A case study of an independent black school: implications for developing a culturally sensitive assessment model

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A CASE STUDY OF AN INDEPENDENT BLACK SCHOOL:
IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPING A CULTURALLY
SENSITIVE ASSESSMENT MODEL

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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A CASE STUDY OF AN INDEPENDENT BLACK SCHOOL:
IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPING A CULTURALLY
SENSITIVE ASSESSMENT MODEL

Advisor: Dr. Claudette Williams

Dissertation dated December, 1998

The twofold purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of an independent Black school in meeting the developmental needs of its students and to consider the implications for developing a more culturally sensitive model for evaluation.

The single case study research design was selected for this study. Interviews, participant-observation, document review, and a parental involvement questionnaire were the four major techniques for collecting data. Triangulation was the method used to address the validity and credibility of the findings. Based on the research findings, this study concluded that the school under investigation provided a more holistic approach in educating its students and provided an effective education for Black children in the early grades. Independent school leaders should systematically evaluate their institutions. They should publish their findings so that the wider
community can be made aware of their contributions and successes with culturally
different student populations.

A culturally sensitive model of evaluation is a holistic view of the educational
experiences of children. It should include components that assess: the beliefs,
values, goals, and objectives of an institution; whether or not a student is developing
a positive and healthy identity; teacher and student relationships; and students’ moral
and spiritual development.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I give thanks to Allah. I should also like to thank my husband, Ahmad Shabazz, and my daughters, Alisa, Stacia, Asia, and Daa’yiah for their continuous support and encouragement through the years. Of course, I cannot forget the guidance, constructive criticism, and support given by Dr. Claudette Williams, my chairperson, and Dr. William Denton and Dr. Leslie Fenwick, my committee members. I am especially grateful to the headmaster, teachers, students, and parents at Prepville for their assistance and cooperation.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

How to assess the effectiveness of a school is a chief concern of administrators and teachers.¹ Schools have multiple goals and objectives for their students, but for the most part, standardized test scores are used to measure cognitive achievement as if that was the only purpose of schools. Schools need a more comprehensive way of determining pupil progress because test scores only provide a limited view of students’ learning performance.² Governments and mainstream researchers have tended to focus on evaluating public schools but have recently begun to investigate the impact or effects of private schools.³

The current debate regarding "choice," the idea of giving parents’ vouchers or tuition tax credits to enable them to select a public or private school for their children, has initiated more research in the public versus private school debate. However, data that have accumulated usually refer to research conducted on Catholic


²Ibid.

schools or predominantly elite Caucasian private schools such as those represented by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). Very little research has been conducted on Black private schools. The Institute for Independent Education stated:

Because so little has been known about these schools, their place in American education and their impact on student progress generally have been overlooked....Until now, there has been no systematic study of student performance in these schools, no formal tracking of their graduates, and no current database on the schools as institutions.

Public schools have not been very effective in educating the majority of urban, poor, Black children. Despite many efforts by the federal government to equalize resources among schools, the American public educational school system has too often failed to help poor Black children achieve success. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that:

Perhaps the most pervasive problems of the American education system remains the insufficient educational preparation of minority students, especially those who are economically deprived. Studies reveal that minority students still have excessive school dropout rates, low high

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7Ibid.
school graduation rates, and low college and graduate school enrollment and completion rates.\(^8\)

Among minority students, Black students are on the bottom rung of the academic ladder.\(^9\) Black people have become skeptical of the value of public education and many other Americans have also become disenchanted with the public school system and have sought alternatives such as magnet schools, private schools, and home schools.

However, there are diverse reasons cited for the schools' failure to educate poor, minority and Black children. Asa Hilliard III, and others argue that the public schools socialize minority children to emulate the values, habits, and customs of the dominant group while it, at the same time, devalues the culture of minority children.\(^10\) Others, such as James Coleman, Thomas Hoffer, and Sally Kilgore (Equality of Educational Opportunity Report), believe that the children or students' home-backgrounds affect their capacity to learn.\(^11\) There are also others who believe Black children are inferior and do not have the intellectual capability to do


challenging academic work. Many educators believe that the problem lies in how the public schools are managed and organized. For whatever the reasons, many Black children are not experiencing success in the public schools.

In response to this crisis, many minority parents have sought and are seeking private schools for their children. This need for more quality schools has helped spur the growth of independent, Black and minority schools in the United States.¹² Many of these educational institutions have achieved success in educating minority students.¹³

Formal or systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of independent Black schools is almost nonexistent. Understanding the connection between the concepts of culture, education, and evaluation is paramount to the discussion of what will help Black and minority students succeed in school.

Purpose of the Study

The twofold purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of an independent Black School in meeting the developmental needs of its students and to use a case study research approach to consider the implications for developing a more culturally sensitive assessment model.


¹³Ibid., 1.
Background of the Problem

Much of the available information regarding educational evaluation pertains to students in public schools. Prior to the sixties this was usually conducted informally by teachers, principals, and school boards.\textsuperscript{14} It became more formal or systematic when different interest groups became more concerned about the costs associated with education.\textsuperscript{15} When Congress allocated massive amounts of money for social and educational programs during the sixties and seventies, it became mandatory for those programs to be evaluated to see if they worked or had accomplished their objectives.\textsuperscript{16} The effectiveness of public schools was predominately decided by commercial standardized achievement tests and the majority of school evaluation activities were funded by government contracts.\textsuperscript{17}

Very little information is available on students in private schools. What information does exist is spotty and disconnected because data were not collected in a systematic manner.\textsuperscript{18} Private schools generally do not receive federal money to implement their educational programs, therefore, the government does not feel


\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 10.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 44.

compelled to evaluate them.\textsuperscript{19} Private schools, like their public school counterparts, also use standardized achievement tests to judge their effectiveness. However, private schools enrollment figures are a more immediate way to gauge their effectiveness. If student enrollment figures for a particular school rise year after year, obviously more parents want that type of education for their children and the school can infer that it is providing a desired educational service. Declining figures indicate that the school is no longer fulfilling the needs of the parents and their children or are not doing so effectively. In the negative case the school will either adjust quickly to meet changing market requirements (i.e. the demands of the parents or the surrounding communities) or they will not survive.\textsuperscript{20} Although more research is being conducted about private schools in general, research on independent Black schools has been lacking until recently.\textsuperscript{21}

During the sixties, a number of independent, Black, private schools were established to provide students with educational options in both content and concept. Those schools were generally referred to as Freedom schools or Pan-African schools because they advocated an African frame of reference and a "freeing" of the mind away from an Eurocentric point of view.\textsuperscript{22} The research community did not study

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{22} Margaret Bowers, \textit{The Independent Black Educational Institution: An Exploration and Identification of Selected Factors that Relate to Their Survival} (Ed.D. diss., Atlanta University, 1984), 2.
or evaluate those schools because they were considered insignificant by their standards.  

The problem of evaluating independent Black schools cannot be fully understood without looking at the social, political, economic, and historical contexts of American society. The United States public school system is a reflection of its social order. In this society, Black people have existed and remain at the bottom of America's social, political, and economic ladders. The educational system also reflects this caste-type social order.

The education of Black people has always been problematic for the leaders of the United States ever since they were brought here as slaves. As slaves, Black people were not allowed to attend schools, own land, nor vote. They were totally dependent on their slave masters for food, clothing, and shelter. It was illegal to teach slaves how to read or write. However, sympathetic Caucasians taught them how


25Ibid., 358.

26Ibid.

to read the Bible because they thought it would help "civilize" the slave.  

Basically, the slave was given a religious education, which was Christianity.  

After the Civil War, the government set up separate schools for its former slaves. The education given to them was an education to keep them in an inferior position. These schools were poorly financed and maintained and were never equal to the schools that the Caucasian children attended. Black people were just not considered equal to the slave master nor his children and were not regarded as human beings at that time. In fact, the original United States Constitution defined Black people as three-fifths of a human being. The laws of the land also reflected this perspective. For example, in 1896, the Supreme Court Case of Plessy v. Ferguson required separate schools for Blacks and Whites. This was the beginning of the "Separate but Equal" doctrine that was espoused by government leaders, however, the Black schools never received a fair share of the resources for their schools' progress and development. The independent Black schools flourished at that time. However, when the federal government increased its funding of public schools after

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28Ibid., 70.
29Ibid., 36.
30Ibid.
31U. S. Constitution, art. 1, sec. 2.
32Ratteray and Shujaa, Dare to Choose, 3.
33Ibid., 2.
the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the number of independent Black schools declined.\(^3^4\)

As the number of Blacks increased in the public school system after the "1954 Brown Decision," so did the procedures for evaluating the school's progress or lack of progress. It wasn't until the sixties and seventies that Black people started to regain control over their education by developing community or Pan-African schools. Although those schools were generally small and under-financed, they were committed to providing their children with a quality education.\(^3^5\) They were not too concerned about spending money for evaluating their schools.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem that was addressed was the lack of information regarding the effectiveness of an independent Black School in meeting the developmental needs of its students. There is extensive information in literature pertaining to the effectiveness of public schools, but very little information exists on private and religious schools. Information regarding the effectiveness of independent, or private Black schools is almost non-existent. Therefore, this study was undertaken to answer the following questions:

1. What is the school's philosophy?
   
   (a) What is the school's mission or purpose?

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\(^3^4\)Ibid.

\(^3^5\)Institute for Independent Education, *Road to Success*, 2.
(b) What are the school's objectives?
(c) What values are emphasized at this school?

2. What is the school's curriculum?
(a) What cultural knowledge is considered most important and how is that knowledge transmitted?
(b) What activities or programs does the school provide to foster academic, physical, moral, and spiritual growth?
(c) What symbols, language, dress, or rituals are used to foster school values?

3. How are the students performing (i.e. academically, socially, morally and spiritually)?
(a) To what extent are students achieving academic success as measured by the IOWA Test of Basic Skills?
(b) How are students' ethnic identity being affirmed?
(c) How are the students performing morally and spiritually?

4. What type of relationship exists between teachers and students?

5. To what extent are parents involved in school activities?

6. What criteria are used by parents to judge the successful development of their children?

Significance of the Study

There is a paucity of information regarding the effectiveness of independent Black schools. This study will add to that knowledge base. Also, the results from this study can be used by the participating school to improve its educational program and
may motivate this school and other independent schools to engage in systematic school evaluation. In addition, it may promote reflective thinking among educators for designing appropriate cultural models of education. A culturally sensitive model of evaluation can be used to insure that the specific needs of students from different ethnic or cultural groups are being met.

**Summary**

Poor, Black students are not achieving academic nor social success in the American public school system. Evaluators and critics of the public school system cite many reasons for this failure, such as the child's home environment, low teachers' expectations, inadequate funding for the schools, and the unresponsiveness of the schools to address the cultural needs of its students. The inability of the public schools to nurture Black youths' academic, social, spiritual, and cultural needs is partially responsible for the growth of independent Black schools.

There is very little information regarding the performance of students in private schools, and what information does exist pertains to comparative test scores of private and public school students. Information on students in independent Black schools in the United States is scarce and is not collected in any systematic format by the government. The number of independent Black and minority schools are increasing but there is a lack of data pertaining to the effectiveness of these schools in the educational research literature.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

According to Worthen and Sanders:

...one key deficit in most educational system is the lack of effective evaluation. Without careful, systematic inquiry into the effectiveness of either current school practices or new programs, many changes occurring in education become little more than random adaption of faddish innovations. Though it is just one step toward educational improvement, evaluation holds greater promise than any other approach in providing educators with information they need to help improve educational practices.1

The literature on educational evaluation is extensive. The evaluation of educational institutions prior to the 1950's was usually conducted informally by teachers, principals, and school boards. Then, two major events increased more formal and systematic developments in the evaluation field. The first was the launching of Sputnik on October 4, 1957, by the Russians, which made them the first country to reach the moon. The United States felt they should have been the first and started massive mathematics and science programs in the public schools. The second was the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. It helped to bring about massive funding for social

and educational programs for the "disadvantaged" because it showed the world the disparities of what the United States espoused (as the land of freedom, justice, and equality) and the reality of the poverty and oppression of Black people and the "poor." Those two events greatly spurred the growth of the evaluation field. In the mid 1960's, when compensatory programs were made available in the public schools for the disadvantaged, large-scale studies of school effectiveness began. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which provided funds for the improvement of educational programs, mandated "that programs funded under Titles I and II of the Act be evaluated annually and that reports of the evaluation be forwarded to the federal government." If evaluation agencies or schools did not comply, they would lose their funding.

Definition and Purpose of Evaluation

Ralph Tyler, who is credited with coining the term "educational evaluation" in the 1930's, viewed evaluation as a method to find out whether or not educational objectives were being achieved. Tyler believed that one goal of education was to produce desired changes in students' behaviors and stated that evaluation "is the process for determining the degree to which these changes in behavior are actually

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2Norris, Understanding Educational Evaluation, 9.

3Ibid., 15.

taking place." For example, a learning objective for a kindergarten student may be "to learn to print neatly his or her first and last name on lined paper." The criteria for successful mastery of this objective are given and the learned behavior can be observed by the teacher. If the student is not able to print both his first and last name neatly on lined paper, the student has not mastered this objective 100 percent and this would indicate that the student needs more help or guidance to master the desired objective. Thus, the purpose of evaluation from a Tylerian perspective is to provide information for use by teachers, students, parents, and others to help the students learn what the school is trying to teach. On the other hand, Worthen and Sanders stated:

> Evaluation is the determination of a thing's value. In education, it is the formal determination of the quality, effectiveness, or value of a program, product, project, process, objective, or curriculum.\(^6\)

In this definition, evaluation is perceived as a formal or systematic inquiry process or judgment to ascertain the value of a school's curriculum or program. David Nevo defines educational evaluation as "a systematic activity of using information to describe educational objects and judge their merit or worth."\(^7\) This definition is similar to Worthen and Blaine's. Other definitions of evaluation focus more on their political and value-oriented purposes. Elliot W. Eisner, who worked in the evaluation field for more than twenty-five years, viewed evaluation as a value-

\(^5\)Ibid., 106.


oriented process that helps us to determine whether or not the schools are working
toward virtuous goals. In other words, school goals themselves should be examined
to see if they are meeting larger educational and social goals, such as educational
equality, or receiving equity in the distribution of resources by the government.

HeadStart programs, for example, were designed and implemented on a
limited scale for disadvantaged children. They were evaluated to determine their
effectiveness and were either retained, modified, or eliminated based on the empirical
evidence. Evaluating HeadStart programs also served the purpose of demonstrating to
the public that government was interested in the welfare of the disadvantaged and the
poor. From his research on educational evaluation in the United States and
Britain, Nigel Norris emphasized that "Educational evaluation is about social planning
and control," and was a way for government to efficiently manage and control
peoples' behaviors by using research and scientific methods or technology.

For instance, during the Great Depression, masses of immigrants flooded the
United States. Many of the immigrants were not well-educated and brought with
them their values, habits, and customs. The school system viewed the immigrants as
lower class people. Thus, the society and the schools had to find ways to deal with
that new population of people in order to fit them into the existing social order.

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8 Elliot W. Eisner, *The Art of Educational Evaluation: A Personal View*

9 Ibid.


11 Ibid., 15.
Programs such as health classes (to deal with the perceived uncleanliness of the immigrants) and citizenship classes were designed to help the newcomers fit into American life.

Norris, further stated that evaluation methods are used as a "way to manage society when there are major demographic or social upheavals." Many studies have shown that schools are sorting machines. In other words, the schools categorize students by tracking them (i.e. into a vocational or academic program), which determines what type of subjects or courses the students will be allowed to take. In later years there are ramifications on what colleges the students will be accepted into or what type of jobs will be available to them.

According to the International Encyclopedia of Education, evaluation is:

...a careful, rigorous examination of an educational curriculum, program, institution, organizational variables or policy. The primary purpose of this examination is to learn about the particular entity studied, although more generalizable knowledge may also be obtained. The focus is on understanding and improving the thing evaluated (formative evaluation), on summarizing, describing or judging its planned and unplanned outcomes (summative evaluation).

