African American Female Secondary School Educators: Their Teacher-Student Relationships, and How Their Relationships with their Students' Parents, Colleagues, and Administrators affect the Teacher-Student Relationships

Kathryn Elizabeth Warren

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African American female secondary school educators: Their teacher-student relationships, and how their relationships with their students’ parents, colleagues, and administrators affect the teacher-student relationships

By
Kathryn E. Warren

A Dissertation
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Mississippi State, Mississippi

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African American female secondary school educators: Their teacher-student relationships, and how their relationships with their students’ parents, colleagues, and administrators affect the teacher-student relationships

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This qualitative research study described African American female secondary educators’ challenges in their educational working relationships. The purpose was to truly understand the challenges that African American female secondary teachers experienced in the classroom, outside of the classroom, in their dealings with their students’ parents, colleagues, and their relationships with school administrators.

This study focused on the challenges 10 African American female secondary teachers encountered in their educational work environment. This study also took into account how those teachers’ relationships with their students’ parents, colleagues, and administrators affected the teacher/student relationship.

In an effort to increase student achievement, researchers, educators, students, parents, and administrators must all work closely to improve relationships between teachers and students within their district. Moreover, district policies must continue to encourage the development of school-family-community collaboration as an essential component vital to student academic improvement efforts. Administrators must continue
to equip African American female secondary educators with a range of practices for involving students, parents, colleagues, and administrators to improve student outcomes.

The best efforts are comprehensive, seeking to involve all teachers, students, parents, their colleagues, and administrators in a variety of roles. African American female secondary teachers can be empowered through training, time, and support. There are long-lasting, long-term investments in cultivating positive relationships between teachers and students that will help students reach their full potential. The cost in terms of student outcomes not achieved is incalculable.
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Moore (2012) stated that in this modern political climate, the vocation of teaching at one time was thought of as a steady, well-thought-of profession for African American females (AAFs). Over the years, it has developed into a relatively unimportant career and is undergoing a decline. Factors affecting this decline include mandatory testing, cutbacks in disseminating tenure status, and rising demands to increase student achievement. Leonard and Martin (2013) explained that issues leading to fewer African American female secondary teachers (AAFSTs) choosing to pursue a teaching degree has been attributed to several problems which include insufficient preparedness for university success, standardized testing for teachers, and their heightened prospects to follow different specialized professions.

Friedlaender and Darling-Hammond (2007) suggested that it is important to realize that AAFSTs often, even while attending college, have had to survive in some environments that were not culture friendly to AAFs. In addition to focusing on Black female college students, academic systems provide difficult challenges since they appear to cater to the traditional White student experience. These AAFSTs find themselves entangled in the academic standards of traditional White institutions and may become victims of the loss of their individual cultural identity. Even though this condition may appear a bit unusual, it is not uncommon. Regarding this, Howard (2015) explained that it
is because White America establishes the norm that creates discriminatory issues with minorities. Because of the norms established, discrimination surfaces as a barrier in academic situations. In fact, the AAFSTs can become a victim of this social standard, causing them to be less effective in the classroom. From this perspective, American society is credited with creating a larger gap for minority teachers to cover, including concealed principles of acceptance.

Berry and O’Connor (2009) further stated that American society appears to have created hidden standards of acceptance based on race, gender, sex, and social class. As explained by the Dragoset, Thomas, Herrmann, Deke, James-Burdumy, Graczewski, Boyle, Tanenbaum, Griffin, & Upton (2016), education will not be exempt from addressing complex issues associated with diverse social changes even in the post-secondary level. Cogburn, Chavous, and Griffin, (2011) explained that minority groups may require even more attention than they did in past times and are often exposed to all kinds of discriminatory actions. Minority groups face problems that develop from stereotyping to oppression. The fact that AAFSTs stay in the teaching profession despite the issues they encounter makes their teaching more effective and rewarding. Although effective AAFSTs are social contributors, this still does inhibit discrimination.

Moreover, shared experiences of beginning African American teachers (AATs) should be conveyed to teacher and administrator applicants in their initial licensure programs while attending college. Moore (2012) stated that teacher educators and administrators in colleges of education should research and address the issues that hinder the enrollment of AAFSTs in teacher education programs.
Historically, North American culture has been filled with hierarchical structures that privilege some and reject others. National Center for Educational Statistics (2010) explained that some African American women today are entering the world of teaching unprepared for the dilemmas they will face in their working environment. Statistically, African American teachers nationally fill 8% of the teaching staff, while school populations consist of 16% of Black students. As a result, factors contributing to this statistical information account for high turnover for AAFSTs. Some of the contributing factors are attributed to mandatory core subject area testing, inadequate working environments, a lack of cultural experiences, institutional support, and discrimination.

Consequently, Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2008) stated some AAFSTs struggle to overcome challenges encountered in their educational relationships with their students and are realizing that accomplishing this goal is not as easy as it might appear.

In addition, Watkins and Arthur (2010) discovered that the quantity of minority students in public schools was progressively escalating while the amount of minority teachers was quickly diminishing in the United States. Furthermore, there are nearly 18 million minority students, consisting of African American, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Americans who attend elementary and secondary schools in the United States. In addition, (Nunez & Fernandez, 2006) suggested that minority students have elevated levels of achievement and a higher sense of self-worth when they experience being educated by teachers of their same ethnic group or by teachers who promote teaching to culturally diverse students in their classrooms. Therefore, the decline in minority teachers has caused great concern for public schools in the United States.
Brown and Haygood (2010) related that AAFSTs must exercise enthusiasm in their pursuit to learn solutions to the issues they face with their administrators in the workplace. The three items that AAFSTs find self-fulfilling through their employment include the following: self-development, family development, and community development. First, self-development is a factor that motivates them to pursue a higher education. Their culture revolves around the idea of achieving educational goals to improve their lives. Self-development motivates African American Female Teachers (AAFTs) to seek financial stability. Financial stability offers the opportunity to live comfortably while employed in a stable career. Secondly, the family is the basic social entity where children learn values, customs, and their culture. Castro, Garcia, Cavazos, and Castro (2011) explained that for many AAFSTs in this study, the pursuit of higher education is considered an endeavor that will not just benefit themselves, but their entire family. Thirdly, although the AAFSTs in his study recognized the importance of individual and family development, they also are very mindful of the effect their success will have on the larger African American community. The motivation toward achievement is particularly the case study, as many of the women regarded themselves as leaders of their community. Their community connections served to increase their sense of identity and interest in political endeavors.

Hooks (2010) stated in the traditional discourse of African American studies is a scarceness of research which observes the development of the AAF intellect, using a Black feminist viewpoint. Also, a Black feminist framework takes into consideration the instructional dynamics of race, class, and gender. Feminism investigates how these multifaceted social oppressions affected AAFSTs on a daily basis in their relationships
with their administrators. Kelly (2007) posited that remarks can be very hurtful. Notably, Hollins and Guzman (2005) reported that AAFSTs report that narrow-minded attitudes regarding their competence, teaching skills, or qualifications result in the perceived lack of employment and promotional possibilities. Research suggested by Cochran-Smith (2005) stated that the female population of candidates that are White and middle class embrace negative views about those who are different.

Salo, Uibu, Ugaste, and Rasku-Puttonen (2015) stated that teachers must have a reasonable degree of freedom within the guidelines established by the district and the state. Along with this freedom come necessary obligations from peer educators and superiors to offer continuous instructional management support to the teacher. Cowan and Goldhaber (2016) summed up that a positive relationship between AAFSTs and their colleagues improves routine teaching practices, establishes a professional partnership with the community, sets higher expectations for teachers’ performance, and encourages peer dependency among the educators. In addition, a healthy relationship between the minority teachers and other teachers encourages a team concept that produces a desire for success. Regardless of the difficulties and challenges encountered in the profession, all teachers, both Black and White, deserve satisfaction of knowing that they are valuable individuals in the teaching profession.

This study focused on the challenges AAFSTs encountered that allowed unequal practices, policies, and structure in their educational work environment. Because AAFSTs may choose to teach for different reasons than their counterparts, topics relating to their job satisfaction will also be discussed.
Background of the Problem

Mason-Matthews (2015) noted that AAFs typically have different reasons for learning than typical students. These include the following: maintaining social relationships, meeting external expectations, serving others, advancing in their profession, stimulating intellect, and satisfying interests. Cultural attitudes play a big part in their satisfaction on the job.

Per Banks (2011), two out of three AAFs are unmarried in the United States. Many of these AAFs that are married do not have committed husbands. AAFs not only find themselves financially disadvantaged and alone, but college educated AAFs are twice as likely as White females to be unmarried, as well as economically disadvantaged. AAFs become discouraged because they confront a relationship marketplace with too few African American (AA) males who have reached a level of stability and are employed on a regular basis. Also, Banks (2011) stated that extraordinary numbers of AA males spend some period in jail. More than 1 in 10 AA males between the ages of 20 to 30 years of age ends up behind bars. Like women of all ethnic groups, AAFs do not want to be married to someone who has been in prison. Also, statistically speaking, there are twice as many AAFs as African American males. This translates into a deficiency of AA males available. Rogers (2015) revealed the AA males who are college graduates that would be tempting as a marriage possibility are less likely to marry than are their white counterparts. When these African American males do marry, they often marry women who are not AA. Gedeon (2015) explained that highly educated AAFs who marry, wind up more likely than other ethnic groups to marry a man who is less educated than they are and makes less money than they do. Research has found that when the husband is
unemployed, a couple's possibility of divorce rises. Moreover, unmarried AAFs must contend with Black men who are more likely than any other group of men to maintain relationships with several women.

Additionally, Ogbu (2003), an educational anthropologist, argued that his research showed that AA have cultural attitudes that are often neglected. Likewise, Hornby and Lafaele (2011) noted this is particularly true of ethnic communities which perceive public schooling as not of their own creation. Cole (2008) suggested the negative image and low expectation of educators are the main reasons AAF students do not enter the field of teaching. This perception on the part of AAFSTs who work predominantly with diverse student populations is significant enough to warrant consideration. Because of the lack of highly qualified teachers in school districts of an ever-growing population of AA students, there is an ever-increasing search for AA teachers.

More notably, Guarino, Santibanex, and Daley (2006) indicated that the school-age population is on the rise, and the demand for highly qualified minority teachers is even greater. Not only is there a demand for highly qualified teachers, there is an even more pressing demand for effectiveness in the classrooms.

In a quest to ascertain the challenges and feelings of AAFSTs experiences as it relates to their relationships and feelings as it pertains to their issues to include cultural, social, communication, trust, racist attitudes, salary, respect, inequities, gender and teacher education. AAFSTs’ perception had a direct effect on their choice to become a teacher and was well chronicled in the literature of Fairclough (2004).
Statement of the Problem

The problem within this study was the lack of knowledge in this area and the apparent need to close the gaps in the literature. The AAFST is dealing with a changing type of student body population in today’s public school educational system (Crouch, 2012). Curry and Holter (2015) stated that culture issues vary widely with students’ families coming from every level of socio economic status and social backgrounds. There is a common theme of a lack of both communication and trust among teachers and parents. Between teacher and colleagues, many times racism, lack of respect, and poor salary issues cause stress on AAFSTs. Furthermore, two researchers, (Donato & Lazerson, 2000), explained that issues, such as inequities, gender, and teacher education, become yet a bigger hurdle for AAFSTs and their administrators. Trying to address this great variety of issues that surround their relationships with their students presents a multitude of challenges for these AAFSTs in the classroom. The teachers’ relationship with their students, as well as teachers’ relationships with their students’ parents, colleagues, and administrator became a very important issue in increasing the battle to improve student achievement.

This research study explored the challenges AAFSTs’ experienced with their students, as well as their students’ parents, colleagues, and administrators, that influenced this relationship. There were indications that the AAFST was confronted with a plethora of issues and challenges. Many of the challenges were common in education, but for the AAF groups of educators the problems tended to escalate.

Uniquely, Leathers (2010) noted that AAFSTs have a desire to serve in professions that make contributions and aid communities they grew up in or similar
communities. Buxton (2000) suggested that areas where AA students densely inhabit the demographics have attracted the AAFSTs. Not only are the conditions in these areas not favorable and the communities are not appreciative of the services that these teachers are willing to provide, but the teachers often work in the unfavorable conditions that create undue stress and sometimes depression. Likewise, Harley (2008) purported that the emotional strain on these women is high and while many have tendencies to give up, they still feel compelled to be successful. A big contributor to the problems that AAFSTs are experiencing in their teaching experiences, per Celik (2012), was that minority teachers, especially AAF, are leaving universities to enter the teaching profession without the coping strategies to succeed within their educational working environment. This research identified issues that AAFSTs face in their educational environments with their students and other issues that affect this relationship.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives and challenges of AAFSTs as it related to their (a) teaching relationship with their students and also (b) how their relationships with their students’ parents, colleagues, and administrator affected their relationship with their students.

Leathers (2010) related that AAFSTs are a complex minority group to study. There is not an abundance of research available to address the AAFSTs’ beliefs and attitudes. However, what was available was used as a foundation to address barriers that were presented in the research questions for this study. Any research conducted in this area is important in adding additional information that helps explain the factors that
determine what kind of relationship minority teachers foster with students, parents, peers, and administrators.

**Research Questions**

The major dimension of this study was how AAFSTs respond to the challenges encountered in their profession relative to actual working relationships with their students. Furthermore, this study is designed to provide a better understanding of the challenges that AAFSTs face with their students and others. The following four questions were designed to establish the foundation for the study:

1. What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience in their interactions with their students in relationship to cultural and social issues?

2. What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience when addressing their students’ parents in regard to communication and building trust?

3. What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience with their colleagues in terms of respect and salary issues?

4. What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience in their relationship with their administrator with regard to inequities, gender, and teacher education issues?

In like manner, the research questions presented in this study were designed to focus on the relationship that AAFSTs encounter with their students in contemporary
learning environments on the secondary level. In addition, these research questions were
designed to discover how this group of teachers’ relationships with their students is
affected by their interactions with peers, parents, and administrators.

First, the initial research question addresses how AAFSTs handle challenges they
face with their students in relationship to cultural and social issues to improve positive,
student achievement. It is difficult for students to be successful if they encounter cultural
and social issues in the classroom (Center for Mental Health, 2008). In fact, Keddie
(2008) expressed that teaching students effectively requires knowing what type
environment they live in, as well as their cultural circumstances. This enables teachers to
connect with their students in a language they can relate. Although there will always be
exceptions to the rule, research has detected that a teacher who is familiar with her
students individually, the better student achievement will rise, especially in urban
situations.

Also, Cole (2008) relayed that the single mother is usually the parent who is
responsible for the student. Each student from a single-parent home is unique and should
be approached as such according to his/her individual situations. Also, Shuger (2012)
stated that teenage pregnancy is another issue that has become a stumbling block
affecting student achievement. In fact, after a student gives birth, she is more apt than not
to drop out of school, therefore, failing to graduate. Moreover, the mothers of these
children have little education themselves, rendering them unable to help their children
with homework. In some cases, they do not act as good role models for their children.
AA students, more often than their other White peers, go home to a situation where there
is no father figure in the household. These examples serve as some of the biggest issues
that prevent students from receiving a high school degree, much less furthering higher education. Gardner and Holley (2011) discovered that AA students have more barriers to conquer at home than their peers at school. The increase in parents being divorced or having children out of wedlock has radically altered the family unit of American children.

Research question two examined teachers’ relationships with parents and how that relationship affected their relationship with their students. Hisin (2007) suggested a rapport with parents is significant in developing a collaborative partnership between teacher and parent, thus the teacher and student’s relationship grows positively and effectively. Also, trust and productive dialogue result from this kind of partnership.

Hisin (2007) proclaimed communicating with parents is a major part of a teacher’s job description. In concurrence, Reilly (2008) exclaimed that building a strong bond between home and school is one of the characteristics of successful schools. For instance, having consistent, effective communication between parents and teachers can benefit a child with respect to academic achievement. Although parent-teacher conferences can be unpleasant for both parents and teachers, they are indeed necessary. To promote effective communication with parents, constant communication from teachers should be conducted as often as possible.

Zha (2009) purported each individual student moves through the educational system with a teacher’s guidance, in the hope of providing a sound educational foundation for his/her life after school. Equally important in this process is a parent’s participation as educational cohorts.

Reilly (2008) informed this new position created for a parent has been central to noteworthy advances in the students’ performance at school level. Not only does this
significant change begin with the teachers, but also the parents’ presence in their
student’s educational setting becomes a significant role in a student’s successful
achievement. In light of a teacher’s acceptance that parental involvement is an essential
ingredient, Ho (2011) suggested that teachers have attempted to involve parents more in
their children’s school success. This has resulted in contact with parents to involve them
in their student’s academic status, as well as extracurricular activities. Hornby and
Lafaele (2011) explained that whether a parent conference or an extra-curricular activity
in or off of the school environment, the goal is to improve gradual growth, develop
abilities, and provide strategies in order to give students the opportunity to become a
whole adult. This progression is more proficient if the parent is successful in monitoring
their student’s achievement in the educational process. For these reasons, building parent-
teacher educational relationships is essential.

Research question three placed an emphasis on teacher and colleague
relationships. Dealing with colleagues has the potential to be difficult. Also, Williams
(2011) proposed that respect, money, and social status can be ingredients for chaos. The
AAFSTs are not excluded from this challenge. This issue also affects the relationship
between teachers and their students.

Madsen and Mabokela (2014) described AAFSTs struggle with stereotypes. The
AAT participants were in the minority and had to defend their position to have their
accomplishments recognized. Moreover, the AAFSTs described that their uniqueness was
often overlooked by their colleagues’ stereotypical beliefs about AAs. The AAF had to
contend with establishing her value as “qualified” teachers. So, as a coping mechanism
with these injustices and the low opinions of their white colleagues, these participants felt
a need to surpass their White counterparts, yet were never recognized for their accomplishments, except in the role as the Black specialist.

Madsen and Mabokela (2014) stated that they coined a term called cultural switching. When conducting a study, they stated that it had become obvious as the AAFSTs expressed the weight of being in a setting where there were often very few AAFTs in the school. In addition, they struggled with the ethnic differences between them and their White colleagues. Because of these differences, these anxieties resulted in feelings of conflict, as well as a feeling of being incapable of utilizing social cues to find their way in the school’s culture. For that reason, in culture switch, these teachers were able to create coping strategies of being either direct or subtle observers in learning to find their place in their working environment.

Research question four addressed administration. Chou (2007) stated that problems can arise that may put the female AAFTs at odds with the principal, who may not be fair and impartial with regards to race or gender. This group of AAFSTs had the task of finding a way to teach even when administrative issues present difficult hindrances.

