

INDUCTION EXPERIENCES OF MINORITY TEACHERS IN A  
RURAL MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

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## ABSTRACT

The induction experiences of minority educators in a rural Mississippi School District were sought for this qualitative study. In a district of 196 teachers, only 54 were minority educators and of that number only 22 taught core subject courses. Interviews were conducted with 11 minority educators, 20% of the entire population of minority educators in the district. What emerged in the analysis of the interview data presented was not only discussion about their induction experiences but the unavoidable themes of race and prejudice and how they impact their professional lives and how an induction program may serve as a tool not only for support but for initiating true change. Critical Race Theory provided the theoretical backdrop against which the interviews and resulting conversations were conducted and later analyzed.

Comprehensive teacher induction programs have been heralded for the systemic and systematic supports they offer new and beginning teachers to the field of education and new to districts; their impact in retention has been well documented, especially in other industrialized countries around the world. Though other countries routinely offer induction, by and large, induction programs are not consistently offered in our educational system with resulting factors of not only a revolving door among our teacher population but the inconsistency in our teacher population directly correlates to waning student achievement. In the United States, billions of dollars are spent each year in teacher turnover and the recruiting of new teachers.

For minority educators, the idea of induction is even more significant as their presence in our nation's classrooms is getting progressively smaller with each passing year while our minority student populations rise. Presently, minority teachers comprise only 18% of the entire

teaching population of over 2,000,000. For many minority educators, the class composition, location and context of the school community or financial gain are far less important than truly positively impacting the lives of their students. Studies show that the impact minority educators have on student achievement, particularly minority students is tangible and massive but often what drives them to leave the profession is a lack of support, visibility, networking and input, much of what induction programs tend to offer.

The findings here are consistent with much of what research shares about the experiences of minority educators no matter the setting, rural or urban, and suggest the need for not only further research but a greater awareness for the racism inherent in certain policies and practices in schools and putting in place structures to eliminate them. The findings further support the pressing need for comprehensive teacher induction programs in this country's educational system as tool for support and a catalyst for change.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends and to those who simply offered an encouraging word throughout this process. I, especially, wish to dedicate this manuscript to my parents, themselves educators and my very first role models in education who have always believed in me and loved me unconditionally. And to my fiancé whose love, patience, unwavering support and encouragement has been a true blessing, I thank you! I love you all!

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

HBCU	Historically Black College or University
PLC	Professional Learning Community

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## CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW

Teacher recruitment and retention are issues of critical importance to districts throughout the country with the latter causing perhaps even greater concern, as investment dollars put into training new personnel by districts leave when those teachers do. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future estimates that the cost nationally of public teacher turnover exceeds \$7 billion dollars (2007). "NCTAF's estimate, which is based on the cost generated by teachers who leave their school or district during a given year, does not include the district's cost for teachers who move from school to school within a district in search of a better position. The estimate also does not include any federal or state investments that are lost when a teacher leaves" (NCTAF, 2007).

In addition to costs, for our nation's low-performing, high-poverty schools, the problem of teacher attrition directly correlates with student achievement gaps (NCTAF, 2007, p. 2). Research underscores the significance of teacher effect on closing achievement gaps. In a longitudinal study of students in a Tennessee District who began second grade in 1991, students were analyzed according to a teacher effectiveness measure and assigned teachers through their fifth grade year (Sanders, 1996). The results showed that those students who had most effective teachers for 3 years consistently showed up to a 54-point percentile range higher in mathematics than those of children who had the least effective teachers (Sanders, 1996). "Many of these schools struggle to close the student achievement gap because they never close the quality teaching gap; they are constantly rebuilding their staff" (NCTAF, 2007, p. 2). High-need urban

and rural schools are often staffed with an inordinate amount of under-prepared, inexperienced teachers who are left to their own devices in trying to meet the needs of their students (NCTAF, 2007, p. 2). Beginning teachers are inequitably found in schools in high-poverty neighborhoods and communities (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012, p. 4), thus putting those students at a decided disadvantage compared to their more advantaged peers (New Teacher Center, 2016, p. 2). “By every measure of qualification--certification, subject matter background, pedagogical training, selectivity of college attended, test scores, or experience--less qualified teachers tend to serve in schools with greater numbers of low-income and minority students. Studies in state after state have found that students of color in low-income schools are 3 to 10 times more likely to have unqualified teachers than students in predominantly White schools”(Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2011, p. 1) For those teachers, the isolation can be debilitating, causing that new teacher to feel overwhelmed by all they face. In the face of these feelings of frustration and isolation, they leave (NCTAF, 2016, p.2). So problematic is the issue of high numbers of beginning teachers being assigned low-performing, high-poverty schools, thus widening the achievement gap that the Equity and Excellence Commission was chartered by Congress to “provide advice to the secretary of the U.S. Department of Education on the disparities in meaningful educational opportunities that give rise to the achievement gap, with a focus on systems of finance, and to recommend ways in which federal policies could address such disparities” (The Equity and Excellence Commission, 2013, p. 3). From the findings of this commission, in July 2014, the U.S. Department of Education launched Excellent Educators for All Initiative. As part of this initiative, states were asked to create new, comprehensive plans that put in place locally-developed solutions to ensure every student has equal access to effective

educators. These plans are required by Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The National Teacher Center published a report entitled, *Support from the Start: A 50-State Review of Policies on New Educator Induction and Mentoring*, in which just how dramatically the employment demographic in education has shifted in the last three decades (2016). “In 1987-1988, the typical teacher had 15 years of experience; by 2007-2008, the typical teacher was in his/her first year” (National Teacher Center, 2016, p. 2). Current data indicate the presence of early-career educators is equally common with one in five classroom teachers in their first three years on the job (National Teacher Center, 2016, p. 2). Findings in a report from the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future suggested that one out of every two beginning teachers, approximately 46%, left the classroom by the end of his or her first 5 years of teaching, with 14% leaving in the 1<sup>st</sup> year and 33% leaving with the first three (2007, p. 3)

Teaching is a challenge. There are students with varying needs and personalities that the teacher has to be ever cognizant of all while delivering district, state and federal course content standards effectively against the context of the school culture and local community. “Being a teacher intersects one’s personal and professional knowledge with idiosyncratic school structures and contexts” (Dharan, 2014). Given the complexity of attempting to infuse knowledge juxtaposed against context, culture, policy and expectations, it stands to reason that new teachers need systemic supports through a comprehensive induction process designed to meet their professional and personal growth goals. “Teachers hired today are the teachers for a next generation. Their success will determine the success of an entire generation of students. Their success can be ensured by providing them with a comprehensive, coherent professional development program” (Wong, 2004, p. 41).

While all schools and students can benefit from more effective teachers, the power of high-quality induction has special significance for schools that serve a disproportionate number of low-income and minority students. In such schools, teacher turnover is generally higher--and sometimes rampant. High-quality induction programs can help to provide the specialized support that new teachers need and transform these schools into strong professional communities where educators want to stay and work--and be more successful in working with students. (New Teacher Center, 2016, p. 2)

Though many view induction and mentoring as synonymous, the terms really are not. Induction is a systemic, comprehensive system of professional development and support organized by a school district to train, support and retain new teachers (Wong, 2004, p. 42). Mentoring is merely a part of the larger whole of the induction process. Mentoring is action-based. It typifies what mentors do. A mentor is one person whose basic function is to help a new teacher. Usually, that help is for survival, not sustained professional learning that leads to becoming an effective teacher (Wong, 2004, p. 42).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Attrition issues among minority teachers are particularly daunting as numbers indicate their scarcity in the field from the onset. “Teachers of color are significantly underrepresented in the public school population, despite the fact that the number of students of color is growing rapidly” (Partee, 2014, p. 1). The numbers indicate that while students of color nationally comprise almost half of the public school population, teachers of color make up only 18% of the teaching force (Partee, 2014, p. 5). The reasons for this trend actually seem to be somewhat cyclic. As minority students primarily comprise high poverty urban and rural schools where higher teacher turnover and achievement gaps exist and seem to be getting wider, then this manifests itself in lower high school graduation rates for those students. Consequently, the numbers of qualified applicants is ultimately fewer. Multiple factors exist for the underrepresentation of effective teachers of color, including insufficient early academic

preparation, which leaves too many people of color incapable of aspiring to a teaching career (Partee, 2014, p. 7). Too often, it manifests as either failure to graduate from high school or lacking or the necessary skills to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and/or pass competency tests at the teacher-preparation or certification level (Partee, 2014, p. 7).

For minority students, the impact that teachers of color bear on their academic outcomes is monumental in the areas of attendance, retention, test scores, etc. Many of these positives are attributed to students' identification with their teachers, the setting of high expectations and the power of teacher-student relationships (Partee, 2014, p. 6). Research suggests two classes of explanations for the relevance of minority teachers for minority student populations. The first class is that of passive teacher effects; the second, is that of active teacher effects (Dee, 2004, p. 196). Passive teacher effects essentially suggest that by a teacher's mere racial presence, "a teacher's racial identity generates a sort of role-model effect that engages student effort, confidence and enthusiasm" (Dee, 2004, p. 196) consequently providing students with an opportunity to spend time with real life, similar background, human examples of future career paths (Bireda & Chait, 2011, p. 2). While certainly there are effective teachers of many races, for underprivileged African American students, especially, the presence of an African American teacher may encourage them to rethink their own beliefs about educational possibilities that may exist for them (Dee, 2004, p. 196).

Student diversity is significantly different than diversity in the teaching staff. Educational leaders must identify methods to bridge the gap in teacher diversity so that students of all backgrounds see adult role models and images of themselves in the classroom.

Recruiting, developing, and retaining qualified minority teachers is an important practice that must be further enhanced for the benefit of all students. (Branch & Kritsonis, 2006)

The second class of explanation for the relevance of minority teachers is that of active teacher effects, which include such things as allocating class time, interacting with students and in

designing class materials more oriented toward students who share their racial or ethnic background (Dee, 2004, p. 197). Of utmost importance in recruiting and retaining teachers of color is the potential of what they provide to an ever shifting demographic. One way that exposure to a wide range of cultural and linguistic experiences can be accomplished for students is to provide them with educators of diverse races and ethnicities (Partee, 2014, p. 6).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Research does show, as discussed earlier, that African American teachers are disproportionately found in high-poverty urban and rural settings (Bireda & Chait, 2011). Even though student socioeconomic and demographic statistics may parallel, are the contributing retentive factors for minority educators in these settings parallel, as well? The purpose of this study is to explore the induction experience of minority teachers in a rural Mississippi Public School District.

### **Goals of the Study**

There are three goals for this study. The first goal is to identify strategies and inductive procedures deemed important to beginning minority educators in the Middleboro School District that lend themselves to successful induction practices. The second goal is to identify challenges experienced by minority educators, particularly internal challenges (i.e. policies, procedures, etc.) that respondents feel undermine the full potential and success of minority educators in the Middleboro School District. The third and overall goal of the research is to provide a voice for minority educators in the Middleboro School District regarding their overall induction experiences and to offer research based implications for policymakers and administrators that may be useful in improving the induction and overall teaching experiences of minority educators while decreasing attrition rates among minority educators in the Middleboro School District.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions will guide this study.

1. What are some challenges minority educators face?
2. What are some practices identified by teachers that the district has instituted and/or promoted that have led to successful induction strategies for minority faculty?
3. What are some practices or policies related to induction that could assist minority faculty to have a more successful experience?

## **Background**

Mississippi ranks 50th in terms of student achievement, up from 51st for the past several years (Associated Press, 2016). Despite making some gains, the state remains last in student academic achievement (Associated Press, 2016). The overall graduation rate in 2012-2013 was 68.0%, some 13 percentage points below the national average of 81%. Mississippi further has a 50% minority student population; however, the graduation rate of African American males for that same time (2012-2013) was a dismal 51%, some 30 percentage points below the national average and 17 percentage points below the state average. Latino males' grad rate was 61%, still somewhat behind state and national averages (Schott Foundation Report, 2015). As an educator originally from and currently practicing in Mississippi, it is important to me to explore with new and beginning Minority educators those factors that contribute to their wanting to stay and make a difference in the lives of their students, particularly in my current district. Research suggests minority students seeing and interacting with teachers with whom they can identify makes a difference in minority student achievement and subsequent completion of school. To that end, this dissertation should provide for policymakers and those in authority those institutional factors that can be implemented to drive those teachers to want to stay as well as those factors they would like to see instituted to improve the overall teaching experience and ultimately, retention.

## CHAPTER II: THE PROBLEM OF TEACHER TURNOVER IN AMERICA

Teacher turnover trends in the last 25 years have marked a dramatic shift from one end of the pendulum to another from what was a career that seemingly pointed to longevity in the field to one in which one article lauds, “Hire Today, Gone Tomorrow”(Feng, 2010). The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2007) held that almost one of very two beginning teachers leaves the profession by the end of his or her first five years of teaching with 16-20%, depending on location, leaving within the first year (p. 1). The cost of attrition for schools around the country is astronomical. “America’s schools are struggling with a growing teacher dropout problem that is costing the nation over \$7 billion a year. It is draining resources, diminishing teacher quality, and undermining our ability to close the student achievement gap” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007). The argument for reducing teacher turnover cannot be overstated.

Until we recognize that we have a retention problem we will continue to engage in costly annual recruitment and hiring cycle, pouring more and more teachers into our classrooms only to lose them at a faster and faster rate. This will continue to drain our public tax dollars, it will undermine teaching quality, and it will most certainly hinder our ability to close student achievement gaps. (NCTAF, 2007)

While some might hold that the issue is in recruitment, that does nothing to stem the expenses-- financial and student achievement--that the tide of teachers leaving the profession takes with them (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2007). All turnover, certainly, is not bad. “Teachers will continue or leave for personal reasons that cannot be controlled by the

district. Some beginning teachers may also find there are not well suited to teaching--they and their districts may be better off if they leave teaching early” (NCTAF, 2007, p. 3). However, teachers are leaving the profession at a 4% higher rate than those in other professions (Riggs, 2013, p. 2)

The following figure indicates teacher turnover trends from for a 25-year period, beginning in 1988 through 2013 (Shanker Institute, 2015; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). The teacher turnover data presented here is inclusive of those teachers moving from one school to another, movers, and those actually leaving the profession altogether, Leavers (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014).

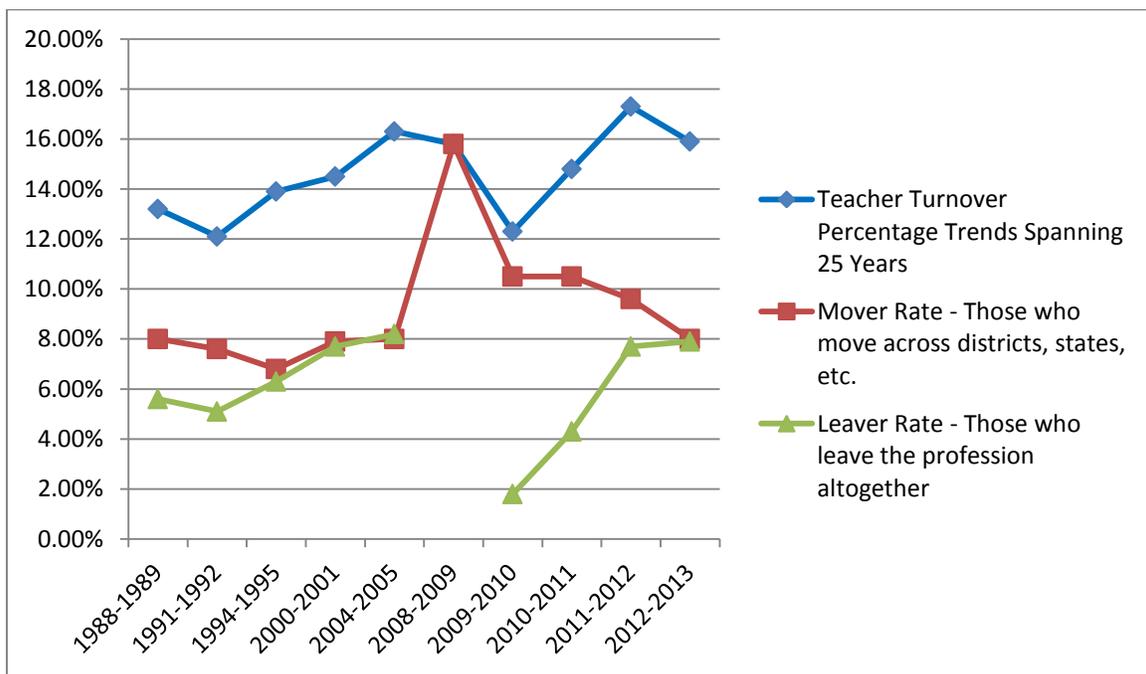


Figure 1. Teacher turnover percentage trends in the United States spanning 25 years.

The turnover figure indicates that after years of consistent increase in turnover, there was some tapering and diminishing in leaving from 2004 through roughly, 2010. It is important to mention that the time between 2008-2009 and 2012-2013 marked two significant factors. First, was the Great Recession our country underwent during 2008-2009. In these years, people in all sectors of

employment were likely reluctant to change professions or even try to change teaching positions as the instability of the job market was a huge determinant for the country as a whole (Shanker Institute, 2015). The second was the increase in retirement.

### **Why Are Teachers Leaving?**

Aside from retirement, what are some reasons teachers leave the profession in general? Common reasons for turnover in the profession among teachers at large seem to fall in one of two broad categories: teachers' personal and professional backgrounds and school contexts (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Sexton, 2010). In their Meta-Analytic review of 34 studies of 63 attrition and retention variables, Borman and Dowling (2008) identified those factors that most contributed to teachers leaving the profession. The studies that comprise this analysis varied from urban to rural participants. From their research, those factors could be further divided into personal attributes of teachers, organizational characteristics of schools, student body compositions and resources (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p. 367).

#### **Personal Attributes an Important Factor in Attrition**

Attrition is usually much more substantial during the early stages of a teacher's career because the teacher has accumulated less specific capital, or knowledge, specific to the craft (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p. 397). Position in the life cycle of teachers plays a role in attrition as well, with family related decisions – such as whether to have a child – playing something of a role in the decision. “Teachers who have children are far more likely than those teachers who do not have children to leave the profession (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p. 397). Later in life, such family decisions as the need to care for aging parents or the desire to spend time with grandchildren are factors that lend themselves to attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p. 398). Another area of importance is that of the characteristic of the work environment.

## **Teachers' Professional Preparedness**

Teachers' career phase, educational background, experiences in teacher preparation programs and graduate study, certification and entry route into the profession (Borman & Dowling, 2008) play a role in retention and attrition, as well. Credentialed teachers, according to Borman & Dowling (2008), were more likely to stay in the profession than those who lacked credentials. Additionally, those with graduate degrees were more likely to leave the profession than those who did not (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

## **School Context and Organization of the Work Environment**

School context and organization of the work environment when comprised of a lack of support from administration, student discipline issues and lack of input in the decision-making process, contribute to teachers leaving the field (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p. 398). In addition, salaries, instructional resources and characteristics of schools' student bodies are also important; the greatest attrition rates are found in those schools serving low-achieving, poor and minority students (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p. 398). In looking at school context, it, too, could be further synthesized into student body characteristics, the availability of organizational capital - financial, human and social capital and power structures and relations (Achinstein et. al., 2010). Student body characteristics play a very important role in teacher attrition among teachers at large, with teachers much more likely to leave schools with a majority of students either living in poverty or with a high concentration of free and reduced lunch recipients (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Also, teachers in schools with a majority of students of color were 3 times more likely to leave than teachers in schools with a majority of White students (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Financial capital--salaries and resources--was another area that impacts teacher attrition (Achinstein et. al., 2010). Teacher salaries and instructional resources are great leverage points

and because they can be changed and positively impact teacher retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008).