However, in many school systems throughout the United States, evaluation of schools has been equated with standardized testing programs. Student performance has

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12Ibid., 16.


been limited to this narrow measurement method. Although most people are aware that test scores cannot predict a student’s success in later life, many of the benefits (scholarships) awarded to students and other professionals are based on how well they have performed on a test (such as the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). The government, armed with this knowledge, has not decreased the amount of testing that is going on. Instead, the trend for testing has actually increased.15 The goals of an educational system are diverse but, in general terms, an education should produce an informed citizen who is honest, just, and works toward the good of his fellow man and society and can provide for himself/herself. But our present system of testing students does not try to assess these non-cognitive behaviors.

There is no agreement on any one definition of evaluation or agreement on any specific model that should be followed in evaluating a school program. However, the common thread that runs through all the definitions is that evaluation is a process that provides information for decision-making.16

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16Ibid.
Formative and Summative Evaluation

Lee Cronbach, a noted educational researcher, believed that evaluation should be used for improving educational programs. However, Michael Scriven, a well-known psychometrician, disagreed with Cronbach. Scriven published a paper in 1967 entitled, "The Methodology of Evaluation," in which he made the distinction between formative and summative evaluation. This distinction was appreciated by many in the field of evaluation because it was a fairly new and budding social science at that time. Scriven stated that:

... formative and summative evaluation are different in the function they serve (hence) the destination to which they go. Formative evaluation is evaluation designed, done, and intended to support the process of improvement, and normally commissioned or done by, and delivered to, someone who can make improvements. Summative evaluation is the rest of evaluation: in terms of intentions, it is evaluation done for, or by, any observer or decision makers (by contract with developers) who need evaluative conclusions for any other reasons besides development.

Scriven viewed formative and summative evaluation as two roles that evaluation can play and rather than two types of evaluation. In the formative role, the evaluator is a helper and tries to identify or suggest ways to improve a program, whereas, in the summative role, the evaluator judges whether the educational program is of value.

The formative versus the summative distinction made by Michael Scriven in 1967 has

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18Ibid.

19Ibid.
been used by many and the concepts have also been so widely misinterpreted or
misunderstood, that Scriven outlined ten fallacies of the formative/summative
distinction in a chapter in the book, entitled, Evaluation and Education: At a Quarter
Century.\textsuperscript{20}

Evaluation of Public Schools

Joseph Rice conducted the first formal evaluation in the United States in 1897.
He compared the spelling performance of more than 30,000 students in a large city
school district, and found that an emphasis on spelling did not contribute to a
significant gain in learning.\textsuperscript{21} This was not a true evaluative study but a
measurement activity.\textsuperscript{22}

One of the most noted educational evaluation studies was led by Ralph W.
Tyler in 1934. He was asked to serve as director of the Eight Year Study (1932-1940)
at Ohio State University. It was an experimental study to determine the effectiveness
of progressive secondary schools versus the traditional high schools.\textsuperscript{23} Tyler used a
comparative research design and test scores to measure the effectiveness of
schools.\textsuperscript{24} The study was initiated when graduates from the progressive high schools

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 19,

\textsuperscript{21}Ronald Beck, ed., Educational Evaluation Methodology: The State of the Art

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., 2.

\textsuperscript{23}Norris, Educational Evaluation, 12.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid.
were not being admitted to colleges because they lacked credits in certain subjects.\(^{25}\)

A few high schools were selected to develop their own educational programs. They did not have to adhere to college admission requirements and accreditation standards, so they could better meet the needs of the students. The focus of Tyler's evaluation was on developing a curriculum and a plan of instruction.\(^{26}\) Tyler's conception of evaluation placed emphasis on performance outcomes and curriculum improvement. During the period from 1930 to 1945, Tyler's view of evaluation flourished.

The Equality of Educational Opportunity Report (The Coleman Report) conducted in 1966 was another landmark study which basically stated that schools did not make much difference in the lives of poor and minority youths.\(^{27}\) This landmark study consisted of a survey of principals, teachers, and students in approximately 4,000 public elementary and secondary schools. The study examined school characteristics such as curriculums, facilities, staff, teachers' training as well as such students' characteristics as race and socioeconomic status.\(^{28}\) The Coleman Report was criticized severely for the methods it used to determine achievement. The study analyzed the relationship among attitudinal and material inputs from the children's home but did not analyze attitudinal inputs from the school. It only

\(^{25}\)Ibid.

\(^{26}\)Ibid., 14.

\(^{27}\)Harbison and Hanushek, *Educational Performance of the Poor*, 15.

\(^{28}\)Ibid.
examined material inputs from the school.29 The Coleman Report was conducted to measure equality of educational opportunity among students in the different schools and not just in terms of school inputs.30 Student achievement was measured by how students performed on a verbal test as well as a general knowledge test. What a school possesses did not necessarily mean that learning was taking place, so multiple measures of assessing equality of educational opportunity would probably have strengthened Coleman's study.31

The trend of evaluation is moving away from the objective-performance models of evaluation where teachers and administrators have more input on curricular decisions and moving toward more government control of evaluation.32 Harbison and Hanushek reported that:

Much of the funding of evaluation is through government contracts and all or most of it is done by external agencies. The evaluation trend is also moving away from standardized test scores as measures of student performance and moving toward more direct or authentic assessment. More technical and political in nature.33

Direct or authentic assessment refers to alternative and more direct ways of judging student performance in different content or subject areas. For example, students may be tested on their knowledge of "telling time" by asking them to "draw a picture "of a

29Ibid.

30Ibid.

31Ibid., 19.

32Tyler, Evaluation: A Challenge, 123.

33Ibid., 15.
clock that shows the time of 8:40 instead of giving a multiple choice item in which
the students must select the correct answer. The focus is more on the student doing
something to demonstrate his/her knowledge and understanding of the time concept.
Although attempts are being made to test students' knowledge in more direct ways,
one question still remains, of "Who decides the standards for such assessments?"

Evaluation of Private Schools

Private schools enroll approximately twelve percent of all public school
students in kindergarten through the twelfth grades. These schools are very diverse in
nature.34 However, there is very little information in research literature regarding
systematic evaluation of private schools. The information that is available usually
pertains to inputs (i.e. teacher qualifications, classroom size, facilities, and
governance structure). Systematic data is not kept by any government agency and the
schools themselves do not keep very good records.35 In addition, many private
schools do not want to make information available to the public.36

Recently, mainstream researchers have turned their attention to studying
private schools.37 The continuing debate and discussion surrounding school choice
(giving parents more say in choosing a school for their child) and the issue of

34Slaughter and Johnson, Visible Now, 12.
35Levy, Private Education, 34.
36Ibid.
37Ibid.
providing tuition tax credits for parents who send their children to private schools have initiated further research between the public and private school sector.

One of the first studies of Catholic and other urban, private schools was undertaken by the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights in 1978 to 1979. The study's findings were published in a book, entitled *Inner-City Elementary Schools: A Study*. In this exploratory research, the Catholic League wanted to know whether or not the families, teachers, and students of other big inner, city private schools were typical of the students, families, and teachers of Catholic secondary schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Catholic League's study of the elementary private schools found that: the children achieved relatively high test scores on national achievement tests, both lay and religious teachers were highly motivated but poorly paid, and a majority of the families made great sacrifices in order for their children to receive a quality education.

Sixty-three schools were selected in eight cities (Milwaukee, New Orleans, Los Angeles, New York, New Jersey, Washington, D.C., Detroit, and Chicago), but only fifty-four returned the questionnaires completed by parents, teachers, and principals. The schools had to have a 70 percent minority population and had to be eligible for the Title I Elementary, Secondary, Education Act (ESEA) funding to be included in the study. All of the schools were private. Fifty-six of the sixty-three were Catholic schools and seven were community-type or Lutheran. The research techniques used for gathering the data were questionnaires, interviews, and personal observations made by the authors. Questionnaires were given to a sample of parents
and teachers but were given to all principals (339 teachers, 50 principals, and 3,995 parents). Those schools were found to be more egalitarian in their admissions process. The study also looked at parents' social characteristics such as income, occupation, race, education, religion, and family structure. The study found that the parents valued a quality education for their children. Religious training was secondary. Parents weren't against public schools but perceived the private schools as more responsive to their children needs.\(^{38}\)

In 1981, Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore announced at a conference their research finding that Catholic schools were more effective than public schools in helping students attain cognitive skills.\(^{39}\) Their study compared the test scores of public and private school students after adjustments were made for students' social background characteristics.

The High School and Beyond (HSB) Survey of the United States Department of Education was the basis for further comparative research between public and private schools because it addressed organization, governance, and student achievement. The HSB project was a longitudinal study of 58,728 high school students in the United States drawn from 893 public schools, 84 Catholic schools, and 38 non-Catholic, private schools. Its data base had a stratified sample design with an over sampling of students in certain types of schools, including public and Catholic schools.

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schools in which more than 30 percent of the students were minority group members.
The data set was comprised of scores for high school sophomores and seniors on a
battery of tests developed by the Educational Testing Service.

Evaluation of Effective Schools

The Effective Schools Research first began as a response to studies that claimed family background had more impact on school achievement than other school factors such as school facilities and teachers' qualifications. Researchers such as Ronald Edmonds and Lawrence Lezotte, repudiated the findings of the Coleman Study and found from their research that schools could and did make a difference on the achievement level of Black and poor students. Edmonds and Lezotte advanced the equity issue in the Effective Schools Research. They developed an operational definition of an effective school as one that demonstrates that:

1. ninety-five (or greater) percent of all students at each grade level demonstrate minimum academic mastery and are prepared to succeed in the next grade anywhere in the United States;

2. there shall be no significant difference in the proportion of students demonstrating minimum academic mastery as a function of socioeconomic class; and

3. the above two conditions have been obtained for a minimum of three consecutive years. Minimum academic mastery is

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measured by performance on a standardized test (preferably criterion-referenced as opposed to norm-referenced).  

Edmonds and Lezotte also identified characteristics, such as strong instructional leadership, a safe and orderly environment, a belief that all students can learn, high teacher expectations, a positive school climate, clear goals, and monitoring student progress, as being important to school achievement for Black and other students.

Edmonds' research on effective schools caught the attention of many educators, parents, and policy makers, however, other researchers found it lacking in empirical evidence. Some researchers complained that Edmonds was more interested in advancing a political ideology than in validating his research findings. Ralph and Finnessey concluded that:

The significance of the effective schools research lies more in the ideology underlying it than in the validity of the empirical support for the idea that schools can lessen the effects of race and social class on academic achievement.

Other researchers also ignored Edmonds effectiveness definition. The changing political climate and tricky data analysis helped to shift Edmonds' equity definition of

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43 Ibid., 51.

44 Ibid., 23.
effectiveness to one that focused on school performance. That shift in the definition left out the race and equity issues.45

The Center for Policy Research in Education defined effective schools as "those that attain higher than average output with the same inputs."46 This definition of effective schools carried with it the idea of an "industrial model" of education in which, what you put into the schools (i.e. libraries, experienced teachers, and modern equipment) will determine your rate of return. In the case of students, one could infer that to mean higher test scores.

As an indicator of an effective school, the Effective School Research studies relied on the distribution of standardized test scores among the school population, for example, did low income students relatively attain the same level of achievement as their higher income counterparts? Although test scores are important in achieving parity with the dominant group in America, issues of culture and ethnicity were left out of the discussion as having any influence on minority success or achievement.

**Evaluation of Independent Black Schools**

Independent Black schools have a long history within the context of the American educational school system. The first schools were known as African Free Schools, established in the 1700's.47 Today, there are approximately 300

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45 *Ibid.*, 32


independent Black schools in the United States, serving approximately 53,000 Black students or 7.9 percent of the total Black public school enrollment of 6.7 million.\textsuperscript{48}

Like the Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), they vary in their goals and objectives and cannot be lumped together as a homogeneous group. What they have in common is that they place an emphasis on a quality education for all their students at all socioeconomic levels and meet their students' cultural needs.\textsuperscript{49}

Although more research is being conducted about private schools in general, research on independent Black schools in any systematic way has been lacking until recently.\textsuperscript{50}

In 1986, the Institute for Independent Education (I.I.E.) conducted a study of independent neighborhood schools in the United States that were all minority schools with the majority being predominantly Black. Surveys were sent to administrators and parents. School administrators were asked to describe their institutions and parents responded to questions about why they chose independent neighborhood schools for their children. The factors that were mentioned most often by families in choosing private schools in order of importance were: the learning environment and


\textsuperscript{49}Institute for Independent Education, \textit{Road to Success}, 2.

\textsuperscript{50}\textit{Ibid.}, 16.
academics, religion at religious schools, and culture-affirming reasons at secular schools.\textsuperscript{51}

From 1989 to 1991, I.I.E. conducted another study to determine the effectiveness of independent neighborhood schools in meeting the college and employment needs of their students.\textsuperscript{52} The schools were found to be effective in meeting the above mentioned goals. The criteria mentioned for success were:

- interaction between students and teachers,
- teacher and administrator expectations,
- the expectations of parents,
- the styles of teaching,
- how students and teachers perceive the school's philosophy or mission,
- and how curriculum priorities are linked to that mission.\textsuperscript{53}

Other factors that were also considered important were parental involvement, the homogeneity population of students and teachers, and the students need to be culturally affirmed.\textsuperscript{54} Students at those schools generally scored above national norms on standardized achievement tests. Forty-four percent of the schools were considered to be high performing schools. Test data were gathered on math and reading subtests from more than 1,400 students in 1989 and more than 2,300 for 1990. Eighty-two schools participated in that study. Approximately 50 percent were religious schools and the rest were secular institutions. Data collected for that study were interpreted from a historical view of American education, which involved: the themes of school access (whether certain categories of people should receive a serious

\textsuperscript{51}Ratteray and Shujaa, \textit{Dare to Choose}, 10.

\textsuperscript{52}Institute for Independent Education, \textit{Road to Success}, 2.

\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Ibid.}, 16.

\textsuperscript{54}\textit{Ibid.}
education at all); content (what was taught); and context (the perspective from which it was taught).\textsuperscript{55}

Alumni of those schools were also interviewed. Questionnaires with a cover letter were sent to 1,429 alumni. A separate form asked alumni to indicate whether or not they would like to be interviewed. The questionnaires were analyzed using domain analysis (analyzes semantic relationships). Fifty interviews were conducted over the telephone by research assistants who had been trained in the use of structured qualitative interview techniques. The ethnography, a qualitative analysis software package, was used to code the interview data. The alumni perceived the school climate (a feeling of warmth), academic curriculum, teachers, school policies, and the affirmation of their culture to be important characteristics of their private schools.\textsuperscript{56}

In Margaret Bower's doctoral dissertation, "The Independent Black Educational Institution: An Exploration and Identification of Selected Factors That Relate to Their Survival," she reviewed the work of two other doctoral studies on the Independent Black Educational Institution (IBEI) conducted by June Ridley and James Doughty. June Ridley's dissertation was an exploratory study of the national IBEI model to determine the ideology, purpose, and definitions of the IBEI. Ridley interviewed five professional educators using open-ended interview techniques. Ridley used a philosophical perspective in reviewing her data and observed that the

\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Ibid.}, 5.

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{Ibid.}, 36.
"African" perspective for the schools would take time and felt the hindrances to the schools would be a lack of finances and lack of facilities. 57

James Doughty's study in 1973, "A Historical Analysis of Black Education Focusing On the Contemporary Independent Black School Movement" was a historical analysis of the Independent Black School Movement. 58 Doughty focused his analysis of the IBEIs on three areas: philosophical foundations, curriculum practices, and parental roles at the IBEI. Doughty also found from his research that financial independence and security were tied to the IBEIs stability.