Principals (Blaze & Blaze, 2006) who choose to be abusive towards the AAFSTs in the workplace symbolize one of the most widespread and grave difficulties facing teachers in the place of work at present. Unfortunately, abusive administrators display behaviors such as ignoring teachers’ needs, withholding resources, interfering with and criticizing teachers, making difficult demands, intimating teachers, chastising without necessity, and forcing teachers out of their employment, to mention just a few. Of course, teachers that have been abused by their administrators experience overwhelming
outcomes. In addition, Blaze and Blaze (2003) contended that the results of such maltreatment are detrimental to teachers’ personal and professional lives. Principal mistreatment of teachers results in shock, bewilderment, shame, isolation, broken self-worth, unremitting panic, apprehension, rage, despair, and a whole host of physiological issues. Likewise, in trying to solve the problem of administration’s exploitation of AAFSTs, issues must be addressed concerning unfavorable results for rapport among colleagues, decision making processes, and classroom pedagogy.

Fahie and Devine (2012) suggested that seasoned teachers tend to be completely engaged in their schools. They commonly offer the leadership essential to instigate innovative preparations among colleagues, with student progress being the focal point. However, administrators that delight in abusive behavior towards their teachers can harshly affect their teachers’ outlook on their attitudes about their engagement. Blaze, Blaze, and Du (2009) purported that this maltreatment of teachers can hinder the development of innovative and collaborative structures among colleagues as well as the teachers’ overall level of involvement in their schools. As a result, badly treated teachers typically remove themselves from participation in activities; for instance, joining committees, school events, and professional development. If there are activities that are compulsory, teachers do the minimum to get by and remain silent. Furthermore, these actions of AAFSTs serve to guard them from further attacks by principals who are abusive. This behavior has further consequences of their performance, such as limited or no collaboration among teachers to share fresh, new ideas.

These four research questions defined the major areas examined in this study that challenge AAFSTs’ relationships with their students. Addressing these questions in this
study provided an insight through further investigation into establishing strategies for AAFST student relationships in promoting positive and effective student achievement. Uniquely, each question complements the other and provides a more detailed understanding of the challenges that AAFSTs face with their students.

**Rationale for a Qualitative Design**

Merriam (2009) explained that qualitative research is research that utilizes an investigative broad method that is comprised of numerous types of research methods within the realm of qualitative research. Qualitative research is beneficial when trying to acquire insight into fundamental reasons, opinions, and motivations. Creswell (2008) contended that qualitative methods scrutinize the *how* and *why* of why people do what they do, as opposed to the *who, when, what, or where*. Qualitative research is, among other disciplines, widely used in educational research.

Creswell (2007) suggested that qualitative research provides an understanding into the problems being investigated, as well as assists in developing awareness for potential quantitative research. Qualitative research is used to discover developments in beliefs and views, while digging to the root of the problem. Newton (2010) noted that qualitative data collection methods can utilize unstructured, semi-structured, or structured interview practices. Some common methods include individual interviews, participation/observations, and focus groups. The sample size is usually small, and participants are chosen in order to satisfy a given quota.

When utilizing a qualitative approach, the task becomes one of determining the qualitative method to be used. Additionally, Stake (2010) used purpose, research design, and methodical data techniques as a way of classifying types of qualitative research.
Similarly, Cresswell (2013) spoke of five practices of qualitative research. These five practices consist of biography, phenomenological study, grounded theory study, ethnography, and case study. This researcher chose a phenomenological study for this research project.

The method chosen for this research was phenomenology. Furthermore, this researcher explored and described phenomena, as was perceived by AAFSTs with their relationship with their students to find the meaning of the phenomena (Cooper, Fleischer, & Cotton, 2012). It was made explicit at the outset of this study that this phenomenology dealt with persons as opposed to subjects. Persons are whole beings, complete with past experiences, thoughts, ideas and ethics. Giles, Smythe, and Spence (2012) purported that these participants should be complete with both cultural and social influences. Furthermore, it was emphasized the application of phenomenology was referred to as phenomenological inquiry.

In this study, phenomenology was utilized to investigate, reflect, and put in writing the AAFSTs’ feelings. These thoughts were linked with reflection. It was when the questions were asked about the phenomena presented that the participants’ thoughts and feelings were assembled on paper. At that point, this researcher had an opportunity to step back and reflect.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study placed emphasis on addressing AAFSTs’ relationship with their students which affect their relationships with their students. Since the literature concerning AAFSTs in their working relationships with students is minimal, this study served as a contributing resource to the existing literature on this topic.
Moreover, this study also delved into the impact of AAFSTs’ effectiveness as it related to support from their parents, colleagues, and administrators. Of course, the AAFSTs had characteristics associated with perspectives, styles, perceptions, and motivations unique to each individual teacher participant in this study. As the teachers commented on their interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators, strategies were revealed that could help minority teachers function more efficiently in their teaching environment and possibly help formulate more appropriate curricula and improve instructional delivery to their students. Lastly, this study served as an addition to the literature related to AAFSTs’ challenges experienced through their interactions with their students, and the ability of parents, colleagues, and administrators to contribute to a more positive and productive educational experience.

**Limitations**

The study was limited in a number of ways. This research was based on the following assumptions:

1. The findings may only apply to a population that is similar to the population of one town in Northeast Mississippi and one town in Central Mississippi.

2. This study examined selected AAFSTs’ insights of their challenges in relationships dealing with their students.

3. The findings of this inquiry will be specific to this group of AAFSTs.
4. The author of this paper is a white female researcher which may have made it more difficult to get AAFST to completely be open and respond without inhibitions with information in this study.

**Summary**

This study focused on the discernment of AAFSTs in their relationships with students. It also examined the factors that affect these relationships, such as teachers’ relationships with parents of students, colleagues, and administrators. Statts (2014) stated that researchers have little documented information about the thoughts and convictions of AAFSTs. Therefore, the responses provided by these AAFSTs offered insight into this research. The participants offered fluctuating views. Although these beliefs may be linked to information, they may also be categorized as phenomena dissimilar from information.

What the participants believed had major implications for all those involved in the educational process, especially the students. In addition, this study examined the cultural and social experiences of AAFSTs in a professional setting. This information will add to the existing literature which examined the teaching experiences of AAFSTs in their relationships with students, as well as other issues that affect that relationship with students, such as the relationships with parents, colleagues, and administrators.

The significance of this study was its ability to target the challenges from the time frame covering the statement of the desire of AAFSTs to become teachers and their actual performance in their vocation. In like manner, this research contributed to a better understanding of how to cultivate better relationships between AAFSTs and their students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. Encouraging positive relationships in
their professional setting will help to increase and to maintain the number of AAFs in the profession.

**Definition of Terms**

The following definitions will be used in this study:

*Black Feminist Thought*—expresses African American women’s rising control as driving forces of knowledge (Hill-Collins, 2000).

*Data*—forms of information that have been grouped utilizing certain procedures (Erickson, 2012).

*Member Checks*—a continuous process during data analysis used by researchers as verification of the overall results with participants (Koelsch, 2013).

*Mortality*—loss of people participating in a study (Rolls & Relf, 2006).

*Multicultural*—highlights the distinctive characteristics of diverse cultures (Banks & Banks, 2009).

*NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001)*—a U. S. federal law that authorizes certain federal programs that try to improve the achievement of America’s elementary and secondary schools by elevating the criterions of accountability for states, school districts and schools, as well as providing parents more latitude in choosing which schools their children will attend ("No Child Left Behind," 2011).

*Paradigm*—a general categorizing structure for empirical research social theory that consists of fundamental theories, key questions to be responded to (Joffe, Drake, Richardson, Lightman, and Collingwood, 2011).

*Phenomenology*—any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Groenewald, 2004).
Positionality—refers to the ways a populace is classified in a hierarchical culture (Chavez, 2008).

Qualitative Data—information in the form of words, pictures, sounds, visual images, or objects (Johnson, Dunlap, & Benoit, 2010).

Rigor—indicates relentlessness, constructions, and strict set rules (Prion & Adamson, 2014).

Triangulation—looking at an object from several different points to get a more accurate view of it (Newman, 2000).

Typicality—is the possibility of measuring the usual choice of words uttered by the speaking subject (Erickson, 2012).

Typology—a categorization that contains two or more theories wherein the connection of the concepts generates a group of subcategories. In social theory, it is the foundation of a concept group (Marshall & Rossman, 2010).
CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE  

Introduction  
Teaching, as a vocation of African American female secondary teacher (AAFST), can be very challenging. Accordingly, De Walt (2013) asserted that the interconnected scope of African American culture suggested a need for change in order to more fully understand the range of experiences that African Americans, particularly in educational contexts, experience. The use of new culturally delicate research approaches can be a means for educational change. In addition, De Walt also advised that their research indicated that the experiences of AAFSTs included racist practices by students, parents, colleagues, and administration. Additionally, these women suffered from feelings of isolation and discrimination. Issues of gender and discrimination factors, reduced levels of feelings of insecurity or failure, feelings of being less than adequate, racial mistreatment, and harassment were explored.  
This chapter focused on a literature review that was guided by the research questions. This research examined the literature for relationship issues that are experienced by AAFSTs with their students, as well as why these challenges occur.
Cultural and Social Issues Encountered in Relationships between African American Female Secondary School Educators and Students

Cultural Issues

Hardy (2014) revealed that teachers must be prepared to serve students who have diverse cultural backgrounds. It is difficult for contemporary instructors to serve students unless the instructor has some knowledge of their students’ backgrounds. Teachers become bonding agents because educators help students find their places in society. Kincheloe (2010) explicates that schools are a major contributor when it comes to influencing the formation of students’ views. Teachers should help students cultivate knowledge and respect for cultural differences. Likewise, school districts function in heavily inhabited regions. They serve a large student population. Many school districts have elevated masses of deprivation, cultural diversity, and frequent withdrawals.

In addition, Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, and Noguera (2011) suggested that teachers’ familiarity of cultural diversity within their classrooms differ. Some teachers may be aware of the home lives of students whose cultures and backgrounds differ from their lives. Because of this knowledge they possess, some teachers have labeled what they feel these students can achieve or how likely they are to behave according to their culture or ethnicity. Subsequently, these expectations can influence the teachers’ behaviors and teaching styles.

Ebersole, Kanahele-Mossman, and Kawakami (2016) related that good teachers are relentless and defy the odds because they know that there is no generic solution to teaching all students. Innovative teachers find ways to bring majority and minority students together so that one compliments the other. When one side realizes the need for the other, both sides realize how much power they have as one cohesive unit.
Correspondingly, Steele’s (2010) research points out that African Americans exhibit more emotional susceptibility to being unsuccessful. Students tend to take their academic failures as substantiation of negative labels about their ethnic intellectual ability. As an illustration, Lund and Colin (2010) argued that teacher racism has a negative effect on the teaching-learning process. They neither discuss the race-gender intersection nor explore in depth how the race and gender of the teacher affects the learning environment. Falk (2014) focused on the gender of the learner and also explored how the teacher’s race and gender affect the learning process. To the contrary, Robinson & Baber (2013) described a cultural behavior of AAFSTs as possessing the ability to step into the role of mother away-from-home to their students by setting examples such as utilizing their morals of thoughtfulness.

Henry, Purtell, Bastian, Fortner, Thompson, Campbell, & Patterson (2013) explained that teaching experience has its advantages if the individual references past events and challenges. Inexperienced instructors normally do not have this resource to use. They only have basic teacher training and prescribed scenarios to apply to classroom management. Many inexperienced teachers avoid taking a job in multicultural environments because of this challenge. For this reason, teacher preparation becomes an art for those who prepare teacher candidates to be effective in teaching diverse students.

Steele (2010) proposed that minority students often feel inferior because of the stigma that sometimes follows them. This stigma can be damaging, and it can create psychological instability that can threaten positive student achievement.

Coleman, Degron, and Lipper (2011) suggested that immobility to establish productive learning opportunities for all students creates dissension among students and
hinders learning opportunities. Although the family and neighborhood have a major influence on children, academic achievement opportunities should still be available regardless of background. Olstad, Foster, and Wyman (1983) stated that high teacher expectations for students allow many teachers who are not prepared to deal with multicultural classrooms so that they can manage their classroom in an encouraging manner. High expectations for students help teachers to create a foundation for success through positive thinking. Likewise, low expectations of minority students put teachers at a disadvantage with minority students because these students are not motivated to become academically successful.

Cole (2008) acknowledged that since teaching has evolved as a multicultural function, instructors look at student diversity as an expected encounter. A trend is taking place that is going to result in an industrial population composed of minorities and minority subgroups. Classroom instruction needs to contribute to the success of the students falling into these categories.

Over the years, Ware (2006) stated that AAFSTs have been known as warm demanders that demand their students’ highest potential. Not only do AAFSTs carry on the persona of being the warm demander, but they also serve as authority figures and disciplinarians to their students. Also, they are known for taking care of their students’ unique needs. More importantly, they build relationships with students, even outside the classroom. Their pedagogy goes beyond a specific teaching method. AAFSTs try to engage students academically and culturally. Cole (2008) proposed that AAFSTs do more than stay in tune with their students’ feelings, they encourage them to become academically successful in order to develop as promising scholars.
According to Gilroy (2008), African American teachers also share concerns while interacting with students. Examples of teachers’ racist behavior reported in his study, included the following: (1) jokes that demean specific ethnic groups, (2) stereotyping students, and (3) making demeaning comments about specific ethnic groups. Moreover, according to Jones (2008), teachers have a responsibility to ensure their behavior is not racist. They must also ensure that classroom discussions do not contain racism that may be promoted in the media. Cole (2008) explained that teachers must have high expectations of all students, regardless of their ethnicity, as well as students’ expectations being reciprocal of their AAFSTs.

Coleman et al. (2011) explained that it is important to understand what equity means universally and what equity means circumstantially. In education, issues affecting all student populations and sub-populations need attention. Equity is not just a concern at school sites, but a challenge for school districts.

Social Issues

Bratter (2012) suggested that the social construction of ethnic differences among teachers and students exists as an element of human occurrences. In fact, the acknowledgement of diversity in the classroom may be strengthened during classroom discussions that allow different ethnic groups’ knowledge to increase. Socially constructed meanings are sometimes included in perceived dissimilarities. Particularly, DeLeon & Ross (2010) agreed that students construct their ideas of racial difference through the practices of pedagogy and curriculum. They go on to say that while students develop their ideas on racial difference from a variety of sources such as classmates, parents, and within the community, they are not passive beneficiaries of this information.
The development of beliefs and attitudes is a multifaceted process. The role of the school is critical through both the setting of the classroom and interactions within the school community.

Wagner (2009) stated the attitudes of students towards the cultural diversity of their classrooms and communities vary. By way of contrast, some students have a commitment to diversity. Other students fear differences and feel resentment toward people of different cultural backgrounds.

According to Estepp (2012), for the “other” teacher developing immediacy with students from a White culture is oftentimes a demanding task. Further, immediacy plays an important role in effective teaching because it is culturally anchored. Learners tend to be more receptive to speakers they view as relatively similar. The “other” teacher’s values and attitudes are another area for challenges with students. Because the “other” teacher’s attitudes and values are usually different from the white students, their lectures and expert opinions are often interpreted as unsubstantiated beliefs with a lack of objectivity on the part of the “other” teacher. In like manner, Mosley (2010) explained how AAFSTs are often faced with racism by their students. These teachers have to adapt to the culture of the classroom. These teachers sometimes feel that if they retain their culture, they might be considered less than a human being. These teachers try to be resilient to students’ racist remarks. In the same way, Hossain (2009) suggested that the idea of “social distance” is helpful in understanding the cultural gulf that can exist between students and teachers because the gap is generally caused by a combination of factors. The greater the social distance, the more educators needed to stretch themselves to imagine who their students are outside of school to generate an image of that parent
sitting in the back of the room. Most instructors can predict how people will respond socially if they were sitting in the back of their child’s class.

Moreover, Hanley and Noblit (2009) explained that African Americans have their own customs of which some originated from the African way of life. Some of these customs included displays of feelings and religion. Furthermore, Monroe and Obidah (2004) identified the differences in cultures of teachers, students, and schools. Others have exhibited the inadequacy of cultural coexistence among a student and teacher or student and student that can cause different behavioral issues within the classroom. Likewise, Ahram et al. (2011) suggested that because most teachers in public schools are White and the larger part of the students are African American, cultural differences become an important issue for all public schools in the United States. Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007), explained the importance of teachers of African American students allowing for this diversity through their pedagogy. Accordingly, these teachers are sometimes thought of as culturally open teachers.

Likewise, Ahram et al. (2011) suggested that because the larger part of the teachers in public schools in the United States is Caucasian and African American students compose the increasing ratio of student populations in urban schools, cultural differences become an important issue. Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007), explained the importance of teachers of African American students coordinating their pedagogy to the culture of their students. Accordingly, these teachers are sometimes thought of as culturally responsive teachers as well as warm demanders.

Monroe and Obidah (2004) acknowledged verbal and nonverbal communication between a student and a teacher are like what a student is used to at home. These teachers
utilize the way they look at students, voice inflections, and verbiage to get across a forceful and energetic technique. Oftentimes, teachers who handle their students in such a manner can be misunderstood as compared with conventional classroom environments.

In contrast, Daly, Brown, and McGowan (2012) rationalized that various researchers address curriculum rather than multicultural issues and disciplinary connections.

**Challenges to Communication and Building Trust in Relationships between African American Female Secondary School Educators and Their Students’ Parents**

**Communication**

Researchers have identified a connection between positive relationships between teacher and parent communication in association with positive student achievement (Rumberger, 2011). However, the opposite effect can take place if there is negative teacher-parent communication which facilitates a decrease in a student’s sense of independence and commitment. Bursztyn and Coffman (2010) explained that these research studies imply that an intervention centered on teacher and parent communication has the ability to increase student engagement, efficacy, and motivation, thus increasing students’ academic achievement. Other research, such as that from the American Federation of Teachers (2007) and Timkey (2015), provides evidence that when teachers communicate with students’ parents by phone, positive academic benefits occur.

Sapungan and Sapungan (2014) determined that over time, teachers have come to appreciate the benefits of parental involvement in their students’ educational process. Parental involvement improves students' attitudes towards their academic achievement, as well as improving dropout rates for the school district. Likewise, the local community tends to back the educational process, creating a win-win situation for everyone. In the
same way, Cole (2008) felt that despite the socioeconomic status, cultural setting, or the parents’ personal, educational success, when family units are involved in the learning process, students tend to become more successful in their education process. Balfanz, Bridgeland, Fox, and Moore (2015) purported that a multitude of schools battle to aggressively employ parents to get involved in their child's academic progression. It is noted that minority and lower-income families are profoundly underrepresented in decision-making processes involving their child’s education. This trend causes parents to think that the schools do not want to involve them. Moreover, the schools believe that the parents do not want to be engaged in their child’s educational process.