### **Lack of Professional Support through Induction**

Lack of professional support through induction is perhaps even more significant than personal and family factors affecting new teachers' career decisions. New teachers leave because teaching, as a professional occupation, has been slow to develop a systematic way to induct beginners gradually into a highly complex job (Borman & Dowling, 2008, p. 397). "In theory, the classroom hours aren't bad and the summers are free. But, many young teachers soon realize they must do overwhelming amounts of after-hours work. They pour out emotional energy into their work, which breeds quick exhaustion. And they experience the frustrating uphill battle that comes along with teaching – particularly in low-performing schools" (Riggs, 2013, p. 3). Social capital, or the providing of opportunities not to work in isolation but network, collaborate and participate in professional development activities is so critical to new teachers (Borman & Dowling, 2008) who find themselves at this crossroads mentioned above by Riggs (2013). Formal induction and mentoring programs for new teachers have been noted as beneficial in helping teachers remain in the profession (Achinstein et. al., 2010). It relates to simply to support (Borman & Dowling, 2008). As compared to countries that experience higher achievement with their students and subsequently rare teacher shortages, America lacks a systematic approach to recruiting, preparing and retaining teachers (Hammond & Ducommun, 2016) that prepares them for such rigors. The following table compares the entry of U.S. Teachers to those countries with systemic, governmental supports for beginning teachers:

Table 1

*A Comparison of Entry Level Teacher Experiences in the United States to Other Higher Achieving Countries (Hammond & Ducommun, 2016)*

Experiences of Entry Teachers in the United States	Experiences of Entry Teachers in Higher-Achieving Countries such as Finland, Sweden, Germany, etc.
Dramatically different levels of training – often with those least prepared teaching the most educationally vulnerable	High-quality, graduate-level teacher education, at government expense, including a year of practice teaching in a clinical school connected to the university
Sharply disparate salaries--with those teaching the neediest students earning the least	Equitable salaries (often with additional stipends for hard-to-staff locations) which are competitive with other professions such as engineering
Working under radically different teaching conditions--with those in the most affluent communities benefitting from class sizes under 20 and a variety of materials, while those in the poorest communities teaching classes of 40 or more without adequate supplies	Mentoring for all beginners in their first year of teaching from expert teachers, coupled with other supports like a reduced teaching load and shared planning
With little or no mentoring or on-the-job coaching in most communities to help teachers improve their skills	Ongoing professional learning embedded in the 10 or more hours a week of planning and professional development time

As the table information suggests, there exists in progressive countries throughout the world a systemic means of induction for beginning teachers into the profession. Teaching is treated from the onset with great respect and a honing of the craft with new teachers. Consequently, there is very little turnover in these countries (Hammond & Ducommun, 2016).

**Voices from the Past, Desegregation and Its Impact**

Zora Neale Hurston, a famous African American author, best known for her work, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and a presence in the Harlem Renaissance, a period of great cultural awareness and awakening of African American artistic genres--written, spoken, performed

(Wormser, 2002) was unlike many of her colleagues in her upbringing and consequently, her style of writing. Zora was born and raised in Eatonville, Florida, the first all-Black township in America. Her father had been mayor, owned a store and was a preacher there (Hurstun, 1942/2006). Many of the adults she had seen as a child held positions of prominence. Her mother was a teacher, her first teacher (in fact) that told her to “jump at the sun” in seeking her dreams and goals (Hurstun, 1942/2006). When as a young artist in the 1920’s she found herself in Harlem, in the wake of this creativity, conversations about civil rights became more than just whispers (Wormser, 2002). Then, as the country moved into the Great Depression and World Wars, the position of minorities in supporting the country’s efforts to survive prompted even further conversations about equality (Logan, 1944). Contemporaries such as W.E.B. Dubois, Mary McLeod Bethune and others sought change and Civil Rights in all aspects of life (Logan, 1944).

Through our personal and group contacts with other racial groups, we must increasingly win their understanding and support. Only in this way can the swelling force among minority racial groups be channeled into creative progress rather than explode into riots and conflicts, or dissipated into hoodlumism (Bethune, 1944, p. 255). We must challenge everywhere the principle and practice of enforced racial segregation. We must make it clear that where groups and individuals are striving for social and economic status, group isolation from the other allows the rise of misunderstanding and suspicion, providing rich soil for the seeds of antagonism and conflict. (Bethune, 1944, p. 257)

In *What the Negro Wants* (1944), the reader sees Mrs. Bethune and her contemporaries take stances on cultural and racial diversity that speak to uplift of the race through inclusion and understanding (Logan, 1944). When the landmark decision concerning integration of schools came by way of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Zora Hurston, by virtue of her life experiences, presented a slightly differing viewpoint. She held that it is not about the color of the person teaching the class as much as it is about the quality of teaching in the class. “If there are not adequate Negro schools in Florida, and there is some residual, some inherent and

unchangeable quality in White schools, impossible to duplicate anywhere else, then I am the first to insist that Negro children of Florida be allowed to share this boon. But if there are adequate Negro schools and prepared instructors and instructions, then there is nothing different except the presence of White people” (Hurston, 1955). She went on to raise concerns about minority students losing some things in culture through integration.

The whole matter revolves around the self-respect of my people. How much satisfaction can I get from a court order for somebody to associate with me who does not wish me near them? It is well known that I have no sympathy, nor respect for the “tragedy of color” school of thought among us. The Supreme Court would have pleased me more if they had concerned themselves about enforcing the compulsory education provisions for Negroes in the South as is done for White children. Growth from within. Ethical and cultural desegregation. It is a contradiction in terms to scream race pride and equality while at the same time spurning Negro teachers and self-association. (Hurston, 1955)

Of course, this view made her unpopular among her contemporaries as it appeared she was not in favor of equal rights. Both ladies, literary and educational figures, spoke to the ideals of growth and opportunity. On the one hand, Mrs. Bethune spoke to a generation about the need for equality and civil rights, while Zora Neale Hurston spoke to the same through capitalizing on the strengths already present in minority communities. The impact of what both of these ladies shared is evident in our educational system today.

Some 60 years after desegregation, educators are still divided about desegregation’s true benefits. As one writer suggests, “Sadly, school desegregation was not the Utopian ideal that many had hoped” (Watson, 2014). When school segregation was deemed unconstitutional with *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, many African American schools were simply closed and their students bussed to White schools. Many school districts fired minority teachers simply out of retaliation for the desegregation ruling (Watson, 2014). In the decade following the Supreme Court decision, “African American teachers were pushed out of the profession through demotions, firings and forced resignations. By 1970, more than 38,000 African American

teachers and educators lost their jobs” (Ahmad & Boser, 2014, p. 4). Around the same time, more opportunities in other fields opened up allowing more choices for African Americans (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). Desegregation did, in many ways, sway minorities from the field of teaching as many saw their positions which were once valued in their communities forcibly taken away thus creating an environment for students and teachers of being unwanted, much like Zora predicted. The court order, itself, did not instantaneously fix segregation as hundreds of school districts were placed under court order to desegregate their schools, with some orders still in place from over 50 years ago and still open today (Larson, Hannah-Jones & Tigas, 2014). For minority students, the overwhelming numbers of suspensions, expulsions and the ever-widening achievement gap between minority students and their White counterparts, as discussed in this paper, point to this theoretical perspective and those

### **Underscoring the Pressing Need for Minority Educators**

A major argument underscoring the need for minority educators is that of being role models for students who look like them and assisting in helping schools feel like a caring and safe place for minority students to be culturally validated and encouraged to pursue academic excellence (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2004; Schott Foundation, 2015; Shanker Institute, 2015). “Fundamentally, this is an extension of community, where students feel that they and their home cultures are warmly embraced” (Shanker Institute, 2015, p.10). Segregated Black schools were designed with great intent and deliberateness in not allowing the ideology of Black inferiority. “In addition to being sites of learning, they also instituted practices and expected behaviors and outcomes that not only promoted education--an act of insurgency in its own right--but were designed to counter the ideology of African Americans’ intellectual inferiority and ideologies that saw African Americans as not quite equal and as less than human”(Shanker Institute, 2015,

p. 10). Researcher Patricia Kusimo (1999), a former student of a segregated school recounted the lifelong lessons and experience she gained as a result. She shared,

In my own experience as an African American student in segregated schools, we were told we would have to be twice as good as Whites, and were prepared to expect racism and bigotry. But we were also taught we could fight back by being excellent. Today, the ranks of African American Teachers, the traditional orators of that message, have diminished. Achievement data indicate the pressing need to carry the message that excellence is possible and essential for rural African American students. (Kusimo, 1999)

When looking critically into the demographics that comprise the overall teacher population it dramatically illustrates the need to retain and attract teachers of color in our nation's schools. Minority teachers are a subset of the field experiencing many challenges in affecting the level of teacher turnover (Partee, 2014). The relationship between minority student enrollment and minority teacher presence is negatively correlated. When school systems began to desegregate after *Brown v. Board of Education*, 80% of the school population was White and 20% was minority (Torres, Santos, Peck, Cortes, 2004). By 1996, the number of minority students had risen to approximately 35% of the student population (Torres, Santos, Peck, Cortes, 2004). Nationally, people of color now represent approximately 41% of the student population in public schools but represent only 18% of public school teachers (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014, p. 5). While teachers of color have the distinction of being sorely underrepresented in their profession, conversely, students of color are emerging as the dominant sector in public schools (Partee, 2014).

It is hard to imagine that 20 years ago, there were state and national-level discussions and programs aimed at outlining goals for adding and supporting diverse teaching staff and training teachers in cultural competency. Today, the discussion about teacher diversity and cultural competency is barely audible. (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014)

Also worthy of note concerning the presence of minority educators is their ability to influence not only intrinsic motivators in student achievement among minority students, such as cultural

validation and safety, but also internal, institutional practices that can serve as extrinsic barriers to minority student success. Authors Meier, Stewart, and England (1989) draw parallels between the discriminatory practices in segregation as external but point to internal practices such as discipline and tracking and its marginalizing effect on students of color. Research shows that the positives of having teachers of color interacting with students of color range from better school attendance, retention, better standardized test scores to more enrollment in advanced-level courses and greater increase in college enrollment (Meier et al., 1989). Additionally, fewer African American students' are placed in special education classes, suspended or expelled when they had more teachers of color (Meier et al., 1989). These positives are attributed to many teachers of color having a culturally relevant perspective from which to draw with their students through the infusion of culturally relevant experiences and examples. From this perspective comes the setting of high expectations, the development of true and trusting relationships with their students and the serving as cultural and linguistic resources as well as their roles as advocates, mentors and liaisons for students, their families and the community (Partee, 2014).

For minority students, especially, there is a pressing need to see, interact with and be recognized by teachers who look like them. Research suggests various reasons this is important, from self-validation and actualization to feeling a camaraderie that provides them a safe place to explore their own feelings and experiences without fear of penalty or humiliation (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Shanker Institute, 2015; Schott Foundation, 2015). The Shanker Institute report holds that when it comes to minority students being taught by minority educators there is particular social and emotional benefit to minority children, especially minority children from high-poverty neighborhoods. It means a great deal to minority students to know, be known and recognized by people who look like themselves, who are successful and in positions of authority

and prominence (2015, p. 9). Evidence points to the fact that the performance of Black students more than other races and ethnicities is influenced greatly by the support and nurturing provided by teachers, referred to as culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy, as espoused by Gloria Ladson-Billings, asserts that there is much power in connecting with students when their cultural relevance is taken into full account (Ladson-Billings, 1995). And while sensitivity to cultural values held by students is something that can be done by any teacher willing, there is a solid belief that teachers of color can fill the gap for minority students by boosting their confidence and helping them overcome their feelings of marginalization (Ladson-Billings, 1995) through their own cultural identification and experience.

Culturally relevant pedagogy is based on the following: (a) Students choosing and experiencing academic success; (b) students maintaining cultural competence and “street credibility” while seeking academic excellence; and (c) students developing a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Academic success is a must for all students. In order to compete both domestically and globally, “all students need literacy, numeracy, technological, social and political skills” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). “Thus, culturally relevant teaching requires that teachers attend to students’ academic needs. The trick of culturally relevant teaching is to get students to choose academic excellence” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). Secondly, while accomplishing academic excellence, minority students need to also feel they have maintained their cultural integrity. “Thus, the African American student wearing a hat in class or baggy pants may be sanctioned for clothing choices rather than specific behaviors. Culturally relevant teachers utilize students’ culture as a vehicle to promote learning” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 161). Music, art, language are all examples of cultural tenets that teachers of similar cultures,

especially, use in their classrooms to promote achievement among their students (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 162). Finally, the infusion of the idea that it is not enough for the individual student to feel empowered through choosing excellence and remaining grounded if those skills are not used to challenge those norms, values and institutions that maintain societal inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 162).

At a time in this country when feelings of marginalization are reflected in aspects of society at large, having a safe haven in schools is critical to minority students, especially. A 2014 report from the Office of Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection revealed that while African American students represented 16% of the student population, but they represented 32% to 42% of students suspended or expelled (Office for Civil Rights, 2014). In comparison, White students represented 31% to 40% of students suspended or expelled but were 51% of the population (Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Translated, this means African American students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than White students (Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Being away from school is being away from instruction and, consequently, becoming even further marginalized. As our country and classroom demographics continue to change, it is crucial that we reignite the national discussion on the importance of addressing teacher diversity (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014). Teachers holding high expectations for all students and teacher diversity are pivotal (Partee, 2014). In a 2007 memo, Alexa Posny, Director of the Office of Special Education Programs to State Directors of Special Education Programs, writes,

As you know, the disproportionate representation of children from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in special education is a longstanding national issue and continues to concern the public. The phenomenon of disproportionality is particularly troubling when one considers that the proportion of minority students in the population of school-age children has risen dramatically--to 35% as of 2000--increasing the diversity of students in many public schools throughout the nation. As minority children continue to comprise an increasing percentage of public school students, the Federal government must be

responsive to the growing needs of an increasingly diverse society. (A.Posny, personal communication, April 27, 2007)

What can be done to address appropriately such overrepresentation? There are suggestions that stem from classroom environments to nutrition; however, one author suggests it could be as simple as recognizing the difference between cognitive functioning and cultural differences (Burnette, 1998). An important solution: Recruit and retain educators who have had experience with diverse student populations and are, themselves, are from diverse backgrounds (Burnette, 1998). The “warm demander” relationship between teachers and students is one in which high expectations are seen as a natural byproduct of a relationship based in mutual respect (Ladson-Billings, 2004). In a recent study of teacher expectations, researchers observed expectations from two teachers per student. Their findings were that non-Black teachers of Black Students had much lower expectations than did Black teachers of the same students (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorgeor, 2015). “Relative to teachers of the same race and sex as the student, other-race teachers were 12 percentage points less likely to expect Black students to complete a four-year college degree. Such effects were even larger for other-race and other-sex teachers, for Black male students and for math teachers” (Gershenson et al., 2015). Finally, exposure to teachers of all ethnicities is a benefit for all students, “especially in regard to the anti-bias effect that such familiarity can bring” (Shanker Institute, 2015, p. 11). Since the mid-1980s, researchers have argued that the lack of teacher diversity serves to undermine democratic amity by “reinforcing stereotypes and perpetuating existing social inequalities” (Shanker Institute, 2015, p. 11).

The following figure compares the demographic growth difference in percentages of the public school teacher workforce from 2004 to 2014. Of the projected 3.5 million elementary and secondary school full-time teachers who were employed in the fall of 2014--a number not

substantially different from 2004 (National Center for Education Statistics Fast Facts, 2014). “Approximately 82 percent of the public school teaching force is White non-Hispanic, 6.8 percent African American, 7.8 percent Hispanic, 1.8 percent Asian American, 1 percent Pacific-American, 0.5 percent Native American and 1.0 mixed race” (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014, p. 5). A breakdown in representation for minority teachers from the National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (2004) showed 7.9% African American Teachers, 6.2% Hispanic, 1.3% Asian, 0.7% Multiple Races, 0.5% American Indian or Alaskan Native and 0.2% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The numbers here illustrate that while these numbers show 1% growth overall in minority representation in the teaching force, only 1% growth was amassed in ten years. As the figure illustrates, there has not been a significant change in growth. Hispanic Teachers have shown the most growth, 1.6%, over that period of time while African American Teachers have shown the most decline, 1.1% over that same period of time. And as the apparent gaps indicate, there is a lack of equality.

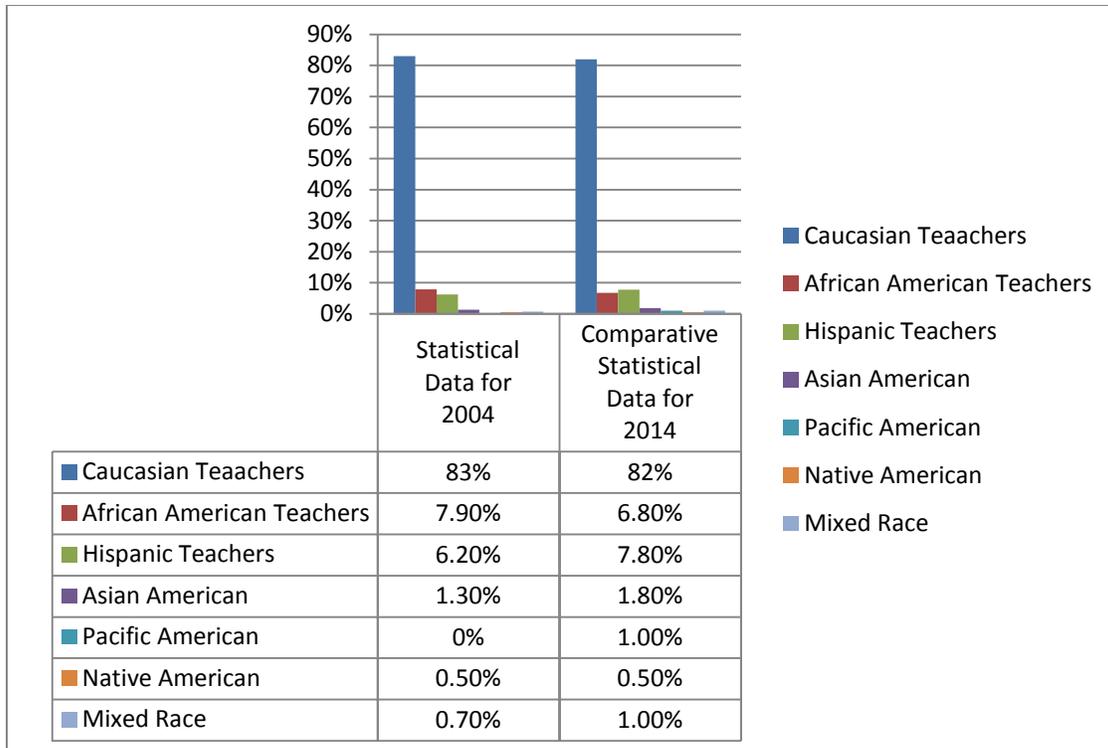
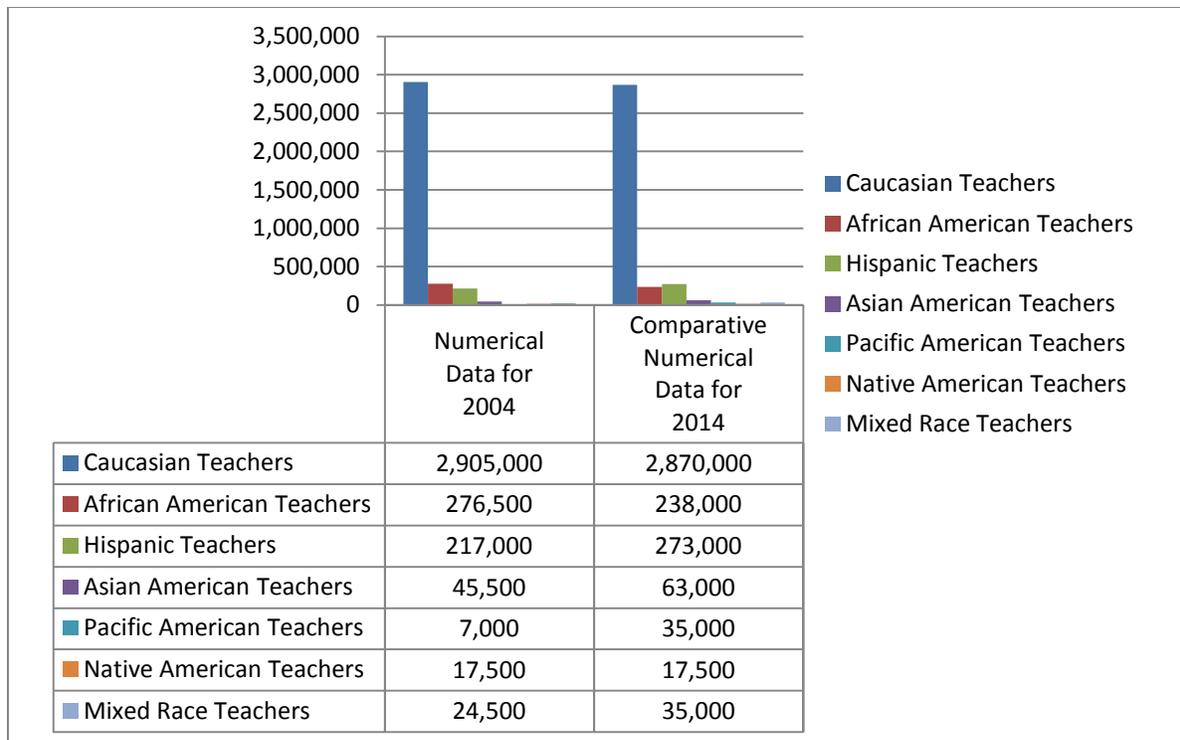


Figure 2. 10-year growth data percentage comparison from 2004 to 2014 in public school teacher workforce of approximately 3.5 million full-time employed educators.