The researchers mentioned above who examined the independent Black schools identified ideological issues, the curriculum, and finances to be of major importance for the development and growth of independent Black educational institutions along with a sense of developing their own ideas of what constitutes a proper education for Black people. That idea generally included a view of detaching oneself from the Eurocentric model of education.

Educators and parents are demanding that schools become more flexible and "culturally affirming" for their children. This is evident in the growth and development of private, secular, and religious schools across the country. The current Afrocentric Movement also espouses the concept of self-affirmation and advocates for Black children an educational environment in which they should be educated from their cultural heritage or experiences. Culture provides a framework

57 Bowers, Independent Black Institutions, 27.
58 Ibid.
for the social, moral, spiritual, and intellectual development of a child in an
educational setting because a person's culture provides a certain way of looking at life
or living.\textsuperscript{59}

From their research on Black students in private schools, Slaughter and
Johnson stated:

Parents choose independent neighborhood schools because they find that
mere access to educational institutions is not enough and they are
looking for what they perceive to be nurturing environments, where
children can take advantage of learning opportunities and are fortified
by an understanding of the religious or cultural contexts of
knowledge.\textsuperscript{60}

\section*{Muslim Schools}

Islamic schools were the forerunners of the independent Black School
Movement, and they have been around since the 1930's.\textsuperscript{61} Those schools were
private religious schools designed for Black children in North America. They were
called the Universities of Islam. The first University of Islam was set up in the early
1930's by W.D. Fard, the teacher of Mr. Elijah Muhammad. By 1979, Elijah
Muhammad had established 40 Universities of Islam across the United States. Those
schools have been and continue to be effective in educating Black children.

\textsuperscript{59}Gordon L. Berry and Joy K. Asamen, \textit{Black Students: Psychosocial Issues and

\textsuperscript{60}Slaughter and Johnson, \textit{Visible Now}, 197.

\textsuperscript{61}Hakim M. Rashid and Zakiyyah Muhammad, "The Sister Clara Muhammad
Schools: Pioneers in the Development of Islamic Education in America," \textit{Journal of
Ibrahim Shalaby's doctoral dissertation was a study of the Universities of Islam. The title of his dissertation was "The Role of the School in Cultural Renewal and Identity Development in the Nation of Islam in America." His study was a theoretical analysis of the Universities of Islam from the viewpoints of social theorists such as Ralph Linton, Ward Goodenough, Anthony Wallace, and David Aberle, to explain the phenomena of cultural change and identity reformation in the Nation of Islam schools. The methods used in Shalaby's study were library research and field study (non-participant observation, informal and formal interviews with parents, school personnel, school leader, and students). An aspiration inventory was also given to students. Shalaby found the schools to be effective in helping students learn a new set of attitudes, religious beliefs, and values. The schools attempted to aid the student in rejecting a culture that was not theirs and to help them learn new customs and habits that would elevate and unite them. Ideology, culture, identity, religion, and the school's curriculum were important factors in that study. The Muslim schools were found to be effective in helping students gain a new culture and identity that was free from the stereotype of a so-called Negro.

Previous research on independent Black schools examined mostly content and process variables and were particularly concerned with identifying and defining Black educational institutions and the factors that helped them to survive and succeed. The Institute for Independent Education has conducted evaluations of independent

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neighborhood schools (minority schools), but their research focused more on cognitive and employment success of students. The study differed from the others stated previously in that it examined the school to assess its effectiveness in meeting the total developmental needs of its students.

Culture and Schooling

The term "culture" generally refers to a groups' overall design for living. The world view of life and living embodies certain habits, customs, behaviors, music, language, and values. Culture is a multitude of things shared by a group of people.

Dr. Wade Nobles, an experimental social psychologist, states that culture is:

a human process representing the vast structure of behaviors, ideas, attitudes, values, habits, beliefs, customs, language, rituals, ceremonies, and practices peculiar to a particular group of people and which provides them with a general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality.63

One's culture shapes behavior and influences the learning process.64 Each culture or ethnic group has a code of ethnics, rules of behavior, certain beliefs, rituals and traditions, religion, and group ideas of what is right or wrong. Each culture, group, or nation has values that it deems are important and these values are taught and reflected in the child's education or schooling process. It is a nation's or society's

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64Ibid.
culture that influences the educational process and not the other way around.

According to K. Agyei Akoto education is:

...the ritualized reaffirmation of the national identity. It is anchored in the real and idealized history of a people. The nation’s education is shaped and given impetus by the cultural and ideological assumptions, dynamics essential values, priorities and goals of the nation.65

In other words, schooling is also culturally referenced and the two (culture and education) cannot be separated from each other because they are interrelated.

Schooling has intended and unintended outcomes. To pinpoint exactly when learning has occurred within the child or student is difficult to assess because children come to school with varying degrees of experiences, knowledge, and skills which contribute to the learning process. One’s culture influences the educational process and is value-laden. Testing alone will not tell us anything about the aims and purposes of education or whether or not those aims or purposes are good and noble goals for our children. Schooling is a means to orient children to a particular or accepted culture or world view.66

Summary

There is no agreement on any one definition of evaluation or on any one specific model that should be followed in evaluating a school program. However, the common thread that runs through all the definitions is that evaluation is a process that


provides information for decision-making. Tyler's conception of evaluation was that it was a process for determining whether or not the goals or objectives of a school or school's program had been achieved. The conception of, the purposes for, and the methodology used in educational evaluation has grown in scope and is much more complex today for judging the merits of an educational program. In the public schools, the trend of evaluation has moved away from curricular improvement and from local control by teachers and administrators to a trend where government is taking more control.

Most public and private school evaluations are conducted by the government and are quantitative studies. Very little research has been done by private or non-government agencies. Today, evaluation is almost synonymous with achievement testing. The majority of research on effective schools has relied on achievement test scores to determine whether or not a school is effective. Although the assessment trend is beginning to move away from using multiple-choice-type tests to a method referred to as "direct or authentic" assessment in which student performance is viewed from a more hands-on or direct approach. These methods of evaluation, however, do not address the issues of equality or quality education nor are they a way of assessing broader goals and objectives of the school, such as equal access to educational program or the fairness of the educational system.

There is very little research available regarding the effectiveness of independent Black schools. The review of the literature on independent Black schools revealed that ideological issues, the curriculum, and finances were important to the
development of Black students and institutions. It also suggested that Black students may need an education that caters directly to their unique needs and is different from a Eurocentric paradigm or philosophy of education that is provided in the public schools. Culture, history, religion, parental support, and a curriculum that focuses on the positive aspects of the child appear to be factors that provided a nurturing learning environment for the Black child or student.

Each culture, group, or nation has values that it deems are important, and these values are taught and reflected in the child’s education or schooling process. One’s culture influences the educational process and is value-laden. Therefore, an effective evaluation of a school must first determine what the goals or objectives are of a school. Both cognitive and non-cognitive goals should be assessed.
Yin stated that "...theory development prior to the collection of any case study data is an essential step in doing case studies."¹ A theory or theories help to guide the researcher in making decisions about what data to collect and helps him or her to analyze and interpret the data once it is collected.²

This study’s theoretical framework is based upon the premise that education is a cultural process and does not take place in a neutral setting.³ Formal schooling is a complex process that has intended and unintended outcomes, and it takes place within a particular cultural context and implies a "particular social ideal."⁴ "All systems of education are based on a particular society’s or nation’s view of life and culture."⁵

In accordance with that perspective, Professor James of the University of South Carolina in Columbia stated "Education is a value-laden enterprise...It will, either

²Ibid., 37.
⁴Ahmad, Principles of Islamic Education, 8.
⁵Ibid., 5.
implicitly or explicitly, express some world view." For example, we cannot effectively assess the Japanese system of education by only examining Japanese students' standardized achievement test scores. Knowledge of Japanese history, values, beliefs, behavior, and attitudes help us to understand how and why they have been able to excel in many areas. Academic achievement is highly valued in their society, along with respect for teachers, parents, and a cooperative work ethic, and these values are reflected in their educational system. Thus, in evaluating a school, or school program within a school, it is imperative that the researcher does so from the perspective of that particular culture, if he or she truly wants to understand or improve that school's processes or performance.

According to Kuh and White, culture is "the shared values, assumptions, beliefs, or ideologies that participants have about their organization." In more simple terms, culture is a way or pattern of life for a group or society of people.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad, the deceased leader of the Nation of Islam in America, used the religion of "Islam to shape both the context and content of education" for Muslim children in North America. A cultural model of education coincides with Janice Hale-Benson's theory. She asserts that Black children can

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6Education Week, 9 October 1996, 13.

7George D. Kuh and Elizabeth J. White, The Invisible Tapestry: Culture in American Colleges and Universities, Association for the Study of Higher Education, (ASHE), Report #1, 1988, 3.


9Ratteray and Shujaa, Dare to Choose, 4.
benefit from a distinctive educational process because they have a distinct culture. She portends that Black children need an educational system that understands their culture and that will build on the children’s strengths and their particular learning styles. Benson described three components for an ideology which would have for its foundation a true picture of Black people in America and in the world from a:

(1) political/cultural (ideology)...an accurate historical and political analysis of the education of Black people in America and in the world;
(2) pedagogical relevance...the method that will be used for the education of Black children; and (3) Academic rigor (content)...must equip them [Black children] for excellence.

The Centrist or Afrocentric paradigm advanced by Molefi Kete Asante also compliments the cultural frame of reference because it purports that the most productive way to teach a child is to place his or her group within the center of the context of knowledge. This means that Black children should be taught from a knowledge base that is from their African heritage and feels the curriculum should reflect all aspects from this vantage point. That is not to say that other cultures or ethnic groups are ignored but that the African knowledge base should be their source of self-knowledge. Critics of this world view, such as Schlesinger and Diane Ratvitch, say this will not help minority students achieve but is no more than an

10Hale-Benson, Black Children, 4.

11Ibid., 152.

emotional, make them feel good, approach reminiscent of the sixties and seventies. "I'm Black and I'm Proud days."

The most appropriate approach for this study would be a qualitative design rather than a quantitative design. The qualitative paradigm began in the late 19th century as a backlash to the traditional, positivistic, or experimental design, through writers such as Weber and Kant. Some of the major differences between the two paradigms are their assumptions about what is real or reality, their reasoning processes, and their desired end product. The qualitative world view is that there are multiple realities in a research study. For example, in studying another culture, there is the researcher’s belief about what is occurring and what is "real," but there is also the perspective of the people under study who have their own beliefs and act on these beliefs, which is their reality (emic perspective). Reality, therefore, is based on personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. In qualitative studies, the researcher usually refrains from holding tentative hypothesis or theories because he or she wants to analyze the collected data for possible new emerging patterns or categories. This inductive reasoning process provides the researcher an opportunity to let the data inform him with a new or fresh perspective. The important goal in qualitative

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research is to describe and understand the meaning of the phenomenon in context.\textsuperscript{15} The researcher physically goes to the scene and directly observes what is going on in the natural setting of the phenomenon under study, and he or she is the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing the data. The end product is a "thick" or detailed description of people, interactions, behaviors, and events conveyed through words or pictures.\textsuperscript{16}

On the other hand, in the quantitative paradigm, the researcher views reality as objective, "out there" independent of the researcher.\textsuperscript{17} In other words, the truth is out there and can be measured. A deductive form of logic is used where predetermined hypotheses or theories are usually tested to find out if there are any causal relationships. The researcher attempts to remain distant and objective of what he is trying to research and tries to keep his or her values out of the research study.\textsuperscript{18} The language of quantitative research is also more formal and impersonal than qualitative language. For example, words such as comparisons and relationships are accepted versus qualitative words such as understanding and meaning. The goal of the quantitative paradigm is to develop generalizations about a theory or hypothesis to better predict or explain a phenomenon, and data is generally presented in numerical form.

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid.}, 16

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{17}Creswell, \textit{Research Design}, 4.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}
The qualitative approach is more appropriate for this study because it will allow the researcher to take a close-up look at students in their natural school setting. Also, in examining groups or people, a person rather than a nonpersonal instrument, such as a survey or questionnaire, would be a more practical and sensible way to pick up subtle nuances of human interactions in a holistic fashion. Furthermore, schooling is a complex process which needs to take into consideration that children come to school with different experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and skills, and we cannot separate the student into arbitrary divisions set up for purposes of analysis. The student is an individual who manifests different and distinct behaviors at different times and at different stages of development over time.

Summary

Formal schooling is a cultural and complicated process and does not take place in a vacuum. It is impossible to isolate cultural and educational variables because they are inextricably linked together. Evaluation is a systematic inquiry process that is designed to discover the values (or information) that can be used by educational decision-makers to understand and improve their educational program or institution. Because the two processes are value-laden, the best research approach for this study would be from the qualitative paradigm approach because it requires that the researcher interpret findings from the perspectives of the people under study.

19Merriam, Case Study Research in Education, 5.
Definition of Terms

In order to better understand this study, the following terms were defined:

Culture - The totality of ideas, concepts, beliefs, and knowledge that a group collectively shares and transmits to succeeding generations. In short, it's a way of life.

Curriculum - That particular body of knowledge that is planned to be taught in a school.

Educational philosophy - A belief in the way children should be reared and taught.

Evaluate - To make a judgement regarding a school's effectiveness in meeting the developmental needs of its students.

Identity development - Cultural and historical knowledge of one's own ethnic group, race, or culture.

Independent Black school - A private school that has a 100 percent Black student body and is not owned or operated by any government agency.

Moral/Spiritual development - Knowledge and/or belief in God; the ability to discuss a concept of God; the ability to discuss actions or behavior that are right or wrong.

Parental involvement - The extent to which parents participate in their children's school activities.

Student academic performance - Achievement as defined by the IOWA Test of Basic Skills. Standardized achievement tests used to measure the development of general cognitive skills.

Unit of Analysis - The primary object of study in case study research. A holistic view of the independent Black school under study.
CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methods and procedures used in undertaking this investigation. Included in this discussion is a description of the data collection and data analysis processes. Lastly, a discussion of the limits of the study occurs. The twofold objective of this study was to: (1) assess the effectiveness of an independent Black school in meeting the developmental needs of its students; and (2) consider the implications these findings might have for developing a more culturally sensitive model for evaluation.

The Research Design

The single case study research method was selected for this study because it was an approach that allowed the researcher to investigate a phenomenon in a holistic way. According to Yin:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that:
investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context;
when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.1

Yin asserted that before a research strategy was selected the researcher should closely analyze the form of the questions he or she was trying to answer. He claimed that

1Yin, Case Study Research, 23.
“How” and “Why” questions can usually best be answered by using the case study research strategy. This study paralleled the guidelines above because the primary focus of this research was to discover how well an independent Black school was meeting the developmental needs (i.e. academic, social, moral, and spiritual) of its students.

Patton, however, maintained that a case study “seeks to describe the phenomenon in depth, in detail, in context, and holistically.”\(^2\) On a similar note, Hamel, Dufor, and Fortin stated:

The case study is an in-depth investigation. It accordingly uses different methods to collect various kinds of information and to make observations. These are the empirical materials through which the object of study will be understood. The case study is thus based on a great wealth of empirical materials, notably because of their variety.\(^3\)

Using a variety of materials to show evidence of a finding or findings is a major strength of employing the case study approach. According to Yin:

The use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and observational issues. However, the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of inquiry,[referred to as triangulation of sources]....Thus, any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode.\(^4\)


\(^4\)Yin, *Case Study Research*, 97.
Evaluating a school is a complex process and does not only refer to students' standardized test scores. Although test scores are important, the school has multiple goals and objectives. Thus, evaluating a school requires a methodology that is flexible and holistic in nature so that the investigator will be able to see the big picture and not just the individual parts of a school, such as the headmaster, the teachers, and the curriculum. In this case, the school was the object of study, whereby the whole (the school) is equal to more than the sum of its parts.