Similarly, Ankrum (2016) suggested successful parent and teacher communication is crucial to a teacher's success. Most teachers recognize the value of parental involvement but sometimes cannot find enough time in the day. Sloan (2013) also noted that in the past, AAFSTs have not been taught how to successfully engage parents in their students’ academic process, but are now beginning to address the issue in higher education.

Hughes and Kwok (2007) therefore believe that parents are often excluded from their child’s academic process altogether. Because parents are excluded, the bulk of the minority parents often loses trust in their child's teachers. They think their opinions are unwanted, so schools experience low parental participation. Therefore, positive relationships between teachers and parents often take place less for low-income students and minorities than for higher income students’ parents.

Kraft and Dougherty (2013) discovered three essential tools through which an increase in teacher-parent and teacher-student communication caused changes in student
engagement. Those three tools emerged from teacher follow-up surveys and student interviews and were identified with more positive teacher-student relationships, increased parental involvement, and increased student motivation. The American Federation of Teachers (2007) claimed that positive parent-school communications benefit parents. First, the approach in which schools communicate and work together with parents influences the degree and quality of parents' contribution at home with their child's education. Secondly, parents benefit when informed by the school of techniques they can utilize at home to help their children improve their academic achievement. Finally, parents’ confidence is boosted by witnessing the importance of their involvement and support in the educational process by participating in their child’s educational process.

**Building Trust**

Knopf & Swick (2007) revealed that gaining a parent’s trust is usually a slow and sometimes difficult process. The parents first have to view the teacher as someone that is genuinely caring about their child’s academic success. In addition, these authors stated that students who are aware that their parents are communicating with the teacher regularly and who realize their parents trust the teacher will behave appropriately and try hard academically. If they know their parents do not trust the teacher and there is no communication with them, they will most likely display inappropriate behavior and perform poorly academically. This lack of trust and communication with the parents will only cause difficulties for the teacher.

Furthermore, Ahram et al. (2011) disclosed that trusting relationships between parents and teachers are critical when strategizing how to improve parent involvement. Successful districts seek to build relationships with parents and their community. In
addition, the authors stated that schools should provide professional development for teachers, focusing on creating guidelines for teacher/parent communication. Parents should prep themselves on how they can help improve their student’s achievement at home as well as be able to take part in activities at school and be treated as though they want to be a part of their child’s academic success.

Russo (2011) explained a student’s learning sequence should be intertwined with experiences, caring, and responsibility. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2008) stated that a teacher’s vocational success includes parental involvement. Some teachers take for granted that they can function without knowledge about students’ lives outside the classroom. If teachers are not from the local area or community they serve, then the social distance between teachers and their students increases, and communication challenges and the building of trusting relationships with their students’ parents can be difficult.

Allensworth (2012) stated that as a teacher, she sought the parents’ support, but she did not want intrusion. These mixed feelings about sharing authority are perfectly normal, especially if teachers have not been exposed to a setting in which parents have a voice in what occurs in the school. It is common for teachers, without awareness, to communicate to parents their mixed feelings. Likewise, parents commonly feel they are not wanted, participate less, and will be unlikely to voice concerns on their child’s education. Parents begin to feel that sharing concerns is just not part of the school culture. Teachers can feel overwhelmed with the difficult demands made on them and criticisms they receive. A common misconception is formed by parents and students since they are
unaware of a teacher’s responsibility. These parents and students feel teachers are not knowledgeable and are uncaring about their child.

Moore, Garbacz, Gau, Dishion, Brown, Stormshak, & Seeley (2016) also expressed when parents and students are from a lower socioeconomic status than their teachers, parents often feel inferior. This creates an environment between teacher and parents, which makes it almost impossible to develop positive relationships. Less educated parents are usually unaware of school jargon and are unfamiliar with the way schools operate. Communication allows teachers to combat feelings of inferiority of the parents. In agreement with Moore, Ediger (2016) explained teachers often must hone their communication skills when discussing school matters with parents. Often, educational terms are like a foreign language to those who are not educators. Furthermore, learning how to speak respectfully and honestly with parents who are already suspicious and uneducated is not a skill easily acquired. This task is complicated because most AAFSTs have not frequently interacted with adults of another race and class.

In addition, Reynolds (2010) stated school community relations are often damaged if a school is perceived as allowing racist acts that go unpunished or acts that exclude the participation of groups that come from culturally diverse backgrounds. Parents and members of these communities may be unwilling to support school activities and are unlikely to have confidence in the school system. Consequently, the level of involvement of parents from diverse cultural backgrounds is also often affected by the availability and willingness of staff to support their needs. Schools offering greater levels of support have the most success in attracting a parental involvement.
In this manner, Bilgic and Gumuseli (2012) disclosed similarly that contacting parents to keep parents informed of their child’s progress can be time-consuming for a teacher. However, it is central to building trust between a teacher and parents. Be that as it may, with the technology that is available to teachers, communication with parents can include not only the traditional telephone calls, notes, and parent-teacher conferences, but also can include emails, web pages that parents can access about what is going on in their child’s classroom, etc. The authors go on to suggest that a successful teacher can also utilize a variety of these suggestions. Regular communication between teacher and parents helps to lower any misconceptions by the parents in their child’s educational process.

On a more positive side, Knopf and Swick (2007) stated that a teacher’s first milestone to achieving parental trust is to let the parents know a little individual background about the teacher. This allows the parents to be able to connect with the teacher on a personal level, allowing a great beginning for a more trusting relationship between a teacher and parent. It is understood that communication between a teacher and parent is essential. Secondly, teachers should show an interest in their students. Finally, it was advised that teachers permit parents to observe their child’s classroom activities in person so they can see for themselves a highly, qualified teacher with a goal to make their child academically successful. Parents who care about education will grow to trust the teacher if they see the teacher cares about their child academically, as well as personally.
Racist Attitudes, Salary, and Respect Issues Encountered in Relationships between African American Female Secondary School Educators and Colleagues

Racist Attitudes

Aud, Hussar, Planty, Snyder, Bianco, Fox, Frohlich, Kemp, and Drake (2010) proposed that some AAFSTs have questioned their choice to become a teacher because of the way they have been received by students, parents, colleagues, and administration. However, regardless of how they are targeted, there has been no proof that they have performed inferior to their white colleagues. One participant in the study conducted by Aud et al. (2010) stated that the only bullying he could attest to was by a principal. These authors went on to say that this participant also admitted that he had heard about or witnessed first-hand the abuse of other teachers, staff, and students by a principal.

Accordingly, Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin (2006) purported that regardless of the good intentions of their White colleagues, AAFSTs continue to find themselves in insulting positions. Their White counterparts, unaware of how it will be taken, manage to communicate insulting racial statements to AAFSTs. Coupled with the schools have increasing numbers of white female teachers, while the numbers of AAFSTs are declining (Hrabowski and Sanders, 2015). The AAF collegiate who enters the teaching profession may face detachment because of cultural and educational experiences and devaluation in the classroom (LeSavoy, 2010).

According to Berry (2005), AAFSTs have issues with the validity of the curriculum presented in college. Some of these issues include the following, such as: 1) it is inconsistent with their perceptions of school, and 2) it leaves educators accountable for the students' quality and dedication to the profession.
Accordingly, Jay (2009) implied that no words could describe how racism feels. Everyone deals with it differently. Some respond by lashing out verbally, while others withdraw into themselves. Some people can talk openly about how it feels, but others hide it deeply within. Mabokela and Madsen (2007) proposed that AAFSTs often find themselves in unreceptive environments where some White teachers refuse to speak or work with them. Others question the validity of Black educators’ teaching credentials and reported that many AAFSTs were influenced by the status granted to them by other faculty.

Decuir-Gunby and Gunby (2016) purported that social isolation of an AAFST within the academic environment is another issue brought up in focus groups. AAFSTs often experience the discouragement from professional authority by colleagues. For beginning AAFSTs, this treatment can be a very distressing experience.

Likewise, Obiomon, Tickles, Wowo, and Holland-Hunt (2007) reported narratives gathered by AAFSTs indicated that minority race status and their female gender are factors that colleagues use when deciding if these AAFs are credible educators. These teachers had to work exceedingly hard to establish their credibility in the classroom due to colleagues’ beliefs about AAFSTs, teaching courses previously considered to be taught by White males. Therefore, there is an urgent need to establish credibility because AAFs in this field do not automatically possess it. They often feel the need to demonstrate their ability. These AAFs actively set out to prove they are competent teachers. Establishing credibility as opposed to it being assumed is a burden AAFSTs carry because of their race and gender.
Also, Berry and Candis (2013) conveyed issues of identity are critical for AAFSTs. They need to be able to affirm their own cultural and group identities and explore their identity as participants of the educational system. Curriculum and resources need to echo the diversity of the school and of society to guarantee all teachers can feel they belong. AAFSTs are enriched by cultural skills that their colleagues convey in their working relationships. For this reason, Dymoke (2013) proposes that educational institutions must support their teachers since support is crucial in the development of AAFSTs’ self-efficacy. If they perceive acceptance by their colleagues, they have the propensity to emerge with a stronger identity. On the other hand, if their colleagues are the cause of their stress, these beginners interpret the new experiences as unpleasant. Thus, they consider teaching a vocation worth terminating.

Along the same lines, the American Psychological Association’s Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities (2012) expressed that a mix of teachers from different ethnicities in a school system can result in a hostile work environment, thus forming strong friendships based on ethnicity. In fact, teachers who make close connections with their culture appear to encounter resistance from co-workers of other ethnicities. Lastly, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, and Cohen (2007) believed that peers should discourage judgments rooted in stereotypes. Cultural diversity’s acceptance is crucial for building close relationships among all teachers. When racial tensions occur in the school climate, high school teachers of African American ethnicity often limit their associations to those of their own ethnicity.
Salary

Wynn and Winchester (2015) suggested most school districts set their teachers’ salaries on defined salary scales. Years of experience determine the annual salary for teachers in many school districts across the nation. Although merit pay is being introduced in some districts, it is not the primary determinant of teacher pay in most districts. Salary diversity is a major factor in determining which districts get the best teachers. Teachers do share a profound love the profession, but salaries compete with the passion associated to teaching. Some lower paying poor performing school districts that would improve student achievement by having the best teachers are denied of that opportunity because of inferior monetary reimbursement. The district allegiance and desire to teach are not enough to equally distribute effective teachers to share their valuable expertise in needy districts across the nation.

There are specific variables in the teaching field that influence the salary school districts pay teachers. Belli (2016) explained that one concern is what region of the country or what state a teacher works in. It is factually evident that teachers in most urban metropolitan areas receive better compensation for their services than their rural counterparts. Traditionally, teachers in most of the southern states are paid substantially less than the teachers in the eastern, northern, and western states. The cost of living may be higher in different areas across the country, but the high demand and the high expectations for teachers are not cut short because salaries vary so readily. Instructional performance is still expected to be of the highest quality possible.

Goldhaber (2007) explained that there is another important factor that determines the outcome of teachers’ salaries, and this factor is more of a responsibility of the teacher
and it reveals itself in degrees of training. Bachelor level instructors are paid less than Masters Level. Masters Level instructors are paid less than Specialist level. Likewise, teachers who earn a doctorate are positioned higher on the salary scale than the three prior degree levels. This rating is reflected across the nation. Having the highest degree does not guarantee the best teachers or the highest salaries.

Dorning (2015) suggested that there is also a salary discrepancy in some areas when a comparison is made between elementary and secondary level teachers. The average salary for secondary (high school) teachers in 2013 was $55,360, while elementary and middle school received an annual salary of $53,710 the same year. The average secondary teacher’s salary was approximately 3% more than the elementary teachers. The special education teachers’ average salary that year, $54,900, was still slightly higher than the elementary teachers in 2013.

**Respect Issues**

According to Dowd-Higgins (2013a), there is a basic need to be an accepted and respected member of a group. This basic requirement creates a sense of need and value among colleagues. Equally important, an empowering quality with regard to any teacher is self-confidence. Self-confidence is a valuable tool in a quest to earn the respect for your colleagues. Being aggressive is not an attribute for promoting respect from others. Likewise, the more self-assured and emphatic teachers are towards a colleague, the more respect is apt to be received from others. A positive character of respect for colleagues will be clearly recognized. This positive character encourages a positive undulation within the staff. When respect is given, respect is received. Cultivating professional relationships in the workplace means a win-win situation for all.
Dozal (2016) advised that as teachers navigate their teaching career, self-confidence can be empowering tool. It is important to learn to assert self in order to earn the respect of colleagues. Becoming more determined and self-assured without portraying aggressiveness, is the desired goal. It is likely that a positive undulation of this same behavior will occur among other colleagues as well. Teachers should never compromise this commodity because everyone deserves to be admired within their profession. Receiving respect from colleagues, as acknowledged by Benard (2006) allows teachers to enjoy being around someone they feel is respected by all. Fostering a first-year teacher’s professional relationships with colleagues creates a great working relationship.

Dowd-Higgins (2013b) purported that one basic human need is to be an accepted part of a respected group of colleagues. Therefore, this acceptance and respect sometimes creates a feeling of need and sense of value by colleagues. This empowerment usually leads to validation, being listened to, and viewed as a teaching professional. Moreover, all new teachers should be shown respect from their colleagues and administration, even though it has been said that respect has to be earned. When respect is given by colleagues, there will always be a happier and more productive school environment.

However, respect is not always easy to attain from colleagues. In a study conducted by Madsen and Mabokela (2000) it was noted during the interviews with AAFST participants that difficulties existed with respect from their colleagues. As defense strategies for struggling with a lack of respect from their colleagues were perfected, the longer their employment continued. However, these defense strategies were established to isolate them from the other teachers. It was also noted that as new
AATs came to the district, it did not take long for them to learn to ignore tactless remarks from their colleagues. Keeping a low profile, as well as isolating themselves from the other teachers, aided them to tolerate their lack of respect from their colleagues.

**Inequities, Gender, and Teacher Education Issues Encountered in Relationships between African American Female Secondary School Educators and Administrators**

**Inequities**

Kane (2003) explained that AAFTs are held to a different criterion than their White peers. The White female teachers are applauded for creativeness, while their AAFTs are commended for cowering down. Moreover, when Caucasian teachers fail to follow rules, they are regarded as just a radical, while AAFTs are thought of as committing an offense that could result in being terminated.

Likewise, Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2008) stated that AAFTs experience alarming barriers with their principals. Education has been perceived as a resource to be utilized toward achieving social and personal empowerment. For many years, AAFs have been challenged with issues of race, class, and gender. Moreover, resulting from this research, it was determined that AAFTs are frequently treated as second-class citizens. This group of educators face lack of respect, isolation, and hostile environments on a regular basis, contrary to their White counterparts which are treated much better.

**Gender**

According to Madsen and Mabokela (2014), AAFSTs must exercise enthusiasm in their pursuit to learn solutions to the issues they face with their administrators in the workplace. Administrators must support their teachers on issues of student behavior. In order to develop an aura of positive student behavior in teachers’ classrooms,
administrators must develop an ambiance of authority within the school environment toward faculty and staff members. Students must understand and internalize that disrespectful behavior towards an adult will produce adverse consequences.

Evans (1997) suggested that the three items that AAFSTs find self-fulfilling through their employment include self-development, family development, and community development. Self-development is a factor that motivates them to pursue a higher education. Their culture revolves around the idea of achieving educational goals to improve their lives. Self-development motivates AAFs to seek financial stability. Financial stability offers the opportunity to live comfortably while employed in a stable career. The family is the basic social entity where children learn values, customs, and their culture.

Castro et al. (2011) explained that for many AAFs in this study, the pursuit of higher education is considered an endeavor that will not just benefit themselves, but their entire family. Although the AAFSTs in this study recognize the importance of individual and family development, they also are very mindful of the effect their success will have on the larger African American community. The motivation toward achievement is particularly the case, as many of the women regard themselves as leaders of their community. Their community connections serve to increase their sense of identity and interest in political endeavors.

Furthermore, Hooks (2010) stated that in the traditional discourse of African American studies is a scarceness of research which observes the development of the AAFs’ intellect, using a Black feminist viewpoint. A Black feminist framework takes into consideration the instructional dynamics of race, class, and gender. Feminism
investigates how these multifaceted social oppressions affect AAFSTs on a daily basis in their relationships with their administrators.

In addition, Kelly (2007) posits that remarks can be very hurtful. Hollins and Guzman (2005) reported that AAFSTs report that narrow-minded attitudes regarding their competence, teaching skills, or qualifications result in the perceived lack of employment and promotional possibilities. Research suggests that the White, middle class, female population of teacher candidates hold negative views about those who are different from themselves.

**Teacher Education Issues**

Ingersoll and May (2011) explained that the absence of minorities in education is not unique to teachers. A shortage of minority school principals also exists, most likely due to the inverted challenges African American principals experience in leadership positions dealing with White subordinates. White administrators are not well-versed in supervising minority faculty because there are no prior administrative experiences for administrators to associate with minority subordinates. No precedents are in place for incidents that arise. Moreover, administrators lack vital knowledge of women of color in the classroom. Racism in schools has negative effects, both on individuals and the learning and working environment, spawning tension within school communities which alter cultural understanding and reduce the educational experience of all students.

Mabokela and Madsen (2007) suggested that usually AAFSTs who experience racism by their administrator talk of having lower levels of self-confidence and feelings of uncertainty or failure. AAFSTs who feel that their culture and uniqueness are not respected may also experience lower levels of self-esteem and self-worth, which have no
place in the educational system. These feelings may lead to a negative response of their own culture, language, and values. Racist abuse and harassment by an administrator can cause AAFSTs to be terrified of a school administrator and withdraw from other colleagues and school activities. If the administrator does not address discriminatory attitudes and actions, AAFSTs feel disappointment and vulnerability with no rights to non-discriminatory treatment.

McKinney, Bartholomew, and Gray (2010) revealed lower participation rates, behavioral challenges, and feelings of hostility exist as a result of racism in the educational system, having a strong influence on educational outcomes. Education depends on the regular sustained attention of educators and their ability to instruct successfully in the classroom. In a racist learning environment, this balance is upset, and educational end products are limited. Educational outcomes for AAFSTs who are subjected to racism may result in lower levels of educational accomplishment and lower rates of involvement in school education and training.