The next figure illustrates what the percentage comparison figure previously presented actually represents numerically. Looking at the actual numbers is sobering as this is not only a representation of teacher numbers nationwide but the relative slow pattern of growth over this 10-year period. Hispanic teachers, who showed the largest gains, saw an increase of 56,000 teachers in that 10-year period, while African American teachers, who showed the largest decline, actually lost over 38,000 teachers during that period of time. All of the ethnic groups combined do not total the number of Caucasian teachers, with Pacific American, Native American and Mixed Race teachers combined comprising less than 100,000 teachers.



*Figure 3.* 10-year numerical data comparison from 2004 to 2014 in public school teacher workforce of approximately 3.5 million full-time employed educators.

### **Factors that Contribute to the Shortage of Minority Teachers**

Why is there such a shortage of minority educators? The answer to this question, the factors that contribute can be further explained through examining pre-professional barriers and post-professional barriers. Pre-professional barriers include having a representative minority population prepared to meet the requirements for high school and college graduation, minimal requirements for pursuing not only a career in education but any professional career (Bireda & Chait, 2011, p. 5; Camera, 2015). Then, within that minority population, there must be those further prepared to meet the rigors of testing requirements for certification purposes (United Negro College Fund, 2008). Once having overcome the pre-professional barriers, the post-professional barriers primarily include a non-existent system of support in place for minority educators to feel acknowledged and valued as professionals (Partee, 2014).

**Achievement gaps in both high schools and colleges.** Before one can pursue the possibility of becoming an educator or any other professional occupation, usually that pursuit comes with it education and training beyond high school. Another significant part of the reason for the shortage of minority educators is due to the ever widening achievement gap between minority students and their White counterparts, diminishing greatly any pool of applicants for any professional career requiring college completion and beyond. “High school graduation, an absolute requirement for entering the teaching field, continues to elude many Black and Latino students” (Bireda & Chait, 2011, p.5). Nationally, graduation rates for 2011-2012 were 69% for Black students and 73% for Latino students, respectively, compared to 86% for White students (Governing the States and Localities, 2012). Even more concerning, the Schott Foundation for Public Education, a non-profit agency dedicated to advocacy and equity in public education among all students, in its 2015 Biennial Report, suggested that “the opportunity gap continues to be greatest for Black males of all racial/ethnic and gender groups and while nationally there have been slight increases in their rate of securing a regular diploma four years after beginning high school, the gap between graduation outcomes for Black males compared to their White male counterparts continues to widen (Schott Foundation, 2015, p. 7). At the national level, the 2012-2013 school year estimates indicate a national graduation rate of 59% for Black males, 65% for Latino males, and 80% for White males” (Schott Foundation, 2015, p. 7).

In colleges and universities, increases are being seen for all races; however, there still persists a graduation gap between White students and underrepresented minorities. More than two-thirds of all four-year public colleges and universities reported increased graduation rates among their student demographics between 2003 and 2013, with underrepresented minority percentage increase at 6.3% vs. White student increase at 5.7%; however, a closer review of the

percentages actually reveals that the graduation gap narrowed by less than 1 percentage point in ten years (Camera, 2015). The question then becomes if it takes ten years to close the gap by one point, how much progress has actually been accomplished? As the numbers reveal, the rate of high school and college completion for students of color certainly reduces the number of qualified minority applicants for the teaching field. For high school graduates who enter colleges and universities, the exposure to possibilities in numerous career fields coupled with negative schooling experiences held by some of those students, discourages them from pursuing a teaching career (United Negro College Fund, 2008). Approximately 10.6% of college students in the United States are education majors and of that number, 82% are White; 7% are African American; 7% are Hispanic; 3% are Asian; and 1% is designated as “other” (Ahmad & Boser, 2014, p. 10). Additionally, the UNCF (2008) reports that many students in teacher-education programs have difficulties passing the tests required for licensure in most states and finally, the costs are definitely a factor. “The high cost of college drives many graduates to more lucrative careers in order to pay back student loans. Unlike some graduate school programs or professional schools, teacher preparation programs require students to take out large loans with little promise of financial reward. With these constraints, teaching has steadily lost prestige among college students, becoming a career of last option” (Bireda & Chait, 2011, p. 5).

**Teacher licensure exams.** Once making it to college and/or university, there is still the issue of teacher certification and licensing which is still a significant barrier for some. Most states use the Praxis I, a measure of basic skills in reading writing and mathematics designed to evaluate a candidate’s propensity for entering teacher education, and Praxis II, measure of specific subject areas, exams as a means of licensing teachers (Ahmad & Boser, 2014, p. 12). Results of a study of first-time teacher certification test takers from 2005 to 2009 found that of

those taking Praxis I, pass rates for White test takers was twice as high for African Americans – 81.5% compared to 40.7% for reading; 79.5% compared to 44.2% for writing; and 78.2% compared to 36.8% for mathematics (Ahmad & Boser, 2014, p. 12). For the Praxis II, Data from the 2007-2008 academic year showed that in the English content exam, the pass rate gap between African American and White test takers was 42.3%. For the math content, the pass rate gap was 47.3%. Hispanics, Asian-Americans and Native Americans fare slightly better but Whites still outperform other groups on almost every subject area (Ahmad & Boser, 2014, p. 13).

**The revolving door of minority teachers.** For those minority students who have continued their course and entered into the profession, data shows that minority teachers' careers have been less stable than those of their non-minority peers and have included more job transitioning (Shanker Institute, 2015, p. 22). "In 2003-2004, for example, 47,600 minority teachers had entered the profession; however, by the following year, 20% more, about 56,000, had left teaching. These data convey an image of a revolving door: too many going in one door and out another" (Shanker Institute, 2015, p. 22). As with any profession, there are some variables that are ultimately beyond the control of policymakers. Personal reasons from pregnancy and child rearing to health and family moves play into decisions to stay in the profession with minority teachers as it would their White counterparts and are common to many types of organizations (Shanker Institute, 2015, p. 23). But more than half of minority teachers who leave do so based on job dissatisfaction or the desire to pursue a better job, another career or better career opportunities in or out of education (Shanker Institute, 2015, p. 23). Many minority educators tend to be employed in urban schools serving high-poverty, minority communities (Shanker Institute, 2015, p. 5). Interestingly, unlike their White counterparts, the socio-economic and racial constitution of the student population really does not have a bearing on minority

teacher retention (Partee, 2014, p. 8). Instead the factors that lead to attrition for minority teachers are more organizational--low levels of administrative support, lack of classroom autonomy and lack of collective faculty decision making influence (Partee, 2014, p. 5). Professionals like to be treated as such. Input and feeling welcome in offering opinions and ideas are paramount to professionals as they are demonstrations of respect; minority teachers are no exception to this. Even if those opinions are not always used, feeling empowered enough to have a voice to use them is powerful (Partee, 2014). "Influence and autonomy are hallmarks of respected professions. Schools that provided teachers with more classroom discretion and autonomy, as well as schools with higher levels of faculty input into school decision making, had significantly lower levels of minority teacher turnover" (Shanker Institute, 2015, p. 24).

In looking at the pre-professional barriers, especially, these barriers are perpetuating themselves and further contributing to the shortage of minority educators. As our students fail to see reflected in their classroom experiences those that share cultural bonds or simply look like themselves, we diminish for a generation the possibility of what they can become. Further, as we lose minority students to the achievement gaps in both high school and college, we further diminish the pool of applicants available to become the next generation of minority educators. As this pool of potential applicants becomes smaller even before college, the result is fewer and fewer minority educators from which to draw. In looking at the post-professional barriers, seemingly, just by putting in place systems to actively recruit and support minority educators, we may see an increase in their presence in our schools and some improvement in pre-professional barriers thus promoting a positive correlation between educator presence and student possibilities.

## **Perspectives from Minority Educators, Reasons to Stay**

Several studies of minority teachers in various settings and subject areas throughout the country identify minority teachers' experiences, challenges and reasons they have chosen to stay in the field. In reviewing the studies, it is interesting to note that much of what the teachers had to say were universals, not necessarily relegated to just that particular setting. For example, in a study of those factors that motivated five minority urban science teachers to stay in the field, five factors emerged as most essential. The first was a personal and professional need for in-depth knowledge of the subject they were teaching as well as the constant seeking to expand that knowledge. They were in consensus about loving their subject area and wanting to convey that love of science to their students. (Fraser-Abder, 2010). Second and third factors, understanding, caring and commitment to the whole child and setting high expectations, were symbiotic. Schools tend to be places where students from different cultural backgrounds have very different experiences within the same classroom, all tempered by the classroom teacher-student relationships (Fraser-Abder, 2010). One participant summed it up by saying, "Students need a support system to help them survive in their day-to-day life. Often the teacher is the one they turn to for that crucial support" (Fraser-Abder, p. 243). As teachers they felt the need to address not only teaching the curriculum but reaching the needs of the whole child. Additionally, participants also spoke to the need to motivate all of their children and set high expectations for their achievement no matter what issues they may bring with them (Fraser-Abder, 2010, p. 244). Finding voices/perspectives of minority teachers in rural settings is to first, find rural minority teachers. Nationally, teachers of color accounted for a smaller percentage of public school teachers in rural schools (8%) vs. schools in other locations (12-29%) in 2003 – 2004 (NCES, 2007). Second, the ratio of teachers of color in such rural, same-cultural areas falls dramatically

short of the ratios of White teachers to White students (Castaneda, Kambutu, & Rios, 2006, p. 13).

In two studies of teachers in rural areas, for minority educators, again, certain universal themes emerged among the study participants. Their perspectives of their experiences speak to certain behaviors to which they have become resigned and/or have challenged in their own unique way. The first study setting, Wyoming, seemed an unlikely setting for the basis of this research which seeks to ultimately gain perspectives from minority educators in rural Mississippi; however, Wyoming is the 16th most rural state in the U.S. with 34% of its citizens living in places with 2500 or fewer people (Castaneda et al., 2006). Of its educational system the state report reveals that small schools, small classes, lots of computer use and strong parental support for teachers are characteristic of rural education in Wyoming, much like Mississippi. Rural schools in Wyoming also reflect a strong sense of community and close ties with families, nationwide tenets of rural education (Castaneda et al., 2006). From this study, the motivator factors for teachers to enter the profession were: family or community influence, following in the footsteps of parents, being first in family to attend college, having made a connection with a teacher or teachers in formative years and/or having a natural love of learning and inclination to instruct or lead others (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 15). Each educator went on to describe feeling particularly efficacious in positively effecting students' lives while "modeling other cultures for mainstream students" (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 16). The challenges these educators face in rural settings that are not reflective of their own racial-ethnic communities of origin and the factors that derail those experiences are important for policymakers and leaders to know in order to recruit, hire and retain minority teachers in such settings (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 17); however, the hesitancy and fear minority educators may feel about speaking of those challenges are

palpable when often they are one of only a small few and feel their voices may be misinterpreted or cause for retaliation rather than reward. When addressing the challenges they face, educators in this study (not surprisingly) were very reluctant to speak, fearful their answers may somehow make it back to their communities because by virtue of their being so few minority teachers or in some instances the only one, they felt their answers would be readily identifiable and place them at risk (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 18). Of the challenges, participants related being held suspect, misperceptions and invisibility (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 18).

All six participants related incidences when their academic and/or professional abilities were called into question. The participants characterized the public as appearing to carry a general attitude that educators of color were poorly or inadequately prepared even after school training and preparation for the field, held suspect. (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 18). Along with “being held suspect” was the idea of misperception. When educators were suspected of possessing inferior academic credentials, they were frequently misperceived as unprepared professionally (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 18). Invisibility was a common theme not only the classroom but even in the pre-service program. In pre-service programs, invisibility looks like being alone--the one or two students of your ethnicity in education cohorts unless a student at an HBCU. In the classroom, that invisibility looks like lack of support from students, parents and administrators (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 19). Teachers of color in rural contexts cope with suspicions, misperceptions and the resultant invisibility and isolation from colleagues, administrators, parents and students with whom they must interact (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 19). The use of the focus group in the study was described by participants as a great positive as it provided them a vehicle for getting to know one another and having a network of support for discussing ideas and challenges (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 19). While they stopped short of

calling this induction, the networking, sharing of ideas and support system they gained from being brought together through focus group are tenets that successful induction can provide. Much was devoted to this study of Wyoming rural educators of color as many of the themes identified here seem to likely typify experiences of rural educators in localities outside Wyoming.

The second study, set in twelve southern rural public schools in Louisiana and the Mississippi Delta, explored with both White and Black teachers their insights into the reasons for low achievement in southern rural schools from the perspective of teachers in those schools (McCoy, 2006). In this study, unlike the Wyoming study, much more attention was given the communities in which the schools were set; however, the voices of the minority educators were similar. What was of particular interest were the voices of White educators in this study and how different the perspectives were between the two teacher groups (McCoy, 2006). The researcher in this study found it impossible not to broach the issue of race and prejudice in the rural South with 8 of the 12 schools 98% to 100% segregated (McCoy, 2006). In these communities, the Black students attend public schools and White students attend academies; teachers shared that if poor Whites cannot afford the academies, then financial assistance is provided so they do not have to attend the all Black public schools (McCoy, 2006, p. 753). Employment prospects beyond high school were described as dismal; there was little, if any, industry; drugs, crime and gangs were problematic in the settings of this study (McCoy, 2006). The undertones of race and prejudices inevitably found their way in the classes and teacher/student, teacher/teacher relationships. Worthy of note is that while Black teachers seldom mentioned race, interviews with White teachers at both mixed and Black schools, usually resulted in some critical reference to their Black students (McCoy, 2006). Some teachers went on to suggest they did not get along

well with their colleagues of a different race (McCoy, 2006). Similar to teacher voices in Wyoming, and science teachers in the urban setting, several minority teachers expressed their desire to build their students own sense of self-worth through students seeing their love of the subject, setting of high-expectations and demonstrating their willingness to help them achieve them (McCoy, 2006, p. 755); however, unlike those voices, many opportunities to impact student awareness, a sense of social justice, were ignored or overlooked, with both teacher groups acting as observers rather than true change agents. Said one participant in the study, “The community is broken; the children are apathetic; they (children and parents) do not care” (McCoy, 2006). One African American teacher related for the researcher her personal experience during segregation when still a student herself, on the night before the high school was to be integrated, the White public high school was burned down by an arsonist; Black students resumed attending their former high school. She further recalled that White students went to the beginnings of the all-White academy in church basements around town (McCoy, 2006, p. 754). The power of that story to encourage her students was almost tangible; this act of arson that completely destroyed the high school fully illustrated the lengths someone would go to maintain the separation of White and Black students in that community. However when asked if she shared that story with her students and how it impacted her to work just that much harder to achieve, her response was that they (the students) would not care (McCoy, 2006, p. 754).

Student learning in rural settings brings with it challenges unique to the setting as with students in urban and suburban settings. To be sure, context definitely plays a huge role. There are variations of the word rural as it applies to the educational setting. Rural areas located nearest urban areas are referred to as “fringe rural” while those located further away are referred to as distant rural and remote (NCES, 2007). As expected, fringe rural areas tend to enroll a larger

percentage of all ethnic groups while those in more remote locales, tend to enroll less (NCES, 2007). While student motivation does not appear to be a generally distinguishable variable between rural and non-rural schools, rural educators often attest to a dampening effect on student aspirations where families do not see education as an essential vehicle to advancement in life, and the improved life chances an education provide usually require a relocation away from a the community (Redding & Walberg, 2012). The centrality of the school to rural community life, however, places a greater responsibility on the rural school to elevate students' aspirations (Redding & Walberg, 2012). It is critical in rural communities to institute practices that promote attracting and retaining minority educators. "When the remoteness of a rural community is already a likely barrier in attracting and retaining school leaders and teachers, the school's internal systems for ensuring consistent application of effective practice is paramount. The policies, programs, procedures, and practices must be engrained in the daily operations of the school in ways that optimize the productivity of current staff and readily assimilate new staff" (Redding & Walberg, 2012, p. 4). Moreover, when the rural communities are more "fringed" in their overall make-up as those described in the deep south study, with its inherent problems and lack of real opportunities, the same constructs--policies, programs, procedures and practices--must still be engrained in the daily operations of the school in ways that optimize the productivity of current staff while readily assimilating new.

With this in mind, how, too, can those procedures and policies be better aligned to meet the needs of successful induction and retaining of minority educators in such settings? Are the experiences of the educators both in Wyoming and the deep south similar to those of experiences from minority educators in rural settings elsewhere and if so, what can we do as a nation to address those tenets in our culture that speak to "being held suspect," misperceptions and

invisibility very eloquently identified by those participants and researchers? “Good teaching is good teaching, point blank. But context matters. In communities where access to resources goes beyond monetary solutions, and school culture is dominated by a social context remarkably unique to the community, the national discussions and policies around improving public education often seem irrelevant”(Wang, 2014).

### **The Potential Power of Formal Teacher Induction Programs**

The underlying purpose of any induction program for any occupation is that of introducing the new employee to that new work environment. It serves to introduce the goals of the organization, the expectations the organization holds for its employees and then to further provide the resources--human and material--by which that new employee can, hopefully, become a successful and productive member of that environment (Salau, Falola, & Akinbode, 2014). The more formal the induction program, the more specific and intentional the design of the induction program itself (Klein & Weaver, 2000).

Induction, for teachers, is further characterized as a period of time, not surprisingly, the initial three years in the profession (Hoover, 2010), which has been widely recognized in numerous studies, including this one, as the time most vulnerable to the retention of teachers, particularly minority teachers where shortages persist even from the onset (Partee, 2014; Dilworth & Coleman, 2014). For many teachers in our country, induction begins and ends more with placement, less with process. Effective formal teacher induction programming is a systematic, systemic process embedded in a school environment that seeks to meet new teachers’ personal and professional needs (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). While there is variation in the design of formal teacher induction programs across districts and states, the common ground for successful programming include opportunities for experts and veteran teachers to pair with new

and beginning teachers, promoting time for collaboration, reflection and a gradual acculturation into the profession of teaching (Howe, 2006).

Researchers estimate that less than 1% of new teachers receive the kind of supports that could actually be classified as formal teacher induction (Sun, 2012). As of 2016, only 29 states require new teachers to participate in some kind of support for new teachers and only 15 of those require it extend beyond the first year (New Teacher Center, 2016). Mentoring seems to be the predominant means of induction for new teachers but yields similar outcomes in attrition as no induction supports (Sun, 2012). Teachers receiving no induction supports had a 40% turnover rate while those who received basic induction (categorized as mentoring and supportive communication with principal and and/or department chair) had a 39% turnover rate (Sun, 2012). While more than 30 states require training for mentors, most state policies say little about its content or delivery. Only 18 are specific regarding mentor training, requiring such key components as: knowledge of state teaching standards, formative assessment of new teacher performance, classroom observation, reflective conversations and adult learning theory (Goldrick, 2016). To be clear, mentoring is only a small part of a greater whole in induction and its effectiveness is only as good as the training and supports provided the mentor in working with new teachers.

Mentoring is an action. It is what mentors do. A mentor is a single person whose basic function is to help a new teacher. Typically the help is for survival, not for sustained professional learning that leads to becoming an effective teacher. (Wong, 2004, p. 42)

The task of transitioning from the role of “students of teaching to a teacher of students” (Hoover, 2010) is daunting when one considers their being faced with translating theory from teacher preparation programs into practice, dealing with classroom management skills, meeting federal, state and local expectations for delivery of curriculum through instruction, often in

relative isolation (Moir, 2011) and “learn how to thrive in the culture of the school environment” (Breux & Wong, 2003).