A single case study rather than a multiple-site design was used because it was a rare opportunity to get a "close-up" look at an independent Black school in its natural setting. In general, private schools are difficult to investigate if you’re an outsider. Thus, it was the desire of this researcher to take an in-depth look at one school because of the access issue and because of time constraints. According to Yin, there are three major reasons for doing a single case study:

where the case represents a critical test of existing theory, where the case is a rare or unique event, or where the case serves a revelatory purpose.\(^5\)

In the first instance, the case study is viewed as being similar to a critical experiment where the existing theory principles contained in a case are confirmed, rejected, or modified.\(^6\) The second reason mentioned is when a case is so rare or unique that it would be advantageous to study and document it. For instance, a student who may

\(^5\)Ibid., 50.

\(^6\)Ibid., 47.
have been diagnosed as mentally challenged, may show exceptional skill or ability in

drawing landscapes or sculpting works of art. An investigator, therefore, would want
to study this phenomenon. The third reason for doing a case study (a revelatory case)
is "when the researcher has an opportunity to observe and analyze a phenomena
previously inaccessible to scientific investigation."7

All of the aforementioned reasons fit this study of an independent Black

school. Much of the research on private schools pertains to comparing test scores of
public and private schools. The research on school effectiveness also tended to be
measurement activities where test scores were used to measure effectiveness. My
goal was to assess the school from the viewpoints of the headmaster, teachers,
parents, and the students. In other words, what did these stakeholders believe was a
proper and effective education for students?

The case study approach, however, has been criticized by other researchers for
its lack of rigor. They have viewed it as a soft science and not truly scientific
because, in the past, the research was done poorly.8 Some researchers were accused
of letting their own biases influence their conclusions or findings.9 Another
complaint was that it took too long to do and amassed a great amount of useless
materials. But Yin professed that case study research doesn’t have to take a long time
nor does it have to rely only on ethnography or participant observation, which are

7Ibid., 48.

8Ibid., 21.

9Ibid.
data collecting methods. Ethnography is a method in which the researcher stays for long periods of time in the field, i.e. in direct contact with people in their natural setting. Participant observation is also a data gathering technique that may not require as much time but the researcher still has to expend a great deal of energy in his or her field efforts.\(^\text{10}\) Even with these disadvantages, the case study’s greatest strength, according to Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg, is its ability to "assemble complementary and overlapping measures of the same phenomena."\(^\text{11}\)

**School Selection**

Prepville (not the real name of the school under study) was selected because it was an independent Black school which had a 100 percent Black student population and staff. It was the only school which agreed to participate and had a student population large enough to generate data that would inform this study. Initially, two Islamic schools had agreed to participate, but one backed out and the other school did not have a student population large enough to generate data that would be meaningful for this study.

**Gaining Access and Building Trust**

Gaining access to Prepville took one month and required this researcher to be persistent and tactful in pursuing Dr. Black (not a real name), the headmaster of the

\(^{10}\)Ibid., 22.

school, for her permission to conduct the research. Initial contact with Prepville took place in May 1996. This researcher did not begin any scheduled observation until June 1996. Contact with Prepville started with an intentional, unannounced visit to Prepville by this researcher, to jar the memory of the headmaster or her assistant. This researcher wanted either one of them to physically see me because I had done my graduate internship at Prepville in 1989. It was now seven years later. At that time, Dr. Black had written a glowing assessment of this researcher’s work. It was my hope that her favorable impression of me had lingered and would assist in my admittance to her institution to conduct the study.

Dr. Black was not in the office on my first visit, but her assistant was available. The study was explained to her and she advised me to call Dr. Black and discuss it with her. Three telephone calls were made after that initial visit but each time Dr. Black was busy or in conference. On the third try, I was able to set an appointment with Dr. Black for the following week to explain my research plans. Dr. Black then gave me permission to conduct the investigation.

The following steps were taken to complete the case study:

1. A phone call was made to the headmaster thanking her for giving me the opportunity to do the study.

2. A formal letter was written to the headmaster outlining the purpose of my study and a meeting time was requested to discuss a time frame for conducting interviews and administering the survey.

3. Interview guides were developed for the headmaster, teachers, parents, and students.
4. During our first meeting, I was advised not to tape interviews. The headmaster said, "I think you'll get more accurate data if you don't tape them." Her advice was followed by this researcher.

5. First two weeks of June 1996 were spent observing the setting and getting a feel for the place and the people. Handwritten notes were taken daily. Informal interviews were conducted with staff, parents, or students as the opportunities arose.

6. During the next weeks and months from June to August 1996, several activities were performed simultaneously. As participant observer, my activities included such things as:

- interacting with teachers and students through informal conversations;
- assisting teachers in their teaching displaying bulletin boards, teaching assignments, running errands such as going to the store to buy items for special events;
- transporting students from a field trip;
- interviewing teachers, parents, and students;
- reviewing school documents; and
- conversing with the headmaster each time I was on campus.

Sometimes our conversations were short (a minute or two) or lasted longer than an hour. This researcher always "checked in" with her when I arrived on campus and before I left at the end of my day. Formal appointments were made with teachers for interview dates.

7. All data gathering instruments were given to Dr. Black for her comments or suggestions in June 1996.

8. During the months of December and January 1997, six teachers' classrooms were observed.

9. Parent Involvement Surveys were mailed in August 1996 and again in January 1997 because this researcher did not have a complete list of Prepville's parents during the first mailing. Each survey envelope contained a stamped self-addressed return envelope.
10. Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with parents when the information was available.

11. Data were coded, analyzed, and interpreted.

**Data Collection**

The time period for the research investigation was from June 1996 to January 1997. A break in the research occurred from August 1 until August 16, 1997, because of the 1996 Summer Olympics. One hundred and six hours were spent in the field.

Four major techniques were used for collecting the data - interviews, participant-observation, document review, and a parent involvement survey.

**Interview Guides**

In order to obtain data in an organized manner, interview guides were developed. The following individuals were interviewed:

1. The founder and headmaster of the school
2. The assistant to the headmaster (her daughter)
3. All eight full-time teachers
4. Parents
5. Students
6. Other school staff (teacher's aide, cook, maintenance worker)

The subjects were interviewed about their jobs and responsibilities, their educational philosophies, their expectations of students, and pedagogical practices.
Interviews

An important source of information in a case study is the interview. The interviewee, respondent, or informant are those individuals who provide to the researcher information that helps him or her to better understand a case. According to Patton, the purpose of the interview is to “allow us to enter the other person’s perspective and knowledgeable respondents can provide important insights about the case.”

He stated that there were three approaches to interviewing: the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. The difference between the three techniques is the degree to which the interview questions are predetermined and standardized before the interview occurs. The informal conversational interview is generally a spontaneous type of interview, conducted when the opportunity presents itself. Questions are not designed in advance. The researcher can be flexible in his or her questioning depending on the individual and the situation at hand. The interview guide is a list of questions that the researcher has developed beforehand for use with a number of individuals in order to obtain responses to the same question. The standardized, open-ended interview has

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\textsuperscript{12}Patton, \textit{Qualitative Methods in Evaluation}, 19.

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, 109-110.
the least amount of flexibility. It contains a certain number of carefully worded questions that the investigator plans to ask in the same order in each interview.\textsuperscript{15}

Interview guides were developed for the headmaster, teachers, and students. They consisted of open-ended questions (See Appendices A, B and C). The time frame for the interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to two hours. Some questions were asked of both headmaster and teachers. For example, both the headmaster and the teachers were asked "Do you believe that a high level of Black consciousness is the basis for developing a positive African-American self-concept?" Questions such as these were designed to gain knowledge about their world views. Students were asked a different set of open-ended questions, but the questions were also designed to gain information and insights into the students’ way of thinking about themselves, their teachers, and their school.

**Participant Observation**

In this mode of observation, the researcher takes on the active rather than passive mode of collecting case study data. He or she may participate in school events or activities “without trying to alter them by his or her presence or through the observational process.”\textsuperscript{16} Taking this role has its advantages and disadvantages.

In this study, an advantage was that the researcher was able to unobtrusively observe the staff at Prepville by interacting with staff in a variety of “helper” roles,

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 110.

\textsuperscript{16}Hamel, Dufour and Fortin, *Case Study Methods*, 3.
such as teaching, serving lunch to the Early School children, and assisting the headmaster in completing a proposal. Over time, relationships developed with teachers and students who felt free to express their true feelings, opinions, or attitudes to the researcher. Informants (people selected by the researcher who could provide important insights about the case) helped the researcher to better understand the people and or organization as a whole.\(^\text{17}\)

A disadvantage of this mode of observation is that the researcher may become too close to his or her informants and identify more with them. This process is sometimes referred to as “going native.”\(^\text{18}\) Thus, the researcher may not be able to provide an objective analysis or conclusion regarding the phenomena under study.\(^\text{19}\)

**Document Review**

This entails analyzing documents, such as letters, announcements, minutes of meetings, proposals, reports, or other types of written communication, to increase and corroborate findings from other sources.\(^\text{20}\) The researcher’s notebook was not adequate enough to handle all the materials that had been collected, therefore a “Case Study Data Base” was created and organized. It consisted of written documents and materials collected during the research period. Items in the data base were a black

\(^\text{17}\)Ibid.


\(^\text{19}\)Ibid.

\(^\text{20}\)Yin, *Case Study Research*, 85.
notebook consisting of my handwritten field and interview notes, pictures, brochures, Prepville's yearbook, and tabular materials, such as tuition and book fees. The development of this data base is in keeping with Yin who suggested that:

> every case study project should strive to develop a formal, retrievable data base, so that in principle, other investigators can review the evidence directly and not be limited to the written reports. In this manner, the data base will increase markedly the reliability of the entire case study.  

### Parental Involvement Questionnaire

This questionnaire was adapted from Miller (doctoral dissertation) to obtain demographic data about the parents at Prepville and to assess the level of parental participation in various school activities. Miller developed a thirty-nine item questionnaire which was validated through a panel of experts. The survey was divided into two parts. Part A solicited demographic information and Part B used a Likert-type response mode (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = very often) to measure the level of parental participation in school activities (see Appendix D). The survey was administered to parents in 20 elementary schools. For data analysis, 502 completed questionnaires were used. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the demographic data and Pearson's R Correlation techniques were used to analyze the relationship among the variables. The data revealed a significant relationship

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21Yin, *Case Study Research*, 98.


23Ibid.
between parental involvement, parent aspiration for their children, and school personnel encouragement. Miller's survey instrument was appropriate for my research because it also sought information about parental involvement in their children's school activities.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of coding, categorizing, tabulating, or "playing with the data" to address the questions of the study. There are no prescribed or hard-set rules for a researcher to follow to reconstruct the reality of the phenomenon under study. According to Mary Jo McGee Brown:

extended time in the field; systematic acquisition of perspectives of as many participants as possible through observations, interviews, and document analysis, and the goal of culture description from the world view, conceptual framework, and terminology of the people studied (emic perspective) are the best assurances for attaining the quantitative goal of validity in a qualitative study. 24

Findings of this study were arrived at by examining and coding handwritten field notes that were logged in a large, black, notebook. Direct quotations from informants, the researcher's reflective thoughts, and direct observations of the setting and school participants were handwritten into the notebook. Personal thoughts and reflective notes were handwritten on the margins of the field notebook.

My data base file consisted of written documents, pictures, and other items of communication that were accumulated during the research period. Data collected

24 Judith P. Goetz and JoBeth Allen, eds., *Qualitative Research in Education: Substance, Methods, Experiences*, 91.
from parental surveys were also coded, analyzed, and also placed in the data base file, which was a black, portable, carrying case.

The analytical process was begun by systematically going through my field notes page by page. Similar words, notes, or quotes that emerged from the handwritten data were highlighted with a colored marker. For example, the word “family” and observations of family-type behavior (i.e. hugging, kissing, and the use of endearing language) that were written in my notes were highlighted. Thus, notes or quotes pertaining to family were highlighted with a blue marker.

Comments made by the headmaster and teachers were highlighted with a green marker, and notes or themes regarding discipline or teaching methods were highlighted with a yellow marker. Descriptive notes about the school were coded with a pink marker. During the initial phase of organizing the data, broad categories were developed but were later refined after the data were reorganized and reanalyzed several times.

The data collected from the parental surveys were also coded, categorized, and analyzed. Initially, a blank parental involvement questionnaire was used to record respondents replies as they were received. The date was noted on the envelope and a number was assigned to each envelope as they were received. This was done to keep the researcher updated on the number of completed surveys that were being returned and how many more were needed to begin the data analysis process. The dated envelopes allowed the researcher to track the time it took to receive at least 50 percent of the completed questionnaires.
The demographic data were easy to track and record because groups of five tally marks ( ////// ) were used to maintain an accurate count. Written responses of the parents were first copied by hand onto a blank parental survey form, and all handwritten responses were later typed. This made the text easier to read and code. For example, responses, such as, “older child there and his advancement and knowledge has paid off well,” “reputation and age qualifications,” “a black school which exposes children to all walks of life,” “it was recommended by a co-worker,” were handwritten and typed under the question, “Why did you select this school for your child?” The responses were then color-coded and categorized. Color-coding made it easier to categorize and view the data. The terms, “recommended,” “referral by a co-worker,” or “school’s reputation” were first highlighted in pink and later collapsed into one category entitled “recommended.” Each survey question was reviewed and analyzed in that format. Finally, a larger chart was developed in order to see all parental responses on one large chart. The three steps of examining the data for similar words, themes, or patterns among data sources; coding the data; and then recategorizing and reanalyzing the data were repeated several times in order to attain meaning from the data.

Judging the Quality of the Case Study

Validity generally refers to the “truth” of the researcher’s findings. How do we know that the investigator’s observations or conclusions are correct? Four constructs are generally used to judge the merits of a quantitative study: internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Internal validity refers to a
concern for causal or explanatory studies. In other words, if $x$ happened, does it lead to event $y$. External validity refers to transferability, which means can the findings be generalized to other situations or settings. Reliability refers to demonstrating that the data collection procedures can be repeated, usually by other researchers, and will produce the same results. Objectivity refers to the researcher’s ability to report findings without letting his or her own biases taint or influence the findings unfairly.

Qualitative researchers also seek to validate their research design and findings but use alternative constructs and find the positivist’s constructs (quantitative assumptions) inappropriate for qualitative studies. For example, Lincoln and Guba matched the term credibility to the concept of internal validity because the multiple realities found among the informants by a researcher also had to be believable to them. Thus credibility refers to the manner in which the research was carried out to ensure that the phenomenon under study (or person) was accurately or truthfully identified and described.

The second construct, transferability, as mentioned earlier, refers to whether or not the findings can be generalized to a population. According to Stake, case study findings are not usually generalizable to other case studies. He stated:

single cases are not as strong a base for generalizing to population of cases as other research designs. But people can learn much that is

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26Ibid., 145.

27Ibid.
general from single cases. They do that partly because they are familiar with other cases and they add this one in, thus making a slightly new group from which to generalize, a new opportunity to modify old generalizations.28

Yin takes a different view of generalization, he stated:

A fatal flaw in doing case studies is to conceive of statistical generalization as the method of generalizing the results of the case. This is because cases are not “sampling units” and should not be chosen for this reason...In “statistical generalization,” an inference is made about a population (or universe) on the basis of empirical data collected about a sample...the method of generalization is “analytic generalization,” in which a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study. If two or more cases are shown to support the same theory, replication may be claimed.29

Thus, in case study research it is very difficult to generalize from one case because it is so particular in nature unless there are multiple cases studying the same phenomena. On the other hand, if a researcher’s findings are applicable to a theory (i.e. Centrist or Afrocentric Theory) then the findings may be said to be transferable.

The third construct, dependability, is matched with reliability. In quantitative research, the assumption is that the social world is unchanging. This is in opposition to the qualitative assumption that the social world is always changing. Dependability allows the researcher to account for changing conditions in his or her study if a better understanding of the setting is attained.