Also, Vilson (2015) stated that 50 years ago, African American students were predominantly taught by AAFSTs. At present, many African American students, as well as students in general, may make it through elementary and secondary schools, even college, and never are taught by an AAFST nor ever see them in their school. Brooks, Vorreyer and Gambino (2011) stated reality must be faced. The struggle of recruiting enough teachers from minority groups to mirror the increasing diversity of the student population will increase with each year. Efforts must continue to enlist, plan, and maintain teachers of color within the profession and within classrooms.
All educators of today and in the future, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or background, must be equipped to teach the diverse student populations that define classes without continually battling these challenges. Preparing educators to enable students to meet their potential must also include assessing the diversity of the students taught and the different cultures they represent. Administrators must make a commitment to support the efforts of the AAFST to reform teacher education programs and back collaboration with local districts to institute professional development in schools.

Brown and Haygood (2010) explained teachers must trust in their administrators. Administrators have the task of responding in a manner that is in the best interest of teachers as well as students. In order to develop positive behavior, administrators must take the following steps: 1) Set up meetings with teachers facing bad behavior from students for support sessions, 2) Offer an assortment of support strategies for classroom management for teachers having difficulty, 3) Follow-up with bad classroom behavior on a regular basis, and 4) Maintain an active presence throughout the entire school on a daily basis. With administrators practicing these suggestions on a daily basis, these steps may help to encourage positive student behavior.

The crucial issue must be how to ensure that teachers, parents, colleagues, and administrators are prepared, able, and willing to teach all students, especially those who have traditionally been left behind. Willis (2007) stated a mark of respect needs to be made to honor the legacy of the thousands of AAFSTs who gave everything so that every child in America could benefit from having greater access to equity and equality in all educational opportunities. One way such a tribute could be made is to commit to a highly qualified and diversified teaching profession as part of the realization of educational
equity, uniformity, and quality for all America’s children. Therefore, the American Psychological Association (2012) purported that to improve teacher education programs, educators and administrators must be groomed to elevate their level of accurate knowledge of African American culture. Success requires a deeper understanding of the impact African American culture has on behavior, learning styles, preferred teaching styles, and a genuine appreciation for the valuable repertoire of experiences AAFSTs bring to school.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter III described the process of this qualitative phenomenological research study. Not only does this chapter reveal the research design utilized in this study, but also the relationships of the research questions that were under examination, as well as the procedures that were followed in the development and implementation of the study. A full description of the relationships is included in the research design, research questions, population, data collection, and data analysis involving the challenges that these AAFSTs experienced with their students. In addition, the rapport of these teachers with their students’ parents, colleagues, and administration, as to how those affected their relationship with the participants and students, is also addressed. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience in their interactions with their students in relationship to cultural and social issues?

2. What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience when addressing their students’ parents in regard to communication and building trust?
3. What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience with their colleagues in terms of respect issues and salary?

4. What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience in their relationship with their administrator with regard to inequities, gender, and teacher education issues?

**Rationale for a Qualitative Study with a Phenomenological Design**

Qualitative research utilizes different theoretical assumptions, such as approaches of inquiry, techniques of data collection, and analysis and understanding (Kakulu, 2014). A qualitative approach gives emphasis to the qualities of entities, processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency (Denzin 2010). Therefore, Denzin described qualitative research as the definitions, characteristics, meanings, concepts, metaphors, symbols, and description of things. The research questions often stress how social experience is created and given meaning. This type of inquiry stresses the relationship between the researcher and the participants as well as the situations that occur that constrain the shape of the inquiry.

Numerous ways of framing qualitative methods are available. Creswell (2013) concluded that there are various types of qualitative research. The following are the five methods that are the most common:

**Action Research**

Katigbak, Foley, Robert, and Hutchinson (2016) explained that action research is one method of qualitative research that pursues an action that will improve a practice and studies the effects of the action that was taken. Answers are sought to problems, for
example, that are in one specific health care setting or hospital. In action research, the placing solutions into practice occurs as part of the research method. Implementation of the solutions is put into place immediately.

**Grounded theory**

Smith (2007) stated that grounded theory utilizes the same inductive approaches, but results with the goal of the development of a theory. Because this theory is “grounded” in the data, hence the name grounded theory. Also, lower level concerns are detected through description and verification.

**Case study**

Baxter and Jack (2008) purported that the case study is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, institution, group, or community. However, a case study is categorized by the unit of analysis, or the case, instead of by the topic of the study. This method is, at times, combined with other types of qualitative methods due to the fact that the unit of analysis defines the case study.

**Ethnographic study**

Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges (2008) established that ethnography was developed by anthropologists in order to study human society and culture. Researchers use it to study race and culture. Hence, an ethnographic study seeks to interpret the data through a sociocultural perspective.

**Phenomenology**

Wertz, McSpadden, Charmaz, McMullen, Anderson, & Josselson (2011) explained that phenomenological inquiry is appropriate when focusing on meanings and
perspectives of research study participants. With the phenomenology method, one can analyze the data to gain an understanding how the world is formed from the participants' perspective. Correspondingly, Quay (2016) suggested that this method focuses on participants’ own experiences and are compared and analyzed to better understand the phenomenon being studied. In one sense all qualitative research is phenomenological in nature, but with its focus on understanding and experience, phenomenology is able to stand on its own as a method.

As shown in this brief summary of the different types of methods used in qualitative research, it is evident that not all qualitative research is conducted in the same manner. Diversity exists among the methods. In the case of this qualitative research study, a phenomenological inquiry was found to be the best fit.

Sargeant (2012) established that qualitative data are a result of the method selected for the study, which are affected by a researcher’s academic focus. Consequently, data related to the motivation for choosing an issue, the conduct of the study, and the analysis is also related. Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2010) shared that some of the common qualitative data-gathering techniques include interviews, ethnography, focus groups, historiography, and case studies. Each approach has advantages and limitations such as level of intrusiveness, opportunity to review during the collection process, proximity to natural field setting, and amount of bias based on the presence of the researcher. The resulting pieces of data may take the form of text, audio or video files, photographs, or field notes.

Hepworth and Kay (2015) suggested that when a researcher selects strategies of inquiry, it is important to realize these will have a dramatic influence on procedures of
analysis and interpretation. Data collection in the field can be a lengthy process; however, the researcher can frequently reflect, analyze, and correct the research during this time. Saldaña (2013) stated portions of data should be meticulously labeled and organized in such a way that facilitates ongoing analysis. This process of analysis involves deciphering data collected, image, and audio and/or video formats.

Researchers today usually store data electronically. Moreover, Johnson, Dunlap, and Benoit (2010) related qualitative data analysis software can store large amounts of data and is excellent for organizing. These types of computer software programs enhance indexing and sorting large amounts of data. Likewise, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software is useful for coding data and determining themes. Emerging concepts, categories, and themes can be coded, recorded, or edited throughout the entire process of the research project.

Accounting for validity and reliability in qualitative research projects looks quite different from quantitative projects. Leung (2015) posited reliability is an examination of the stability or consistency of responses. To increase the consistency and reliability of a project, researchers document all procedures, and, if possible, set up a detailed protocol. Additional reliability procedures consist of checking transcripts for obvious mistakes, etc.

Creswell (2013) discussed that qualitative validity is established on the accuracy of the results. Procedurally, a researcher can check for the accuracy of the findings by employing a combination of multiple validity strategies: triangulation; member checking; rich, thick description; researcher bias clarification; negative or discrepant information; prolonged time in the field; peer debriefing; and use an external auditor use.
Points of Consideration for this Qualitative Research

Greene (2014) stressed that engaging in qualitative research demands an understanding of some of the disadvantages associated with conducting it. Some of these disadvantages are the time and resources involved in collecting and analyzing qualitative data. A related concern involves depending on others for access to documents such as diaries, logs, and other records. Silverman (2013) suggested that training for qualitative research is also a concern. This disadvantage occurs when working in an environment where quantitative research is the norm and where qualitative research is not understood or appreciated. If a researcher has a lack of training in the qualitative research or does not understand qualitative methodologies, it can lead to other issues within the qualitative research project. The first issue would include applying quantitative methods in analysis of the qualitative analysis. The second issue would include approaching qualitative research with a quantitative mindset. Thirdly, a description of how the qualitative research study was conducted should be included. Researchers need to provide sufficient detail for their studies to be replicated so that readers can understand the basis on which interpretations have been made.

In conducting a qualitative research project, an awareness of the difficulties that are often related to such research should be addressed. Some of these issues include allowing an adequate amount of time and the necessary resources to collect and analyze the data. The research must employ the necessary skills to conduct qualitative research as well as the capability to take on a qualitative perspective in order to write rich, thick descriptions of research that will allow the project to be replicated.
Phenomenology

Phenomenology is one approach to performing qualitative research. Englander (2012) suggested that phenomenology is a descriptive methodology of human science. Moreover, it seeks to explore and describe phenomena as it presents itself in the world to find the meaning of the phenomena. Its origins are in philosophy and are discovery-oriented that requires an attitude of openness by the observer in order to let the meanings emerge. Atwood and Stolorow (2014) established that it should be made clear at the outset that phenomenology deals with persons as opposed to subjects. Persons are whole beings, complete with past experiences, attitudes, beliefs and values. They live in a world of experience, complete with both cultural and social influences.

Quay (2016) explained that phenomenological inquiry uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in a context-specific setting. Munhall (2007) suggested that a phenomenological study involves the research of a phenomenon by attaining an authority’s spoken descriptions based on their opinions on this phenomenon. They seek to find common themes or elements that are contained within the phenomenon. The study is intended to discover and describe the elements and the underlying factors comprising the experience of the researched phenomenon, and phenomenology is viewed as one of the repeatedly used practices in qualitative studies. A phenomenological study describes the significance of the cognizant experiences of a few individuals about a perception or the phenomenon (Reiter, Stewart, & Bruce, 2011). Another definition provided by Cooper, Fleischer, and Cotton (2012), offered the following definition describing phenomenology as a research design used to study in-depth human experience. Since the phenomenological research is not used to create new
conclusions or locate new-found theories, phenomenology utilizes rich descriptions of human experience to underlying, common themes, thus resulting in a brief description in which every word specifically portrays the phenomenon as experienced by co-researchers or participants (Cresswell, 2008).

Langdridge (2008) stated that in phenomenology, to explore is to reflect, think, and write. Similarly, to write is to put thought on paper. It is interrelated with reflection. Moreover, it is when the questions and thoughts being asked of the phenomena presented are assembled on paper that the human science researcher has the opportunity to step back and reflect.

This research used phenomenological writing to convey meaning in description of the phenomena of AAFSTs. This phenomenological writing sought to communicate the unknown through a deep description of what had been lived being. The writings in this research describe the richness of the phenomena within the lived experience (Altheide & Johnson, 2011). It allowed this researcher to put form and shape to the participants’ thoughts. Writing became both the process and product of this phenomenological inquiry. This investigator wrote to inquire of phenomena in the lived world of AFFST as well as wrote to communicate to others the discoveries resulting from this inquiry. Phenomenological writing has the intent of having others see what had not been noticed before and showed the phenomenon in a new way. When the lived experiences were brought to consciousness first in thought and then on paper, the process of reduction, the peeling back of the layers of influence began, seeking to discover the meaning of this lived experience. This enabled construction of thick, rich description of human actions, behaviors, and experiences as they were met in the world.
Reflective practice is the primary process of any phenomenological inquiry. There are many and varied definitions of reflective practice in the literature (Sherwood & Horton-Deutsch, 2012). Consequently, not all of these definitions summarize the deep reflection that is integral to phenomenological inquiry. Many concerned themselves only with the technical or contextual aspects of a lived experience. Callary (2015) distinguishes three levels of reflection. Each level of reflection is higher than the last. These three levels of reflection include technical application, underlying assumptions of action and the worth of completing educational goals, and critical reflectivity. To successfully explore a phenomenon, the observer looks beyond the initial description and peels back the layers of ethical, moral, and social and cultural influence to seek the meaning of the lived experience.

**Phenomenological Meaning**

In phenomenology, all lived experience has meaning. Meaning is multi-layered and multi-dimensional. Saevi (2013) suggested that human science meaning can only be communicated through text, hence the phenomenological writing. Through reflection, the inquirer comes to distinguish structures within the lived experience, as communicated through the writing, and continues with their interpretation, which leads to the discovery of the themes, followed by coding of terms in transcripts.

According to Tong, Sainsbury, and Craig (2007), a theme is the experience of focus and meaning. It is a simplification or a form of capturing the phenomenon trying to be understood. In identifying themes, the researcher desires to make sense of the lived experience, to be open to discovering new meanings. Callary (2015) explained that to have pedagogical understanding of the themes of the lived experience allows the inquirer
to be practically responsive to it. Phenomenology does not produce new information, but rather interprets a meaning already implied to a lived experience as its truth.

Using phenomenological research, this study seeks to find AAFSTs’ challenges in their relationships between themselves and their students, the parents of those students, their colleagues, and their administrators, in an East Central Mississippi urban area and a Northeast Mississippi urban area. This study will also examine the contributing factors that affect these educators’ challenges.

According to Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, and Hendry (2011), the job of the phenomenologist is to describe the basic makeup of experience. Former beliefs about a phenomenon of interest are momentarily set aside, so it will not impede with the awareness of the elements or formation of the phenomenon. When beliefs are set aside, consciousness becomes fine-tuned and can be examined in the same way that an object of consciousness can be examined.

Permission

Prior to beginning research, the re-certification with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) training on March 31, 2009, was completed. Moreover, after submitting the research proposal and receiving Mississippi State University IRB’s approval, (Appendix A), the research portion of the study began data collection on April 1, 2009.

Setting

This study was conducted in the context of the Southeastern United States. For the purpose of this research, it included one school district in the East Central Mississippi area and one school district in the Northeast Mississippi, area, located approximately 105
miles apart. The East Central School District had 4,300 students and state of the art equipment, which included Promethean boards, MacBooks, and iPads. This district also utilized the Common Core Curriculum as did all of Mississippi during data collection of this study. This district also provided students multiple opportunities including artistic, athletic, and extracurricular activities. General characteristics of this location include a total population of 13,189 people, 70.1% attained high school graduate or higher, the median household income is $37,591, and 10,063 residents are Black or African American. This district also provides free lunches to all students enrolled.

The Northeast School District had 3,500 students and also had state of the art equipment, which included Smart boards, MacBooks, and iPads, etc., and utilized Common Core. Under those circumstances, one middle school and one high school from each location were chosen. General characteristics of this location include a total population of 23,888 people, 88.3% attained high school graduate or higher, the median household income is $31,357, and 8,509 residents are Black or African American. This district has a school lunch program that provides free and reduced lunches to residents that qualify economically.

Site Entry

The superintendents of each school district were contacted for their approval to conduct this research study in their district. The middle school principals and the high school principals at each school in both districts were contacted for permission to conduct research in their building.
**Procedure for Selecting Participants**

Qualitative research design identifies a low number of participants from a populace. From this populace, the data collected is a direct result of the participants (Labat & Sharma, 2016). Therefore, purposeful sampling, utilizing the method of convenience sampling, was the procedure used to secure the participants for this research study. Palinkas, Horwitz, Hoagwood, Green, Wisdom, and Duan (2015) explained that purposeful sampling is used for specific subjects because they hold the detailed information and/or experience that is being studied, which was the case in this study.

Moreover, Farrokhi and Mahmoudi-Hamidabad (2012) explained that one of the easiest methods for selecting participants for a qualitative research study was known as convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is derived from a group of people in an area who may the best possible information.

Equally important, convenience sampling uses participants that materialize as possible participants accessible at the time that the data collection takes place and are chosen for the sample. Many qualitative research studies involving school environments employ a convenience sampling. Also, this method provided an informative initial reaction.

To the contrary, Price (2013) claimed a negative aspect of convenience sampling is that the sample can possibly be biased. Not only can some people be under-selected or over-selected but also might not be included. In the case of this study, all participants were AAFSTs that taught in Grades 7 through 12. It was perceived the interactions observed should have little bias due to the fact the participants, AAFSTs, would have different shared experiences because of different personalities and circumstances.
After obtaining site entry, a sign-up sheet was placed in each location limited to 15 participants for each site. Once the sign-up sheets were complete, the 60 perspective participants were contacted by email, inviting them to participate in the study concerning their experiences with their students and their relationships with their students’ parents, colleagues, and administration as to how the latter affects this teacher/student relationship. Out of the 60 emails sent to possible participants, 46 AAFST responded. As the research study progressed, these 46 prospective participants were sent, via email, correspondence again informing them of the particulars and expectations of the study, as well as the Demographic Survey (Appendix B) and Consent Form (Appendix C) to complete to participate in the study. Of these 46 emails, 13 were returned. After reviewing the questionnaire, 13 AAFSTs were selected to participate in the study. While attempting to set up the interviews for the study, three AAFSTs dropped out of the study claiming they simply did not have enough time to participate in the study. At this point, this researcher went with the remaining ten participants, two teachers teaching at each middle school and three participants teaching at each high school.

### Analysis of the Questionnaire Data

The analysis of the questionnaire data was examined for the purpose of identifying participants for participation in the interviews. As a result of this examination, the participants consisted of AAFSTs who had experiences related to the four research questions posed in this research study. Participants were selected with the goal of achieving a balance between their different roles within their teacher/student relationships. Merriam (2009) advised that most participants were likely to fit into more than one of these roles, which was the case for many of the respondents for this study.
This concept was utilized in analyzing the geographic questionnaires. Possible participants who met the criterion and agreed to be interviewed were selected for participation. Given the demographics of the two middle schools and two high schools in Northeast Mississippi and East Central Mississippi, the participants were proportional with two participants from each middle school and three participants from each high school, for a total of ten participants.

Consent

Upon selection, the participants were sent a Questionnaire (Appendix B) and an Informed Consent to complete (Appendix C) to participate in the study and were informed that they could stop their participation in the study at any time. The 10 participants selected were asked if they would be willing to participate in this research study concerning their experiences with their students and relationships with their students’ parents, colleagues, and administration that affected this teacher/student relationship.

Information on Participants

In order to assist readers with a better understanding of the assumptions drawn from this research, it was essential to cultivate an understanding of each of the participants included within the study. A short biographical entry, using a research-assigned pseudonym, of each participant is included below from their interviews and participation in April 2009.

Sherry (P1). Sherry is a 21-30-year-old AAFST teacher at a middle school in the East Central region of Mississippi. She has been teaching full-time in a predominantly
Black institution for 3 to 5 years. All of her students live in the area. She took the job because she is comfortable in the community, and she wants to help other African Americans succeed.

**Patsy (P2).** Patsy is an AAFST between 51 and 60 years of age. She has been teaching at a high school in the Northeast Region of Mississippi for more than 15 years. Her district is not predominantly African American, with 50% of the population in the school being African American. She continues to teach at the local high school and views her interactions with her students’ as great.