### **The Theoretical Frameworks that Support the Need for Teacher Induction Programs**

There are prevailing theories in induction that support its viability as a resource for training and retaining new and beginning teachers in the field. One theory is that of meeting the needs of the new teacher both professionally and personally (Gold, 1996). Professional needs, as outlined by authors McCann, Johannessen, and Ricca (2005), are knowledge, skills, and strategies in content, pedagogy and personal reflection. Personal needs are further outlined as the sense of self-worth and confidence obtained through the guidance and encouragement embedded in the overall induction process and cultivated through the mentoring relationship (McCann et al., 2005).

Another theory focuses on the importance of the mentoring relationship as it relates to induction. Further, the mentoring relationship can be broken down into three convergent themes--humanistic, apprenticeship and critical perspectives--that work together in supporting the new teacher through the induction process (Wang & Odell, 2002). Personal needs, as described above, are the prevailing focus of the humanistic approach. Technical supports and professional guidance (i.e., lesson planning, parent-teacher conference best practices, etc.) represent the aim of the apprenticeship perspective while the critical perspective promotes reflection and collaboration (Wang & Odell, 2002).

Yet another theory is that of sustaining the professional learning and development gained in the pre-service teacher education programs. Beginning teachers often leave their respective colleges and universities feeling well prepared to tackle the rigors of the classroom as a novice teacher but reality presents a different perspective altogether. Universities are often the last safe

haven prior to entry in the teaching profession, as such helping teachers develop and succeed in their early career period is critical and actually seems a natural extension of their teacher education programming (Bastian & Marks, 2017). Certainly conferences, workshops, books, etc. can provide insights and strategies that can inform individual practice of any teacher (ASCD) but the continuous discussion, collaboration on instructional goals and supports inherent in the design of induction actually provide for the new teacher capacity building designed to promote improve instruction and further increase student achievement (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Hoy and Spero (2000) implied that “some of the most powerful influences on the development of teacher efficacy are mastery experiences during student teaching and the induction year.” As a result, “the first years of teaching could be critical to the long-term development of teacher efficacy” (p. 343).

### **The Importance of Formal Teacher Induction for Minority Educators**

For the minority educator, the task of transitioning into the role of teacher is also met with having to address feelings of even further isolation, often being one of a small number of minority educators in a given school or district; having to further prove one’s preparedness and aptitude and having ideas being heard and respected as an educator by administration, parents, students and peers (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 18). Beginning teachers, particularly beginning minority teachers, are found more often in schools with high poverty and high minority student populations (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014; Partee, 2014; Schott Foundation, 2015). “While all schools and students can benefit from more effective teachers, the power of high-quality induction has special significance for schools that serve a disproportionate number of low-income and minority students. In such schools, teacher turnover is generally higher and

sometimes rampant” (New Teacher Center, 2016). For rural educators in the south, these feelings seem to be even more magnified as undertones of prejudice persist (McCoy, 2006).

As referenced in the theoretical framework supporting the need for quality teacher induction programming for all teachers, efforts that target the first years of teaching are critical to combatting the “sink or swim” environments that new teachers--both White and of color--experience and impact their perceived self and collective effectiveness and efficacy and retention in high need schools. (Partee, 2014). Efficacy is defined as the belief in having the ability to impact positively a situation as an individual or part of a group (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). Induction is vital to the concept of empowering teachers to work collaboratively and independently in crafting their skills. “States and districts are increasingly using induction programs to help new teachers transition into a school and provide the critical support these teachers need to begin an effective teaching career” (NASBE, 2012, p. 3).

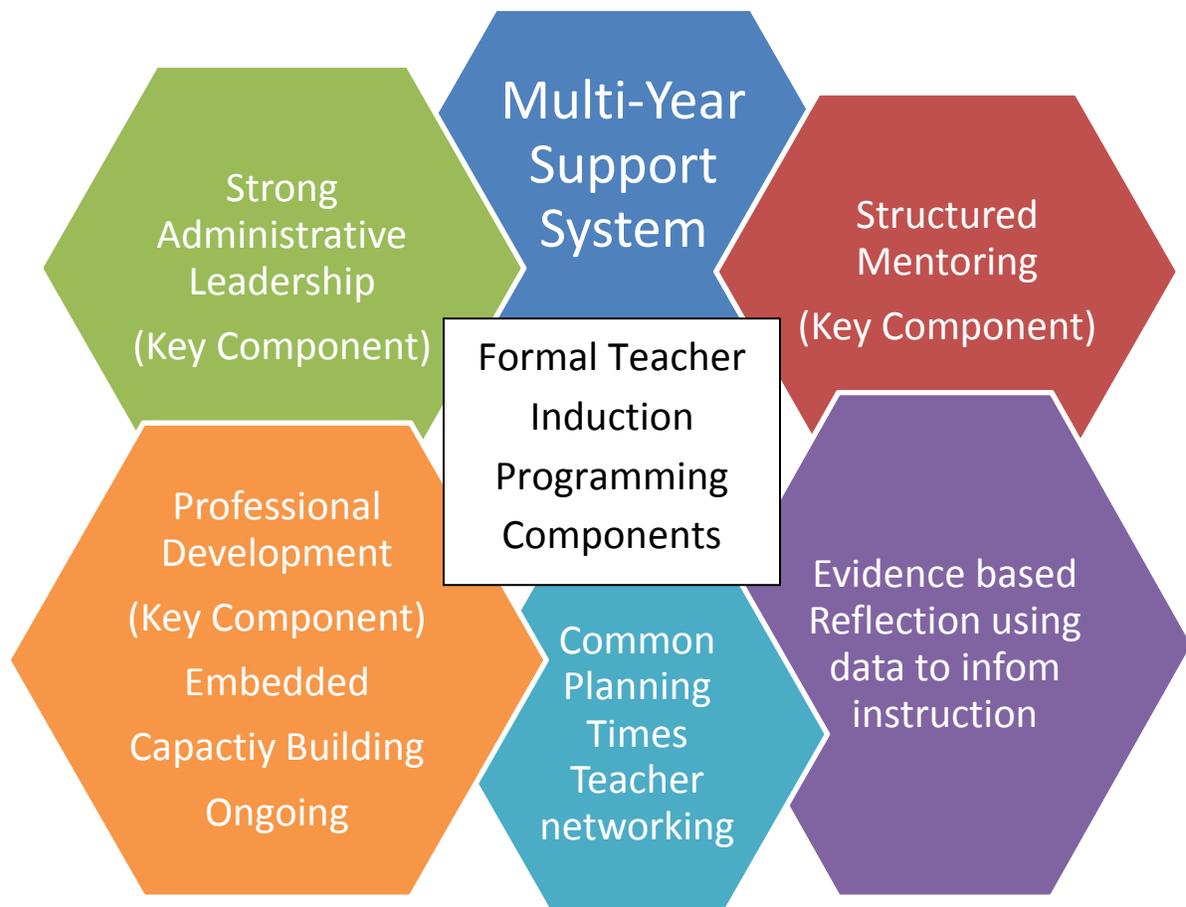
### **Elements of Formal Teacher Induction Programming**

Formal teacher induction programming is characterized as having the following components (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Sun, 2012):

- Multi-year support for new teachers lasting at least two years
- Structured instructional mentoring from carefully selected and trained veterans who coach new teachers using a repertoire of strategies;
- Common planning time with other teachers;
- Frequent and formative standards-based assessment based upon a continuum of teacher development and individual goal setting;
- Embedded and ongoing professional development activities

- Evidence-based reflection that uses data to drive teacher instructional decision making to best meet the needs of students;
- Teacher networking that takes advantage of this generation’s ability to communicate readily through technology, and
- Strong Principal Leadership.

The following figure is a visual representation of the processes assigned to teacher induction as outlined above (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Sun, 2012). As the figure suggests, induction is a process where each component supports the other in the totality of the experience.



*Figure 4.* Visual representation of the elements of formal teacher induction as described in literature review (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Sun, 2012).

In delving more deeply into the components above that comprise formal teacher induction programming, research suggests effective learning about instruction takes place during the second and third years of teaching (New Teacher Center, 2007). As such a program ending prior to this time is not nearly as effective in fully impacting their teacher effectiveness and efficacy (Sun, 2012). Mentoring is part of a greater whole. As an important component of a formal teacher induction program, mentors need to be trained and develop specific skills to be successful in their role of supporting new teachers; providing new teachers the opportunity to collaborate with others helps both improve learning communities and reduce those feelings of isolation (Sun, 2012). In looking at professional development activities, there is a need for those activities for new teachers needs to be specific in content, focusing on the challenges of practices are part of their day to day work. Additionally, the sessions should be scheduled regularly to allow for progressive advances in knowledge and skill (Sun, 2012) while further encouraging collaboration, providing opportunities for new teachers to pose questions, engage in finding answers and reflect (Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Evidence points to the building level administrator and district leadership playing pivotal parts in crafting an environment for new teacher induction programs in which all participants are provided an opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

Administrators play a critical role in setting the stage for beginning teacher and mentor success, creating time for induction, and establishing a positive culture for teacher development in their buildings and in the system. Professional development for administrators and ongoing communication with them about the needs of new teachers, and the nature of the program ensures that they understand their role in fully supporting induction. (New Teacher Center, 2007, p. 2)

## **Desired Outcomes of Formal Teacher Induction Programs**

Even more than reducing teacher turnover, the overarching effect of any formal teacher induction is to provide new teachers the skill and support they need to reach their full potential in the craft, empowering them to be effective and efficacious – collectively and independently (Sun, 2012). “If states and districts are able to achieve this goal, related outcomes such as improved student achievement and reduced teacher turnover rates will follow” (Sun, 2012).

Research has shown a positive correlation between positive teacher efficacy and teacher retention (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). It follows that the more confident a new teacher finds him or herself in his or her ability to competently perform the tasks expected, the more likely they are to remain, growing and seeking new strategies to perform the tasks (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

## **A Current Look at Education in Mississippi**

Mississippi has its own set of challenges in education. Practically one-third of Mississippi School Districts suffer crisis-like shortages of teachers (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016). Recent reports from the Mississippi Department of Education show an English Language Arts proficiency rate among White students of 47.5% vs. Minority students--African American of 18.9% proficiency, a difference of 28.6% (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016). Mathematics proficiency reports 45.2% rate among White students vs. a 17.4% proficiency rate among minority students--African Americans, a difference of 27.8% (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016). Approximately 10% to 15% of those districts’ teachers are not licensed in the subject areas they teach--subjects that include math, science, and foreign languages, as well as special education (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016). “In addition, under Mississippi law, teachers have job protections after two years regardless of how they are doing in the

classroom. But who wants to fire a bad certified teacher when there is nobody to replace him” (Wang, 2014)? Not surprisingly, Mississippi is not one of the 22 states referenced earlier with any sort of state mandated or prescribed induction process for beginning teachers (New Teacher Center, 2016).

Schools in Mississippi reflect a 56% minority student population, with 49.2% of that number represented by African American students in K-12 public education (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016); however, 73% of its educators are White, 25% are African American, and percentages for other ethnicities are negligible (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016). “Mississippi’s teacher shortages mirror those in urban districts including Louisville, Kentucky; Nashville; Oklahoma City; Las Vegas; and Charlotte, North Carolina. Some handle the shortage by using extra pay to lure teachers to struggling schools, while other districts are trying to strengthen ways to improve teacher education programs so teachers enter classrooms more prepared” (Harrison-Henderson, 2016). Additionally, some 39% of teachers in high-minority Mississippi schools have less than four years of experience, while rookie teachers make up just 15% of the teaching force at low-minority schools (Harrison-Henderson, 2016). Principals in areas with extreme teacher shortages often turn to retirees, who can only work half the school year, or long-term subs (Harrison-Henderson, 2016), the effects of which can be life-changing for students. In an interview conducted by Harrison-Henderson with a former student of Wingfield High School in Jackson, Mississippi, the student recounted how the lack of connection and/or inconsistency in instruction affected his life (2016). Beginning school with hopes of becoming a graphic designer, this African American male, often found substitute teachers in his core subject classes or worse, found teachers who looked like him, with whom he made a connection, only to find that person gone the next day, semester, or school year

(Harrison-Henderson, 2016). Such inconsistencies and a developed guardedness about attempting to make connections with teachers for fear of losing them again ultimately contributed to a sense of hopelessness, and he dropped out of school (Harrison-Henderson, 2016). Much of what he shared about the emotional impact of not having that connection with his teachers mirrors what research has said about African American students, particularly males (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014; Schott Foundation, 2015; Shanker Institute, 2015).

Mississippi ranks 50th in terms of student achievement, up from 51st for the past several years (Associated Press, 2016). Despite making some gains, the state remains last in student academic achievement (Associated Press, 2016). The overall graduation rate for the state in 2014-2015 was 78.4%, seemingly only four percentage points below the national average of 82%; however, certain variables such as student transfers, home school enrollments, and completer statuses among students with disabilities do not weigh into the graduation formula for districts and can skew that statistic (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016).

Middleboro School District, the subject of this study, was one of 30 districts state-wide classified as a D in 2015-2016. Enrollment was approximately 3,000 students with the following subgroups represented in demographic: Asian students, African American students, Hispanic students, and White students (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016). Of the 196 instructional staff, only 54 are African American; however, of that number only 31 teach a core instructional course of Math, Language Arts, Science, or Social Studies (Middleboro School District, 2016). The other 23 are assistant principals, elective teachers, or special educators (Middleboro School District, 2016). The district also has both a Career Technical Center and Alternative Campus that have another 11 faculty members, 5 of which are African American and 7 faculty members, 5 of which are African American in their instructional staff, respectively

(Middleboro School District, 2016); however, student access on both these campuses is determined by either selection or circumstance. Of the 54 minority teachers who teach at our mainstream campuses, 22 are within their first five years of teaching in this district, and for at least 8 of them, this is their first teaching assignment out of college (Middleboro School District, 2016). The dropout rate at 21.6% was among the highest in the state (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016).

The Schott Foundation bi-annually reports on African American and Latino Boys and educational disparities between them and their White counterparts in the United States (Schott Foundation, 2015). One area of great disparity is that of graduation rates. Their most recent data obtained was for the 2012-2013 school year and that data paints a dismal picture among our nation's African American and Latino boys in terms of graduation from high school (Schott Foundation, 2015). Nationally, for the 2012-2013 academic year, graduation rates were 59% among African American males, 65% among Latino males, and 80% for White males (Schott Foundation, 2015). During the 2012-2013 academic year, Mississippi was ranked among the lowest states for African American males to graduate high school with an overall 51% graduation rate; 61% graduation rate for Latino males (Schott Foundation, 2015).

Given the statistics that highlight some of the issues that plague minority students in our schools, we, as a nation and state, are in a crisis. The Middleboro School District dropout rate and minority student proficiency statistics point to a desperate need. If recruiting and retaining minority teachers can bridge some of the gaps in minority student achievement in our district, then it seems worthwhile to investigate those successful inductive factors that appeal to minority educators in this community. Conversely, it is important to also explore those challenges faced by minority educators in this context that make them want to explore other possibilities. Through

doing so, policymakers and other stakeholders can hear their voices and implement strategies that capitalize on the successes in induction while addressing the challenges of these educators to create structures designed to better meet their needs and consequently the needs of our minority students to see and make those connections with even more minority teachers.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory seeks to look at how practices--individual, institutional and societal--come to bear on the educational, legal, occupational, and societal outcomes of minorities as compared to their White counterparts, as those policies are designed to favor White society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Political and financial power as well as other material and societal gains tend to lend themselves more to White society in America is what critical race theorists hold. Further, scholars and theorists seek to explore these practices and discover how to more fairly seek and provide equal opportunities for minorities through exposing their realities (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

#### **Key Tenets of Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory is comprised of several tenets that provide its theoretical framework. The key tenets of critical race theory are (a) the permanence of racism; (b) experiential knowledge; (c) interest convergence theory; (d) intersectionality; (e) Whiteness as property, (f) social construction (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), and (g) commitment to social justice (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Each tenet alone is significant in expounding on or revealing the realities of minorities in a predominantly White society.

**The permanence of racism.** The permanence of racism suggests racism being so engrained in U.S. society that it seems natural, ordinary, and invisible to most (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998). “Because racism is so enmeshed in the fabric of our

social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture” (Ladson-Billings, 1998). As a result, the strategy for CRT Theorists is to reveal the presence of racism in its various forms and settings (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

**Experiential knowledge.** Experiential knowledge holds that the lived experiences of people of color is legitimate and provides a “unique voice of color” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The shared experiences of oppression is important in developing a CRT analytical standpoint (Ladson-Billings, 1998). When Whites experience racial oppression, they may develop such a standpoint. Contemporary examples may occur when White parents adopt transracially. “No longer a White family, by virtue of their child(ren) they become racialized others” (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

**Interest convergence.** Considered the “Father of Critical Race Theory,” the late Derrick A. Bell, Jr., first shared the tenet of interest convergence. Essentially, this construct of CRT suggests that only when racial equality aligns with the interests of those in power (typically White elite) do we see forward steps in equality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). In his analysis of the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, he expounds on this tenet. He asserts that the decision in *Brown* (a) helped to provide immediate credibility to America’s struggle with Communist countries to persuade emerging third world peoples; (b) offered reassurance to American Blacks that equality and freedom, principles lauded during World War II for which many fought and died while those who returned still faced discrimination and oppression, might be realized at home; (c) helped provide the illustration of racial progress that as there were many in White elite society who recognized segregation as a barrier to further industrialization and opportunities for greater profits in the South (Bell, 1980).

**Intersectionality.** Intersectionality looks at those facets that comprise our identities and holds that no one holds one single identity. As such, each race possesses its own origins and ever changing history. “Everyone has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties and allegiances” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

**Whiteness as property.** Whiteness as property is based on White dominance and the subordination of people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998). This construct holds that merely being White makes accessible the right to own property as well as the benefits that comes from its ownership. From the article, Whiteness as Property, by CRT Scholar Cheryl Harris, is interestingly shared that the legal legacy of slavery and the upholding of the seizure of land from Native American people is not just a rule of property law informed by racist themes but larger than that, an established and protected interest in Whiteness itself that exists today (1993).

**Social construction.** The tenet of social construction holds that race and races are conveniences to society that correspond not to any biological or genetic reality but to a societal reality invented, manipulated, and retired when ready (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

**Commitment to social justice.** Finally, the commitment to social justice says that critical race scholars are committed to the establishment of a socially just U.S. society and educational system. Critical race theorists and scholars seek to do this through awareness and activism (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015).

### **Critical Race Theory in Education**

Though, in academic circles dating back to the mid-1970s, such scholars as the late Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and the late Alan Freeman have been credited with the thought processes that identified how the advances sought through the Civil Rights Movement had been stalled, circumvented, or rolled back through covert racist policies and actions (Delgado &

Stefancic, 2012, p 3), the positions posited by both Mrs. Bethune and Ms. Hurston, especially, foretold eloquently both the argument and counterargument inherent in critical race theory, especially as it relates to education. Amazingly, their arguments came some 30 years prior to the introduction of CRT to our society. Civil Rights advocates, like Mrs. Bethune, wanted change immediately and equal opportunity for the same growth and prosperity assigned their White counterparts; they felt through legislation and hard work, all races working together could achieve equality for all (Logan, 1944). Critical race theorists want the same; however, like Ms. Hurston they seek to challenge not only how the law could accomplish the changing of hearts and minds (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Hurston, 1955) but the economic, historical, contextual, and agendas hidden within the law that covertly aim to maintain policies and systems to thwart efforts for true equality among all races (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Hurston's letter to the Orlando Sentinel (1955) was prophetic in that it in many ways, laid a foundation for the critical race argument in education.