29Yin, Case Study Research, 38.
The final construct of confirmability matches the construct of objectivity in that the researcher must control bias in his or her interpretation of the findings or conclusions. The researcher may solve this dilemma by having a colleague or other person act as the devil’s advocate or by checking and rechecking the data, purposefully testing for other interpretations (referred to as “member checking”).

This study addressed the issue of reliability by creating a case study data base file. The data base file allows other researchers to review the evidence collected throughout the research period. The issues of internal and external validity were attended to by triangulating the data. As mentioned earlier, triangulation is a method in which different data gathering techniques, such as interviews and document review, are used to verify the truthfulness or objectivity of a researcher’s findings.

Limitations

This case was limited to an independent Black school in the Southeastern United States. Therefore, the case study findings may not be easily replicated unless the private school selected for study has similar students, parents, and school staff.

Summary

This chapter explained why the single case study research design was selected for this study and examined the four major data gathering techniques: interviews, participant-observation, document review, and a parent involvement survey. A classroom observation scale was also used to collect data. Findings of the study were arrived at by examining direct quotations from informants, the researcher's reflective
thoughts, and direct observations of the school setting and school participants. Data collected from the parental surveys were also coded, categorized, and analyzed for emerging themes. The method of triangulation was used to address the validity and credibility of the findings.
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this case study was to assess the effectiveness of an independent Black school in meeting the developmental needs of its students and to consider the implications those findings might have for developing a more culturally sensitive model for evaluation. Six basic research questions were posed:

1. What is the school’s philosophy?
   (a) What is the school’s mission or purpose?
   (b) What are the school’s objectives?
   (c) What values are emphasized at this school?

2. What is the school’s curriculum?
   (a) What cultural knowledge is considered most important and how is that knowledge transmitted?
   (b) What activities or programs does the school provide to foster academic, physical, moral, and spiritual growth?
   (c) What symbols, language, dress, or rituals are used to foster school values?

3. How are the students performing (i.e. academically, socially, morally and spiritually)?
   (a) To what extent are students achieving academic success as measured by the IOWA Test of Basic Skills?
(b) How are students' ethnic identity being affirmed?
(c) How are students performing morally and spiritually?

4. What type of relationship exists between teachers and students?
5. To what extent are parents involved in school activities?
6. What criteria are used by parents to judge the successful development of their child(ren)?

This chapter is a descriptive presentation of the data which have been collected, analyzed, and interpreted. As suggested by Yin, findings are presented in a narrative style using a question and answer format. The narrative includes descriptive accounts, direct quotations from the informants (subjects under study), and the interpretations and analyses by this researcher.

Description of the Setting

Prepville, the independent Black school under study, is located in a large metropolitan city in the southeast section of the United States. The population of the city is approximately 394,017 of which 55 percent are Black. The public school system serves approximately 55,000 students, and 95 percent of this population is Black. The center of the metro area has a large, Black middle-class and is sometimes referred to as the "Black Mecca" of the South. It is also becoming known as an "International City" because it has been able to attract a diverse business population, both large and small, willing to relocate to the metropolitan area. Prepville is situated

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1Robert K. Yin, Case Study Research, 134.
in the southwest section of the city. The homes surrounding the school are neat in appearance and their respective small lawns are also well-maintained in this predominantly Black neighborhood.

**Historical Background**

Prepville initially began as a child development center for children from ages two through four. The center opened with four young children in 1978. Dr. Black (not her real name), the founder and headmaster of the school, opened Prepville because she wanted "to provide an alternative educational program for the Southwest." She later decided to make the preschool a full-fledged private school. Dr. Black expanded the pre-school to service children up to the third grade. Adjacent buildings were purchased to house those additional grades. In 1982, the school became fully accredited by the Georgia Accrediting Commission, a member of the Georgia Association of Independent Schools and a member of the Atlanta Area Association of Independent Schools. Other changes took place with that change. The Preschool became the Early School and the Primary School became the Elementary School. In 1989, another building was acquired and grades four and five were added. The school has increased its enrollment through the years.

**Demographic Characteristics**

Prepville is in operation all year round. The yearly tuition at Prepville is $3,800 for the two-, three-, and four-year-old students and $4,205 for pupils in kindergarten through the fifth grade. Current enrollment stands at 130 students. Fifty-five percent,
or seventy-two students, are in the Early School and forty-five percent, or fifty-eight students, attend the Elementary School. Children from ages two to four make up the Early School, and the Elementary School consists of students in kindergarten through the fifth grade. Table 1 below displays the cost and composition of the student population.

**TABLE 1**

**COMPOSITION OF STUDENT POPULATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Yearly Tuition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pre-K)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>$3,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Grade</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Grade</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Grade</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Grade</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>$4,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school employs a headmaster, a full-time assistant to the headmaster, eight full-time teachers, two full-time maintenance workers and a full-time cook. Adjunct teaching staff consists of music, sign-language, dance, band, and karate teachers.
Although the school has an open admissions policy, there are no Caucasian students in attendance. All students attending Prepville are Black. The majority of the students are African-American but there are students there that are from different cultures, such as Egyptian or Jamaican. The religious background of the student body is predominantly Christian, but there are students of varying faiths and denominations, such as Muslims, Jehovah Witness, and Seventh Day Adventist.

Although Prepville consist of a predominate African-American student population, it employs an international perspective or philosophy in developing its curriculum and students. Prepville is located in the same county in which the majority of its students reside, but there are students in attendance who come from five other surrounding counties.

Parental involvement surveys were mailed out to 106 parents. Table 2 provides a description of the respondents' gender, age, level of education, socio-economic status, and family composition. Half (53) of the surveys were returned. Of the parents who completed the surveys, 87 percent, or 46, were women and 13 percent, or 7, were men. The majority of the parents were over the age of twenty-five. The largest group of parents were in the 31-35 age range and there was one parent below the age of 20. The annual income level of the parents ranged from below $10,000 to more than $30,000. Six percent, or three, parents earned below $10,000 a year; seventeen percent, or nine, parents had incomes that ranged from $10,000 to 25,000 a year. Fifteen percent, or eight, parents had annual incomes of $25,000 to $30,000 a year, and sixty-two percent, or thirty-three parents earned $30,000 or more a year.
### TABLE 2

RESPONDENT'S' DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A) Below 20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) 21-25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) 26-30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) 31-35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E) 36-40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F) Over 40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A) High School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Jr. College</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) Voc.Sch./Coll.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) Undergrad. Deg</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E) Graduate Degree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A) Below $10,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) $10,001-15,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) 15,001-20,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) 20,001-25,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E) 25,001-30,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F) Over $30,000</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Structure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A) Mother Only</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Father Only</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) Mother &amp; Father</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. Percentages may not equal 100 because they were rounded to the nearest percent
Fifty-five percent or twenty-nine of the respondents lived with their spouses. Forty percent, or twenty-one, were single parents. In terms of the educational level of the parents, more than half had undergraduate degrees or technical degrees of some kind. There were only three parents without a college degree.

The school day began at 8:45 a.m. and ended at 3:00 p.m. Extended day care was available from 6:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. for those parents who needed it, however, in July 1996, Prepville’s opening time changed to 7:00 a.m. because so few students came earlier. It cost approximately $30 more a week for that service.

**Prepville’s Campus**

Prepville’s campus consisted of five buildings. All of the school buildings were private residences at one time, except the “main building,” as it was referred to by school staff and students. All buildings were painted pink and green. The pinkish color of the buildings was not a very bright pink but a subdued hue of pink. The windows, doors, and trimmings of each building were painted green. That pink and green color scheme was duplicated inside the classroom buildings. For example, in the main building, the walls were light pink and the wood trim around the windows, floors, and doors was green. Black, iron gate bars covered the ground level windows of each classroom building.

The main building, was the largest building on campus and was located on a hilltop off of a main street. It sat back from the street and was surrounded by a tall, black, wrought iron fence with pointed tips. The fence began at the foot of the hill and travelled along the side of the street to the top of the hill then wrapped around to
the front of the building. Its manicured front lawn was enclosed by a circular driveway, which made it convenient for parents to pick up and drop off their child(ren) at the entrance door. However, parents or guardians of the pre-schoolers were required to escort their child to class in the morning and from class at the end of the school day.

The front door of the main building opened into a small foyer. To the right side of the foyer was a small table. On the top of the table were several copies of the Atlanta Daily World, a Black community newspaper. Parents, school staff, or visitors were welcomed to take copies.

Once inside the foyer area, there were four steps that led up to the main floor of the building. The main floor consisted of Dr. Black’s (the headmaster’s) office, the Early School, a kitchen, and pantry area. To the left of the front entrance door was a hallway. The girls’ bathroom was on the left. It had a large, outer area which opened to a smaller, enclosed area that housed two children’s toilets. Opposite the girls’ bathroom were two water fountains. Each fountain had a wooden, stair-step stool in front of it for the “little people,” as the children were called. Further down the hallway on the left side was the boys’ bathroom. At the end of the hall was a doorway that led into the kitchen. The kitchen was neat and clean. It had two large double sinks, a dishwasher, a large industrial-styled refrigerator, a medium-size, free-standing freezer, stainless steel counter tops, and a very large, old, black industrial, but very functional, gas stove. The stove also had a black griddle section on the side.
Children from two to four years old made up the Early School. Their classroom area was a huge open room that extended from one end of the building to the other. The flooring was hard wood, but a section of the flooring was covered with green carpet starting alongside the outer wall and extending approximately five feet into the room. That area served as a comfortable, cozy setting for teaching lessons, telling stories, or other school activities. On the opposite wall, coat hooks were placed at a height easy for the children to hang their belongings, such as sweaters, umbrellas, or book bags. That enormous room was divided into three classrooms by two long, folding partitions on wheels. Those partitions were padded on both sides with a pinkish, tightly woven carpet material. They were stylish, attractive, and expensive, according to Dr. Black.

On my first visit to Prepville, several notices were taped to the front, black iron gate. One notice, addressed to parents, read, “For every 5 minutes you are late there is a $3 late fee.” Notices, of course, varied over time, reporting upcoming testing dates for students or announcing upcoming school field trips, contests, due dates for paying tuition, dates for teachers to turn in progress reports, and community events. Any school-related activity or important community news was easily noted by parents, students, school staff, or visitors who were entering or leaving the building.

Prepville’s Early School teaching staff consisted of four female teachers. Each of the teachers for the three-and four-year-old children had a large desk with an accompanying chair; a large, free-standing, rollable chalkboard; and children’s tables and chairs. The classroom for the two-year-old children contained four, long
children-sized tables. The tops of those tables were painted a lively green, and the children's chairs neatly lined each side of the table. The tables each sat six or seven children comfortably. Although that was the classroom for the youngest children, there were not many children's toys in that area. That room was also used as the lunchroom for the Early and Elementary School students.

Three adjacent buildings made up the Elementary School. Children in kindergarten through the fifth grades rotated among those buildings for their classes. There were four female, Elementary School teachers. Mrs. Kern (not real name) taught reading, spelling, and English. She was stationed in one building, which was a remodeled carport to house the library and the reading classroom. Ms. Brown (not a real name) had a classroom in the adjacent building and taught science, economics, and African-American culture. Mrs. Hert (not a real name) taught art, music, and social studies and also had her classroom in that building. Mrs. Arnold (not a real name) whose classroom was in the next building, taught Spanish and mathematics. In the upstairs loft of that building was the remedial reading and mathematics classroom. Students who fell below the 50 percentile on standardized achievement tests were eligible for that class. Two teachers on loan from a government grant supervised that classroom, however, that was not known to the researcher until December 1996, six months after beginning on campus! It was learned through a brief discussion with a staff member. A fifth building was located at the bottom of the hill, away from the other buildings, but was not in use at the time. Dr. Black
stated that she may use it as a Teacher Training Institute or for additional classroom space in the future.

My official starting day on Prepville’s campus was on June 3, 1996, at 12:45 p.m. It was a beautiful, sunny day, and children were running around and laughing on the playground. The girls wore white blouses with pink jumpers, and the boys’ uniform consisted of white shirts and green pants. One young, male student shouted, “Somebody get me!” and a young girl ran over and slapped his hand. A couple of girls were playing in the dirt, one girl sitting on the ground in her pretty, pink uniform and the other drawing a picture with a stick.

On my way to the front office, this researcher saw several notices posted to the opened gate. One notice announced dress code requirements for graduation day on June 15, 1996. It stated appropriate dress attire for both boys and girls. Girls had to wear white dresses, white socks, and black shoes. The boys were required to wear white pants, white shirts, white bow ties, black socks, black belts, and black shoes. Another notice read, “Teacher Appreciation Day Canceled…there was not enough support.” The names of parents who had contributed to the occasion were listed and given words of thanks for their support and told to pick up their refunds in the office.

Dr. Black’s door was open. On her door were three signs. One was a thought for the day - ”It is easier to build a child than to repair an adult.” Another alerted parents of a $3 charge for each 5 minutes they were late in picking up their child. The third notice let parents know that they had the right to review the school’s most recent evaluation report.
Dr. Black's office was small but neatly and effectively organized with the usual office equipment: a large desk with a cushioned, high-back, swivel chair; on her desk was a computer, a printer, a telephone, and an intercom system, which she used to communicate with her teachers. Behind her desk sat a black file cabinet, on it rested a miniature television and a small clock radio.

On the walls, hung various school achievements, including awards for Prepville's dance group and touring choir. Certificates of appreciation and plaques for various community affairs also were visible. There was a picture of Dr. Black receiving an award in Washington, D.C. from a dignitary. Black art decorated her walls. In one picture was a little black girl and the other a little black boy. A picture of African women in tribal dress, hung next to the other two pictures. A colorful banner, which was a souvenir from the school's student exchange trip to Mexico, hung on the wall.

The stairs in Dr. Black's office led to a loft. That room was sunny, neat, and comfortable. The window provided a good view of the front grounds. There was a small, tidy bathroom in one corner of the room and the floor had been recently carpeted. The loft also contained a medium-sized sofa which complemented the burgundy carpet. Two medium-sized, metal file cabinets were along one side of the wall and, on a table, was an electric typewriter. It appeared to be a quiet relaxing get-away for the administrative staff and teachers but, during my investigation, it appeared that the room was rarely used. Just outside of Dr. Black's office was a large picture of a group of children of different nationalities sitting in a circle. The picture appeared to symbolize the international perspective or flavor of the school.
Later in the year, that picture was replaced by three portraits of African-American children. As reported by Dr. Black, the framed pictures were donated to the school by a parent.

Dr. Black was in her office eating lunch. It was quiet in the building because the children were taking their afternoon naps. Dr. Black noticed me and motioned for me to sit down. From a small radio in Dr. Black’s office, Gospel music was softly playing in the background. Several newspapers were on the chair and had to be moved. Dr. Black said "I’m saving those papers for my parents."

We exchanged pleasantries and talked for awhile. This researcher commented on the beauty of the school grounds and Dr. Black responded:

We’re getting ready for Grandparents Day on June 14. Every year we send out invitations to the grandparents. We feel that they are also part of the school because they help support their grandchildren. Many of them either bring their grandchildren to school or pick them up after school; they babysit while the parents work or help to support them financially. So we like to take a day and honor them.

As we talked, Dr. Black received a number of calls from parents requesting information about Prepville’s tuition and starting dates for enrollment. One parent who called wanted to know when the summer program would start. A couple of teachers came by; one updated her regarding the progress of a student and the other handed her the daily attendance report. Parents also made spontaneous visits to Dr. Black’s office to share news or to ask how she was doing. One parent came in to pay tuition for the fall and began to tell Dr. Black about her ill mother. She said:

I have been running back and forth from Georgia to South Carolina…I just don’t know what to do! I don’t know whether or not I should move closer to my mother or have my mother moved to Georgia…I spend most of my time on
the road and I have to go there tomorrow and I really don’t know how I’m going to get ...here on time tomorrow morning!

Dr. Black stated, "I’ll pick her up to make sure she gets here on time. The parent was obviously very appreciative of this show of support and thanked Dr. Black for her assistance.