**Olivia (P3).** Olivia is an AAFST between 41 and 50 years of age. She has been teaching at a high school in the Northeast Region of Mississippi for more than 15 years. This district is 50% African American. Even though Olivia is an AAFST, she does not identify any racist attitudes that she has encountered during her more than 15 years of teaching. She continues to teach at the local high school and enjoys fulfilling her duties as an educator.

**Cynthia (P4).** Cynthia is an AAFST between 31 and 40 years of age. She has been teaching at a high school in the East Central District of Mississippi for 3 to 5 years. This district is predominantly African American. She continued working on her education to earn an administrative degree because she wanted to help students at a higher level.

**Tonya (P5).** Tonya is an AAFST between 31 and 40 years of age. She has been teaching at a middle school in the Northeast District of Mississippi for 3 to 5 years. This district has a 50% African American population. She continues to teach at a middle
school in the Northeast District and enjoys helping middle school students prepare for the high school experience.

**Roshelle (P6).** Roshelle is an AAFST between 31 and 40 years of age and has been teaching between 3 and 5 years. She has been teaching at a middle school in the Northeast District of Mississippi, comprised of 50% African American students and 50% White students. She continues to teach at the local middle school in the district and continues to grow as a teacher.

**Pam (P7).** Pam is an AAFST between 31 and 40 years of age and has been teaching between 12 and 14 years. She has been teaching full-time at a high school in the East Central District of Mississippi. This district is predominantly African American. Pam lives in the community and enjoys a rich relationship with her students. She continues to teach full time at the local high school in the district.

**Selena (P8).** Selena is an AAFST between 21 and 30 years of age and has been teaching between 0 and 2 years. She was teaching at a middle school in the Northeast District of Mississippi. Selena experienced some prejudice as a new teacher and felt challenged by her students. She continues to teach and feels that she is still growing as a teacher.

**Celeste (P9).** Celeste is an AAFST between 41 and 50 years of age and has been teaching between 0 and 2 years. She was teaching in a high school in the East Central District of Mississippi. This district is predominantly African American. Celeste lives in the same community as many of her students. She is a fairly new educator and as such
has not encountered prejudice among her colleagues. She enjoys working with her high school students.

**Rose (P10).** Rose is an AAFST between 51 and 60 years of age and has been teaching more than 15 years. She has been teaching at a high school located in the Northeast District of Mississippi. This district population is 50% White and 50% African American. Rose continues to teach at the local high school and plans to retire from this position in the near future.

**Data Collection**

This study utilized a qualitative methodology. Within this methodology, a phenomenological approach was sought in the data collection (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012) support the use of triangulation because triangulation supports data collected by combining various data collection methods. Triangulation expands on creating a stronger understanding as well as validity and reliability within the realism paradigm, which relies on multiple perceptions about a single reality. Newton (2010) explained that semi-structured interview format adheres to the notion of data triangulation by allowing participants in a research to assist the researcher with the research questions and the data collection. Engaging multiple methods, for instance, observation, interviews and recordings, will lead to more valid, reliable, and diverse construction of realities. Yeasmin and Rahman (2012) stressed the importance of enhancing the analysis and understanding of the constructions of others. Triangulation is a step taken by researchers to involve several investigators or peer researchers’ interpretations of the data at different times or locations. Triangulation may include multiple methods of data collection and
data analysis. The methods chosen in triangulation to test the validity and reliability of a study depend on the criterion of the research. The triangulated data in this study included the demographic survey, the interview, transcribed audiotaped interviews, and field notes.

The demographic questionnaire provided the researcher with a baseline for the questions to be conducted during the semi-structured face-to-face interview. Allowing the participants to choose only one response was a less frightening scenario for them and may have elicited more accurate responses by providing a higher level of anonymity and by making the participants feel safer and more comfortable while filling out the questionnaire. Once completed, the questionnaires allowed the researcher to select specific questions of interest to this qualitative study. This provided a basis for the face-to-face interview because the identified questions pointed to possible problem areas which the interviewer could address further during the interview.

There are countless comparable scenarios that certain groups of participants in research have in common. According to Al-Natour, Qandil, and Gillespie (2011), phenomenology provides an opportunity to study participants who have had unique experiences, yet shared some commonality in those experiences. Although factors like race, gender, physical stature, size, moral beliefs, and social status may not be relative in similar studies, the actual experiences of participants establish common ground. Madill and Gough (2008) explained the phenomenon is better understood when an individual’s experience is openly shared by subjects in a study. Understanding the participants was established as a priority in order to make it clearer in viewing issues from the subjects’ perspectives.
The participants were contacted via email, and interviews were set up at their school buildings for their convenience. The locations varied according to the participant’s teaching schedule and privacy for confidentiality purposes. Folders labeled with each participant’s code, were established for each participant to house each participant’s information, including the demographic survey, consent form, etc.

Although interviewing was the principal method of data collection for this study, field notes and a geographical questionnaire were also used to collect additional data. Glesne stated that interviewing is a social interaction occurring within a particular social context, which has implications for thinking about rigor and ethics. In many instances, totally unexpected responses were elicited from questions. In particular, both rigorously and ethically, an acknowledgment and reflection on why and how unexpected responses challenged this examiner’s own ideas and thinking was included. It should be noted that the findings that were different and did not fit were not discarded or erased from the research. These data outliers were utilized to reflect on unexpected or contradictory research outcomes and as points of knowledge and information. This data, moreover, was looked as irregularities that became re-described as new themes. As such, the unexpected became a research situation whereby rigor was rethought. Seidman (2013) mentioned that reflection on the research process would involve a constant awareness of the researcher’s own rational decision-making in the research plan and of how the methods used were sometimes at odds with what was originally hoped, theoretically, to critique and draw out. Rethinking rigor required an acknowledgment of possible contradictions and conflicts between the research methods and theoretical conclusions that were later constructed.
Englander (2012) suggested the social interaction of interviewing can be explored further by focusing on an issue rarely raised in research literature. There were occasions when the opposite was experienced during these interviews, and it was helpful to reflect on these in relation to issues of subjectivity and assumptions of this research. The questions asked were considered, and a professional self-control creating a sense of trust in the interview exchange were maintained. Rowley (2012) stated that it is important to recognize and openly conduct the interview as an expert, in shaping the interview situation and ultimately research conclusions with respect to what counted as the facts. Acknowledgement and welcoming mysteries as challenges to the framework of knowledge and as evidence, giving the participants being interviewed the space to express ideas and concepts that, under a different set of rules, might never have been expressed.

As a result of incorporating a social interaction of interviewing, anonymous semi-structured interviews were used to conduct the interviews for this study. Jamshed (2014) suggested that semi-structured interviews should be guided by the interviewer, but permit participants to give information that the participants deem significant to them, but not a direct answer to the interview questions. Moreover, this suggestion served as a guide to a better understanding of what a participant had experienced of the phenomenon being examined. Furthermore, allowing participants to speak what was on their mind, allowed the opinions of those being interviewed to be articulated through this qualitative method, specifically the anonymous semi-structured interviews that were utilized to answer the research questions.
During the semi-structured in-depth interviews, a set of 24 interview protocol questions (Appendix D) was used to guide opportunities to explore issues of teacher/student relationships experienced in school. Interview protocol questions asked participants to recall their teacher/student relationships, as well as how their students’ parents, colleagues, and administrators affected these relationships.

The Interview protocol instrument was designed to keep the face-to-face interview on track and effective. So, for that reason the questions for this interview were determined by creating an instrument that would lead to the answers to the research questions.

Interview protocols with semi-structured questions were used with the interview protocol. Likewise, the data collection consisted of 10 audio taped interviews, allotting 2 hours for each interview, were conducted during the spring session of 2010. The interview protocol allowed the participants to express their perceptions and opinions in their own words and also helped to minimize leading or directing participants to answer the question in a particular manner. In addition, the interview protocol served as a reference sheet to ensure that all relevant topics and questions were covered.

The Interview Protocol was Used to Answer Each Research Question

Questions 1 through 3, 17, and 21 were designed to address Research Question 1: What challenges do African American female secondary educators experience in their interactions with their students in relationship to cultural and social issues?

Questions 4 through 6, 18, and 22 were designed to address Research Question 2: What challenges do African American female secondary educators experience when addressing their students’ parents in regard to communication and building trust?
Questions 7 through 11, 19, and 23 were designed to address Research Question 3: What challenges do African American female secondary educators experience with their colleagues in terms of respect and salary issues?

Question 12 through 16, 20, and 24 were designed to address Research Question 4: What challenges are African American female secondary educators challenged within their relationship with their administrator with regard to inequities, gender, and teacher education issues?

The goal of this interview protocol allowed respondents to tell their own experiences as seen through the eyes of the participants. Similarly, the primary goal of the interview protocol was to, through the use of semi-structured questions, allow the participants the flexibility to frame and structure their responses. The fundamental component of this qualitative research was that the phenomenon under study would unfold through the participant’s eyes. During the entire interview process, the participants’ perceptions of their daily school experiences with their students were drawn out and documented. Techniques of listening to the voices of participants and becoming immersed in the data were utilized. It was crucial to understand the dynamics of each particular case of each participant. Sensitivity and working with the particular climate and atmosphere of the setting was a priority. In addition, to be sure the need for the participants to feel secure while sharing confidential information was taking place, the interviews were held in an empty classroom with the door closed. Consequently, that procedure provided ample privacy, provided a comfortable environment, and a room that offered little to no distractions.
Field notes were also a subjective data source. Field notes were used to record all personal impressions that could possibly have an impact on the analysis procedures. The interviewer was constantly listening for emerging patterns and themes during the process of conducting the interviews. Thoughts on patterns and themes to be investigated during the analysis process were recorded in the field notes. After the interview was complete, the researcher immediately transcribed the interview session so that all thoughts and impressions were able to be documented. This transcription minus impressions were sent back to the participants to make sure the interviewer had accurately recorded their responses.

Most compelling evidence delivered by Attard and Coulson (2012) led to an investigation to determine themes that stood for the actual meaning of these experiences of the participants as discussed during the interview. In this inquiry, constant comparison of these participants’ feedback with the rationale of organizing the data into carefully planned categories of the analysis by seeking recurring themes, were used. During this process, data was determined as a theme, if it was seen throughout the data as identified during the regular comparison of developing themes during the analysis process. As such, the themes that emerged were considered as possible commonalities from the data that were notated as initial themes and coded. The data were then narrowed down by removing overlapping themes, encapsulating the focal point of each theme’s meaning. At this point, these themes were re-examined through member checking, which was conducted after the interview process. Through this data coding process, general themes emerged and were made based on the context.
When the transcripts were completed, field notes formed additional data for beginning the analysis procedures. The final data collection method utilized for this study were field notes written during the interviews and the member checks that were conducted. Field notes were kept throughout the data collection and analysis process. During and immediately after each interview, field notes were written which included the perceptions of the participants and recollections of how the participants behaved and spoke during the interviews. Lastly, these notes were helpful in allowing the recall of the meanings of what participants said in the interviews during the analysis process, as well as identifying any distractions or comments that were perceived as important to the findings.

Each participant was given a pseudonym. Therefore, this allowed the identification of the transcripts to be notated by these pseudonyms. Moreover, the notes of names of individuals and matching pseudonyms were kept separate from each other and other identifying information was kept in a secure place.

Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, there were three separate data sources that provided the information to be analyzed. The first was the interview conducted by the researcher, field notes, and a demographic questionnaire. The interview consisted of semi-structured answers provided by the participants. The field notes were impressions as perceived by the interviewer and included general body language and the tonal inflections. The demographic questionnaire asked the participant to choose a response based on their personal experiences and was used to identify possible participants.
The goal of coding in this research was to review the data gathered, code the data, and to analyze this data, while maintaining the relationships between the parts intact. Attard and Coulson (2012) guided this study in this phenomenological data analysis. It strived to obtain a sense of the whole phenomenon by reading and re-reading transcripts and gaining a sense of the transcriptions from the participant's interviews. Secondly, the data from the interviews were categorized into meanings or themes of data relating to the phenomenon. The meanings were classified by examining the transcripts, and identifying or specifying statements related to the phenomenon. Thirdly, this data analysis attempted to transform the participants’ language with an emphasis on the phenomenon. These were always maintained and the exact words of the participants were then reviewed to later transform meanings of the language. And finally, the transformed meanings into a consistent statement of the phenomenon’s structure were created. With this intention, the participants' language was transformed and related to the phenomenon, which involved reviewing each of the meanings and expressing the meanings of the statement in language that were consistent with the discipline. In addition, during data analysis, the detailed field notes kept throughout the study, were utilized by regularly assessing of the participants’ feedback with the objective of grouping the data into categories of recurring themes.

**Ethics**

Reflecting on the nature of qualitative studies, the communications between the participant and the researcher were ethically challenging, due to the fact that the investigator was White and the participants were all African American. Due to these ethical challenges, this researcher considered all stages of the study, from designing to
reporting. Items that were included were: 1) informed consent, 2) confidentiality, 3) anonymity, 4) the potential impact of the participants on the researcher, and 5) the potential impact of the research on the participants.

Consequently, because Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, and Cheraghi (2014) claimed that ethics was an important factor of any study, the following was adopted specifically for this project. The investigator explained to the participants exactly what would be expected of them if they chose to participate. They were also informed of the risks involved, such as possible ostracizing by other teachers if any of their answers were revealed, that could result from their participation. Next, the benefits that could result from this research with the help of their participation in the study were revealed. Lastly, it was explained that this was strictly volunteer participation on their part and they had nothing to fear if they chose not to participate or if they chose to drop out of the study early.

Miller et al., (2012) explained researchers have to implement a more comprehensive approach in the production of knowledge to explain the trend being examined, so a geographic survey, interview, and field notes were utilized. These additional sources of data helped to make clear why the relationship between AAFSTs and their students, as well as other issues that affect the relationship can be a hindrance in the classroom. Moreover, because this project dealt with the academic discipline, a qualitative research was utilized as the process for investigating the how and why of this phenomenon of the progression of a concept. Because this qualitative research project was an interpretive research, there was a possibility the findings could be biased,
incorrect, or controversial. However, qualitative research is also known for validating or
discovering different opinions on the same social phenomena.

According to Jeebodh (2014), the term ‘confidentiality’ expresses different
meanings for teachers and researchers. For teachers, confidentiality suggested that
nothing is to be revealed that concerns personal information. However, for researchers,
this is much more difficult because confidentiality is less clear. To the researcher,
‘confidentiality’ involves elaborating on the outcome to be expected from the research.
The researcher endeavored to minimize the possibility of intrusion into the independence
of the participants in the research study. Rich (2015) suggested that when very sensitive
issues present themselves, vulnerable individuals, as well as children, should have some
type of advocate who serves as a representative during initial phases of the research
process through the collection of data.

Informed consent is an essential part of ethics in research. Lakes, Vaughan,
Jones, Burke, Baker, and Swanson (2012) explained that researchers of qualitative studies
should detail beforehand how data will be collected, as well as how it will be utilized in
the study. When considering informed consent, a researcher is accountable for informing
participants of study about every phase of the research in terms that all can understand. It
needs to be made clear what the nature of the study consists of, what is expected of the
participants, who is in charge of the research, the purpose of the research, and what will
be done with the results of the study.

Sanjari et al. (2014) also purported that informed consent necessitates a
continuing compromise of the stipulations of the agreement as the study developments.
In addition, there are individuals that feel called to partake in research that their
colleagues are participating in that will be advantageous to their community. Therefore, this researcher explained to the participants that the research being conducted could be of benefit to their community, as well as many others.

**Issues of Rigor.** Leung (2015) explained the term rigor exists in numerous books, in reference to discussions about objectivity, neutrality, dependability, replication, and validity. In fact, Pereira (2012) mentioned that without rigor, research is valueless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility. Therefore, rigor was a very important part of this study. A great deal of attention was applied to dependability and transferability in the methods of this research.

Applebaum (2012) purported that in qualitative research, it should be assured that all responses are accurately reported and represented, and multiple sources should be used to triangulate the data to increase the study’s credibility. For this study, multiple sources, such as literature reviews, interviews, observations, field notes, and telephone follow-up statements, were used to address triangulation and credibility issues.

Manganelli, Threatt, Brooks, Healy, Merino, Yanik, Walker, and Green (2014) described the importance of triangulation is that all of the outcomes, whether convergent, inconsistent, and contradictory, should be filtered through other knowledge about the setting. As such, triangulation seldom provides a view of a circumstance, but can offer a rich and multifaceted representation of the phenomenon under study. Triangulation is typically a strategy or test for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings.

Rennie, Venville, and Wallace (2011) advocated the use of combining methods when applying triangulation to a qualitative study for increased strength of the study.
Different kinds of data or methods during the triangulation process were combined. In agreement with this view, Singh and Sharma (2015) expounded on judging validity and reliability within the realism paradigm which relies on multiple perceptions about a single reality. They argued the involvement of triangulation of several data sources and their interpretations with those multiple perceptions in the realism paradigm.

In defense of the validity of self-reports for this research, Damianakis and Woodford, (2012) explained that anonymous self-report data is beneficial in that it eliminates the possibly of deductive disclosure of participants, which in-turn strengthens the validity of the method utilized in this research study. In this study, only pseudonyms were used for participants and school districts. By drawing the sample for this study from a population of AAFSTs, it was assured that concerns about revealing information about the contexts of teacher/student relationships were unlikely to impact the data collected. In other words, AAFST participants would not be concerned with any possible ramifications from their school community.

Carlson (2010) described member checks as a continuous process that occurs during data analysis that has largely been interpreted and used as verification of the overall results with participants in order to seek the truth. Member checks were reviewed as a desirable way to verify information that were shared by the participants for accuracy. For example, after analyzing the interview data for this study, the data collected from each individual participant were reviewed again and given back to the participants for accuracy of what they said. Upon completion, the participants were contacted for accuracy.
It was important to give a rich, thick description of the steps taken during this study in order for the study to be replicated. The audit trail established included writing very descriptive notes of each participant’s discussion, to establish to the readers how the data was collected, construed, and analyzed. This description will allow others to duplicate the findings of this study.

In the case of this qualitative interview research, audit trails were established by including a rich, thick description of how the data was collected, construed, and evaluated. By establishing these steps mentioned, the use of this technique allowed others in the future to replicate this study.

**Field Notes**

Field notes will be kept by the researcher in the form of a journal and will describe participants’ reactions and views, as well as the research process itself. Careful attention will be paid to the nonverbal aspects of the interaction, for example, turn-taking, eye contact, and pauses in interaction (Morgan, 1998). Spradley (1979) recommended the journal contain a record of experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, and challenges that arise during the data collection process. “Making an introspective record of field work enables a person to take into account personal biases and feelings, to understand their influence on the research” (Spradley, 1979, p. 76).