What we as a society have seen in education since the passing of *Brown v. the Board Education* has been a step forward and backward as it relates to the educating of minority students. The dismantling of many minority schools during desegregation was larger in many respects than the dismantling of a building but rather represented in some ways the dismantling of cultural connection and confidence, self-worth and pride, and the dismantling of careers of thousands of minority educators. While the passing of the legislation did lead to minority student access to, sometimes, better facilities and materials, it did not, necessarily, lead minority students to better teaching and learning, much of the cultural and nurturing connections made with their teachers was now gone, as their teachers, schools, and all things familiar were gone and now the question of the institutional, educational practices and how they impact minority students and

educators is still largely unanswered or answered negatively. Such institutional practices in our nation's schools, like the disproportional numbers of suspensions and expulsions of minority students and disproportionality of minority students in special education, persist. Additionally, dropout rates among minority students remain high as does the achievement gap between White and minority students. These barriers alone serve to lessen the numbers of qualified minority students for college and university enrollment. In college, the numbers point to not only difficulty for minority students in passing licensure exams but the lure of more lucrative careers for those who complete their studies. Once minority teachers make it to the field, their experiences of invisibility or relegation to certain roles and expectations is palpable.

### **Summary**

Nationally, teacher attrition is not only a costly problem for districts, costing over \$7 billion dollars annually, but it is a human capital problem in that it impacts the lives of students who depend on our nation's educational system to provide them a solid education and opportunities to achieve. After breaking down the teacher turnover data, it is apparent that not only are minority teachers leaving the profession at an alarming rate but their presence in the profession is diminished from the start. While conversely, our minority student enrollment for K-12 continues to climb. From desegregation to current day, the nation has seen a decline among the minority teacher population while at the same time the minority student population has grown exponentially. Factors that influence the minority teacher decline range from high school and college achievement gaps, to more lucrative opportunities in other fields, to the inherent need to feel treated as professionals and valued for their opinions. As one author so eloquently said, "We were told we would have to be twice as good as Whites, and were prepared to expect racism and bigotry. But we were also taught we could fight back by being excellent. Today, the

ranks of African American teachers, the traditional orators of that message, have diminished” (Kusimo, 1999).

Voices from minority educators around the country in studies that spoke to minority educators who remained in the field all seemed to echo the same themes--a love for teaching and wanting to convey that love to their students, a desire to be a role model for their students and help foster student self-esteem and growth and an unwavering setting of high expectations of all students and seeking to help their students meet those expectations often more so than their White colleagues. Studies show such culturally relevant pedagogical practices and the warm demander principles as hallmarks of minority teachers as they related to minority students. Their challenges of proving their worth and of being heard among colleagues and community were palpable. None of the participants in the studies referenced in the literature review spoke of induction as being a vehicle used by their districts; however, teachers in the Wyoming study spoke positively of the focus group experience and what it afforded them in the way networking, sharing of ideas and challenges and having people with similar backgrounds and experiences with whom to communicate--many of the tenets of induction (Wong, 2014).

National statistical data shows an achievement gap that persists and a need to bridge that gap by whatever means are available. State statistical data points to a tremendous gap between our White and minority students, particularly African American achievement (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016). As minority students are rapidly becoming more predominant in K-12 public schools, studies show the impact of minority teachers on minority students achievement in not only providing role models for minority students but on reducing suspensions of minority students, reducing the number of minority students referred to special education and the taking of more advanced courses by minority student populations. Given these positives more

attention to what matters most to and what challenges most severely minority teachers is critical to attracting and retaining minority teachers. Minority teachers are key to reaching minority students. Bridging the student achievement gap is to supply our own workforce in that helping all of our students reach successful academic goals and ensuring they have the foundation necessary to complete high school and college requirements ensures we have a workforce that can continue to do the same for future generations.

This doctoral study seeks to look from a critical race theoretical lens at those successful inductive practices as well as those challenges to minority educators in a rural Mississippi School District to share with policy makers and leadership suggestions for change that may positively impact active recruitment and retention of minority educators.

### CHAPTER III: PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

For many teachers in our country, induction begins and ends more with placement than process and programming. Making the transition from the role of “students of teaching to a teacher of students” (Hoover, 2010) is a hard task when one considers their being faced with translating theory from teacher preparation programs into practice, dealing with classroom management skills, meeting federal, state, and local expectations for delivery of curriculum through instruction, often in relative isolation (Moir, 2011). In addition, new educators must further “learn how to thrive in the culture of the school environment” (Breux & Wong, 2003). Quality teacher induction programs serve to bridge the gap between placement and programming and aid in transition.

For the minority educator, not only must they maneuver the aforementioned responsibilities but they must do so while addressing feelings of even further isolation in often being one of a small number of minority educators in a given school or district; having to further prove one’s preparedness and aptitude and having ideas being heard and respected as an educator by administration, parents, students and peers (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 18). Induction is being heralded as a critical means of support to the beginning educator, particularly beginning minority educators, to address some of those feelings of isolation in faculties comprised of primarily of White educators and provide a much needed transitional period of professional development and other supports necessary to face the task of teaching; however, less than 1% of educators

nationwide receive the kind of supports that could be categorized as comprehensive induction (Sun, 2012).

The purpose of this study was to offer a view of minority educator experiences in the district as they relate to induction and race. A dual purpose was to also provide research-based implications for policymakers and administrators that may be useful in improving the induction and overall teaching experiences of minority educators while decreasing attrition rates among minority educators in the Middleboro School District. Results of this study will hopefully prove helpful to district leadership in developing more inclusive strategies in induction and retention that promote attracting and sustaining minority teachers in core subject areas, particularly, thus improving visibility and cultural connections for our growing minority student population in attempts to further bridge minority student achievement gaps in Middleboro School District. Further, the information gathered in this study may assist other districts with similar demographics among student and minority teacher populations in instituting programs that promote better retention among minority teachers.

### **Research Methodology**

This was a descriptive case study. This descriptive case study solicited from the participants' accounts of their induction experiences as well as challenges they encounter in their position as minority educators (Baden & Howell-Major, 2013, p. 155) in the Middleboro School District.

Qualitative research is based on the premise that the researcher is aware of how much of reality--our experiences, perceptions, ideas--are socially constructed (Yates & Leggett, 2016). The researcher is inextricably embedded in the context of the study while seeking the "how and why" of the story in ways that quantitative does not (Yates & Leggett, 2016). As the research

premise for this study, Induction Experiences of Minority Educators in a Rural Mississippi District, is not only how and why but “what is your perspective?” and “tell me your story,” the manner of qualitative research to be employed is the case study. Case study design is most appropriate in seeking to focus on both historical and contemporary events while not requiring control of behavioral events (Yin, 2009, p. 8). Case study inquiry is defined by Yin as follows:

An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. It further copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion and another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (p. 18)

Using critical race theory as the theoretical backdrop for this study, I am seeking to hear each participant’s view of his or her teaching reality as a minority educator among predominantly White colleagues in a rural Mississippi school district. The qualitative case study is the most appropriate approach in that it allows participants the freedom of explanation (Yates & Leggett, 2016) of their experiences within the social construct of race and how it serves to define their reality. Likely, in answering the interview questions, teachers will share not only their induction experiences but how their experiences of racism or institutional racist practices persist in our culture.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are some challenges minority educators face?
2. What are some practices identified by teachers that the district has instituted and/or promoted that have led to successful induction strategies for minority faculty?
3. What are some practices or policies related to induction that could assist minority faculty to have a more successful experience?

## **Audit Trail**

An audit trail was established by using the following procedures and steps of inquiry that have advised this study: (a) documenting the inquiry process through journaling, notetaking, audio recording the actual interview sessions, and transcription of interview data; (b) developing a data collection chronology from the introduction of the study to potential participants to the collection of data through the participant data sheets and the actual interviews; and, (c) reporting the data analysis processes used in reporting and interpreting the information obtained from participants (Cresswell & Miller, 2000, p. 128). Through the following procedures outlined in the paragraphs which follow, I have sought to address the following guiding questions: Are the findings grounded in the data? Are inferences logical? Is the category structure appropriate? Can inquiry decisions and methodological shifts be justified? What is the degree of researcher bias? What strategies were used for increasing credibility? (Schwandt & Halpern, 1998).

## **Research Design**

The specific qualitative design consisted of two interviews of the individual teacher participant. The unit of analysis was minority teachers' perceptions. The first interview served as an introductory discussion on his or her personal beliefs about their experience as a minority educator in a rural Mississippi predominantly White district and their sense of their own success at feeling a part of the school community; the second interview reflected on his or her induction experience as a new or veteran teacher and processes they would like to see implemented or changed in induction. Interviews were optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences--particularly when sensitive topics were being discussed. (Baden & Howell-Major, 2013). This research was conducted from a realistic approach as I was

looking for elements of critical race theory as applied to the experiences of these educators, linking theory to practice (Baden & Howell, 2013, p. 60).

### **Research Participants**

The participants for this study were minority educators in the Middleboro School District who had been teaching overall or, at minimum, within district five or fewer years as data suggested that the most significant amount of teacher turnover occurs within the first 3 to 5 years of teaching (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). From all indications, attending to their concerns is critical. Additionally, a number of veteran minority teachers (those with 6 or more years) were also included for participation in the research. The letter from the Middleboro School District superintendent granting permission to conduct research (Appendix B) was completed and signed as a part of my documentation.

Using purposive sampling, eight teachers who made up the beginning teacher criteria listed above were contacted initially by telephone call followed by my sending an introductory letter that explained the basis of my research, method of data collection and their involvement in the research project should they have agreed to participate (Appendix C). Further, a participant data sheet was provided to all 8 participants to gather initial data, such as educational philosophy and background (Appendix F).

Participant selection of the initial eight beginning teachers was established according to Core Subject Area Teachers, because of their impact with larger numbers of students coupled with the demands of curricular and instructional expectations, followed by beginning special education and elective teachers. Table 2 indicates the preferred composition of beginning teacher participants. I sought two mathematics teachers because I wanted to look for any difference in the experience between upper and lower secondary mathematics teachers. Because our lower

elementary grades from K-3 are self-contained, Science and Social Studies are embedded courses in Reading and Language Arts. As a result, the “Grade Level Taught” column in Table 2 reflects the grade level in which subject area differentiation begins in the school district. I solicited participation from one elementary teacher in Grades K-3 to gain his or her perspective, as well, and look for possible differences in his/her experience from those of secondary teachers. Table 2 below outlines the participant composition for this study.

Table 2

*Beginning Teacher Participant Composition*

Teaching Area	Number of Participants	Grade Level Taught
Mathematics	2	4 - 12
English	1	4 - 12
Science	1	5 - 12
Social Studies	1	5 - 12
Special Education	1	3 - 12
Elementary Teacher	1	K - 3
Elective (Art, P.E., Music, Etc.)	1	5 - 12

Additionally, three veteran educators-teachers having taught in the district for more than five years, were also sought for their participation in this research. Their purpose in the study was to offer insight from a more seasoned perspective of minority educators in the district. Following the phone calls, the introductory letter (Appendix E) and participant data sheet (Appendix F) was provided to each veteran educator. Table 3 indicates the composition of veteran teacher participants in the study. As with the beginning teachers, had any of the initial three veteran educators declined to participate, another minority educator meeting the criterion or educators meeting the criteria was sought.

Table 3

*Veteran Teacher Participant Composition*

Teaching Area	Preferred Number of Participants	Grade Level Taught
Elementary Core Subject (s) Teacher	1	K - 5
Secondary Core Subject Teacher	1	6 - 12
Special Education Teacher	1	3 - 12

I did not include principals as I wanted to hear solely the voices of these minority teachers and their experiences. Additionally, as this is a small district, I used teachers from elementary, middle, and high schools to complete the study.

**Contacting Participants**

Immediately upon having gained permission to continue my research project from IRB, using purposive sampling, I reached out to 11 potential participants. As this is a small town and small district, many of the potential participants and I already have a cordial relationship outside of school through common interests such as the gym, ballgames, church, etc. For those whose personal contact information I had readily available, I simply called or sent a text message asking that they call me back at a convenient time. For those for whom I did not have such information, I reached out to them initially through their school office and left a message asking that they please return my call. Relying on my position as an administrator in the district, having to call teachers at other campuses for clarity on such things as assignments for students we share in common or correspondences between my instructional staff and them is not uncommon and does not arouse questions. As participants returned my call (within 1-5 days of my initial call to them), I followed the telephone script (Appendix C), thanking them and introducing my research project. Without hesitation, each person agreed to participate with me in the research prior to having the opportunity to see the detailed description of the project as explained in the Informed

Consent Document (Appendix D) and asked that I send the introductory information to their e-mail addresses as this was their preferred means of communication vs. traditional mail service. As IRB permission to continue with the project officially came on May 8th, the end of the school year was rapidly approaching complete with end of the school year wrap-up activities--end of state testing, final exams, high school graduation, verification of final grades, and working with cumulative folder info (for subject area teachers) to complete by their official last school date of May 23rd. In addition, some lived out of town and/or had expressed they would be leaving for vacation very quickly after the end of year date. Though as a researcher with a very defined timeline from my advisor and collegiate department, I was excited and anxious to get the interview portion done and get to know the experiences of my colleagues; as an educator and having once been in the classroom, however, I fully understood the many different directions in which their time and resources were pulled at that point in the year. Given this, I essentially allowed each participant to guide the convenience of working with me on the project as it worked best for them and accommodated accordingly via email, text, etc.

### **Data Dissemination and Collection**

Though the script asked if I could send information regarding the project to their address, not surprisingly, each participant asked if I could just send the information to his or her e-mail address as this was their preferred and quickest method of receiving and responding. I asked for their personal cell phone information (if I did not have it already) and gave them mine so that we could readily communicate as well. Finally, I shared that I would give them time to review the information and complete the data sheet should they still be willing to participate and contact them within a week. Again, I thanked them for their time and willingness at this point as I concluded each call. At the conclusion of each call, I attached the Informed Consent Document

and the Participant Data Sheet to a standard e-mail letter to the individual with whom I had spoken (Appendix F). I contacted each participant after about 5 days to determine if he or she was still willing to participate and gain his or her preferred date, time and place for an interview. I was able to make contact with 9 of the original 11 participants. The other two potential participants either did not respond to the call or they assured me they were coming to my office to see me and discuss the details but never showed up. As a result, I contacted two other participants who met the criteria. Thankfully, the two participants were in elective areas and, thus, easier to replace with alternates.

### **Data Collection**

Two sets of open-ended interview questions that address research participants' perceptions of and experiences with induction into the Middleboro School District were developed for both beginning and veteran teachers. (Appendix E). After having obtained permission to conduct research from the district office and permissions to participate from participants, two, 45-minute, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants after school hours at either my office, my home, his or her classroom, or a neutral location such as the public library. The participant had the opportunity to choose the location where he or she felt most comfortable. The first interview for beginning participants was comprised of eight questions; the second interview for beginning participants was comprised of eight, as well. The first interview for veteran participants was comprised of nine questions; the second interview for veteran participants was comprised of eight questions.

### **Data Analysis**

I took field notes during each of the interview sessions and all but two of the participants allowed audio recordings of the interviews for listening and further transcription. A preliminary

member check, conclusions shared with participants for their feedback and accuracy of content (Brink, 1993), was performed at the conclusion of each interview to allow participants the opportunity to further expound, clarify or restate any answer or answers that were not fully addressed or about which needed further explanation. I created a data wall in which I hand wrote each of the interview questions onto 6 white poster boards using a black marker and leaving 3-5 inches of space between each question. I then wrote each of the answers each participant provided onto index cards and applied adhesive to the back of each card. The answers were then affixed to the poster boards under the corresponding question. Answers were constantly compared, a data-analytic process in which each interpretation and finding is compared with existing findings as it emerges from the data analysis (Cresswell, 2011), and those with similar responses were grouped in clusters underneath each question. That cluster data was then hand-coded and synthesized using inductive data analysis working between emergent themes from interview responses that coincided with the tenets of critical race theory and the literature review (thematic data analysis) as well as unexpected themes that arose to establish a more comprehensive set of premises relevant to these participants (Creswell, 2014). Many of the themes that emerged had previously presented themselves in the interviews and other literature presented earlier in this study on minority educators and their feelings of marginalization in their work environments. Much of what participants said here actually mirrored that information thus making the categorization of their responses easy to code. Further, using deductive data analysis, the emergent themes were further analyzed to determine if more evidence may have supported the themes or if additional data needed to be gathered (Creswell, 2014). In those instances that the emerging codes match predetermined theoretical considerations, those were identified as “Perspectives Expected to Find” or a similar topic in the final analysis, while those that are

surprising or unusual are identified as “Perspectives of Interest” or similar topic in the final analysis as well (Creswell, 2014). Policies were compared to practice and implementation as response data has been analyzed and coded. Examples of coding differences included differentiation in the experiences between the elementary, middle and high school, to be noted in the implications. Differences in experiences that may have arisen between males and females were coded, if identified. Actual participant transcripts, complete with interview questions and responses, were generated by the researcher from the field notes and audio recordings. Those transcripts were then provided to each participant for a final review (member check) of the information that was derived for any additional thoughts, further accuracy and/or clarity. Each participant verified the accuracy of his or her transcript and no further changes were made. To further safeguard the confidentiality promised to participants, as the transcripts, themselves, contain some identifiable comments and observations, this researcher opted not to include the transcript data in the appendices of this study. Rather the resulting participant information and interviews presented in Chapter IV were edited to not include identifiable information.

Finally, the views shared by these educators in this case study were presented in a narrative passage of teachers’ experiences, with a detailed discussion of the themes derived from the interviews explored. Further, in implications for policymakers, any issues derived and lessons learned from the process were presented with the researcher’s personal interpretation coupled with the meanings derived from theory and the literary study presented previously (Creswell, 2014). Lastly, additional questions or things to consider were also suggested based on the analysis of the data presented through the study.

## **Researcher Positionality**

My own realities, from induction to policies and procedures, as they relate to race as a minority educator in this district have helped shape my interest in developing and pursuing this study with my colleagues and peers. In my role as researcher, I wanted to hear the perspectives of the teacher participants who met the criteria specified in this study as they reflected on their personal experiences, providing an opportunity, perhaps, for their perspectives and voices to be heard among administrators and policymakers. As a minority educator in this district, I reflected on and compared my own induction experiences to those of research participants.

## **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness for this study was established through interpreting data from data sheets and interviews of 11 participants (Brink, 1993). Additionally, participants were not provided interview questions prior to the interview. Answers provided by participants came from initial participant reactions without having had an opportunity to discuss with others or much time to ponder and filter. The answers represented their individual thoughts and perspectives. Finally, member checking was afforded each participant through the generation of each participant's individual interview transcript as transcribed through audio recordings and/or field notes. The individual transcript generated from the audio recording and notes was emailed (Appendix G) to each participant for his or her review. Lastly, the audit trail, which provided a description of the research steps taken from the start of the project through the development and reporting of findings (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2008), is represented through the information presented in this chapter.

## **Procedural Safeguards Provided Participants and District in the Study**

Though I anticipated little to no risk to participants in this study, to further safeguard participants from any fears they may have of retribution arising from any of the discussions each participant was given a pseudonym in the actual presentation of the finished results. The wording of some responses, when direct quotes were used for emphasis, were altered slightly so as not to give away any identifiable traits. Further, providing a grade range, rather than specifying the exact grade from which teachers have been selected, served to further reassure teacher participants their anonymity in participating in the research. Actual courses that participants taught were not identified. Additionally, a pseudonym was provided to the school district, itself, to further protect the interests of participants as well as the school district. The school district appears as Middleboro School District in Middleboro, MS. There is no Middleboro in Mississippi nor is there a Middleboro School District. The closest spelling is Middleborough in Massachusetts.

## **Setting of the Study**

Middleboro, Mississippi, is a small town. Church, family, and community are the three mainstays of life here. Often the closest venue for concerts and plays, even finer restaurants can be found in either Jackson, Mississippi; New Orleans, Louisiana; or Baton Rouge, Louisiana, each at least an hour away. The Middleboro-Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce (2016) reports current year demographics with the population at approximately 12,300 people. Further, of approximately 8,000 survey respondents questioned about their education, only 2,400 reported completing high school (Middleboro-Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce, 2016). As the degrees became more progressive, the lowest numbers of residents were represented, with 440 reported having a Master's Degree; 130 reported having a professional degree beyond the

Master's Degree, and 84 reported having a Doctorate Degree (Middleboro-Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce, 2016). The number of those reporting not having completed high school was 1160 (Middleboro-Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce, 2016). Though the city reflects more White collar occupations, countywide, blue collar occupations far outweigh White collar at 6,800 employees to 3,400 (Middleboro-Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce, 2016). Major employers in the area are a Wal-Mart Distribution Center with 900 employees; McLane Southern Distribution Center with 540 employees; Kings' Daughters' Medical Center with 650 employees; and Delphi Automotive with 260 employees (Middleboro-Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce, 2016).