Participant Observations and Interviews

Ten scheduled interviews were conducted from June 13 to July 29, 1996, with all eight teachers, Dr. Black, and the headmaster's assistant. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 2 hours long. Participant observations and informal interviews with school staff, students, and parents were conducted throughout the research investigation. Observation and Interview data pertaining to Dr. Black, the teachers, and the students follow.

The Headmaster

Dr. Black was very much committed to her work. She was usually at her desk by 6:00 a.m. and didn’t leave until 6:00 p.m. Her door was always open, unless she was having a conference. Parents appeared to feel free to come in and talk to her at any time.

Each time this researcher went to Dr. Black’s office to notify her that I was on campus, Dr. Black was working on some sort of school project. She was always searching for ways to improve the educational programs at Prepville and worked to provide professional development for her teachers. For example, while sitting upstairs in the loft of her office, the researcher overheard her on the telephone trying
to arrange a workshop for her teachers on the topic of testing and evaluation. One
teacher informed me that Dr. Black had tried to get the teachers to buy group
insurance and had invited someone to talk to them about it. However, the teachers
decided to purchase any because they didn’t want to pay for it out of their pockets.

Dr. Black also wanted to maintain a neat and clean school. She had recently spent
$17,000 on painting and refurbishing the school walls. During the summer, roofers
were replacing the roofs on two of the buildings, and the buildings were routinely
sprayed for insects. Dr. Black was an attractive, well-proportioned woman with a
warm smile and a friendly manner. She always spoke in a clear, calm, soft voice and
was always very professional in her demeanor when she spoke to her staff, parents,
and students. Her staff addressed her as Dr. Black or answered her with “Yes,
Ma’am.” Everyone at Prepville was referred to as Miss, Misses or mister. No one
was referred to by their first name.

Dr. Black is a native of Georgia. She received her doctorate degree in counseling
from Clark Atlanta University and belongs to the Alpha Kappa Alpha (A.K.A.)
sorority. During an informal interview with a student, this researcher commented on
the color scheme of the school, and the student retorted, “Didn’t you know that
Dr. Black was an A.K.A.? Why do you think everything here [at school] is pink,
white, or green? These are their colors!”

Dr. Black had three daughters and two of them worked full-time at Prepville. One
served as her assistant and the other was a teacher for the elementary school.
Prepville had a top-down organizational structure. Dr. Black was the founder and official (instructional) leader of the school and made all the major decisions regarding curriculum and school policy. However, responses to interview questions on the topic of curriculum produced conflicting answers. For example, during an interview, Dr. Black was asked, “Who sets up the curriculum for your school?”

She replied, “It’s a cooperative endeavor between the headmaster and faculty.”

But when the same question was asked of her assistant, she said, “Dr. Black is totally responsible for the curriculum.”

A teacher answered, “I set up my own curriculum.” [for my students].

A reason for those discrepancies could have been that the researcher had not been clear in explaining what she meant by curriculum or that the interviewees had a different concept of what that term meant. Dr. Black could have interpreted the question as meaning the curriculum for the entire school.

Although, disagreement was found in that area, from my interactions and discussions with the teachers, Dr. Black was clearly the key decision-maker at Prepville. It was not surprising because she was the founder of the school and her children worked there in key positions, therefore, it was similar to a family run business.

On the parental involvement survey form, Dr. Black recommended changes in the wording of some questions. The question “Do you attend parent-teachers meeting?” was changed more specifically to “Do you attend Parent Pupil Support Council (PPSC) meetings?” She also suggested that a few questions be added, such as “Do
you follow proper protocol concerning school matters?” and “Do you discuss a problem first with the person most directly involved?” Dr. Black further recommended that some questions be deleted such, as “Does the principal encourage you to attend faculty and staff meetings?”and “Does the principal include you in decision-making?” and “Does the principal involve you in curriculum planning?” Dr. Black said, “You don’t need to ask any of those questions because they [parents] are not involved in any of these activities.” To this researcher, it appeared that questions related to parental involvement in determining school policy or curriculum planning were not encouraged or solicited.

The Teachers

All of the full-time teaching staff at Prepville were females and African-Americans except one teacher who was from Jamaica. There were two African American male teachers; one taught music and the other taught karate. The teachers at Prepville were very loving and understanding of the children under their charge. On many occasions, this researcher observed them hugging or kissing the children or intently listening to them when they were trying to express themselves. The children appeared to respond to the teachers’ love and attention by returning the hugs and kisses. One teacher said:

Children will look for you. If I leave [school] early the children will ask for me and say,[to whomever is present], ‘I didn’t give her a hug today before I left’...You can tell the ones that are starved for affection--they will be up under you all the time.
Many of the teachers hugged the children whether they were in the Early School or Elementary school. At Prepville, a hug, touch on the arm, or a pat on the shoulder indicated concern and was a delicate way of either instructing or chastising the student. It was not looked upon as inappropriate behavior. Those acts of compassion and concern for the children did not raise eyebrows among the staff nor were they interpreted as a sexual gesture.

The fear of touching students, however, appeared to have infiltrated the teacher training program at Clark Atlanta University (CAU). During my field research at Prepville, there were four other students from CAU at Prepville for six weeks, fulfilling internship obligations. One of the interns said that she was reprimanded by her supervisor for having her hand on a student's shoulder while she was talking to him. Her supervisor had marked that action against her and told her that she should avoid touching students. One of the elementary teachers said:

We run the school like a family...Children hear you better if you hold their hands. They need tender, loving, care. Children need that [affection]. I don't see that anymore like you should.

Displayed throughout many of the elementary classrooms was the following motto:

*I Can, I Must, I Will...There are No Excuses!!* The teachers tried to instill in the students an attitude that they can do anything they want to do if they are willing to work for it. The elementary school teachers have very small classes. The largest class was the kindergarten with 26 students. There were fourteen students in the first grade, 5 in second grade, and 7 in third grade. There wasn't a fourth grade when the study began in June 1996, however, there were six fifth graders. Each teacher taught
more than one subject. For example, one teacher taught economics, African American culture, and science. All elementary students changed classes for the different subject. Music and art were not taught everyday but two or three times a week, depending on whether or not it was Cycle I, II, or III (quarters).

Based on the interview data from teachers, the values mentioned most often that they try to instill or reinforce among their students are academics, honesty and truthfulness, respect for self and others, morals, and a knowledge of their past. An Early School teacher commented,: “I like to see the light bulb go in their face - I love to see that!”

In another instance, while observing a fifth grade class, a student asked the teacher, “Why didn’t I get an A?”

The teacher responded, You did not get an A because you did not do A work. It would be unfair to the others who worked like a dog! You had a month and two weeks to do the project - only two students did all of what they were suppose to do.

From my perspective, the teacher expressed to the student three values that she believed were important: the hard work ethic, a sense of fairness, and truthfulness.

All teachers demanded and received respect from their students. Students were expected to display good manners and appropriate classroom behavior. One teacher instructed a female student to uncross her legs while she was sitting in class. While observing in another class, the teacher said to the class, “Don’t you see that we have a guest here and you should not be talking.?” The teachers seemed adept at providing a learning environment that was not oppressive but warm and yet serious.
Recognition and affirmation of the students' African heritage permeates the school. This researcher noted several artifacts on one of the classroom tables in the African American culture class. There were games such as Forty Famous Black Americans and Black Quest. On display was a book on Thurgood Marshall and another on W.E.B. DuBois. On the classroom wall were the words “KNOW YOUR HERITAGE.” Also hanging on the walls were pictures of famous Black people, such as Ray Charles, Marian Anderson, and Bill Cosby. Books by Black authors were in the reading classroom and the Early School children were read poems or stories by Black authors and poets. Students were always taught to be proud of their history and culture. However, there was one fifth grade student whom the researcher interviewed who said he wasn’t proud that his ancestors were from Africa because they were backwards.

The Students

The students at Prepville were curious and friendly. As they became accustomed to this researcher's presence on campus, that is to say, seeing me in the classrooms and with the teachers at lunch, or in Dr. Black’s office, they became more friendly and talkative. This researcher interviewed all fifth grade students and interacted with them frequently in various situations, such as playing volleyball, or conversing with them briefly before or after class, or during lunch time. Most of the third and second graders were also interviewed, and the researcher generally carried on spontaneous, light conversations with the Early School pupils on several different occasions. Because my head was covered during the research period, one Early school pupil
asked, "Are you from the desert?" Another student wanted to know if the researcher was from Africa. Evidently, they had not seen or known of Black Muslim women at their young age.

When interviewed, the third and fifth grade students were asked what they disliked about the school. The response mentioned most often was the wearing of uniforms all the time. They wanted to be able to wear different clothing sometimes. What the students liked most were their teachers and school field trips. Many students also stated that they had friends at all grade levels at Prepville. The school was small, therefore, students got to know each other well during cooperative work or through interactions in a variety of educational experiences. Students gathered to listen to visiting guest speakers on Career Day and worked together on school programs such as the graduation ceremony, the annual celebration of Grandparents Day, and the International Day Program, in which students researched information regarding the culture and customs of different countries. Displays were created and students worked with their teachers to sell artifacts and food related to the particular country they researched. Parents, relatives, and the community attended that yearly event.

Students had high aspirations for themselves. The fifth graders mentioned the following career aspirations: a pediatrician, a stunt man or basketball player, the first female African-American president, and a veterinarian. Some of the career choices mentioned by the second and third graders were: a doctor, lawyer, a "boss like my mom," a nurse, singer, dancer, and teacher. In interviews, all third and fifth grade students were asked "Do you believe that your racial heritage originates from Africa:
If so, are you proud or ashamed of this fact?" All of them believed that their history began in Africa and were proud of that fact except one student. Overall, the students appeared relaxed and happy in their school.

The following questions were answered in a narrative format:

1. What is the school’s philosophy?

The term, educational philosophy, is defined in this study as a belief in the way children should be reared and taught. In a formal interview, Dr. Black was asked, “What type of student is your school trying to produce?” She replied:

Well, we’re trying to develop a fully functioning person. We want them to know that the world is no longer limited. We want them to grow academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

That holistic perspective was also stated in Prepville’s brochure, where its philosophy was stated as:

Education is global. It requires an international perspective for the actualization of relevance in a world of diversity. And, therefore; should assure every student an opportunity for those experiences in order to meet the standards to:

Respond logically in society

Become innovative and creative

Develop a way of thinking that enhances positive behavior and attitudes which assure desired results and articulate the same, become futuristic in focus

Understand chance and adjust to it

Adapt to higher expectations and become serious about the need for an education in order to become productive, committed, self-actualized beings with an “I CAN BE” attitude of life.
Some insight was obtained about one teacher’s world view by a poem that was hanging on her classroom wall. The following poem was written by Charles Swindall and entitled “Attitude.”

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failure, than successes, than what the people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company...a church...a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past...we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude...I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our attitudes.

The importance of having the proper attitude is not just one teacher’s view but is part of Prepville’s philosophy. In its 1990 yearbook it stated that:

The philosophy of the school is accomplished through the: "I Can " attitude, which encourages the student to be productive, committed, and focused. In this regard, the [school] seeks to provide a high quality education with an international perspective, based on the 5 R’s: Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Respect, and Responsibility.

This "I Can" attitude appeared to be reflected in the students’ aspirations. Students chose careers such as doctor, boss, and the first African-American, woman President.

Dr. Black and the teachers at Prepville had a tendency to decorate their walls, doors, and rooms with sayings or poems that appeared to reflect their opinions, attitudes, or beliefs about life or child rearing practices. One article that appeared in Prepville’s monthly newsletter also expressed its pedagogical philosophy. The article was entitled: “How to Raise a Crook” and went like this:

Begin from infancy to give the child everything he wants. This way he will grow up to believe that the world owes him a living.
When he picks up bad words, laugh at him. It will encourage him to pick up cuter phrases that will blow the top off your head later.

Never give him any spiritual training. Wait until he is 21 and then let him decide for himself.

Avoid the use of the word “wrong.” It may develop a guilt complex. This will condition him to believe later when he is arrested for stealing a car, that society is against him and he is being persecuted.

Pick up anything he leaves lying around - books, shoes, clothing. Do everything for him so he will be experienced in throwing the responsibility onto others.

Let him read any printed matter he can get his hands on. Silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feed on garbage.

Quarrel frequently in the presence of the children. Then they won’t be too shocked when the home is broken up.

Give the child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as rough as you had them?

Satisfy his every craving for food, drink and comfort. See that every desire is gratified. Denial may lead to harmful frustrations.

Take his part against the neighbors, teachers and policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child.

When he gets into real trouble, apologize for yourselves by saying, “I never could do anything with him.”

Prepare for a life of grief because you are sure to have it.

The newsletter indicated that Prepville was a school that believes in providing parents and students with sound parenting and child rearing information or guidelines. A comment made by Dr. Black regarding vacation time for students provided another glimpse into her thoughts about how children should spend their leisure time. She said:
Children don’t need long vacations. They need to be in school. [They] don’t need to be out doing nothing. [They] need to be learning...children are exposed to a lot on T.V. I have cable but I don’t have all that other stuff. I don’t see a need for it. Last night I was watching television and I saw two people - look like they were having sex. I felt like gurgitating.

Prepville’s focus on learning is also mentioned in its school song which states:

DEAREST Prepville, we do love you true.
You have been our building place,
We’re proud to be of you.
Your are warm and gentle,
Your are strong and firm
But we love you most of all,
Because you help us learn....

1a. What is the school’s mission or purpose?

The mission statement indicates that Prepville attempts to develop the “Whole Child.” That is to say it is interested in developing the mental, emotional, social, physical and spiritual aspects of the student’s personality. In Prepville’s yearbook, its purpose was written as follows:

...They [Dr. Black and others] saw a need to avail the southwest area with a major educational option. This option provided for the development of children in the early stages as it related to academic, personal, social, emotional, moral and spiritual growth...The original dream saw the school as a community support system. The reality has become a community stalwart that aptly accommodates the needs of the children (the future community) in a comprehensive setting. Because our society and our heritage has deemed it necessary, Prepville is bound to its commitment to excellence, and is constantly seeking avenues for ongoing superiority in this decade, moving further toward the cross-cultural experience and the international perspective as new ground is broken and new fields are cultivated.

Mrs. Fine (not a real name) was Dr. Black’s assistant and the school’s choir director.

In an interview she was asked, “How would you describe the mission of your school?” She said:
[To] give the students a balance - not only education but a balance in the community. We feel that academics is highly important. We also give the children a well-rounded education - exposure - extensive exposure, in and outside of the classroom. I look at what Prepville has done for my own children. It has given them a positive environment. I was able to be with them and witness their achievements on a day to day basis.

One pre-school teacher stated the mission simply as: “to better educate our African American children.” Another Early School teacher replied:

A well-developed child - A child that is interested, one that wants to be challenged - A well-disciplined child.

In another interview, an Early School teacher believed Prepville’s mission was:

...to give knowledge as best we can. Children need love and understanding. [We] need to be affectionate and help them learn how to communicate and take criticism - then their upbringing will be developed as it should.

An elementary teacher stated succinctly that the mission was to teach the three R’s. (reading, writing, and arithmetic). Two elementary teachers, however, could not recall or were unaware of Prepville’s mission statement.

Prepville’s brochure stated:

Prepville’s Mission is interbred within the confines of its philosophy which shares the accepted premise that every student is entitled to become educated for life. To this end; therefore, Prepville’s mission is threefold: (1) To strengthen the basic essentials of education in the early and elementary schools. (2) To educate students 2 years of age through 12 years of age, in basic educational requirements, thereby, providing the skills and tools essential to achieving the quality of education requisite to assure very high standards, and, to fulfill its commitment to the task of developing fully functional children in a global society.