Qualitative researchers have few strict guidelines for when to stop the data collection process. Criteria include: 1) exhaustion of resources; 2) emergence of regularities; and 3) overextension, or going too far beyond the boundaries of the research (Guba, 1978). The decision to stop sampling must take into account the research goals,
the need to achieve depth through triangulation of data sources, and the possibility of greater breadth through examination of a variety of sampling sites.

**Subjectivity**

According to Bergold and Thomas (2012), qualitative research offers a sound methodological framework for cultivating a comprehension of the implicit subjectivity, which was applicable in this research in that it occurred within AAFSTs’ influences in their educational working relationships with their students.

Likewise, Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2012) suggested that the process of notating and understanding information provides an essential starting point for recounting and understanding the background of this phenomenon, which was applicable to these AAFST participants in this study. In addition, the use of these qualitative research methods afforded an entry point for access of information to examine and understand the lived reality of AAFSTs. Peredaryenko and Krauss (2013) claimed that participants sharing their experience during interviews would aid in the fact-seeking mission into the exploration of the phenomenon, in the case of this research, the relationship of AAFSTs with their students, as well as their rapports with their students’ parents, colleagues, and administration as it related to their rapport with their students.

With the suggested methods articulated in an article written by Morgan and Drury (2003), an interaction between the researcher and participants were facilitated. This interaction became a key element of this data analysis process, because it became a means of a better understanding of the experiences viewed from the participants’ perspective.
**Dependability**

Williams (2011) commented that dependability is the stability of the inquiry processes. In order to check the dependability, this researcher examined in determining any mistakes in conceptualizing the study that may have been made, such as in the collection of the data process, interpreting the findings, as well as the results. The reasoning of the dependability process was to insure the consistency of the research process in order to insure the results were dependable. An audit trail helped assure that the study is dependable.

Brown (2005) explained that dependability involves being ready for the shifting circumstances in the phenomenon being researched, along with modifications in the design of the study in order to better understand the context of the study. Dependability can be improved by utilizing replications, overlapping methods, and/or inquiry audits.

**Transferability**

In this study, the transferability to other situations depended on the degree of similarity between the original situation and the situation to which it will be transferred. This examiner cannot specify the transferability of findings; but rather, only provide sufficient information that could be utilized by the reader to determine whether the findings are applicable to their new situation as suggested by (Streubert-Speziale, 2007).

**Summary**

Using a qualitative approach provided a comprehensive and enriching view of the participants’ experiences. Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2012) suggested the interaction of individual educational experiences, environmental, and social conditions
that occurred throughout the experiences being examined became an essential component of the data analysis. Therefore, the participants were asked to recollect their experiences, and for the most part, they were able to do so.

Another advantage of utilizing this qualitative approach for this research project was the opportunity to allow the participants to be spontaneous and flexible with their interviews. Turner (2010) purported that this flexibility has proved to be valuable by enabling the exploration of each participant’s unique experience through additional probing questions relating to specific events.

A third point supported by Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008) that was advantageous for this research was the importance of good interviewing skills in the facilitation of the data collection and analysis process. Utilizing the ability to be sensitive, responsive, and empathetic was crucial. The use of simultaneously listening, introducing probing questioning, and summarizing through the process of analysis and interpretation were essential in the interviewing and analysis stage of this research. And finally, Merriam (2009) stressed the importance of how collecting a wealth of information obtained through this qualitative process strengthens the research, which enhanced this research project.

Yin (2015) explained that qualitative research requires an enormous amount of time and effort to coordinate the many overlapping and ongoing aspects of the process. In this study, the logistics of scheduling interviews, proved to be very challenging. While the process of qualitative data collection proved to be challenging, this approach provided the most appropriate framework for this in-depth study of this phenomenon. Through individual interviews and field notes, the meanings participants provided about their
experiences as AAFSTs contributed to a more in-depth understanding of the dilemmas AAFST face as educators in today’s educational setting in their relationships with their students, and the rapports teachers have with their students’ parents, colleagues, and administration, as it related to the teacher and student relationship.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

Introduction

This qualitative study described AAFSTs’ challenges in their educational working relationships. The purpose was to understand the challenges that AAFSTs experienced with their students, with their students’ parents, their colleagues, and their relationships with their school administrator. Understanding was achieved by analyzing all forms of data collected and identifying individual and collective themes that existed.

The data obtained from this study helped to enhance the existing literature to gain further insight as to why it is difficult to retain AAFSTs in the K-12 teaching profession.

Individual question responses were collated in the effort to make meaning of the research questions which were:

1) What challenges do African American female secondary educators experience in their interactions with their students in relationship to cultural and social issues?

2) What challenges do African American female secondary educators experience when addressing their students’ parents in regard to communication and building trust?”
3) What challenges do African American female secondary educators experience with their colleagues in terms of respect and salary issues?”

4) What challenges do African American female secondary educators experience in their relationship with their administrator with regard to inequities, gender, and teacher education issues?”

To provide readers an understanding of the relationships that AAFSTs experience in their working relationships, this chapter will begin with the discussion of themes that evolved from the data collection which served as a guideline to direct all descriptions of the data. By examining the frequencies in aggregate form it became apparent that 60% of the respondents repeated the same obstacles. Also, the participants identified the same racial and socio-economic barriers to successfully engaging their students. While 80% answered in a like manner much of the time, there were some outliers that gave totally opposite responses. Narui, Truong, Kimberly, and McMickens (2015) suggested that sometimes it is impossible to tell if the outlier responses were truthful or not. Possibly the fear of retribution from administrators may have altered their responses.

Research Question 1: What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience in their interactions with their students in relationship to cultural and social issues?

In an attempt to gain a better understanding of AAFSTs’ teaching experiences, one dimension of this research focused on the cultural and social issues these AAFSTs faced in their interactions with their students. For 40% of these teachers, connecting with their students who come from various cultural and social groups proved to be difficult.

It was evident throughout the interviews that the participants have an enormous task working as a minority in an environment that is complicated because of a plethora of
backgrounds. In this research, these highly qualified AAFSTs felt they were an asset to their schools and districts because the student populations consisted of students from many different cultures. They felt that there was a need for African American instructors in the educational ranks to help bridge the gap in providing practical instruction to a multicultural student population.

Several of the participants even relayed they were experienced in handling cultural conflicts involving students, because of their first-hand experiences. All participants felt that African American teachers may even be more sensitive in addressing prejudices because of the situations they have found themselves in because of the color of their skin.

**Discipline/Respect**

According to the participants, discipline was a major factor affecting teaching and the learning environment. For these teachers, notably, they looked at discipline as a major component of instructional effectiveness. And, they expressed that a hectic situation can develop with only a very small number of disruptive students. Additionally, instructional time can be threatened by even minor discipline issues. In addition to direct student discipline confrontations, it was expressed that parents often support their children’s bad behavior and they have even known very effective teachers to have given up their careers because of the complexities associated with student discipline.

The participants who had challenges in and out of the classroom dealing with discipline/respect seemed to take several different directions when describing the discipline or respect problems they faced or the disrespect they encountered from their
students. Rose explained the difficulties in being a young black female teacher, who was educated at a predominantly Black college,

   Being a female and professional can be hard. Also, to add the fact that I was educated at two historically black colleges/universities, many of my students only knew about the neighboring colleges. I, as well as others, from these universities were considered as “not ready” or “up-to-the-task.” Along too, with young, 25 years of age, most of the students at the high school level did not always view me as being serious. It wasn’t long before they found out just how serious I was.

Sherry noted that,

   Students that are older than their grade level can also cause discipline problems for their teacher. Some of the challenges I faced include students displaying negative attitudes and over-aged students who think they can make their own rules.

   Most of the participants noted that older students who are above the normal age for their grade were a huge problem with a great many of their students. Moreover, it emerged that discipline with their students can also be a problem because their students were not being taught at home how to act in a socially acceptable fashion in the classroom or out of the classroom. Olivia commented,

   Discipline. Getting respect from my students can sometimes be really hard. You can tell that they have not been taught any better, so how would they know how to act right in class. Even when their parents are called in for their child’s discipline problems, they act foolish, so you know where the child gets their bad behavior.
Another participant also mentioned an issue that she had experienced with male students in her classroom. Pam noted her situation,

Because she was an African American female secondary teacher coach and teaches physical education, that she is sometimes dismissed by males because of her gender. I also feel that the only problem that I face with my students, in and out of the classroom is the fact that I am a female and male students sometimes feel that they cannot learn anything from a female when it deals with sports and physical education.

Another teacher, Rochelle, had similar comments on discipline and felt, “In the classroom, the students feel as though they don’t have to listen to what you say and you don’t get the respect you deserve.”

**Interest/Motivation**

The participants articulated that a large number of students are not successful due to lack of interest and motivation and suggested that students become inert in their accomplishments when there is no interest in their own achievement. Several explained that it is not that students are unaware of their academic expectations, but without academic motivation, students find it difficult to be successful and consequently lose interest in their education.

The participants felt that in order for their students to achieve in their classrooms, they have to present the lessons in a manner that the students can relate. They also felt it is of the utmost importance that they come up with creative and interesting presentations of the material being taught. Patsy explained,
I have always been interested in reaching my students to get the best results from them. Creating interest on the topic for discussion and keeping their attention is one challenge that I am faced with when dealing with my students.

Several teachers expressed that getting their students motivated and interested in academics was an issue that sometimes became challenging and difficult to handle.

Several participants expressed the getting their students motivated and interested in academics was an issue that sometimes became challenging and difficult to handle. Tonya expounded,

The challenge is to have each student interested and motivated in learning and doing their best; to be concerned about their education.

Along the same lines, Cynthia shared,

I face the challenge of getting my students motivated. The attitudes of the students are so lackadaisical at times, that simply getting them interested and motivated in the coursework is like pulling teeth.

**Embracing Diversity**

Participants believed that cultural diversity could be helpful if you were an innovative teacher who embraced it, however for teachers that become overwhelmed by this same diversity, it could be a nightmare. These participants deemed that the teacher has the task of becoming familiar with the diverse cultural issues at hand to increase the odds for success in their classrooms. Rose stated,

Of course, but this issue is not such a problem in school, but out of school, my students struggle with diversity.
Tonya discussed the fact that in this evolving world, our students encounter cultural diversities with more frequency.

**Teaching Teachers to Think of Students as Individuals Rather than “White” or “Black”**

It appeared from the research of the participants that something as simple as positive teacher feedback can contribute to improved student performance. They stated that students are very observant and notice the teachers that care for all of their students and do not see students as “black” or “white.” Sixty percent (60%) of teachers mentioned that positive comments by teachers can give their students the motivation they need to inspire them to work harder. One such participant was Cynthia who said,

Some African American students are so used to “being the underdog” and are content with remaining that way. They see people as being either “black” or “white” and if they see a situation as being “white”, then they think it does not apply to them. It is a challenge to break these cultural barriers and teach them to think of people as individuals.

Selena suspected the following, “I think so, to a certain degree. I am aware of subliminal prejudices that exist based on observations.”

**Low Self-esteem**

Low self-esteem can be brought on by numerous issues. One of these issues is poverty. Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic (2015) explained that poverty is an ingredient for academic failure. Students who fall in this category are labeled as at-risk because they are subject to failure. Another issue is that many students today are products of single parent households, poorly educated parents, low income or
unemployed families, and abusive parents. Some come from neighborhoods that have little respect for what is morally acceptable.

Because of these issues mentioned above, some students have many barriers to pass before they can achieve academically, Sherry asserted,

The students of mine that are not self-confident usually do not have a lot of support from their family members. Some suffer from depression or are involved in some type of delinquent behavior. I feel, as a teacher, that if the opportunity arises, it is my job to try to be supportive in order to try to boost my students’ self-confidence. I know that if I can do that, in my experience, then I can boost that student’s academic achievement.

Likewise, another participant, Celeste mentioned that, “All teachers need to seek every opportunity to boost their self-esteem and establish relationships with their students to foster student success.”

**Low Socio-economics**

It is not difficult to conceptualize that when events occur in society, students are dramatically affected, especially the impoverished minority students. Poor students tend to develop behavioral problems, as well as display low self-esteem. Typical challenges characteristic of poverty stricken students causes this group of students to show little interest for learning and academic success as evidenced by Roshelle’s sentiments, “My poor students are too quick to accept failure. They appear to have little hope of high academic achievement or high expectations.”

Celeste experiencing similar experiences expressed, “The majority of my students’ living conditions and social conditions are very stressful on them. The majority
of my students are at the poverty level. Teaching these students requires setting goals that give them some hope.”

However, Rose articulated, “My students mostly come from middle and upper class families, so most of my students are not poor. There are a few exceptions, which in that case, I try to motivate them in every way I can.”

Rose stated that, “My students mostly come from middle and upper class families, so most of my students are not poor. There are a few exceptions, which in that case, I try to motivate them in every way I can.”

**Lack of social experiences**

Research such as (Quinton, 2013) indicated that teachers who make efforts to understand cultural variations within their classrooms can address low socio-economic issues more quickly. Teachers that stay abreast of their students’ lack of social experiences will have a definite advantage over those that do not. A teacher may be unable to have an effective learning environment without cultural awareness of the social experiences of their students that fill their classroom. This enables the teacher to present the curriculum in a more practical way, when it takes into consideration the encounters that are diverse to student and applies these elements to learning. Relating to student problems and allowing students to interactively relate to their peers’ works for the teacher and the student. Meeting cultural learning challenges prepares students for social experiences.

Eight of the participants agreed that they have encountered social challenges in and out of the classroom, but more importantly, their students experience social challenges out of the classroom, and on a much grander scale.
Roshelle inferred that,

In some cases, my students think that it is easier to make it on the streets and that education is not that important. Needless to say, the people that they come into contact with on a daily basis are not the kind of social experiences that they really need to be involved with. When I tell them what I have gone through, it seems unbelievable to them.

In contrast, Celeste asserted:

My student’s environment is not very diverse. They experience “social shock” when they get outside of their environment. I teach in a predominantly African American student population. Very few of them ever get out of their home town. There is very little for them to do, so when I have taken them on field trips, they do not know how to handle themselves and are amazed.

Social Challenges In and Out of the Classroom

Teachers and students often experience social challenges in the classroom. All ethnic groups are different and it is not uncommon for teachers and students to find the experiences of other ethnic groups perhaps strange to them. It is a learning process in a classroom environment; however, outside of the classroom can be completely different. Closing the gap on social challenges is a major advantage for teachers.

The students’ background knowledge of a teacher can change and strengthen a relationship between student and teacher and can improve their relationship. A positive relationship between teacher and student can help to bridge the gap on social challenges that might arise in the classroom. Celeste was quick to respond to this question by saying
I think my students and I encounter more social challenges outside of the classroom. I don’t think they face it particularly as much in the classroom. In class, they are never at a loss of words, but when they see me outside of school, they oftentimes freeze up and look at me strangely as if to say to themselves, ‘you are a teacher,’ what are you doing out shopping like a normal person would do.

While most felt the same as Celeste, Tonya had a different viewpoint:

Yes. Once, I took some of my students on a field trip and you could tell they had never really been anywhere outside of their town. You could see their uncertainty of how to act in an environment they were not familiar with.

**Students Face Peer Pressure**

Peer pressure is one battle high school students’ deal with on a daily basis. Students influence one another and often listen to their peers before they will listen to their teachers or parents. There are some students who are focused on their academic success and influenced by parents, teachers, and compatible peers. These students desire to excel under adverse conditions.

Much research (Boundless, 2016) professed that peer pressure influences student behavior in various environments. Students can be easily influenced by their peers in the classroom, as well as out on the streets. Some students manage to develop a survival mode that allows them to function effectively in or out of the classroom. Although peer pressure in a student’s out-of-school environment could become destructive for some, there are some who manage to do well in the classroom.

Olivia, mentions that she overhears her students talking at times, and has surmised that,
They usually hang out in cliques or with friends. Some of these cliques are a good influence and some are a bad influence. All you have to do is listen to these children talk after a weekend and you know who is going to end up in trouble, and who will end up being successful. Many of these students succeed because they are hanging out with friends that have the same positive educational goals in life and the ones that hang out with the wrong crowd are more often than not, not so successful academically.

Following in the footsteps of Patsy and Olivia, who commented that,

My students are growing up in a world that is becoming a place where there is a plentiful supply of drugs, a lack of discipline by parents, and increased violence. Because of that, my students have such a hard road to tow, and with peer pressure, it just makes it that much harder for them to say no.

**Students Think It Is Easier to Make It on the Streets, Than to Get a Good Education**

According to Doll, Eslami, & Walters (2013), suggested that students are very good at establishing their own rationale for giving up on school. Some students say school it is not for them, while others find no motivation for an excuse, they just quit. The media provides a big influence on students, as well as movie stars and recording artists. Students are influenced heavily by what they witness. When they live in poor neighborhoods and notice that there are drug dealers in the neighborhoods that are driving nice cars, wearing expensive jewelry, wearing the nicest clothing, and have a lot of money, some may wish to be like them. Therefore, they are easily influenced when the drug dealers try to draw them into their world.
Gewertz (2004) explained that there is a nationwide concern about the influences students of low socio-economic and urban status that are presented. Even though the dropout issue is a national concern, the problem has a unique character within the individual states. The dropout issue is not exclusive to urban settings because it has an effect on areas beyond the cities. The dropout issue in America is a real problem. Celeste shared her experiences with her students, being that she teaches in a low income district:

My students are involved with so many bad influences when they are outside of school. I do my best to try to talk to them. It is so hard for them to understand that I want them to succeed in school and life, and hanging out with the gangs is not a way to do that. They know that they will never have any of the material things they want if they remain doing what I am trying to tell them not to do.

Cole (2008) purported that it is a reality that a student’s self-confidence is a product of their dreams of what they want to become and their real identity. However, students’ personalities differ, and their levels of self-confidence differ as well. It is not uncommon for poverty stricken students to view themselves as failing due to a lack of self-confidence.

Jensen (2009) shared that poor students are more dependent on the influence of people who they deem a person they aspire to be. And, survival in the classroom is not as simple as it appears to be even for normal students. The challenge is greater for the students who do not have enough self-confidence. Likewise, a school is capable of creating an environment that frustrates instead of encourages in the child with low self-esteem.
Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier (2006) related that rejection, isolation, loneliness, and emotional stress are factors that may contribute to low self-esteem. These negative reactions bring these negative factors to the surface. Additionally, with the exposure to so many negative factors, even the seemingly invincible egos of the disadvantaged child are threatened. Rose shared,

I have certain students that seem to have little or no self-confidence. They do not participate much in class discussions or seem to have much to do with any of the other students. I try to make a point to try to talk to them so that I can learn a little bit more about their life. I have found that if I can connect with them in some little way, I can try to make a difference in their life.” Even if it is a small difference, it is a positive difference.