The 2016 Data from the Mississippi State Department of Education listed Middleboro School District, the subject of this study, as one of 30 districts statewide classified as a D in its accountability rating as compared with districts throughout the state of Mississippi (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016). Our enrollment in 2015-2016 was 2982 students and the subgroup statistics were as follows: female enrollment = 1454, 48.76%; male enrollment = 1528, 51.24%; Asian students = 18, 0.6%; African American students = 1880, 63.04%; Hispanic students = 20, 0.6%; White students = 1052; 35.28% (Mississippi Department of Education, 2016). Middleboro School District remains under an open court order to desegregate from 1969 (Larson et al., 2014). As stated earlier, of the 196 instructional staff only 54 are African American; however, of that number only 31 or 15.8% teach a core instructional course of Math, Language Arts, Science, or Social Studies. The other 23 are assistant principals, elective teachers or Special Educators--roles that somewhat limit their access to the entire population on a regular basis.

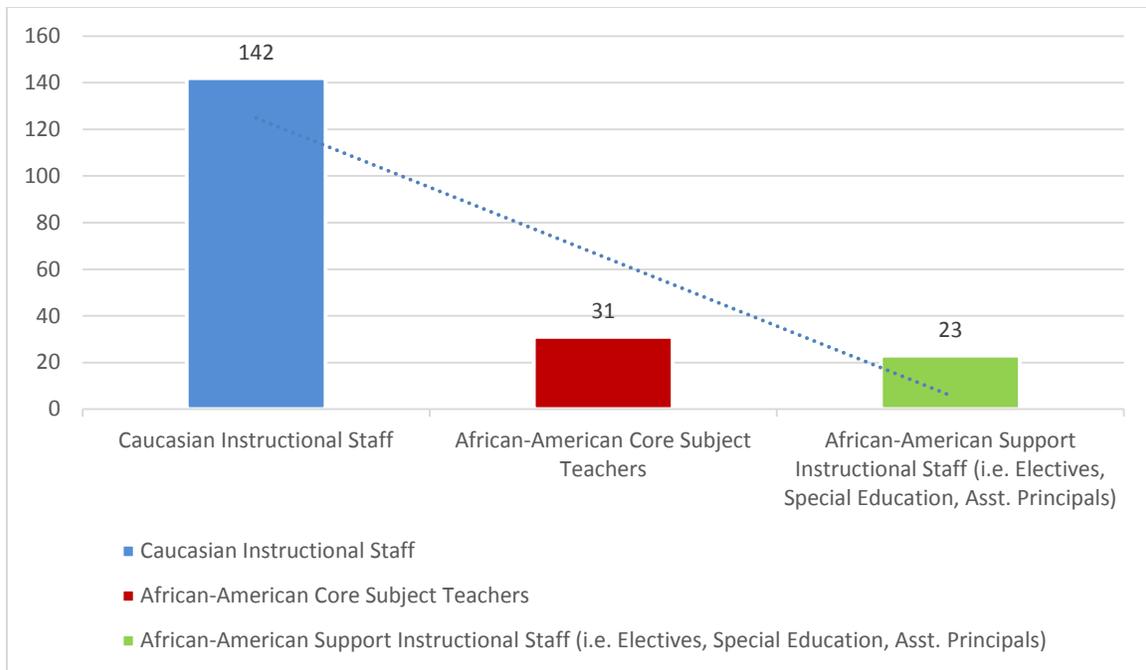


Figure 5. Middleboro school district instructional staff 2016-2017.

The district is further comprised of both a Career Technical Center and Alternative Campus that have another 11 faculty members, 5 of which are African American, and 7 faculty members, 5 of which are African American in their instructional staff, respectively; however, student access on both these campuses is determined by either selection or circumstance. Their access to students on a routine basis is limited by virtue of the context in which they teach. Consequently, these faculty members, though important, are not included in this study. The graduation rate of 69.3% was approximately 11% below the state average of 80.8%, while the 21.6% dropout rate was among the highest in the state.

### Goals of the Study

There are three goals for this study. The first goal is to identify those perceived strategies and inductive procedures that lend themselves to successful induction practices for beginning minority educators in the Middleboro School District. The second goal is to identify perceived challenges of minority educators, particularly internal challenges (i.e., policies, procedures, etc.)

that respondents feel undermine the full potential and success of minority educators in the Middleboro School District. The third and overall goal of the research is to provide a voice for minority educators in the Middleboro School District regarding their overall induction experiences and to offer research based implications for policymakers and administrators that may be useful in improving the induction and overall teaching experiences of minority educators while decreasing attrition rates among minority educators in the Middleboro School District.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Though there is much to be gained for policymakers and leadership in this district, in this study, much of what has been provided is based on experiential perspectives and opinions of participants and cannot, necessarily, be independently verified. Additional potential sources of bias may also be selective memory, recalling events that occurred at one time as if they occurred at another time; attributing positive events and outcomes to one's own agency but attributing negative events and outcomes to external forces and exaggeration (Baden & Howell, 2013). Further, as the study is limited to one specific district and a small number of participants in that district, the results, again, are reflective of the experiences of the individuals. Consequently, some of the information gathered may not be universally applicable. There is certainly room for further research in the field.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Teacher turnover in this country, particularly among new and beginning teachers, is a costly problem for our country's educational system not only financially but in other ways, namely in its impact on overall student achievement. Even more challenging is the issue of teacher turnover among minority teachers in that the numbers of minority educators as compared to their White counterparts are exponentially smaller from the start. Conversely, minority students comprise half of all students in K-12. Keeping and attracting teachers of all ethnicities is important as they educate students to compete globally and be active, productive, perpetuating contributors to our society; keeping and attracting more minority educators is equally important to overall student success for such reasons as the cultural connection to minority students and the cultural exposure to White students, creating a society of mutual respect and acceptance.

Teacher induction has been a mainstay in many industrialized nations across the globe and, consequently, the level of professionalism it affords in terms of setting expectations, providing support and offering networking opportunities has brought to these countries very little turnover and very high return on their investment in new teachers. However, more often than not, induction is not offered teachers here in the United States when they begin in the profession, the result of which being our losing many quality educators.

For minority teachers, the need for induction programs upon entry to the profession is even more important as our educational system suffers from a lack of minority educators from the onset. The invisible and institutional barriers held by society as experienced by minorities,

espoused in critical race theory, make the need for visibility and support through networking and communicating with fellow colleagues, administrators and policymakers, an important aspect in minority teacher retention. Efforts to reach and retain these educators, especially, is important as their ever diminishing presence in our classrooms presents a key reason, according to research, for achievement gaps between minority students and their White counterparts, especially African American and Latino students, as well as a lack of cultural diversity, appreciation and awareness of cultural differences that having teachers who share in that culture can provide students of all ethnicities. These gaps research attributes much to the lack of minority teachers with whom students can bond and with whom students of like backgrounds can find a sense of community, support and even advocacy, when needed.

This chapter presents the results of the participant data sheets and interviews and provides an analysis of the data as they relate to minority educators in a rural Mississippi School District.

### **A More In-Depth Look at Participant Criteria**

In each of the core subject areas, the numbers of minority teachers district-wide were even lower than I realized when I designed the study. What I found in actually pursuing the research was that without the lower elementary teachers taken into account, the numbers of teachers represented in Core Subjects declined as the grade level increased. For instance, there was only one minority teacher, Grades 5-12 in one of the core subject areas, beginning or otherwise. In another core subject area, there were only 5 minority teachers, Grades 5-12. Four of the participants were Grades 5-12 instructors and one was a Grade 9-12 instructor; of these 5 participants, only 3 were new teachers. In yet another core, there were 6 minority teachers--5 of them were Grades 5-12 instructors; of these 6 instructors, 1 was retiring; 2 were leaving the

district, leaving only 2 new teachers. The final core had 5 minority teachers, 4 of whom were Grades 5-12 instructors and only 2 who were new or beginning. Additionally, in Grades 5-6, two of the core courses were actually hybrid courses in that they were taught by the same instructor, during the same class period. This meant that the number of instructors in two of the core subjects reflected some of the same instructors, twice. The following table is a visual representation of the actual composition of minority educators in the Middleboro District teaching Core Courses, Elective Courses (non-Physical Education) and Special Education.

Table 4

*Minority Teacher Representation in Middleboro School District, Grades 5-12*

Subject Area	Total Number of Minority Teachers in Subject Area, Grades 5 – 12	New or Beginning Minority Teachers in Subject Area, Grades 5 – 12
Core Subject 1	1	1
Core Subject 2*	5	3
Core Subject 3**	6	4
Core Subject 4**	6	3
Elective (Non-Physical Education)	5	2
Special Education	5	3
District Total	24	16

\*= Only one teacher in Grades 9-12

\*\*=Two teachers instruct in two cores subject areas; the district total reflects this irregularity.

I would have liked to have delved further into the dynamics of being the only instructor or the only instructor on a particular grade level but to do so would compromise confidentiality.

Further, each participant was given a pseudonym and identifying measures such as actual subject area and/or grade taught were known to the researcher but not revealed in the study.

### **The Participants**

As indicated in Chapter III, the initial questions regarding the participants and their core educational beliefs were obtained by their completion of a Participant Data Sheet prior to the

interviews. While each of the educators identified as new to this district had been here between 1-5 years, four of the educators had total teaching experience that numbered more than 5 years. Further, only two of the beginning educators held Middleboro as their first teaching experience. Six of the eight participants interviewed as new or beginning had one or more previous districts. Again, this is statistically accurate given the turnover rates among minority educators and according to the numbers of minority teachers who either leave districts or the profession altogether. Only the veteran teachers, each who had completed 10 or more years, had begun and remained in Middleboro.

From the information provided by each of the participants on their data sheets, their teaching experience could be categorized in the following fashion: (1) New Educator--teachers with 1-5 years of total teaching experience, all in Middleboro; (2) Beginning Educator--teachers with 1-5 years of total teaching experience with some years elsewhere and some in Middleboro; (3) Beginning Middleboro Educator--teachers with 1-5 years in Middleboro but more than 5 years total teaching experience; and (4) Veteran Middleboro Educator--teachers with more than 5 years in Middleboro School District, all in Middleboro District. Table 5, below, is a visual representation of the participant teacher categories listed above.

Table 5

*Categorizations of Participants' Teaching Experiences*

Teaching Category	Criteria	Number of Participants
New Educator	1-5 Years Total Teaching Experience all in Middleboro	2
Beginning Educator	1-5 Years Total Teaching Experience with some years elsewhere, some in Middleboro	1
Beginning Middleboro Educator	1- 5 years in Middleboro but more than 5 years total teaching experience	5
Veteran Educator	More than 5 years in Middleboro School District, all in Middleboro District	3

The following information was obtained from each of the participants' data sheets and provides a glimpse of who they are even prior to the actual interviews.

### **Participant 1: Paul**

Paul is the middle son of three brothers whose interests include ministry, music, leadership, and a strong desire to see others succeed. While neither of his parents graduated college, education was of utmost importance. Good grades, participation in extracurricular activities, and continuing to learn--even over summer break--were staples of the family. Paul warmly shared how his mother would buy extra textbooks for the home and when he or one of his brothers would express not understanding something taught in class, she would take the time to learn the material so that she could teach it to her children. Her determined spirit (to be there for her sons) led her to choose to work nights so that she could be home each day when they arrived from school. He shared, "Looking back, it was as if I had an at-home mom that worked 10-hour days while I slept."

Paul grew up in a community close to Middleboro and attended high school and a performing arts program there. He currently holds a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in the elective subject in which he teaches. He has won many musical competitions and has played soccer both recreationally and with his high school, having won a championship trophy.

Paul's educational philosophy is that education best occurs when the process of learning is emphasized more than the material being learned. He believes the goal of education is to teach students how to be self-learners and to take pride in such. He asserts, "Most of us don't remember what we learned in math, science or social studies in great detail. The true value of being educated is to possess the skills necessary to find information, remember information, use information, unlearn bad information and use collective bits of good information to create some

new discoveries.” Though new to this district (2 years), Paul just completed his ninth year in education. This is his third teaching assignment. Paul is a beginning Middleboro educator.

### **Participant 2: Deborah**

Like Paul, Deborah grew up in a nearby community, graduating from high school there. She is the second of three siblings. Here, Deborah is very active in the church, community and her sorority where she holds such positions as financial secretary, Sunday school teacher and a member of the Hospitality Ministry. In her family, education was “next in line after God and family.” She describes education as a “non-negotiable” growing up. Her parents’ message was that each child would graduate from high school and would go to college.

Deborah describes her educational career as a blessing, having attained three degrees and working toward a fourth. Though she began in business, she felt a calling for education and so after several years in retail, returned to school to pursue another field of work--education. Her very first teaching assignment was second grade. After teaching a few years, she decided to pursue educational administration and so currently she holds a Specialist in Administration and Supervision.

Deborah’s educational philosophy is that each child is a unique individual who needs a secure, caring, and stimulating atmosphere in which to grow and mature emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially. Says Deborah, “It is my desire as an educator to help students meet their fullest potential in these areas by providing an environment that is safe, support risk-taking and invites a sharing of ideas.” There are three elements that she believes conducive to establishing such an environment: (1) the teacher acting as a guide, (2) allowing the child’s natural curiosity to direct his/her learning, and (3) promoting respect for all things and all people.

Deborah is a core subject teacher in her area of study and though just completing her fifth year with this district, has 15 total years teaching experience. Deborah is also a beginning Middleboro educator.

### **Participant 3: Solomon**

Unlike the previous two participants, Solomon is a native of Middleboro. He is middle child with one older sister and one younger brother. He loves family, watching movies, and anything with technology. One of his parents was a teacher and he describes education as being an important part of his life growing up. Having graduated from Middleboro High School, he currently holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Alcorn State University.

In asking about his educational philosophy, I was given a true glimpse into his passion for education in that in bold print he typed that the goal of education is to enrich the lives of students to become thinkers and lifelong learners who are socially responsible and active citizens of the world. “Education is about teaching students, not subjects. It is about engaging students in their learning and maximizing the potential of each and every child. Education is about educating the whole child.” Believing in the power of leadership as the catalyst for any successful business or school, he believes fervently in leadership being the key to the educational environment as great leaders encourage and produce great teachers who encourage and produce great learners. The process of learning and education, he further asserted, is not just for students but also for teachers and administrators. He summarizes his philosophy by saying that education is like a puzzle where each person has a piece to offer and that with vision, great leadership and collaboration, students will be not only motivated to succeed but will have the tools to do so.

Solomon, like the other two participants, brings experience with him. Having begun in Middleboro with in his fourth year of teaching, he has completed his fifth year of teaching. Solomon is a core subject teacher and a beginning educator.

#### **Participant 4: Ruth**

Ruth is a native of Middleboro and veteran of the Middleboro School District, having spent all of her 10 years in education here. Ruth is the second of four children and much of her immediate family, including her sister, brothers, and their families reside here. Her mother, whom she describes as “the light of her life,” is currently living in a nursing home facility also in Middleboro. Education was very important in her family and her parents were especially hard on her because they believed in her ability to be a doctor. Like Deborah, she, too, was in the business world first and felt the call of education. She currently holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History from the University of Southern Mississippi and a Master of Science Degree in Education. She has also pursued certificate programs to assist in advancing her career.

Her educational philosophy is a simple but profound statement of hope for students in which she hopes that every child is provided a solid education and an equal opportunity to achieve success. “Sometimes obstacles are placed before us to impede our progress but it should in no way be used as a crutch in keeping one from being successful in the classroom. Do not let your circumstances dictate your outcome.”

Ruth has been teaching for 10 years--all of them here in the Middleboro School District. Ruth is a core subject teacher and a veteran Middleboro educator.

#### **Participant 5: Naomi**

Naomi is another veteran. Interestingly, Naomi was born in Alaska but raised here in the Middleboro area, about 8 miles outside the city limits. She is the middle child of three children with an older sister and younger brother, each 23 months apart in age. Family is very important

to Naomi as she wrote of each of her siblings' sons and her own two daughters and grandbaby. While both her parents are deceased, she is proud of the wonderful job her mother did in raising them as a single parent.

Naomi enjoys reading, traveling with her husband and family, and riding her motorcycle, describing these activities as “helping me keep my balance and maintain myself.” When not with family, she enjoys spending time alone. Education was more of a personal goal for Naomi as she describes growing up with her siblings more social than she. The expectation in her home was that “everyone would get their high school diploma and achieve goals in life (i.e., get a job and make something of yourself).” But Naomi would often stay home and read when her brother and sister were out with friends. Seeing this, her mother expected more of Naomi when it came to her education. Her mother was and remained until her passing her biggest supporter and fan. Having attended college, herself, but never finishing, her excitement grew at each degree Naomi attained. “Her proudest moment was when I informed her that I had enrolled in college to receive my doctoral degree. She did whatever I needed her to do to assist me. She bought me snacks, she did not call me on a frequent basis (because she did not want to disturb my studying), and she would stay on me about being focused on my work. That was my motivation to keep striving to complete my degree.”

Naomi holds both her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science Degrees from Jackson State University in an area related to education. She was a Cum Laude undergraduate and member of Phi Alpha Honor Society. She earned her Educational Specialist Degree from William Carey University and is currently pursuing her doctorate in Educational Leadership. When asked about her educational philosophy, it was simple yet powerful. “I’m in it for the students. I’m in it for their futures!”

While she is currently teaching in an area for which additional trainings and certifications have prepared her, she is not actually working in her true area of study as that position was closed after the person holding it last retired.

Naomi, like Ruth, is a 10- year veteran Middleboro educator, and while she is currently teaching in an area for which additional trainings and certifications have prepared her, she is not actually working in her true area of study as that position was closed after the person holding it last, retired.

### **Participant 6: Rachel**

The youngest of three sisters, Rachel describes herself as an avid reader who enjoys cooking soul food, crafting, fashion, physical fitness, attending plays, socializing with friends, and volunteering. Teaching, for Rachel, is her passion and not just a job. With her mother and sisters in education, she felt it a natural route to take in college.

Rachel is a product of Middleboro and Middleboro High School where she was inducted into the National Honor Society. Finishing high school early, she enrolled in what traditionally would have been her last semester in high school in a local community college. While there, she worked hard and excelled, graduating with honors. From there, she enrolled in William Carey University, demonstrating scholarship and service in education and volunteerism. She, again, graduated with honors. Currently, she is working on her Master of Science Degree also there at William Carey. In addition to her collegiate studies, she further exemplifies scholarship and initiative through participating in continuing education and professional development workshops to remain current on techniques and skills designed to further her skills and a teacher.

Her educational philosophy centers on classroom experiences. Ascribing much of her philosophy to John Dewey, educational forerunner and philosopher of the Progressive Era, he

believed that experience is something that should be frequently incorporated into lessons.

“Experiences play an essential part in a child’s education; my classroom is centered on providing all learners with a secure, caring and stimulating atmosphere to accommodate their needs. From experiences, I realize that all students are unique individuals with differing needs and aspirations, thus my preparation for the classroom reflects the diverse and technological needs of students.”

To keep those experiences rich and current for her learners, she charges herself with staying current and abreast of educational research based best practices and innovative trends, feeling that continued professional learning and growth is as much as about her own personal needs as it is about the needs of the students she serves. “There is a need for compassionate, strong and dedicated individuals who are eager to work with children. In our competitive society, it is important for students to not only receive a solid education, but to work with someone who is aware of and sensitive to their individual needs.”

Middleboro is Rachel’s first teaching assignment and she has completed her fourth year.

Rachel is a new Educator.

### **Participant 7: Esther**

The eldest of three children, Esther was born, raised, and educated in the county of Middleboro in its county school district. Aside from teaching, her interests include singing, writing, and working with the youth in the community. Growing up, education was of paramount importance. Being the eldest, she felt responsible for setting an example for her siblings to follow. She set a precedent being the first to graduate high school, attend college, and obtain a degree. “With expectations set, my siblings consequently followed suit and became successes in their own right.”

Upon graduating from high school, Esther attended college here in Mississippi, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. From there, she attended graduate school out of state and

received her Master of Science in Educational Leadership Student Personnel. She further received a Master of Arts in Teaching, Grades 5-12. Additional accolades include being in Golden Key Honor Society, Phi Sigma Pi Honor Fraternity, Chancellor's Honor Roll, and Dean's List.