Prepville’s major focus of course was on educating young students in the basics, that is to say, in reading, writing, and arithmetic, plus other things such as moral and spiritual training. Prepville wanted to build students’ self-confidence so that they will
feel confident in competing with others in this global society. The concept of self-confidence became more evident while interviewing a parent. She felt her daughter was doing well in school but didn’t want her daughter to become over-confident. She expressed that by saying:

They [teachers] tell her all the time that they’re [students] the best. I want her to be confident but I don’t want her to think that she’s better than anybody else. I want her to be balanced.

1b. What are the school’s objectives?

The motto of the school was “AN INVESTMENT IN LITTLE PEOPLE.” Prepville’s objective was to provide a nurturing environment in order to produce students who were self-confident, intelligent, disciplined, and who had high moral standards. Prepville’s yearbook helped to provide insight into its goals and objectives. Toward the back of the yearbook, the following was written:

We are responsible for providing a rich heritage and legacy for our children’s future. A legacy fostered by love, caring, sharing and helping each other.

Let us give to our children a finer sense of community. A community much like our ancestors had. By working together and supporting each other in every endeavor, we develop the tools we need to build such a community. Up you mighty race! Make this a strong Black community, unified Black family, and a self assured Black child.

The Yearbook was also written in an ABC prose format interspersed with pictures of the students, faculty, and staff. Following are some excerpts of its value statements:

Our African-American Heritage affirms our context for living. We need to continue to recognize and reaffirm our African-American Heritage and our context.
Black describes our culture, our heritage, our beauty, and our celebration.

Courage motivates us to maintain our commitment to excellence.

We Dedicate ourselves to the work and the goals before us.

Our Earth is our home. We must take care of her.

Our Faith sustains us, even when knowledge fails us.

Goals are the magical ingredient in our personal miracle making.

Our Hope for a better future is integrally intertwined with our children of the present.

I am because we are; And because we are, therefore I am.

Our Goal is Justice for all the children of the world.

Kindness is a necessary ingredient for meaningful success.

Loving teachers are God’s gift to the universe.

Our Manners are our tools for gracious living.

To be in touch with Nature is to be in touch with ourselves.
Opportunity is best found by those who seek her and are prepared.

Positivity is congruent with the universe.

Quiet as it’s kept...with many great men, are great women.

We must Respect our elders, our children, our schools, and ourselves.

Studying is the process of learning to live and to grow holistically.

With clear objective and Tenacity, we reach our goals.

Unified is the best way to struggle, to win, to celebrate.

Victorious, we rise to the challenges and achieve.

Our wonderful World is ours to share, not to horde or destroy.

Rest is essential.

Excitement is the spice of life.

As we cherish our Youth we secure our destiny.

May the Zenith of our learning be in giving and sharing.

During my first week on Prepville’s campus, my time was spent primarily observing the setting and the school staff. This researcher noticed that many of the teachers were very affectionate with the children. Hugs and kisses were freely given to the students. Teachers and students also joked and played together. It appeared
that the teachers and the administrative staff believed in providing their students with a loving and nurturing environment.

Another goal of the school was to provide students with the “right” type of values and appropriate behavior. During each interview with the teachers, all teachers were asked “What values do you try to teach your students?” The values mentioned most often were academics, self-respect, honesty, and pride. For example, one teacher said, “manners and the academics, of course."

2. What is the school’s curriculum

The school year at Prepville was divided into three cycles and was open all year. Cycles I and II were measured in semester units of credit. Cycle III is the summer cycle and provided reinforcement and enrichment opportunities. Its curriculum emphasized the 5 R’s, reading, writing, arithmetic, plus respect and responsibility. There was not a gifted program or a concept of failure for children in the Early School or kindergarten. There was, however, a strong emphasis on academics and providing students with a wide range of experiences through field trips and other learning activities, such as karate, dance, and music. Self-development and basic skills were stressed with an attitude that students “can do” anything that they set their minds to if they wanted to work for it. Students were always reminded through song, dance, and parables that they should always strive to do their best. For example, a male student in the kindergarten was asked the following question during an interview, “What type of things do you think you should be learning in school?” He answered in a matter of fact manner:
Math, comprehension, about the Lord, reading, social studies, economics, learning about coloring, learn how to work, sweep the kitchen, learn how to use the bathroom and brushing your teeth and learn how to stand up tall and learn how to draw, learn how to wipe up and learn how to get a stool if you're too small, and learn how to write, and subtract, add, and multiply and learn how to print and write in cursive, run without falling, learn how to read, learn the rules of the computer and learn how to sit on the chair properly, learn how to put on your coat and learn how to draw pictographs!

I had expected a few phrases but not that litany of topics. Students at Prepville were taught early that education was very important and that they were there to learn.

The core curriculum consisted of the following subjects:

Reading
Mathematics
Science
Language/Writing,
Physical Development
Music
Library Use
Humanities/Social Studies
African American culture
Economics
Spanish
Art

Prepville also offered an extensive extra-curricular program, including:

Touring Choir
Drama and Dance
Drill Team
Sign Language
Band
Student Exchange Program
Computer

The Student Exchange Program helped to develop partnerships with students in other countries. Its goal was:
...to contribute to international understanding and world peace by offering children opportunities to actually meet and make friends with elementary school children from other nations.

This exchange program gives children the opportunity to travel abroad. Thereby, helping the children realize that people in the member countries are real people, friends, distant neighbors and not the stereotypes read about.

The Early School students were introduced to the computer as early as age three and Prepville’s touring choir helped students to learn discipline, cooperation, and self-control and, at the same time, gave the students a chance to showcase their talents.

Prepville students were expected to exhibit proper and moral behavior. They were actually graded on their report cards for displaying behavior that reflected the following values: respect, responsibility, honesty, courteous, truthfulness, dependability, kindness, punctuality, loyalty and neatness.

Students were required to pay for their school books. The books that they use were books that any other public school might use for their students. The fourth graders booklist for the 1996-1997 school year included such books as Flights, a reading book and reading workbook published by the Macmillan Company; a social studies book entitled I Know A Place; and a phonics book called Phonics We Use, which is published by the Riverside Publishing Company. Teachers, however, did supplement their lessons with other than the required text books. For instance, when the science teacher was interviewed she stated, “...I teach interdependence [of subject matter], I don’t like teaching exactly from a book.”

Prepville’s newsletters also provided a wealth of information and insight about the parents, students, and values of Prepville. The newsletter gave a class-by-class
update on each major subject area, such as African-American culture, economics, science, and social studies. For example, written under the heading, “African-American Culture” was:

What do you know about the motherland and your heritage? Feel free to sit in on one of the classes and learn how our civilization began.

Under “Economics” was written:

Learn how to become an entrepreneur. Understanding scarcity and opportunity cost can make this possible. The Young Investor’s Program offered by Citizen’s Trust Bank can also start you on your path to success.

The newsletter was a great resource for keeping the Prepville community informed of major events or happenings at the school and general information regarding students’ achievements and other Prepville family members. In addition, it provided tips on issues related to parenting, health, and safety.

2a. What cultural knowledge is considered most important?

A knowledge of African-American culture and a belief in God permeates the curriculum. Knowledge of Black history and culture are taught in the “African-American Culture” course. For instance, one morning this researcher was observing the Early School students. Before any actual teaching began, the students first recited from memory the “Black Pledge of Allegiance.” Secondly, the students sang the “Black National Anthem.” After the “Pledge of Allegiance” was recited, the song “America America” was sung by the students. The Black Pledge follows:

I pledge allegiance
To the cause
Of a unified
Black America
and to the purpose
The pledges and songs were recited every day.

The school’s Christian teaching of God (Jesus Christ) was taught through music and songs. Although a religion course was not taught at Prepville, a Christian atmosphere was pervasive throughout the school. Blessings (grace) were said at breakfast and lunchtime and the June graduation ceremony was opened with a prayer and children sang the song “All Over God’s Heaven.” Also, observing a sign language class, the teacher was teaching the students to “sign” a spiritual song. The words to the song were:

The presence of the Lord is here, in this place.
Can you feel the anointing and its power? Come into his presence with singing and praise,
enter into his court with Thanksgiving. The presence of the Lord is here in this place.
In his presence there is love

In his presence there is power
In his presence there is peace
In his presence there is healing
In his presence there is joy
In his presence there is hope

Also, during my attendance at the graduation ceremony, all the graduates sang a song for the audience. The name of that song was “Shake the Devil Off,” another spiritual song. Thus, a belief in God was more or less carried out through the teaching of music, through course instruction (sign language), and through rituals such as the
graduation ceremony or through the celebration of holidays such as Christmas. On another occasion, before taking off on a school bus trip, the headmaster's assistant asked everyone on the bus to bow their heads while she prayed for a safe trip. She ended the prayer by saying "in Jesus name, we pray. Amen."

Prepville also emphasized the importance of striving for academic excellence. The highest honor that a student can receive at Prepville, was to be placed on the "Headmaster's List." That award was given at the end of the school year to the student who had the highest grade point average and who had also displayed high moral standards or character traits.

Prepville's curriculum appeared to stress academic excellence, knowledge concerning African-American culture, and other cultures, and moral and spiritual aspects of a student's personality. The students were explicitly and implicitly taught that they were capable students and could reach any goal they strived for, and that their dreams or goals could be accomplished with a belief in God and by maintaining a positive attitude in everything they did. Thus, the themes of a loving, warm, and nurturing (family) environment, positive attitude with a hard work ethic, and a belief in God, were starting to emerge from parent and teacher interviews, school documents, and from this researcher's role as a participant observer. The administrative staff and teachers appeared to have successfully created a family atmosphere in which parents and students felt at home and at ease. Strong relationships among teachers, students, and parents appeared evident. In a telephone interview with a former parent whose daughter had graduated from Prepville, she said
“I really miss the family atmosphere.” In another informal interview with a parent who worked at the school as a custodian, when he was asked if he liked the school, he said: “I like it. They [teachers] care. They really care.” When students were asked what they liked most about the school, all of them mentioned the teachers and the school field trips. No student said he hated school or a teacher.

2b. What activities or programs does the school provide to foster academic, social, moral, and spiritual growth?

Each cycle (semester) a student was selected to receive the "Headmaster’s List." This honor was awarded to a student who had the highest grade point average and who displayed good conduct. Other events such as Spelling Bees and class projects helped to display students’ talents.

Through Prepville’s extra-curricular activities, the students had the opportunity to gain knowledge, social and physical skills by participating in a variety of activities that could enhance other aspects of their development. Through dance class the students learned motor and rhythmic skills and learned how to appreciate the arts. The boys were able to take karate, which helped them to develop and improve discipline. Prepville’s Touring Choir offered students a chance to learn vocal and projection skills as well as new songs. Participation in the choir and band helped students to build self-confidence and self-control by having them perform at a variety of community and school functions. The instructor of the Touring Choir stated, “I teach self-confidence through music.” Through Prepville’s extra-curricular activities, the students had fun, learned new skills and learned how to work cooperatively in groups.
An event that was held every year was Grandparents' Day. The grandparents were honored for the help they provided to the students. Many of them supported the children in a variety of ways. They were the babysitters, the cab drivers, the bankers, and an emotional and social support system for their children and grandchildren.

3. How are the students performing?

(a) To what extent are students achieving academic success in reading and mathematics as measured by the IOWA Test of Basic Skills?

The IOWA math and reading test scores of the children were not accessible to this researcher. When asked to review the scores, Dr. Black replied, “I can’t do that because that information is confidential.” However, Dr. Black did allow me to review students’ report cards from the first marking period of the school year. The recorded grades for both reading and math for all students were either A’s or B’s. There was one student with a grade of C in reading, but she was no longer at Prepville because it became difficult for her mother to pay her tuition. Overall, the students were successful in learning the content that was being presented to them by their teachers, based on their grades from their report cards.

However, through an informal conversation with one of the teachers during December 1996, it was learned that a federally sponsored program was being offered at Prepville for students who needed additional help in reading or mathematics. The program was available to both public and private schools that were located in low income areas. Grants were available for those schools but each school had to apply
for the grants. If a school’s application was approved, the government provided additional staff for teaching students who fell below the 50 percentile in reading or math on standardized achievement tests. That was Prepville’s first year for receiving such aid.

The student report cards also reflected the mission, objectives, and values of Prepville. Students were graded in three areas. The Experience Evaluation section listed the subjects that were taught, such as reading, math, social studies, Spanish, health, and science. Students were evaluated by a letter grade (A,B,C,D,F or I [incomplete]). Student attendance was the second area, and Moral and Spiritual Values was the third area for evaluation. That area was divided into the values that the student was graded upon. They were: respect, responsibility, honesty, courteous, kindness, truthfulness, dependability, punctuality, loyalty, and neatness.

Prepville had a waiting list for their Early School Program. It had a large kindergarten class of 26 students and currently had fourteen children in the first grade. But, as the grade levels increased, the number of students in those grades decreased. One parent said during an informal interview, “parents seem to take their children out when they get to the higher grades because they are not satisfied with the teaching.” From that statement and from observing the small amount of students in each class at the elementary level, one might infer that the teaching at the higher grade levels was not at the level that parents expected, that parents did not wish to or could not pay tuition, or that they may have wanted to send their children to public schools after they had gained a strong foundation in the basic core subject areas or
had developed a strong sense of knowing who they were as Black people. However, the parental survey showed that 85 percent, or 45 parents, were satisfied with the education their child(ren) were receiving at Prepville.

3b. How are students’ ethnic identity being affirmed?

Students’ identities were being affirmed through a variety of media. One such way was through instruction in the African-American Culture class that all elementary students were required to take. There were a variety of pictures of Black children displayed throughout the school. In an art class, during the Christmas season, students were making pictures of Santa Claus. Santa Claus’ face was made from brown construction paper and his eyebrows and beard were made from cotton balls. Parables and sayings were also displayed throughout the school. The library and other classrooms had a variety of books about Black people and books written by Blacks. The library also offered a variety of books about people of other cultures.

One proud parent said:

I send her [daughter] here because of the location, the money, and the education. It’s much more than that, it’s everything! We get so much for the money. She loves them and they love her. She is only three years old. Last Sunday when we went to church, we sung the Black National Anthem. My daughter said, ‘Daddy, I know that song. We sing it in school.’

The students also saw people like themselves in books, in the pictures that hung on the walls in hallways and in their classrooms. They also got to see an educational institution owned and operated by their own people.
3c. How are the students performing morally and spiritually?

From my observations of the students in different settings, such as the playground, the lunchroom, and in classes, the students appeared to get along well with each other and with their teachers. Older students played with each other but would interact and play with the younger students as well. One student remarked, “I have a lot of friends because the school is so small. I have friends in the lower grades and friends in the higher grades.” No physical fights were observed during my visits on campus. Students did not talk back to teachers or disrespect them in any manner. The students were well-behaved and polite toward the headmaster, teachers, and the researcher.

Such things as theft or vandalism appeared to be absent at this school. This researcher’s purse was left in a classroom a couple of times without incident. At the graduation ceremony, a teacher left her pocketbook on the ground and it was returned to Dr. Black’s office by a student. Students did not have personal lockers. Book bags and personal belongings were left in the classroom during lunch and field trips. Desirable character traits, such as honesty, respect and good manners, were emphasized by parents, teachers, and the rest of the school staff. Students’ belief in God became evident during the interviews. All students that were interviewed by this researcher answered “yes” when asked the question, “Do you believe in God?”

4. What type of relationship exist between teachers and students?

In my role as an [teacher’s] aide, in a variety of settings in both the Early and Elementary School, it became increasingly obvious that the teachers believed in providing a warm, loving, nurturing environment for their students. The teachers
showed affection toward their students by hugging or kissing them. They also used endearing terms or language when they spoke to their students. One teacher said to a child, “What’s the matter sweetheart?” when she saw the child looking sad. In another situation, a young girl (who looked as if she did not want to go to class that day) was entering the classroom and an Early School teacher said, "Come on sugar and give me a hug." From my observations, the students appeared relaxed and happy at Prepville. Data from students’ interviews also supported this observation. Students also liked and respected their teachers.

The Parents

Questions five and six were answered based on the data collected from the parental involvement questionnaire.