**Taught by Parents/Past Experience**

Minority Black teachers who have high expectations and are highly qualified have the potential to be exceptional when confronted with the challenges students present. These AAFSTs purported that they view problems or situations that arise in their classroom as opportunities for motivation. They focus on building students’ self-confidence. Students must know that their teacher has an actual concern for them. However, coming together in racial harmony seems to be a challenge in today’s multicultural environment. Moreover, students have difficulty understanding one another due to diversity in culture. In the chaos, teachers misunderstand students and students misunderstand teachers. Misunderstanding results in behavior problems that are sometimes, supported by parents.
The participants felt that students held certain opinions of AAFSTs by expressing that they probably felt that way because of something they had experienced themselves previously or that it was an opinion they had learned at home. Patsy implied that, “They might hold this feeling because of previous experiences.” Celeste verbalized, “They base any opinions they may have from past experiences.” Rose proposed, “I think any opinion of the students would come from what they have heard at home or from others they are around.” Other participants were unsure why their students had bad opinions of AAFSTs and answered the question a little differently. For example, Tonya explained, “I am not sure of what opinion students have about African American female secondary school educators.”

Two of the participants remarked that they had not experienced anything in the classroom that would lead them to believe that their students felt any differently about them as compared to other teachers of other ethnicities on staff. However, the first participant that felt that her students felt nothing differently about her than they did toward other teachers was Pam, who said, “I do not feel that our students see the African American female teachers any differently than any of the other teachers. However, at my school, this question would work better for the white teachers.”

**Student/Parent Involvement**

Roshelle thought more authority to run her classroom as she saw fit, as well as taking her children on field trips would help them see the different aspects of her students’ choices would be beneficial and claimed the following,

If I could handle my classroom the way I see that is appropriate, if I had the support of the administration, or if the parents understood that you are the one in
control, things would be better. If I could provide some type of trip to show the students where I come from and how I made it. If all students could visit a jail, or a prison, and see where their lives could end up, without an education I could show the students different schools and how they progress in learning. If I could provide the students with perks to enforce learning and keep my students motivated.

**More Out of School Involvement**

A positive rapport between parents and teachers definitely helps to improve the odds of student achievement from low socio-economic students. Schools have the alarming task of winning parents over as partners. As a team, all goals can be achieved. More out of school involvement would only to serve to boost students’ academic achievement. Some of the participants explained their thoughts on how to achieve this better rapport by suggesting solutions. Sherry suggested, “I feel that having more one-on-one time to get to know them on a more personal level would help to improve my relationship with my students.”

While Selena felt all that must be done to solve this problem is to, “Just make sure that parents are teaching their children to be culturally responsible and respectful without prejudices. Parents need to stress the integrity that they value within teachers.”

**Research Question 2: What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience when addressing their students’ parents in regard to communication and building trust?**

Students have the ability to develop a positive attitude about school when their family shows genuine concern in their success in school. Family intervention as a form
of student motivation and a prerequisite for high performance results in a proud student, as well as a proud family. However, parental involvement is somewhat of a struggle as students reach high school between school and family. Low socio-economic families do not have much voice in school operations. Middle class white families display a dominant voice where there is input and recommendations. A special relationship must exist between the student, parent, and teacher in order to maximize student achievement. Of course, students should be held accountable for preparation and the quality of their work, but this will never happen without parental reinforcement and support at home. With teacher, student, and parent(s) working together, the potential for higher achievement becomes more realistic.

These participants felt that it was very important that a good line of communication be open between teacher and parents. The participants agreed that getting parents involved was somewhat of a challenge. They all seemed to agree that with parent involvement, student achievement would improve. The data were evenly split between participants that felt schools afforded few opportunities for parents and teachers to talk out of the classroom. Fifty percent (50%) agreed and 50% disagreed that there were few opportunities available.

Interestingly, there were participants that stated they had great parent involvement, while others stated it was like pulling teeth to get parents involved in their students’ educational process. Olivia stated, “The parents of my students are usually very cooperative.”

Unfortunately, there were participants that expressed great difficulty with parental involvement in their experiences. Cynthia claimed that,
Some of my student’s parents expect me to give my students a break because I am African American and female. Their idea of giving the child a break, however, is simply giving the child a grade rather than making the child earn the grade. It is hard to teach the children morality and ethics when they are not receiving the same message at home.

Although, she has not experienced non-parental involvement as severely, as some of the other participants, Sherry noted, “Sometimes, parents aren’t as supportive of their child’s academics as I would like.” Pam shared, “Being an educator for the past 12 years, I have encountered no challenges with students’ parents.”

**Good Lines of Communications**

Teachers must be willing to go the extra mile in order to help students reach their maximum potential. There are times when it seems impossible to catch up with parents. A good teacher may even have to take time out to go to their student’s home if their parents will not come to them. Not only does the teacher have to contact parents, but they need to establish a positive relationship with them.

All participants felt strongly that a good line of communication in and out of the classroom with their students’ parents was extremely important. However, they also expressed that this was sometimes difficult with so many single parent families. The participants stressed that these parents have to work and find it hard to sometimes find time to communicate with teachers like they should. Celeste expressed, “Yes. I send letters home. I make phone calls to my student’s parents, and I see them in the community.” Additionally, Rose added that her lines of communication were, “Not as good as I would like.”
It is evident that Olivia also believes in good communications with her students’ parents as she mentioned the following,

Yes. I have a good line of communication with my students’ parents. I try to keep in touch with my parents to let them know what is going on. I make a point to make phone calls when I feel it is necessary.

**Trusting Relationship In and Out of the Classroom**

A face-to-face meeting with parents is one of the most important interactions an instructor could have with a family member of the student’s household. Furthermore, parents are more cooperative when the teacher has a genuine interest in the child’s success. The initial meeting is recommended for the beginning of the school year if possible. Consequently, meetings are more productive in an environment that has not become negative because of behavior issues. Parents and teachers learn to work together as partners to maximize student performance and achievement.

All participants felt that it was very important to have a trusting relationship with their students’ parents. Likewise, the more trusting their relationship is, the more unity and student achievement will result. Celeste stressed the importance of trusting relationships with parents by sharing, “Yes. Because of the fact that I live in the community, so I know most of the families. Also, once a parent realizes I care, they know I am only looking out for their child’s best interest.” However, Roshelle related, “There is some trust, but most parents look for any mistake in you to hurt you, and to sue the district, and get you fired, or have any disciplinary action taken against you.” Although some participants felt as though they have the trust of parents, Selena had mixed feelings, which were evident by her statement,
I do feel that I and my students’ parents have a trusting relationship in and out of the classroom between my students, parents, and me. There are parents who feel they need to prove who they are to me (superiority) and I think that they create this subliminal mistrust factor in questioning my ability to make good calls about how I give grades versus how smart they think their child is. Furthermore, they also sometimes infer the type of grade that they want me to give their child.

**Passed on Information through Parent or Previous Experience**

Parents are unique and inquisitive. Hence, they are dependent on their more authoritative friends for advice. This can be both good and bad. Furthermore, parents rely on other people who they admire. Teachers are not always a parent’s primary source of information. Additionally, a line of communication opened to parents has the potential to increase the confidence level between the teacher and the parent. The student becomes the beneficiary of this alliance. Sherry expressed the following, “Parents come into contact with all sorts of media. This contact can sometimes distort their view of reality.” Whereas, Cynthia acknowledged that these opinions existed and explained,

I think my students’ parents got the ideas from their parents and their parents happened to have grown up during the 1950’s and 1960’s when segregation and racism ran rampant. It has just taken a few decades to get those blatant acts of racism erased out of the minds of people so that they can go on and start treating people as individuals.

Roshelle had an idea not mentioned by the other participants, which was, “Because they are females who are struggling and having a hard time and they think that we are belittled by society as they are, in some cases.”
Pam felt that being an AAF could be the reason some parents feel the way they do in that, Some may feel that in order for their children to learn, they have to be taught by a white teacher. Many think this way because they believe that we have not received the same education or an education of quality.

**More Communication from Teacher**

Respect and confidence earned by the teacher prepares the teacher and the parent for circumstances that could be unpleasant. Also, unity between parent and teacher reinforces their commitment to the child. Occasionally, problems do arise and a verbal exchange sets the stage for a conference. Perspectives can be discussed from all angles to address bullying, harassment and low student achievement. Furthermore, conferences allow parents, teachers, and students opportunities to meet personal issues head-on, solve them if possible, and move forward with the main goal which is to educate the child.

The following is the suggestions from Patsy, to increase the communication process with the parents of her students, and explained that, “Maybe invite them to my church, meet them in the store, community activities, and invite them into my class to observe.” Olivia believed, “We need more active communication with students’ parents. More activities where they get a chance to interact with the teachers.” Albeit Pam, unlike the other participants, thought the following, “I believe that my students’ parents and I have an open line of communication and that we respect each other’s opinions and advice.”
Research Question 3: What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience with their colleagues in terms of respect and salary issues?

Majority of Participants Have Faced No Challenges When Dealing With Their Colleagues on a Professional Basis

To nurture a sound-minded competitive professional, all areas of conflict must be dealt with. This includes racial problems. Equally important, there is no justification for racial discrimination or any other kind of discrimination among staff in the workplace. Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents agreed that they felt when they engaged their entire personality, how they think, what they knew, how they knew it, how they felt, and why they felt that way in the teaching process it made the clearest case for the importance of the AAFST while 30% disagreed. Regardless of differences on the job, employees have a common interest of concerns directed to increasing student achievement. Hence, individual differences or issues of respect should not be allowed to disrupt harmony in a school environment. There should be strategies in place to address discrepancies among school employees and the administration should take lead in this area.

Most of the participants stated that they didn’t face challenges when dealing with their colleagues on a professional basis. Only three participants mentioned that they had ever had a problem with their colleagues.

The first participant of the three, to experience any problems with their colleagues was Selena, who explained the challenges,

I don’t have any specific challenges that I face with my colleagues. I do feel as though those teachers that I work closely with (in my discipline) treat me professionally. I was challenged as a beginner teacher to earn my respect from others based on my feedback and ideas that I used in my classroom. As I share
more information with teachers, I began to see more teachers open up to me and on many occasions, ask that I share more of what I’m doing. I would also hear other teachers say in passing. “I heard you were working on…” and this opened my eyes up to see that I was part of some discussions, and I was being observed unerringly by other teachers, who I think, were dubious about my ability to teach. All other teachers involved were Caucasian and veteran teachers, I’m not sure if my ethnicity contributed to their incredulous minds.

The second participant that experienced problems with her colleagues was Roshelle, “Most of my colleagues are females and they are jealous and always out to hurt you in some way. They don’t want to see you succeed or progress.” And the last participant to experience any problems with their colleagues was Sherry, who stated, “Some of the challenges I have faced with my colleagues include inconsistency, not establishing a boundary.”

Although not voiced during the interview process, there seems to be an opinion among the participants that they experience situations where their colleagues are not willing to collaborate because they are an AAFST. Forty percent (40%) agreed with this assessment.

**All Stated They Felt They Were Treated Equally When it Came to Salaries**

At present, all teachers regardless of color, gender, etc., are paid by level of education and the number of years of teaching experience. Although these amounts may vary from state to state, they are paid equally now. With that in mind, the participants had the following to say about their salaries. Celeste said that her salary was equal to
others on the faculty, “Yes. My salary is based solely on the district’s teacher’s salary schedule, as are all other teachers.”

Studies show that we often apply generalizations about groups, which may or may not be valid, to the evaluation of individual. When questioned about salaries and whether she was treated equally to non-African American female colleagues Pam said, “I am equally yoked when it comes to my salary and that of my non-African American colleagues. I probably make more due to my supplements for coaching sports and having a Master's Degree.” Selena felt she was treated equally when it came to salary. She had this to say, “Yes, my salary is based solely on my experience, degree, and government and district funding.” While 90% of the respondents felt they were treated equally regarding salary equality Rose did not feel she was treated equally and simply said, “No, but can't prove it.”

Respect for Colleagues

Most of the participants felt that they had encountered respect issues with their colleagues. Celeste appeared to have no qualms with respect issues with her colleagues. She revealed, “I am well respected among my colleagues.” Only two participants shared any negative comments. These comments, however, could be just normal human behavior of people displaying jealous emotions against each other in everyday life. Roshelle described behavior by colleagues as, “My colleagues are always backstabbing each other. There is really no loyalty to each other. If you are not in the clique, you are considered as a “nobody.” Likewise, Rose relayed experiences with her colleagues by stating that, “Although I am the driving force behind a given project, I oftentimes won’t get credit.”
Colleagues Opinions

There were mixed feelings when it came to why their colleagues have a different opinion about them. The following participants felt that their colleagues held different opinions about them just because they were an AAF. For example, Patsy explained,

I think overall my colleagues hold a good opinion of AAFSTs. Sherry thought these feelings came from the media and explained, “Colleagues encounter all sorts of media. This contact can sometimes distort their view of reality.”

Roshelle reported that her feelings on the subject consisted of, “The ‘other’ teachers are African American, but they fear someone like them being in control. Some may like it because we know how strong we can be in hard situations.” Pam took a little different approach to her answer in that, “I believe that the opinion of our colleagues comes because of the subject that the African American female educator teaches, the number of degrees earned, and where the degree(s) was earned.”

However, there were some participants that either were not sure or not aware that other colleagues thought of them differently. These participants were unaware of any different opinions about them being African American, including Selena who commented, “I am not sure.”

Better Communication

All participants agreed that there were things that could be done to improve their relationship with their colleagues in their educational experiences. Most agreed that better communication with colleagues would definitely improve their relationships with their colleagues.
Tonya felt that more communication could help to nurture all relationships with her faculty. She suggested what teachers needed was, “Communication and more time to do walk-throughs. Olivia concurred with Tonya in that she recommended, “Again, just more active communication with our colleagues. We get so bogged down with our daily duties that we don’t always get the opportunity to nurture our relationship with our colleagues. Pam advised that there were ways for teachers to make their relationships better, in which she offered, “I believe that being more open with advice and questions can improve the educational experiences with my colleagues.”

More Staff Events

All teachers, regardless of culture, are proud of their heritages. And, the very fact that teachers are culturally different makes them better prepared to handle and interact with their multicultural colleagues. Moreover, exposure to different cultures allows teachers and their colleagues the opportunity to contribute to the cultural unity of all their working environments.

All participants thought that there could be more activities or social events so that they could improve their relationships. Some suggested walks, others suggested additional time and effort could be put into these relationships, in-service on culture and relationships, being more respectful and open to new ideas, more integrity, working on jealousy, or put out a suggestion box.

Sherry expressed her thoughts on this matter by sharing, “I feel that if we had more staff social functions as well as “classroom walks,” this would improve my relationship with my colleagues.” Although Celeste stated that her relationships with her colleagues are great, she proposed that, “At this point, my relationship with my
colleagues in my educational experiences are great. However, everyone has room for improvement.”

**Research Question 4:** What challenges are African American female secondary school educators faced within their relationship with their administrator with regard to inequities, gender, and teacher education issues?

**No Challenges**

After conducting the interviews, this researcher had noted that most teachers will not openly express issues involving administrative support. Therefore, the responses from the following participants reflected a positive relationship between the participant and their principal. Even though the responses show a positive relationship there is some question of how the respondents actually feel. This was reinforced by looking at the statement “I feel that my administrator respects me as an educator.” Although they agreed with the statement there was 10% Not Sure and 10% missing. This leads one to wonder exactly how fearful the teachers were of administrative reprisal. Another example of this is by looking at the statement “I can count on my administrator for his/her support in any situation that might arise.” 30% Strongly Agreed and another 30% Agreed. The interesting part is 30% were Not Sure and another 10% was missing.

Celeste was short and to the point in responding to this question, “None to-date.” Pam also reflected only positive comments about her and her principal’s relationship, “I feel that I am well respected by my administrators because of my experience and reputation. Also, Patsy expressed, “I haven’t experienced any difficulties with my relationship with my administrators.”

However, there were two participants that felt differently. Cynthia described her difficulties with her relationship with her principal by commenting, “My administrator
feels as though you should respect him and do as he says without hesitation. When you speak up for yourself or try to express yourself, you are ridiculed.” While Rose had some good experiences with her administrators over the years, she did comment about one administrator where there was friction in their working relationship, “I’ve had the pleasure of working with many. Some have been open-minded and the working relationship has been great. On the other hand, I have worked with administrators that may have felt a bit intimidated by my presence.”

**Majority Said No for Observed Differences**

Most of the participants stated that they had observed no differences. However, there was one participant that had observed some inequities of other ethnic groups by their administrator. Pam was one of the participants that felt her principal treats her just like all of the other teachers by stating, “I have not encountered such. My administrator has always treated me the same as my non-African American counterparts.” The only participant to share any problems with her administrator showing inequities was Rose, who said, “Definitely. On a number of occasions, I have seen them leave the building during school hours. Also, it seems the administrator is much harder on some of us than others.” The only participant that expressed that her administrator had a problem with her being an AAFST was Roshelle who stated, “Yes, the administrator does not respect African American Females and thinks of us as weak. Our opinions don’t count.”

**Majority Agreed Teacher Education and In-service would be Good for All Teachers**

Continuing education is essential for all teachers. In education, the curriculum is constantly changing. Likewise, discoveries are made on a daily basis, causing a teacher’s
need to stay abreast of the newest innovations an essential part of life-long learning. It is just as important for teachers to be kept up-to-date on how to handle the growing diversity of the student population in public schools.

All but two participants thought that education or in-service training would improve the working environment and would be a good idea. They did feel, however, that all ethnic groups of teachers should have this training, not just the AAFSTs. Patsy agreed teacher education and in-service training is a good idea by responding, “Yes. I think that is always appropriate for all teachers, regardless of their ethnic group. Roshelle also felt that continuing education and in-service training would enhance working relationships by stating, “Of course, but there has been little training for any teachers.” Olivia saw teacher education and in-service training as an essential tool for all teachers’ improving their working relationships, “Yes. I think life-long learning is essential for all teachers. All teachers need to understand how to continually improve their working environment.” Rose agreed that it would be helpful, she shared, also how her non-African American colleagues felt about it by responding, “Yes, although many of my non-African American colleagues don’t believe there is a need for such.”