Esther's educational philosophy is very determined, reflective of her demeanor. "I believe that education is not a privilege but a right of every student. A teacher's sole purpose is to maximize students' learning potential in order to obtain success." Though her original endorsement is in history, she is currently teaching a core subject for which she has obtained an additional endorsement.

Though completing her second year in the Middleboro School District, she has just completed her sixth year teaching and Middleboro is her third teaching assignment. Esther is a core subject teacher. Esther is a beginning Middleboro educator.

### **Participant 8: Lydia**

At the time of her participation, Lydia had just finished closing on her first home as a single mother to three children. Lydia was born and raised here in Middleboro. She has one younger brother. Education was very important in her household as a child. As her grandmother had only completed the fourth grade, she was determined that Lydia would not only finish high school but go to college. "She read books from her memory to me every night as a young child. She told me that I was going to grow up to become a teacher."

An honor graduate of Middleboro High School, she graduated with her Bachelor of Science from Jackson State University in 2004 and later returned to obtain her Master of Science in 2012.

Her educational philosophy is very simple but true. “I believe that no one can do everything but everyone can do something.”

She is currently teaching in her subject area and though new to this district (completing 3 years), she has been teaching all total (including her 4 years as a teacher’s assistant) for 13 years. Lydia is a beginning Middleboro educator.

### **Participant 9: Sarah**

Sarah is the eldest of the three veteran educators selected for the study. Sarah is a native of Middleboro and has a sister with whom she is very close that also works in the district and lives on the same street. Singing and spending time with her family, reading, shopping, and traveling are some of the things she most enjoys. As a third generation teacher, education was and is valued extremely high in her family. When high school was completed, no one dared ask if they were going to college but rather, discussions ensued on where they were going to college.

Sarah finished high school during the decade of integration in Mississippi school systems. She attended Jackson State University and while there completed her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees. While in high school, she received the Pilot Student of the Month Award and was a member of the National Honor Society.

Her educational philosophy is somewhat similar to Lydia’s in that Sarah believes that all children can learn just not at the same pace.

She is currently a core subject teacher, teaching in her area of study and has over 30 years teaching experience. Sarah is a veteran Middleboro educator.

### **Participant 10: Martha**

Martha, too, is a native of Middleboro. She is the youngest child of four. She describes her interests as drawing, painting, playing sports, spending time with family, and traveling as very important. Education, she described, was at the top of the family to-do list.

Martha also graduated from Middleboro High School. She then attended Copiah-Lincoln Community College, earning her Associate Degree. From there, she continued her education at Alcorn State University, earning her Bachelor of Science Degree in a Social Science Field. She went back to school some years later, earning her Master of Science Degree in School Counseling and is currently pursuing her Educational Specialist Degree in Leadership. Of her educational philosophy she shared that the future lies in the power of those who lead children. Children imitate what they see and hear. These behaviors are learned. “As educators, we are morally given those powers and opportunities to shape lives and make the best of any situation. When we touch lives, we open a window of opportunities.”

Currently, Martha is teaching a core subject but it is not her preferred area of study. She has 4 years teaching experience, all in Middleboro. Martha is a new Educator.

### **Participant 11: Ezekiel**

Ezekiel is from a neighboring city to Middleboro. The second youngest of five children, he enjoys reading, watching movies, and coaching. He did not describe the importance of education in the family but rather described its importance to him. He believes that education can open doors to help anyone grow and be prosperous. All students can learn.

Ezekiel proved that belief by graduating salutatorian from his graduating class. He earned his Bachelor of Science Degree and later earned a Master of Science in Secondary Teaching. His educational philosophy was different from his counterparts in that he focused his philosophy on structure. Says Ezekiel, “All students can achieve if education is structured and individualized. Differentiation is important but all education must have structure.”

Ezekiel is currently teaching in a core subject area that is his area of study. New to this district, he has completed his first year. He has completed, all total, 16 years in education. Ezekiel is a beginning Middleboro educator.

The following table is a visual representation of the teaching area, years in education and resulting category assigned each of the 11 participants.

Table 6

*Categorization Table of Middleboro Educators Participating in Study*

Participant	Teaching Area	Total Number of Years in Education	Number of Years in Middleboro	Category
Participant 1, Paul	Elective	9	2	Beginning Middleboro Educator
Participant 2, Deborah	Core Subject Teacher	15	5	Beginning Middleboro Educator
Participant 3, Solomon	Core Subject Teacher	5	2	Beginning Educator
Participant 4, Ruth	Core Subject Teacher	10	10	Veteran Middleboro Educator
Participant 5, Naomi	Special Education Teacher	10	10	Veteran Middleboro Educator
Participant 6, Rachel	Elementary Teacher	4	4	New Educator
Participant 7, Esther	Core Subject Teacher	6	2	Beginning Middleboro Educator
Participant 8, Lydia	Special Education Teacher	13	3	Beginning Middleboro Educator
Participant 9, Sarah	Elementary Teacher	30	30	Veteran Middleboro Teacher
Participant 10, Martha	Core Subject Teacher	4	4	New Educator
Participant 11, Ezekiel	Core Subject Teacher	16	1	Beginning Middleboro Educator

## **The Interview Process**

Upon receiving the data participant information, I contacted each participant, again, via phone call, text or e-mail (whichever method the individual participant preferred) to determine the date, time, and place they would feel most comfortable in conducting the interviews. The actual interviews were, indeed, insightful and interesting. Each participant had very definite ideas about not only induction but his or her experiences as minorities in education in this district and how it impacted them.

As the approval to continue the research and subsequently the sending and receiving of their informed consent and completed data sheet took some time, I scheduled interviews based on whatever participants shared was the best time and place for them. Again, the school term was ending and at least three of the participants lived in neighboring communities and had to commute. I expressed to each of them I would travel to them, if need be, and meet in their communities wherever they designated. Each of the three commuters chose to make in-town arrangements. The preferred location of the interview is indicated in the narrative of each interview session.

To ensure confidentiality, interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis, independent of any other participant. Further, no information was given by the researcher to participants of the identity of other participants in an attempt to prevent collusion. Correspondences were limited to only that participant and interview questions were not presented until the actual interview. No one had the opportunity to review questions or edit responses. It was meant to be a candid conversation. This approach also lent itself to ensuring validity of responses, in that, again, participants did not know other participants and did not have an opportunity to compare experiences or dramatically edit responses. The answers provided during the interview were their initial impressions of their individual experiences.

The first interview was conducted on the last day for teachers in the district, the last interview took place mid-June, with the others falling somewhere between. Though 45 minutes was allotted for each interview session, parts 1 and 2, for a total of potentially 90 minutes, as I spoke with each participant a flow and cadence emerged in the conversations. In each interview, I found that the opportunity to speak to the concepts presented and to share reflection were coming quickly for the participant, as though they had been waiting on someone to simply ask how they felt. As a result, none of the interviews lasted longer than 30 minutes for each part and each participant asked that we continue from Part One into Part Two. All but two of the participants provided permission for me to record our interview and, again, given how rapidly the participants shared their thoughts and reflections, I was grateful for being able to record all but two interviews so that I could go back and reinforce or clarify something written hurriedly in my notes. We were much like two people sitting down for a chat. Even more interesting was that with even the most seemingly reserved personalities, this interview seemed to strike a chord that the participants had wanted an opportunity to sing. Interviews are presented in a narrative fashion as each participant's experiential knowledge contributed to the overall story and subsequent realities of their experiences.

### **Interviewee 1: Paul, Introduction**

An extremely pleasant and soft-spoken gentleman, Paul was the first participant in the study. Not from here and commuting every day, he asked that we complete the interview, if at all possible, on the last day for teachers. He further asked that we conduct the interview in his classroom. As shared earlier, by the time the interviews got underway, the school year had ended; students were gone and so conducting the interview there was no problem. Paul's room was located in an annex, with few other teachers in that building. The posters and arrangement of

the room reflected his interests. He greeted me with a hearty, “Hello!” and thanked me for thinking of him to participate in the study. Aside from seeing Paul in passing, this was the first time I had sat and spoken with him at length. I found him and our conversation to be interesting and insightful. Paul is not a subject area teacher. The following summarizes the result of our discussion.

**Paul: Part 1.** In answering the first question of the interview, sharing what inspired him to become a teacher, Paul described the kind of teachers who encouraged him to be a teacher - teachers who were good at their craft and their subject knowledge. Said Paul, “There were two teachers in particular who allowed students to teach other students in the classroom. Them finding that I was good at seeing and helping others succeed and providing me that opportunity to teach other students helped me know I wanted to be a teacher for a lifetime.” Actually, Paul was led to this district by a teacher. The teacher who previously held his position had been one of his teachers and recommended him for the job. Paul was living out of state but wanted to move closer to home and so, once again, a teacher encouraged him. As a minister, this gave him, again, an opportunity to be closer to home in furthering his ministry.

The question of challenges he has faced and to what he attributed those challenges caused his smile to wane a bit. After a moment, he shared, “Having a connection with other minority educators both in district and abroad. In my area, Caucasian educators hold positions of leadership from district up through state and nation. It would just be nice to attend conferences and workshops and have someone with whom I can connect culturally. The way students see you sometimes, it’s as though they don’t know how to accept or work with minority educators.” He went on, “We are still coming out of a time of discrimination in our culture. That still is embedded in our culture. We don’t see minority educators as often as we should. Our students

don't get to see principals or superintendents. There's an expectation for us to move on and we're treated as such. 'They're here now but they won't be here in four years.' That trust of us being vested in the community and in the school for a little while isn't really there. Becoming an educator is still new in the amount of Black people entering the field. Maybe the next generation will see a change."

In measuring his successfulness he offered that there are good days and bad days saying, "But when students come back or find a need to stay in touch, I count that as success. This year, I had a student who made 44 first term and 99 in second term. Giving a student something important changed that situation. When I see students teach other students, that is success."

When asked how he feels among his predominantly White colleagues and if he is included and his perspectives sought, he sighed before answering, "It can be discouraging. When they walk down the halls, they are more apt to speak to each other than they are to speak to me. There is this assumption that I can teach difficult minority children better than they which is not necessarily true. Even the faculty expects me to speak or act with a certain "Blackness" that I was not raised with. Being Black somehow makes it more difficult to make those personal connections with them (staff). I can eat lunch here with them in the building during the day but outside the building, not so much but, he shared, "I eat lunch every day. It would be nice to be asked to join a teacher group for lunch outside of school. It's almost as though it's not acceptable. The principal does a decent job of asking for opinions after faculty meetings but I'm not sought out to provide any opinion." He further shared, "Our (school) society is so divided that there are people who simply don't know me and I don't know them. I think there needs to be provided the opportunity to get to know someone from a different background."

He characterized his legacy as offering opportunities for leadership and impact in his classroom with his students and when asked if the plans on remaining in education what would be his reason why, he said with a bright smile, “Right now, can’t imagine doing anything else!”

**Paul: Part 2.** Paul’s induction story was “mostly by coincidence and mostly surrounded by teachers who care a more than they have to.” Certain teachers took the initiative to check in on him. But there was no real induction program and certainly, “no deliberateness to bringing us into and acclimating us to the district. Finding out what’s happening here or what is going on happens a lot by chance or in passing conversation.”

His previous school setting provided a powerful example of induction for beginning and minority beginning faculty. Of his previous induction experience, he shared, “I was a teacher in what is considered an exemplar district for this particular state. There they assigned me a personal mentor. We had 3-4 days of training prior to the actual date for all teachers and staff to return that was focused on relationship building, and a one-week training on discipline in the classrooms. We even had a professional development on languages and cultures of different students throughout the district. There were meetings and professional developments throughout the year for new staff and they even had meetings with minority teachers to discuss retention and how we felt about any issues. It was very extensive and extremely organized. Middleboro has not been what anticipated in that finding out what’s going on happens a lot by chance. While we don’t tend to get in a lot of trouble for things you didn’t know, it is the lack of intentionality that resonates from top down.”

Further he shared that while he has not been assigned a mentor, the overall goal of mentoring as he sees it is wanting to make sure of what your job is in the classroom--what your lesson plans should look like, identifying district and school goals--and outside the classroom in

helping you become included in the school on a more personal level. He said, “I see the mentor as something of an ambassador on campus, someone who can say, ‘Here’s Paul and this is what he brings to our school.’”

There really has not been much from a district perspective in factors that the district has instituted and/or promoted that have led to successful induction but he described communication as strong from the principal and that the new superintendent seemed to be more communicative. However in inductive policies or practices he would like to see set in place to assist minority faculty, he simply said, “Acknowledgement.” He went on to elaborate, “Acknowledgement that we are different. Acknowledgement of what strength that might bring.” In policies he would like to see done differently or put in place in the induction process to promote the further success of minority educators, he shared, “Twice a semester or once per year let’s open the floor for some honest conversation.”

Finally, he would like to see as an outcome in this study that a real effort is made to hire more minorities. He said, “I’d like to see a true effort for creating a bridge for us to become a part of the school fabric, hopefully long term. I’d like to see opportunities for leadership. And finally, we’re really much like anyone else. Include us on a personal level. Tell us about your two children and we will share with you about ours.”

### **Interviewee 2: Deborah, Introduction**

Deborah is so bright and has such a warm personality. She greets you with a smile if you are at work, in the community, at church--wherever! Deborah makes it a point to make you feel that she is genuinely happy and happy to see you! Though still new to the district, in administrative meetings when the names of our top teachers come up, Deborah is considered district-wide by contracted educational consultants, parents and students as one of the best in the

district. She has truly made her mark in a short period of time here in the district. Given these accolades, I anxiously looked forward to what she would share Deborah wanted to conduct her interview in my office. She came by one afternoon when my secretary had gone for the evening. The following summarizes our interview discussion.

**Deborah: Part 1.** I was surprised to learn that Deborah finished college, initially, with a business degree and began in retail but soon found that wasn't her passion. She wanted to help children wanted to see the lightbulb come on for children. Her mother and father were both teachers. She remembered fondly coming up and still saw as an adult how they liked teaching. She tilted her head in answering what encouraged her to become a teacher and how it coincided with her educational philosophy and simply said, "I wanted to be a part of that."

Deborah chose to move here after finishing college as this community was larger than her home community and she was familiar with it from college. She went back to school in education, completing three additional years of school in education to obtain her teaching. Not able to begin her career in education here in beginning, she commuted to a nearby district. She, then, married someone from here and now resides in Middleboro.

In asking what challenges she faced as a minority educator in this district, it was clear this question really struck a chord with Deborah as she grew pensive, shook her head and said, "The challenges lie in opportunities, Ms. Harrison, opportunities for growth, opportunities as a teacher to be viewed on the same level as my counterparts! I always have to do more, have to be better than counterparts to receive any kind of recognition or to be acknowledged, congratulated! I feel like I have to work twice as hard! It's more given than achieved for counterparts. They just don't have to prove their abilities." Deborah went on, "I attribute this to environment and culture. Culture here is prejudiced. It's not equal. Even though they say it is, it's not. As far as students

you receive on your roster, it's 'give Black children to Black teachers,' especially more challenging students. When teaching White children, the parents still want what they want no matter district or classroom procedures. If you don't comply, they make your life difficult for that period of time with constant calls to complain or parent teacher conferences. Consequently, I feel like I'm not able to teach or serve my students properly. Honestly, I sometimes feel that if you doubt me that much just give me a classroom full of students who look like me and let me teach in peace!"

In asking about her feelings of success as an educator, she said, "I have felt successful. Things that have made successful are when students come back to say, 'Thank you.' Next year, my first group of students in district will be graduating. When the data comes back and my scores indicate proficiency or tremendous growth, that's success."

When asked her feelings about being a minority teacher among a predominantly White faculty and whether or not she feels included, she simply said, "I'm not included." She went on to say, "You can give your opinion but it is not valued. It's their way of saying you don't have a voice. I guess I feel ok about it. Feel I can come to work and work. It doesn't make me feel inferior. In fact, I don't feel any pressure as far as being competent because I am a minority. The pressure comes in having to explain myself when I know I've done the right thing but it's played down or not given any value."

She believed her legacy as a minority teacher to be that of helping minority students. She said, "I can give them something they can take with them always. Feel that there was someone there for me that guided me along the way that was very helpful. Very positive and motivating and I want to be that for others."

**Deborah: Part 2.** Deborah's eyes momentarily lit up when she recalled her initial feelings about coming to the district. She recalled being very excited initially - excited to come to an urban school given the more rural setting from which she had come, excited about teaching students of different races as her previous district was more segregated but the excitement soon changed. She recalled, "My excitement quickly changed into having to put my guard up and be very careful in my responses, demeanor and actions. This is not a free place to learn, grow, mature."

Deborah did recount having had a mentor but it was not formal, structured - not an actual program. She did not feel open with her mentor could not talk to that person about what felt, saw, thought. The goal was to give me someone to go to but was not structured. She said, "I think the person wanted to be a mentor but only to people of her own race. Not me."

Deborah is currently studying administration and so at the question of induction, she shared from not only a place of study but from what it might have meant to her saying, "Formal induction is very instrumental for a person beginning. New teachers need to know procedures, process, Culture of the district. Need to buy in to the culture. Need to feel a part of. Need to feel invited and wanted because then their performance will be much better. It could be very important to a new person coming in."

When asked what factors the district has instituted to promote a successful induction for minority educators, she replied, "Nothing." But she further shared that from a school perspective, the mentoring thing might have been good program had they improved it and followed through. "That was a one-time thing. Haven't seen it since. That was one idea they did not capitalize on it - a great idea that fell through the cracks."

It was clear that even when asked about some practices or policies that might assist minority faculty in having a more successful experience it took a moment for her to gather her thoughts and articulate. Finally, after a moment, she shared, “It’s very difficult for a person to have a smooth transition into the district because of the culture. The culture will not change here because they believe what they believe.”

When asked what she would like to see done differently in inductive policies and practices to promote further success, she said that first she would like to see an actual induction program--a sit-down formal induction with an entry and exit ending or concluding process. She offered, “There should be mentoring periodically. Meetings with the principal or administrator of the building should occur periodically. Also mentors need to be trained and non-biased-no matter race, religion, whatever the difference. “They need to see people as strength. If they are doing a good job, they need to be acknowledged. If you are qualified, you are qualified. Your education and experience should allow for opportunities, not skin color.” She further shared that students need to be heterogeneously grouped with a mixture of students with varying academic levels saying, “There is no professional development for minorities. When I asked my previous principal could I go to a professional development, my request was ignored. After that year, only certain teachers were even chosen for professional development or conferences. So the growth and improvement came on their own. There was no sharing of professional development or accountability upon return.”

In speaking of outcomes for this study, she suggested, “I would like to see Black educators awarded for their accomplishments and be able to teach without being scrutinized by their White counterparts. I’d like to be able to teach without having to worry about job security.” Finally, on if she plans to remain in education her reasons why reflected her own positive

experience as a child in school and a rather selfless response. She said, “There was someone there for me, a teacher who guided me, someone positive and motivating. I want to be that for others.”

### **Interviewee 3: Solomon, Introduction**

A very soft spoken, mild mannered gentleman, Solomon embodies the kind of demeanor seen in men much older than he. Though a quiet and reserved man, I was surprised to hear the insights he shared. His was one of the lengthier interviews! This topic really seemed to touch on something he wanted to share. Like Deborah, Solomon, wanted to come by the office for his interview. He came by one morning. As my secretary is a 10-month employee, at his request, we scheduled the interview during a time that she had completed her duties and was gone for the summer because the previous year, she had worked at the same campus as he and he did not want to have to search for an explanation for his visit. I respected his wishes in scheduling. Upon his arrival, he offered a very brief and courteous greeting and was ready to begin. The following summarizes our discussion.

**Solomon: Part 1.** Also like Deborah, Solomon, was first in retail. As a manager of a retail store, one day he had a customer--a young, Black male who wanted to buy some shoes. He reflected, “I told him the price of the shoes and the young man counted out \$60 more than the price. When I corrected, he argued! He said, ‘Nah, I’m good.’ I was floored! He really could not count! This struck a nerve because he was in high school and could not count money!” The encounter with that young man stayed with him. Solomon felt compelled to do something. Soon after, he applied for Alternative Route Educator Programs in two states, one of them Mississippi. Surprisingly, it was the other state that called him back with information and an invitation for his participation in alternative route certification process. He moved there and taught. Wanting to

come back home was what led him back to the district. He always kept in touch, always inquired about home. Being a Black male in education, knew he was a rarity and he thought that if he could come back and teach at home, he could inspire at home.

