise the client with a format different from what was expected.

• **Give thought to the oral report**
Oral reports should be brief, clear and concise. In addition, oral reports should allow opportunity for questions, indicate why the study is important and why the findings are meaningful, begin with the most important findings, and engage the listener in an active manner.
Focus Group Interviewing --- Richard Krueger

Bibliography

Readers wishing further information on focus groups and qualitative research procedures may wish to consult the following references.


Appendix G
IRB Research Approval Letter

RESEARCH @ EMU

UHSRC Determination: EXPEDITED INITIAL APPROVAL

DATE: October 11, 2016

TO: Alexander Ofili, Doctorate
    Eastern Michigan University

Re: UHSRC: # 961371.1
    Category: Expedited category 7
    Approval Date: October 11, 2016
    Expiration Date: October 10, 2017

Title: Minority Administrators' Perspectives on Leadership in Predominantly White Schools

Your research project, entitled Minority Administrators' Perspectives on Leadership in Predominantly White Schools, has been approved in accordance with all applicable federal regulations.

This approval included the following:

1. Enrollment of 12 subjects to participate in the approved protocol.
2. Use of the following study measures: Minority Administrator Survey; Minority Administrator Interview Questions
3. Use of the following stamped recruitment materials: Focus Group Invitation
4. Use of the stamped: Informed consent form (focus group); Informed consent form (interviews)

Renewals: This approval is valid for one year and expires on October 10, 2017. If you plan to continue your study beyond October 10, 2017, you must submit a Continuing Review Form by September 10, 2017 to ensure the approval does not lapse.

Modifications: All changes must be approved prior to implementation. If you plan to make any minor changes, you must submit a Minor Modification Form. For any changes that alter study design or any study instruments, you must submit a Human Subjects Approval Request Form. These forms are available through IRBNet on the UHSRC website.

Problems: All major deviations from the reviewed protocol, unanticipated problems, adverse events, subject complaints, or other problems that may increase the risk to human subjects or change the category of review must be reported to the UHSRC via an Event Report form, available through IRBNet on the UHSRC website.

Follow-up: If your Expedited research project is not completed and closed after three years, the UHSRC office requires a new Human Subjects Approval Request Form prior to approving a continuation beyond three years.

Please use the UHSRC number listed above on any forms submitted that relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the UHSRC office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 734-487-3090 or via e-mail at human.subjects@emich.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,
Joan Cowdery, PhD
Vice Chair
University Human Subjects Review Committee
Appendix H

Graduate School Doctoral Dissertation Document Approval Form

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School
DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
Document Approval Form

Student Name: Alexander C. Giles
Program of Study: Leadership, Counseling
Academic Department/School: Leadership + Counseling
College: College of Education

TITLE OF DISSERTATION
Minority Administrators' Perspectives on Leadership in Predominantly White Schools

DOCUMENT APPROVAL COMMITTEE SIGNATURES

Chair: Elle M. Britton Date: 01/24/2017
Members: Date
Date
Date

Member representing the Graduate School: Joel G. Jeter Date: 01/24/17

ACKNOWLEDGE OF COMPLETED DISSERTATION

Date: Program Director/Coordinator/Dept. Head:
Date: Administrator: (Dept. Head/School Director/Academic
Dean)

GRADAUTE SCHOOL

DOCUMENT HAS BEEN SUBMITTED AND EDITED – DEGREE MAY BE CONFERRED

Date: Graduate School

Signed original to Record’s student file. Copies/PDF to: Graduate School, chair, and department/college file

DISSERTATION APPROVAL FORM
Appendix I

Graduate School Oral Defense of the Dissertation Approval Form

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School
ORAL DEFENSE of the Doctoral Dissertation
Approval Form

Student Name: ____________________________
Program of Study: Leadership & Counseling

TITLE OF DISSERTATION

Minority Administrators Perspectives on School Leadership

ORAL DEFENSE

Date: 01/24/2017 Time: 1:00 pm Place: Kegg 105a Conference Room

After review of the dissertation and on the basis of the oral defense of the work presented in the dissertation, the doctoral committee certifies that the candidate:

☐ Satisfactorily passed the oral defense of the dissertation
☐ Did not satisfactorily pass the oral defense of the dissertation

Recommendations

COMMITTEE SIGNATURES

I have read and approve the content of this dissertation. FINAL document approval of the written requirement will occur upon review of suggested edits with signatures on the DOCTORAL DISSERTATION DOCUMENT APPROVAL FORM.

Chair:

Members:

Member representing the Graduate School:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PASSING THE ORAL DEFENSE

Date: ____________________________ Program Director/Coordinator/Dept. Head: ____________________________

Date: ____________________________ Graduate School

Signed original to Record’s student file. Copies/pdfs to: Graduate School, chair, and department/college file

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Rev. 7/11