Only two participants did not see where teacher education or in-service training would be of any benefit to teachers. The first one was Cynthia stating, “No, I do not think it is necessary. However, any training that can improve a process should be welcomed.” The other participant that was against teacher education and in-service training was Tonya, “Although she would not expound on her answer, she stated ‘no’.”
Majority Said No to University Training or In-service Training for African American Females on What to Expect in a Predominantly White School, Faculty, Parents, and Administrator to be More Prepared for Teaching – All Teachers Should be Prepared Regardless of Race

The multicultural students that fill the classrooms today warrant addressing teacher education or in-service training in order to keep teachers abreast of this growing issue. As a matter of fact, Black and White students need to be familiar with cultural diversity, as well as the teachers that teach them to survive in scenarios that a multicultural society creates.

The majority of the participants said they felt that universities should not train AAF students in education, but more in realities of what they can expect to encounter in a predominantly white school, faculty, parents, and administrators. Most the participants did agree, however, that all teachers should be trained on these issues, not just AAFSTs. However, there were some that were undecided, and a few that thought it would be good for all educators. Celeste responded to this question by saying, “Yes, but not just African American teachers, but all educators of all ethnic groups.”

Selena was one of several participants that did not agree that AAFSTs should be trained in the realities of what they can expect to encounter in predominantly white schools, faculty, parents, and administrators. She responded with these comments,

No, especially if that’s not an issue with any of the African American teachers. I wouldn’t prefer it in that sense because it would seem to make more prompting of those unwanted behaviors that we would really prefer to deface in the future. It doesn’t need to become known as a societal expectation, but much rather focus on promoting a diverse leadership and culturally respective school system throughout
the communities that will embrace those values of loyalty, respect, integrity, fairness, and honesty about genuine feelings regarding issues that will arise.

Cynthia did not agree with this question and responded by saying,

No, I do not. I think that training them in this manner would bias the opinion of the educator. I think that the educator should treat her individual students as individuals and not based on what a training session says she might encounter with them.

**Not Aware of Any Opinion**

Because this information was self-reported by the participants, it is not possible to tell if the participants are reporting the truth. It was noted that during the interview process, it seemed at times that the participants were not always willing to tell the truth for fear of retribution, even though the researcher made sure they knew the information was confidential. Patsy responded, “I do not think my Administrators have held any bad opinion of me personally. I cannot speak for other educators.” Roshelle believed, “Most male administrators feel that women are weak and break down in stressful situations. Men can’t appreciate compassion.”

The last two participants were not sure about this question. Tonya responded by saying, “I am not sure of what opinion administrators have about African American female secondary school educators.” Concurring with participant Tonya, Selena explained, “I am honestly not sure.”
Better Communication

Interactive communication is a must in a school environment regardless of the differences that multicultural influences present. In order to promote interactive communication, there must be an accord between teacher and administrator in order to have a productive working environment. Moreover, communication must exist between teachers and administrators. Open channels of communication allow teachers to express their needs in a multicultural learning environment to administrators. Furthermore, clear communication with teachers allows an administrator a more direct approach for handling problems unique to diverse instructional management and student behavior. Unity between teachers and administrators result in the development of better strategies to direct multicultural issues in a positive direction. Not only should communication among school professionals be interactive, but it should also be positive and constructive.

Likewise, when asked the question, Tonya responded, “Better communication.”

Olivia also felt communication was the biggest bridge to cross when trying to improve your relationship with you administrator. Consequently, she explained, “Again, more active communication with our administrator. We get so wrapped up in our daily duties, learning, and discipline, that we don’t always make enough time to improve our relationship with our administrator.” Pam stated, “I believe that being more willing to listen and speak openly will improve educational experiences with my administrators.”

Patsy had another idea for improving communications between teachers and administration,

I feel that a suggestion box at certain intervals and ask the teachers their opinions on what would enhance their relationships with their students, their students’
parents, their colleagues, and their administrators. Also, there could be more social activities that would bring everyone together more.”

Summary

Researchers, educators, students, parents, and administrators are confronted with the challenge to build education into a district project. State and district policies must continue to encourage the development of school-family-community collaboration as an essential component vital to school improvement efforts. Administrators must continue to equip AAFSTs with a range of practices for involving students, parents, colleagues, and administrators to improve student outcomes.

At this school level, the best efforts are comprehensive, seeking to involve all teachers, students, parents, their colleagues, and administrators in a variety of roles. AAFSTs need well-planned clear goals and expectations that serve to incorporate the views of all stakeholders. AAFSTs can be empowered through training, time, and support. They value parents for the perspectives they bring with respect to their children's needs and for their own special skills. Finally, there are long-lasting, long-term investments in cultivating the practices that will help children reach their full potential. Ideally, parents must begin their involvement when their children are in pre-school and continue to be involved throughout high school. More research is needed regarding the relationships between teacher-student, teacher-parent, teacher-colleague, and teacher-administrator involvement. Despite the evidence about the value of parental involvement, far too many parents continue to lack sufficient information about their children's schools. Many educators fail to understand their students' families, why their
colleagues act the way they do, and why administrators are not more supportive than they could be. The cost in terms of student outcomes not achieved is incalculable.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

As the research progressed, numerous themes emerged from the data collected. Themes identified were intricately connected with each other to the extent that many themes appeared to be sub-themes of the other. Some of the participants agreed with each other on the issues presented to them, while others had different experiences that they shared with the researcher.

This chapter contained a summarization discussion of the themes that emerged from the data collected during this research. A total of 26 themes developed from the data. These themes were determined based on the questions that were created to support the research questions.

The analysis of the data drew implications that can be expounded upon from this research that will help AAFSTs and their relationship with their students, as well as how their relationships with their students’ parents, colleagues, and administration can greatly improve the teacher/student relationship. By recognizing and addressing the challenges that AAFSTs experience with their students, administrators can create a more multicultural learning environment to better enhance their students’ achievements.

Moreover, the interview revealed many themes, all of which appeared to be interrelated, but at the same time, initiated extensive discussion as separate entities. The
four research questions provided the framework for this examination into the experiences that AAFSTs experienced in their relationships with their students, as well as how their relationships with their students’ parents, colleagues, and administration affected their relationships with their students. In an effort to organize the data collected into an easy form for readers to interpret, the data was broken down into research questions, a short explanation, and the themes that were revealed by the interview protocol questions that pertained to that particular research question.

In addition, by focusing on the results of this study, administrators will be better equipped to address the needs of their faculty and students, and to create a more positive learning environment. Not only can this data become an invaluable tool for administrators to increase the retention of AAFSTs in the teaching field, but also the results give administrators insight into the experiences of this specific group of teachers in their own words without others’ biases and views. Most importantly, there needs to be serious consideration to the results of this study, which originated expressly from AAFSTs.

**Summation of Findings**

**Research Question 1**

“What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience in their interaction with their students in relationship to cultural and social issues?” The research question dealt with challenges AAFSTs experienced in their interactions with their students in relationship to cultural and social issues. Each participant discussed challenges they had faced in their interactions with students pertaining to cultural and social issues. A common theme that emerged was that these
educators experienced discipline and respect problems as well as a lack of interest and motivation on the part of their students. Seventy percent of the educators were either not sure or felt that discipline/respect problems or lack of interest and motivation were due to what their students were taught by parents or what the students experienced in the past. The participants also felt that more student/parent involvement and more out of school involvement were needed.

Research Question 2

“What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience when addressing their students’ parents in regard to communication and building trust?” This research question examined challenges that AAFSTs experienced when addressing their students’ parents in regards to communication and trust building. According to the responses from participants, parental involvement presented a problem with communication and building trust 60% of the time. These same participants also felt that there were problems with trust concerning students’ parents and the teacher. The majority of the participants were not aware of any issues; however, and 40% of the participants felt the poor communication issues and trust issues were passed on from their parents or previous experience. Seventy percent (70%) of the participants felt that more communication from teachers (e.g. invitations to visit the classroom and out of school invitations) would help to improve communication and trust building with their students’ parents.
Research Question 3

“What challenges do African American female secondary school educators experience with their colleagues in terms of salary and respect issues?” According to the responses gathered, all participants stated that they have not faced any challenges with their colleagues in terms of salary and respect issues. The participants also felt they were treated equally to their non-AAF colleagues when it came to salary. Because there is a salary scale based on years of experience, they felt they were treated fairly. Most the participants felt there were no respect issues with their colleagues and were not aware of any unusual opinions that their colleagues held about them, but 20% did say that they had experienced respect issues with their colleagues based on past experience and personal upbringing.

Research Question 4

“What challenges are African American female secondary school educators challenged with in their relationship with their administrator with regards to inequities, gender, and teacher education issues?” This research question examined the challenges AAFSTs experience in their relationship with their administrators with regard to inequities, gender, and teacher education issues. Eighty percent said they faced no challenges when dealing with their administrators. Participants stated they have not seen any displays of behavior that showed their administrators preferring one race of teachers over another race of teachers. The participants also stated that being an AAFST played no part in the challenges they faced with the administrator. Most participants agreed teacher education and in-service training are good, but felt that it would be beneficial for not only ethnic teachers, but rather for all educators. The overall sentiment of participants was that
universities should train all future teachers to be prepared for realities of what they can expect to encounter in a predominantly White or Black school and of faculty, parents, and administrators, so that they might be more prepared for teaching regardless of race. The majority of the participants were not sure or unaware of any opinion that their administrator holds about AAFSTs. All of the participants stated that better communication would help their relationship with their administrator in their educational experiences.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the analysis from the interview protocol, observations, and field notes, this researcher offers discussion and summarizes the chapter. The following conclusions were derived from the findings in this study:

- AAFSTs encountered discipline/respect issues and interest/motivation problems in their interactions with their students
- AAFST participants stated that their students have a hard time thinking of people as individuals rather than “White” or “Black.”
- AAFSTs felt that parental involvement can provide a great asset, but also liability in the learning environment, dependent of the type of parental involvement.
- The AAFST participants perceived many of their students as having poor self-confidence and low self-esteem.
• The AAFSTs felt trust and problems with their students’ parents presented problems regarding communication and trust building. They often felt that students were taught by parents/past experience which shaped the level of trust they were able to achieve.

• AAFSTs felt more student/parent involvement, both in and out of the classroom, is needed as a possible solution to addressing communication and building trust challenges associated with students’ parents. Some educators admitted they could issue more invitations to visit the classroom and make efforts to involve the parents.

• The majority of AAFSTs said they had faced no racism from colleagues.

• Some of the AAFSTs did note that more staff events would be beneficial to all teachers so they could communicate more effectively.

• The majority of AAFSTs agreed teacher education and in-service training are good and beneficial for all educators.

• AAFSTs noted that discipline was the major impact on inhibiting the learning environment.

• The majority of AAFSTs did not indicate any challenges they faced when dealing with administrators.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

The following recommendations are offered based upon the review of literature and data collected via the study:
• A replication of this study with a larger population should include additional districts in the state of Mississippi.

• The school district should create professional development workshops for their teachers to make them aware of activities that they can use to generate parent involvement.

• School districts should have professional development workshops to make them more aware of inequities between ethnic groups on their faculty.

• School districts should have workshops for teachers, students, the student’s parents, and administrators to teach them to think of people as individuals rather than White or Black.

• Teachers need to be educated more diligently in cultural differences so that they may help students to develop an understanding of and respect for cultural differences in order to prepare students to be a part of a multicultural society.

• More activities need to be available for parents to attend so that they may become closer with their children’s teachers, their children, and the administration.

• Universities and colleges need to build into the curriculum for prospective teachers an educational base to build on concerning students’ behavior/respect, students parents’ respect/cooperation, and administrators’ respect for all ethnic groups in their employ before ever putting a teacher in the classroom.
• Universities and colleges need to include in their curriculum a strategy for coping when faced with challenges in their educational working experiences and to prepare students for the “real life” realities of teaching in all areas of diversity.

• Teachers need to commit to a highly qualified and diversified teaching profession as part of the realization of education equity, uniformity, and quality for all America’s children.

• Workshops could have AAFSTs provide insight on issues with dealing with African American children as experienced through their own lived experiences.

• The State Board Department of Education needs to create a class to help school children learn to cope with stressful issues in a manner that is acceptable to all ethnic groups.

• School districts should create new and innovative ways to get parents involved in their children’s educational experience.


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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL
April 3, 2009

Kathy Warren
136 Nolan Circle
Pearl, MS 39208


Dear Ms. Warren:

The above referenced project was reviewed and approved via expedited review for a period of 4/3/2009 through 3/15/2010 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.110 #7. Please note the expiration date for approval of this project is 3/15/2010. If additional time is needed to complete the project, you will need to submit a Continuing Review Request form 30 days prior to the date of expiration. Any modifications made to this project must be submitted for approval prior to implementation. Forms for both Continuing Review and Modifications are located on our website at http://www orc.msstate.edu.

Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. Please note that the IRB reserves the right, at anytime, to observe you and any associated researchers as they conduct the project and audit research records associated with this project.

Please note that the MSU IRB is in the process of seeking accreditation for our human subjects protection program. As a result of these efforts, you will likely notice many changes in the IRB’s policies and procedures in the coming months. These changes will be posted online at http://www orc.msstate.edu/human/aaihp.php. The first of these changes is the implementation of an approval stamp for consent forms. The approval stamp will assist in ensuring the IRB approved version of the consent form is used in the actual conduct of research. You must use copies of the stamped consent form for obtaining consent from participants.

Please refer to your docket number (#08-200) when contacting our office regarding this project.

We wish you the very best of luck in your research and look forward to working with you again. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Christine Williams at cwilliams@research.msstate.edu or call 662-325-5220.

Sincerely,

[For use with electronic submissions]

Christine Williams
IRB Compliance Administrator

cc: Advisor Dr. Du
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE
Demographic Information

My gender is ________

a. Male  
b. Female

My ethnicity is ________

a. African American  
b. Asian American  
c. Hispanic American  
d. Native American  
e. White/Caucasian American  
f. If others, please specify _________

My age is ________

a. <20  
b. 21-30  
c. 31-40  
d. 41-50  
e. 51-60  
f. >60

I have been teaching for ______ number of years.

a. 0-2  
b. 3-5  
c. 6-8  
d. 9-11  
e. 12-14  
f. More than 15

I am teaching ______

a. full time  
b. part time
APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Invitation to Participate
My name is Kathy Warren, the researcher and graduate student working on my doctorate at Mississippi State University. I am conducting a study on African American Female Secondary School Educators: The Challenges in Their Educational Working Relationships with their Students. You are invited to participate in this study because you are an African American Female Secondary Educator presently teaching 6-12 grade students in a specific school district in either an East Central Mississippi area district or a Northeast Mississippi, area.

Purpose
The purpose of the study is to explore problems relative to African American female secondary educators’ perceptions of their relationships with their students, and how the parents of those students, their colleagues, and their administrator, in the Southeastern United States. For the purpose of this research, it included one school district in the East Central Mississippi area and one school district in the Northeast Mississippi, area, located approximately 105 miles apart. I will use one junior high school, and one high school from each geographical location. This research will be an inquiry into the knowledge and beliefs African American female secondary educators hold about the dilemmas they face among the people they come into contact within their teaching environment that affects their relationship with their students and their academic achievement.

Description of Procedures
You will be interviewed individually. The conversational style interview will take approximately one to two hours and, with your permission, will be audio taped. In addition to the interview, you will be asked to complete a Demographic Questionnaire about you. The interviews will take place in a private location.

Risks and Inconveniences
There are minimal risks attached to this study.

Safeguards
N/A

Confidentiality
Your interview and survey responses will be kept confidential; available only to the research team for analysis purposes. Interview tapes will be locked in a safe place. Only the researcher will listen and transcribe the information you give me.

Interview responses will not be linked to your name or address, and there will be no follow-up sessions. However, the five-question survey you are asked to complete will
have a follow-up session. So that our research team can contact you in the future, we will link your name to a unique identification number next to it. We do this to ensure your responses remain confidential and that you feel free to respond as freely as possible.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in this study, but later change your mind, you may withdraw at any time. If the length of the interview is inconvenient for you, you may stop the interview at any time without any consequence to you. There are no consequences of any kind if you decide you do not want to participate. Your job is in no way at risk if you choose not to participate.

**Benefits**

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Your participation will likely benefit African American female secondary teachers, in the future, with their relationships with their students to increase student achievement.

**Questions**

If you have any questions about this study, I will be happy to answer them now. If you have any questions in the future, please contact the principal investigator Kathy Warren, 136 Nolan Circle, Pearl, MS 29209, 601-573-6774. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact our Institutional Review Board at 760.750.4029.

- [ ] I agree to participate in this research study.
- [ ] I agree to be videotaped
- [ ] I agree to be recorded

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APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. As an African American female secondary educator, what challenges do you face when dealing with your students in, and out of the classroom?

2. Do you feel that you and your students encounter culture challenges in and out of the classroom?

3. Do you feel that you and your students encounter social challenges in and out of the classroom?

4. As an African American female secondary educator, what challenges do you face when dealing with your students’ parents in and out of the classroom?

5. Do you feel that you and your students’ parents have a good line of communication in and out of the classroom?

6. Do you feel that you and your students’ parents have a trusting relationship in and out of the classroom?

7. As an African American female secondary educator, what challenges do you face when dealing with your colleagues on a professional basis?

8. As an African American female secondary educator, do you feel that your colleagues have a racist attitude about you?

9. What types of racist acts do your colleagues carry out against you to make you feel this way?

10. As an African American female secondary educator, do you think you are treated equally to your non-African American female colleagues when it comes to salary?

11. What types of respect issues do you encounter when dealing with your colleagues in your educational experiences?
12. As an African American female secondary educator, what challenges are you faced with in respect to your working relationship with the administrator?

13. Do you feel, as an African American female secondary educator, that your administrator displays certain inequities that are afforded to your non-African American counterparts?

14. Do you feel that your being, not only African American, but an African American female secondary educator plays any part in the challenges you face with the administrator?

15. As an African American female secondary educator, do you think that it would be beneficial for all ethnic educators’ in your school receive teacher education or in-service training to improve your working environment?

16. Do you feel that universities should train African American female Students in Education more in realities of what they can expect to encounter in a predominantly white school, faculty, parents, and administrator, so that they might be more prepared for teaching?

17. Why do you think your students hold the opinion of African American female secondary educators that they do?

18. Why do you think your students’ parents hold the opinion of African American female secondary educators that they do?

19. Why do you think your colleagues hold the opinion of African American female secondary educators that they do?

20. Why do you think your administrator holds the opinion of African American female secondary educators that they do?

21. What do you feel would improve your relationship with your students in your educational experiences?

22. What do you feel would improve your relationship with your students’ parents in your educational experiences?
23. What do you feel would improve your relationship with your colleagues in your educational experiences?

24. What do you feel would improve your relationship with your administrator in your educational experiences?