5. To what extent are parents involved in school activities?

One hundred and ten parental involvement surveys were mailed out to parents. Four of the surveys were returned as undeliverable. Therefore, half (53) of the surveys were returned. Parents selected Prepville for different reasons but the reason that was cited most often was because of its “good education.” Over half of the parents stated that the school was either recommended to them by a friend or a relative. Other reasons, cited most often, were: it was an African-American school, its location, and the child’s age requirement. (Prepville takes children starting at the age of two.) Many of the parents gave several responses why they selected Prepville and did not give just one response. For example, some comments were:

Education and discipline; close to home, management by African Americans, & economical; because of its small & warm family-like atmosphere; good
education & enhances spiritual belief-, God first, and family values; school is safe, school puts education first, I’m very comfortable with school,; We’re looking for a predominantly Black school that stresses learning, nurturing, discipline, and safety.

According to the parents, the school stressed the importance of getting a good education, self-pride, good manners, discipline, respect, honesty, and cultural awareness. Eighty-seven percent (46) of the parents believed the school did encourage students to have a belief in God. Four percent (2) said the school did not encourage a belief in God. Eighty-five percent (45) of the parents stated that the school was meeting its children’s needs. Nine percent (5) said the school was not meeting their children’s needs. In a follow-up telephone interview, one dissatisfied parent said:

They have a basic principle - good family principles and whatever. They try to teach that they do some good things - The skill level of the teachers -that’s one of the facts that creates the problem - there’s the program at Prepville - the course curriculum, the subjects, resources are not up to standard. It’s not the skill level I was looking for. Eighty or seventy-five percent of their program is just day care. To learn to sit quietly and not to do things - not generating development. I’m a professional. I’m aware of the importance of exposing children to a variety of things at an early age. [They] train a kid to listen to the teacher, sit there quietly, and if a kid is a little active or rowdy - [They are] labeled as hard to discipline kid. The biggest problem with most private schools (for children) at this age -(under 5 years old) Most of them just day care. The teachers, they have a day care mind set...Noticed my child came home with inappropriate language. She came home with profane language - she got that from another kid. They were approached and showed concern but they didn’t have a system to deal with the problem. There is too much yelling. (referring to the teachers). Not to say they’re (the teachers) not nice or loving.

Although there were three parents who were not satisfied with their child’s progress, 91 percent (48) were satisfied.

Parents had high expectations for their children. They all want them to attend college. One parent specified that she wanted her child to attend a technical college.
Fifty-seven percent (30) of the parents had their child(ren) at Prepville for one year or longer. Thirty-eight percent (20) had their child(ren) in attendance for less than a year.

6. What criteria are used by parents to judge the successful development of their child(ren)?

In judging whether or not their child was progressing satisfactorily, many parents looked at the overall development of their child; that is to say, they looked at their child’s academic, social, and emotional development. Many parents said they listened to their children. They asked questions and looked at their written school work or homework. Parents who did not have children in the elementary grades were more concerned about their child’s happiness and fit at the school. One parent said she wanted her child to be “...able to show and tell what she has learned - is she relaxed, happy and not afraid to go to school.” Other parents mentioned grades and test scores. A typical parental response was, “Grades and the amount of attention [child gets].” One male parent summed up his criteria for judging the successful development of children by stating, “[It is] The dreams and aspirations of the children that are the most important measure of success.

Although there were some negative comments made by three parents, the majority of the responses given by the parents were positive and most were pleased with the development of their children’s progress at Prepville. However, the very small number of students in the second, third, and fifth grades implied that parents were opting to take their children elsewhere when they got to the higher grades. That may be because they were not satisfied with the quality of teaching at those grade levels.
On the other hand, parents may not continue supporting a school because of lack of funds, which was the reason one student did not continue at Prepville.

Summary

This was a descriptive study of an independent Black school. The philosophy of the school focused on developing the "whole child."

Four major techniques were used to collect the data: interviews, participant-observation, document review, and a parental involvement questionnaire. Six themes emerged: a focus on providing a quality education for Black students; establishing an (family) environment in which students feel safe and loved; developing positive relationships among parents, teachers, students and community; developing the moral and spiritual side of the student; providing a positive identity for African-American students; and a dedicated and committed headmaster and teachers.

The interview, participant-observation, document review, and survey data overlapped on the themes of providing a quality education and providing a culturally relevant environment for Black students. That is to say, that a quality education was emphasized but was based on the particular needs of its Black student population. For example, the teaching of African-American Culture was something the school deemed necessary for the development of the students’ identity and self-confidence.

The parental involvement questionnaire and student interviews showed without a doubt that the majority of parents felt that the needs of their children were being addressed. To date they were satisfied with the development of their children’s progress. The teacher’s and headmaster’s interviews provided insight on what was
the philosophy of the school in teaching and training Black students. My role as a participant-observer also allowed me to see and feel the genuine care and commitment from both teachers and administrative staff. They obviously believed that students should be shown love, and they constantly demonstrated that by outward signs of affection in class and during special ceremonies. The school also worked hard to provide students with a well-rounded and diverse curriculum. The students participated in a variety of field trips, took Spanish classes, and participated in a student exchange program that provided an international experience. The parents were actively involved in their child’s education and their presence was very much welcomed in the school, at school functions, and as leaders and role models.
Conclusions

The twofold purpose of this study was (1) to assess the effectiveness of an independent Black school in meeting the developmental needs of its students and (2) to use a case study research approach to consider the implications of these findings for developing a more culturally sensitive model for evaluation. Six basic research questions were posed:

1. What is the school's philosophy?

Prepville's philosophy was that all children could learn. Its philosophy also rested on the concept of educating the "Whole Child," meaning that the mental, physical, social, and spiritual aspects of the student's personality should be developed. Prepville's philosophy also emphasized that students should be nurtured in a warm, loving, family-type environment in order to bring out his or her fullest potential.

2. What is the school's curriculum?

Prepville's curriculum reflected its philosophy. It was balanced and comprehensive. The headmaster, teachers, and parents had high expectations for their children, and children also had high expectations for themselves. For example, the Headmaster's List was the highest achievement that a student could achieve at
Prepville. That honor was bestowed on the student who attained the highest grade point average and had displayed good behavior during a marking period. Parents expected their children to attend college and students had dreams and aspirations (such as wanting to be the first African-American woman President, to be a veterinarian, and to be a boss) that showed they had set high goals for themselves.

Prepville offered a wide range of subjects and extra-curricular activities that were designed to nurture and develop students’ knowledge in core or basic subjects such as math and science. An international perspective of the world was provided through Prepville’s Student Exchange Program. The school also provided activities such as dance, drama, music, and karate. In addition, a band and a touring choir helped to nurture students’ creative and physical talents. That knowledge appeared to be given from an African or Afrocentric perspective (a term coined by Molefi K. Asante). Prepville was also a fully accredited institution which indicated that it offered a quality program.

3. How are students performing (i.e. academically, socially, morally and spiritually)?

The students at Prepville appeared to be doing well academically, morally and socially. It was not possible to review students’ standardized test scores, therefore, data were not available on how Prepville students performed on national tests. However, grades written on students’ first report card of the 1996-1997 school year in reading and math indicated that students were performing well, reflecting grades of mostly A’s and B’s in those two subject areas. However, there were remedial reading and math classes at Prepville, which implied that some students were not performing
up to national standards on norm referenced tests. That also shows, however, that the headmaster was concerned with improving and meeting the needs of those students who required additional academic support.

Observation of students in a variety of activities showed that they got along with their classmates and with their teachers. There were no physical fights nor did the parents express any concerns regarding the safety of their children at Prepville. Students were encouraged to reflect on their moral and spiritual duties by teachers through acts of prayer, singing songs, and participating in community events. Proper behavior and attitudes were reinforced in and outside of the classroom. However, some early school teachers reported minor discipline problems.

4. What type of relationship exists between teachers and students?

A loving and respectful relationship existed between teachers and students. The teachers and students interacted uninhibitedly and acted very much as a family unit. Teachers were able to joke and also to be firm with students. Teachers loved and respected students and students showed respect and love for their teachers.

5. To what extent are parents involved in school activities?

Prepville wanted and encouraged parent participation in school events and activities. Parents were very supportive of the school and of their children. They financially assisted the school through fund raising events beyond what was expected from tuition and book fees. Parents felt free to visit the school at any time and were supportive of students by attending and participating in school events. However, the
parents did not appear to be involved in making decisions regarding curricular matters.

6. What criteria are used by parents to judge the successful development of their children?

Parents are looking for a quality school and they want the school to be culturally relevant to their children. Data collected from the parent involvement questionnaires showed that parents took great care in selecting a private school for their child. The most often cited reason for selecting Prepville was its academic program. The next often cited response was because it was a Black institution. The parents liked the "family-like" atmosphere at Prepville.

Parents tended to look for overall improvement or development of their children. They looked at how happy their children were at school; they looked at their behavior and how they related to other children; and, of course, they paid attention to the grades their children received in classes and how they performed on standardized tests.

The findings of this case study support the concept of education as being a cultural process. The curriculum was an African centered curriculum because of its focus on African American culture as its historical reference point and in terms of faculty, the images in the school, art and other cultural aspects.

It can be concluded, based on the parent involvement survey results, that Prepville is an effective educational institution. Eighty-five (85) of the respondents stated that the school was meeting its children's needs. Another indicator of Prepville's effectiveness was its accreditation status as an elementary school, made by
the Georgia Accrediting Commission. Prepville also had many of the characteristics that have been highlighted in the "Effective School" literature such as strong visionary leadership, a safe and orderly environment, and teachers and parents who have high expectations for their children.

Based on interview data, parental involvement was desired and encouraged at Prepville. However, parent participation appeared to be most needed in supporting what the school was trying to teach and not so much in designing its educational program or setting school policies.

Implications for Developing a Culturally Sensitive Model for Evaluation

Assessment issues have implications for devising and implementing testing and evaluation policies. Traditional assessment practices are narrowly focused on cognitive factors, and non-cognitive educational factors, such as religion or a person's faith, are overlooked or ignored.

Education or schooling is a complex, cultural process and requires the use of several different techniques to assess the development or learning that has taken place within and among students. One method, such as the use of standardized tests, is not sufficient.

The issue here is to develop appropriate assessment procedures for culturally diverse student populations. In order to develop appropriate assessment models for culturally different students, one must know and understand the beliefs, values and goals of a particular culture. Although some general goals and objectives would be
the same for all cultures, such as knowledge of math and science and becoming a good citizen, different cultures have different values and beliefs that they want their youths to learn. For example, some objectives of Prepville were to: provide a quality education for Black students; increase students knowledge regarding their history and culture in order to give them a more positive concept of self; and provide students with moral and spiritual training. Therefore, models of evaluation for students of different cultures should include:

1. A cultural component that assesses whether or not a student is developing a positive and healthy identity.

2. A component that assesses teacher and student relationships.

3. A component for measuring the level of parental involvement in school activities should be developed.

4. A component for assessing the beliefs, values, goals and objectives of an institution.

5. A component that measures students' knowledge of core subjects such as math and science.

6. A component that assesses teachers' ideological concepts and teaching practices.

7. A component that assesses students' moral and spiritual development.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

1. independent schools establish a systematic system for gathering relevant data on student performance on standardized tests and their performance on non-
cognitive goals to inform them of the extent of their progress toward their stated goals and objectives;

2. multiple case studies of Black Independent schools be conducted to discern if there are any generalizing characteristics among this population;

3. independent Black school leaders systematically engage in self-evaluative studies and publish or make available their findings so that the wider community can be made aware of their contribution and success with Black students;

4. independent Black school leaders come together to discuss and develop a Black philosophy of education that could be used in designing a model of evaluation for Black students rather than using the traditional Eurocentric approach;

5. policies affecting Black and minority students should try to understand the distinct and different needs of its minority population.
APPENDIX A

Interview Guide For the Headmaster

1. Who established this school?
2. Why was this school established?
3. When was this school established?
4. How many students are enrolled in your school?
5. Has enrollment increased or decreased in the last 5 years?
6. What grade levels do you have in your school?
7. Do you have a written statement of your educational philosophy?
8. Who sets the goals and objectives of your school?
9. What does an effective education, for your students, mean to you?
10. What does your school offer for children that they cannot get from the public school?
11. What are the ideals that you are emphasizing for your children to attain?
12. What type of student is your school trying to produce?
13. Is Black History taught in your school?
14. What does your school do to help students develop a positive Black self-concept?
15. How much have you accomplished toward the realization of your goals?
16. What kind of service does your school give to the community in which it is located?
17. Who sets up the curriculum for your school?
18. What is the area of emphasis in your curriculum?
19. Does your school encourage students to participate in religious activities?

20. Is your school accredited?

21. What kind of extra-curricular activities do you offer your students?

22. Do you require teachers to be certified on the state level in order to teach in your school?

23. What are the qualifications that the teacher must have to be appointed to your school?

24. Do you have a standard of morality that you require your teachers to live up to?

25. How do you report to the parents about heir children's achievements in the school?

26. Do you feel that there is a discipline problem in your school?

   ___ yes   ___ no

27. How often do you have a discipline referral sent to your office by the teachers?

28. How do you perceive parents who let their children attend public schools?

29. Do you have follow-up studies or information on pupils who leave your school?

30. In what activities are the parents most engaged in your school?

31. How do you evaluate the progress of your school, meaning what criteria do you use to judge the effectiveness of your school?

32. Does your school have an active parents' group?

33. How would you describe your school’s financial situation?
APPENDIX B

TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What values do you try to instill in your students?

2. How would you describe the mission of your school?

3. Do you think Black History should be taught? _____ yes _____ no

4. Do you teach the children about their history or culture? _____yes _____no

   If yes, what knowledge do you teach them? For example, do you teach them about famous Black Americans or the history of how their forefathers came to America?

5. How do you help your students feel proud of being Black or an African-American?

6. Do you feel that the majority of your students are performing average or better than average on standardized achievement tests? _____yes _____no

7. Do you feel there is a discipline problem in your school? _____yes _____no

   If yes, how often during a school year?

8. Have you ever requested that a student be suspended from school? _____yes _____no If yes, how often during a school year?

9. How often do you send students to the principal’s office to be disciplined?

   No times so far ____ once a week ____ once a month ____ once a year ____

10. What subjects do you teach?

11. What holidays or special events do your students celebrate in school?

12. Are students allowed to pray openly at your school? For example, can they say a blessing before eating lunch or before starting the school day? _____yes _____no

13. Complete this sentence, “Parents can be most supportive of the school by ___________________________.”
APPENDIX C

STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Do you like your teachers?  yes ___ no ___; If no, why not?

2. Do you have friends at school?  ____yes ___no;  How many?

3. Do you get along well with other friends at school?

4. What do you like best about your school?

5. What don’t you like about your school?

6. What is your favorite subject?

7. Is there any subject in school that you don’t like?

8. Does your teacher ever have to send you to the principal’s office?

9. Do you ever pray in school?

10. Do you pray at home?

11. How do you know what is right from wrong?  (Will elaborate if the child does not understand the question)

12. Do you ever fight in school?

13. What kinds of things make you angry?

14. What kinds of things make you happy?

15. How are your grades in school?

16. Are you happy at this school?

17. What is your favorite TV show?  Why is it your favorite?

18. Suppose someone was talking to you on the phone but had never seen you and they asked you to describe yourself.  What would you say?

19. What kind of career do you want to have when you grow up?
APPENDIX C (cont.)

20. Do you want to go to college when you grow up?

21. What famous Black people have you studied about in school?

22. Do you know how Blacks came to this country, the United States?

23. Who is your favorite hero?

24. If you get bad grades in school, what does your mother or father say to you?

25. What type of things do you think you should be learning in school?

26. What do you wish you had at this school that you don’t have now?


Persaud, Ganga. *The High Definition Observation Scale*. Atlanta, Ga.: Clark Atlanta University, 1996.