He considered the biggest challenge as a minority educator as that of being acknowledged. Since moving back, acknowledgement and visibility have been rough processes. Other school systems, he reflected, tended to be more welcoming. He shared his most favorite experience. “Florida had an induction process, year-long, in which we met every two weeks. Your mentor would come in and talk to you, observe your classroom. They really wanted to make you feel welcome. Here, I was looking for induction but we have an orientation for one day. My thoughts were, ‘You’re around but where is the support?’ Feedback. ‘You’re doing a good job.’ We’re human. I want to know if I’m doing good or bad. What do I need to improve? It’s like I’m not even here. I don’t want to wait until the end of the year to do an observation or to be hit with things about my teaching abilities that my administrator sees need improving. As a manager, I had to give incremental feedback to my employees. As a teacher, we have to give incremental feedback to students. I need that as a teacher.”

Solomon attributed his challenges to lack of support. This year was a struggle for him. He experienced a lot of personal issues in both sides of his family. He lost both of his grandmothers, a cousin, an aunt, and an uncle in a three-month span yet no one acknowledged that loss or his pain among his administrators or colleagues. There was still a very evident amount of pain when he shared, “No one came and asked if I was ok or came and said anything. I pushed through the whole school year to focus on my kids, knowing they needed me. But not having anyone say anything communicated to me that no one cared about me. Just a lack of support.” After saying

this, he dropped his head for a moment as if the magnitude of those words had to resonate even further.

At the next question, which inquired about whether he felt successful, he perked up to answer, “Yes, I feel successful.” While he did categorize this school year as a down year, in previous years he felt great success. He recalled fondly, “My first year I was Teacher of the Year. I’ve been a Math Department Chair in a previous setting. I got a lot of accolades even when moving to another state. I conducted true PLC’s that met every Wednesday and facilitated sharing of teaching strategies, resources, etc. and when I look at my students and see growth, I feel successful.”

When asked about his feelings about being a minority teacher among a predominantly White faculty, how he is included and if his perspectives were sought, he leaned forward and began by saying, “Ms. Harrison, I pay attention to detail.” I could see he had given much thought to the setting and the impressions of what he saw as he continued, “I see approximately 75% African American and staff is approximately 90% White. Problems, students can’t relate. I tell the children, ‘I know where you’re coming from--been there, done that.’ Coworkers ask, ‘Why you treat them this way?’ I don’t treat them “any way.” I know they know better but I am providing guidance.” He then touched on a phenomena I had not considered. Being a subject area African American teacher who is not a coach presented yet another challenge as it further isolated him. Most of the other Black male teachers on campus were also coaches and so he felt a different dynamic as it related to him. He could not communicate with other African American male teachers on campus during their planning period as their planning time was dedicated to coaching. Their planning was at beginning of the day, his at the end of the day. He ended his thoughts on this question by saying, “I would love to see more Black males in district, in subject

areas, whether or not they coach. Our impact is needed here among our children.” Departmental meetings marked a time in which Solomon felt most included. “My input with the team seemed good,” he said, “I felt pretty included on a personal level as well.” Lunch was another time he felt included among colleagues. He said it was fun and seemed to provide an opportunity to share, be himself some.

He felt his impact as a minority teacher was really just being there, especially for Black youth. Just seeing a Black teacher. He shared, “Knowing I had retail background and am now teaching and that I have lived in other parts of country. ‘He may know what I need to do to fulfill my goals, too.’” Finally, his love the children and love for his subject area were what would encourage him to stay in education. If he could get into technology, however, he would.

**Solomon: Part 2.** Solomon likened his induction experience to freshman orientation. He said, “It was a one-day thing. I got to see all these new faces coming in on that day but beyond that what do I need to do? Is there a checklist? Do I need to meet up with anyone? I had to reflect on other inductions that I have done previously. I thought to myself, ‘Ok, this is what they did. Let me follow what they did so I can be at ease with beginning the school year here.’”

Having come from two districts, out of state, in which induction was a cornerstone in their retention and recruitment efforts among teachers new to their districts, Solomon was very familiar with concept of formal induction. He described one of his previous experiences. “I was assigned a mentor. She showed me all the technology relevant to me--how to log in, how to use Smart Board, etc. She showed me the curriculum. Even though I was the Math Teacher at an Alternative Campus, she said, ‘You’re not going to be teaching a lot of students but you are expected to teach.’ They would e-mail and send you on professional developments. Once a month, meetings would be held at a different high school, as there were 11 in our district. I not

only saw teachers at my school but district wide, new to district. I would see teachers at other campus, new or otherwise. They would split us up and let us see other math departments. I was on temp license and through each step of obtaining primary certification, they stayed on top of me and offered support. They made a great effort to keep their teachers. I think if we had something like that in place here, our turnover would not be so high, especially for Black teachers.”

Though he was not assigned a mentor here, he had definite ideas of the goals for the mentoring process saying, ”If assigned a mentor, I should hope it would provide a chance to see If teacher is prepared not only for school but prepared mentally because we also have lives outside of school. Previous mentors asked how are things going outside of school first and it provided that opportunity to talk or vent. It would be a great asset in keeping teachers.”

Solomon struggled to answer what factors the district had provided to create a successful induction experience as a minority education. He finally said that being with his department and being able to meet with them every other Monday was pretty good. The school was expansive, comprised of a main building with several out buildings and annexes. Department members were not all in the same building so coming together was pretty good. He asserted, “That’s something the school has in place, not the district.”

When asked what he would like to see related to induction to assist minority educators in having a more successful experience, he was direct and specific. His answer came from a place of having experienced the benefits of induction. He said, “The district needs to have an induction day where new teachers are assigned mentors that day and meet that day--preferably a week in advance before school starts for returning teachers. Training sessions should begin that day. As a

new employee, you have a lot of questions--gradebook, technology, etc. being able to have your mentor and training session that day can help out and just follow-ups throughout the year.”

For additional policies or practices done differently, Solomon would like to see scheduling done more heterogeneously and more leadership roles for minorities. “You don’t see too many minorities in leadership roles. Most teachers are turned off by administration because they don’t want the responsibility. But being a Department Head is leadership; just give everyone--no matter their ethnicity--that equal opportunity.”

The one outcome he would like to see is opportunity for minorities to be able to truly advance as far as leadership, administration, etc. He ended by saying, “Ms. Harrison, I’d just like to see us given a chance.”

#### **Interviewee 4: Ruth, Introduction**

My first veteran educator was Ruth. Though she is the youngest of the veteran educators, she has a settled, older spirit. With her father deceased and her mother ill, she is the backbone of her family among her sister and brothers, even though she is not the eldest among them. Her sister and brothers look to her for support, counsel, encouragement, meals--all the things mom used to do but now, can’t. Working two jobs to stay afloat, she never misses an opportunity when she is off the second job, to spend time with her mother and tend to her at one of the nursing facilities here in town. The quiet strength she demonstrates translated into our interview and outlook of her experiences. The following summarizes our interview discussion.

**Ruth: Part 1.** While growing up, Ruth had teachers who encouraged her to go into this field. Teachers she described as, “Very good teachers who possessed a willingness to motivate young people, teachers who motivated young people to learn about their culture.” These were role models for her to pursue education.

In asking how her educational philosophy has changed from since she first began, Ruth said, “I believe starting out that every new teacher coming into the profession wants to make a difference in their children’s lives. That hasn’t changed a lot for me other than adding a component. Now, while I want to make a difference in their lives I also want them to motivate themselves. If there is something I can say or do to help them want to do it for self, I’m all for it.”

There really was nothing that led her to the Middleboro District other than her having lived here all her life. Ruth said, “It just seemed natural to want to be a part of my district for a teacher position. I came in and sat with teachers throughout the years; I did substitute work to get my foot in the door. Finally, a position became available when a teacher left in mid-year; I got my big break.” She remained in the district as she was comfortable here which she categorized as something which “can be a good thing can be a bad thing.” Further, Ruth talked on her family obligations and her mother’s illness and how living in Middleboro in that regard is convenient.

She described her primary challenge as a minority educator as not being taken seriously especially by parents, not being taken seriously by co-workers--especially coming in as a new teacher. I was surprised at the direction she took in answering this question in that she attributed this challenge to her subject area. She said, “Most of the time people who teach my coursework are male and coaches so they don’t see the course as serious. It’s not a state subject area tested course until much later in high school and that is the one and only time it is a part of the state testing program from the time a student first enters school.” That perspective was different and extremely intriguing. When asked had she overcome the challenges, she went on to expound on that perspective and how it impacted her as an educator. She said, “I really have not gotten over the challenges. I wanted to take my craft, my subject area seriously and provide that structure

with my children but often that was met with criticism from parents and other colleagues who wanted me to lighten up. Early on, it caused me to doubt myself as educator. But I learned to encourage and motivate myself. I have gone back to school to seek other certifications. I feel like there is something keeping me here. Until that job is done. I am here and I do still take seriously the subject I teach.”

When asked if she feels successful, she said, “I do feel successful in that what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. Obstacles I’ve gone through with parents and other colleagues. I take constructive criticism. It hurts but I take it. It hurts when you don’t have that support from your leader. I had a mentor who really helped a lot. She would talk to me and give me pointers and give me her perspective coming in as a teacher.”

The legacy she hoped to leave was more of a mantra to her children. She shared, “I tell my children each year that no matter what the struggles are or what life may throw at you is what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. Whatever life gives you; make the best of it.” She continued, “I have to be strong for my family and that strength translates into my style in the classroom. Sometimes it is met with resistance or a lack of understanding of where I am truly coming from but my only goal is to help students to be strong as this life requires it.”

**Ruth: Part 2.** Of her induction experience, Ruth recalled having a mentor but she was not a formal mentor. Ruth actually came once school had begun so she did not even get the one-day orientation. She shared, “I came in the middle of the year after the children had ‘run off’ a teacher and two subs! Literally, they (the children) honestly bragged about running off their teachers!” Since it was the middle of the year, I didn’t even get the one day orientation so even the little new teacher rules and binder, I missed out on!” With a chuckle and a slight shake of her head, she continued a little more somberly, “Even when the new school year came in, I still was

not included in New Teacher Orientation. So I felt thrown in. I really just relied on the students to guide what I needed to do or how I might need to teach or reteach. I picked up on their behavior and responded in a way that I could survive. My mentor did not come daily or weekly, but sporadically. She would see me in passing and ask if I needed anything and that was about it. I actually had another veteran teacher to tell me I didn't need any one to come into the class with me because I was strong enough. I think that was the general impression from everyone. 'I was strong enough.' And so, by virtue, didn't need supports. But I did (need supports). After the first 3 weeks or so, I found my rhythm. The children did try me initially but I had to make a decision – me or them! I sought advice from friends who worked in other states as teachers to help me and made it through.” She further shared, “I had taken Alternate Route to become a teacher. The classes somewhat prepared me for what I might see but not really. There is nothing like being in the classroom. The actual walking into the classroom is the most telling. My experience here has been both positive and negative but overall I'm comfortable with it. I do know how to go out and seek support.”

When asked about induction and whether she felt an induction program might have enhanced her experience, I could see that she transported herself to those first few weeks of school in the middle of that initial year when, finally, she spoke. Of what induction might have offered her, she said in almost a whisper, “Those first 3 or 4 weeks of school and throughout the years in how to handle certain situations, it just would have been nice.” Ruth went on, “Just to know how to better handle parent conferences, how to handle certain situations with students, what the expectations are for me. Having a formal induction could have helped with that rather than my feeling my way through. Not to say you're going to be perfect, even with the induction assistance, but it could make it easier to facilitate.”

When asked about induction factors the district has implemented to ensure success as a minority educator, she shared that she could not really say the district had instituted anything. When asked, however, what policies and practices related to induction she would like to see put in place, it was obvious Ruth reflected on her own mentoring experience and some of the assumptions made there. Of this, she said, “This district needs a formal mentoring program. You cannot just take a little fish that’s been cared for in a fish bowl and throw it into the ocean. Coming from a teacher program or in my case, an alternate route program, we’re like those fish and that classroom, is the ocean! And it doesn’t matter how strong a fish appears to be! If you are new to the profession or to the area, you need supports. You need someone to back you up and it needs to be consistent. Assign new teachers a mentor, a peer, whatever and let them guide them through the process. Maybe they could co-teach or be able to observe veteran teachers in action so they can see certain practices they can apply to their own classrooms.”

Further practices she would like to see not related to induction included the promotion of minorities into positions of authority if not administrative positions. She said, “I’d like to see more minorities promoted to positions where their talents can be further utilized--academic coaches, intervention strategists, lead teachers. If there are programs that the schools see are needed for student success, allow minority teachers to be active, viable parts of the process. Take their ideas seriously. Don’t just say, ‘Oh yeah that sounds good!’ but not do anything with it. In a district like this where we do have more White teachers, our population is more minority students. Minority teachers may have ideas that reflect the needs of the student population.”

Finally, that the district might take some of the things said here seriously and implement some of those things was her hope for the outcome of this study.

## **Interviewee 5: Naomi, Introduction**

The second of my veteran interviews, soft-spoken Naomi is a beautiful person and spirit who when she speaks does so with wisdom. She and Ruth are kindred spirits in that they both are backbones of their families and not even the eldest siblings. Having recently lost her mother, Naomi, too, cared for her Mom in much the same way Ruth currently cares for hers. On top of being an educator, Naomi is also a wife, mother, and grandmother, Naomi's extended family looks to her for support and encouragement, too. This was a busy time for her as she was preparing for a new position and moving things into her new classroom prior to a mandatory summer conference she had to attend in obtaining this new position. In the midst of all that, Naomi graciously elected to come to my office and share with me her experiences and perspectives. The following is the summary of our interview discussion.

**Naomi: Part 1.** When asked what inspired her to become a teacher, she shared, "I was inspired to become a teacher because of my background in social work. I have always had a desire to help children, I have a love for children. I have found that oftentimes, children don't have a voice. They want to express things or share things but have no one to go to. I wanted to be that voice for them."

"Working with students with disabilities has shown me and enhanced my knowledge of their abilities. Often people hear the word disability and think this population of student cannot achieve anything further. That's not true. They just need the opportunity or a little assistance or accommodation. Where others focus on the 'dis,' I choose to concentrate on the ability."

Naomi had worked for the district in a summer position. When a position became available, someone from the district office contacted her. She thought it helped for the district to have a knowledge of her and her working ability. She shared, "I guess they thought I would be

an appropriate candidate. And with me being from Middleboro, I thought of the benefit of not having to commute.” When asked why she remains, she emphatically shared, “The first reason is the children! When I see our children and them lacking voice, I become more compelled to stay. I feel like I cannot leave them. Those with whom I have established rapport over the years still come to ask my assistance with life issues--even though they have graduated or left school. Secondly, being a single parent when I first came into the district, I didn’t want to have to put my girls on the road when they were growing up. Closer to home was convenient. Now that I’m married and have a home here and my girls have finished school but live here and my grandbaby is here, those factors all work together in my remaining.”

The biggest challenge she faced, she felt, was politics. Being a minority, she held, translated into not often being heard or acknowledged when voicing issues or concerns. Of this she shared, “They will placate and say, ‘Oh I got you or I understand’ but you don’t see any results or nothing toward yours suggestions! Visibility and voice.” Attributing those challenges to the culture of this area, she said, “Being a small town in Mississippi it is my opinion that the Caucasians here do not have a desire to take directives from minorities. I feel they really are still in the segregation era and it is difficult for them to move out of that. Much of the money and power in the community still lies with Caucasians.” She felt those challenges still existed as she said, “Many nights I go home upset about the way I feel some child’s rights have been denied at school and that I was powerless to do anything because of politics. My husband is a great source of strength and praying to God for change is always a comfort.”

When asked about her successfulness, here, she tilted her head as if in deep thought and then said, “With the kids I do! With the kids I do. When I see them get their grades or get their diploma as a result of my working with them and trying to help them, I get satisfaction there. It’s

not about the paycheck. That reward of seeing success in them is wonderful for me. Where I don't feel success, is with administration. In my position as a teacher, when I bring concerns, I still don't feel my voice is being heard. I still feel overlooked and invisible."

She felt her legacy would be that of helping children succeed. She shared, "I really do believe our children are our future, even those with disabilities."

**Naomi: Part 2.** Naomi reflected on her induction story with the following, "When I first came into the district, it actually was not as a teacher and so that induction was actually wonderful. I had elderly ladies who had held the position for years and they were happy to share what they knew and offer great supports. When I became a teacher, by contrast, there was no induction experience. I did not have any mentor or professional development to prepare me for it. What I learned, I learned on my own. Teacher induction as I understand it--orientation, mentors, professional developments, conference attendance where applicable, etc., I was not given such. I was even denied the attendance of workshops and conferences. If it were not for me wanting to learn and researching things on my own coupled with my peers knowing my desires to learn and them assisting, I don't think I would have achieved. It has not been what I anticipated. It's a difference when you're 'looking in the windows' or on the outside looking in."

When asked how she felt induction might have enhanced her experience, she simply said that if she had been afforded an induction experience it might have alleviated some frustrations. When asked to share what the district has provided by way of induction to ensure her success as a minority educator, she could recall nothing. In fact, she said, "Honestly, from a district standpoint I have received nothing in the way of induction; I have really been self-taught."

As a result of her reflection of her experience, Naomi said of inductive practices and policies that she would like to see put in place, "True mentoring, especially for our African

American Teachers. All new teachers should be in attendance for meetings with their mentor and professional developments. Administrators should periodically be in attendance at these meetings and professional developments, too. We have knowledge. We went to school, too. We need more voice. We need to be seen and heard for our expertise and what strengths we bring. More communication can bring about better understanding. We have majority minority students but primarily White teachers, that's not good. Minority teachers here can bridge understanding. We need to start somewhere so why not at the beginning when teachers first come in.”

For policies and practices not related to induction, she would like to see more minority promotion. She said, “I have seen too many African American teachers here with the degrees, experiences, skills and desire for promotion be overlooked year after year when positions become available in the district- often not even offered interviews. I have been in this district 23 years and feel like this upcoming school year is actually, finally, a promotion for me in terms of this new position. I have all this knowledge. I have a Specialist and lack all but a dissertation in completing my doctorate but my question is still, ‘Where can I go?’ I don’t feel I will ever truly be promoted here. For that, I would have to go out of district. I would like to see more professional development presentations that are done by African American presenters. Again, that may open up communication as well to see that these are African Americans that have the same knowledge as you. If you can listen to them, maybe you could listen to your (African American) teachers.”

She then provided a surprising hope for an outcome of this study by saying, “I would love to see us have an African American Superintendent. I know it may be a long shot given how segregated we are but we have that person (Deputy Superintendent). Why does he consistently get overlooked when the top spot is vacated? He has the ability to bring our district back to

where it needs to be. Why keep getting other Caucasian superintendents from other places? When I first started, the district was successful and seemed to have a family atmosphere that parents, teachers, students wanted to come to, I feel that has dwindled now as a result of poor leadership at the top.”

Her last comments were, “I don’t think a lot of people understand what African American Teachers endure in school districts because often we are silent. We don’t share from fear of losing our jobs or that we’ll be heavily scrutinized in an attempt to eventually get rid of us. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that fear is still there. Open dialog, having a platform to communicate could do something toward change.”

### **Interviewee 6: Rachel, Introduction**

Rachel is such a quiet and unassuming spirit at the onset. Always extremely pleasant and graceful, she enters a room noiselessly. In fact, though we had scheduled the time for her to come to my office for the interview, when she arrived, I was initially startled as she seemed to just appear! Her responses, however, though still graceful, were a stark contrast to her everyday demeanor. I found in the interview that Rachel was very talkative on this subject. She was insightful and introspective. Again the topic seemed to resonate deeply with yet another participant. The following reflects our interview discussion.

**Rachel: Part 1.** Her family, her mom especially, served as her encouragement for becoming a teacher. Her mother was an educator in the district. Her sisters are educators now. She loves to see students learn and wants to be a part of that catalyst that makes sure the next generation has someone they can look to for a role model. She shared, “There are not too many of us. I want to be there for OUR children.”

When asked what led her to the Middleboro School District, she simply characterized it as where her learning journey began. She wanted to stay here and help in her own community. She said simply, “Well, this is home. I wanted to give back at home.”

The challenges she believed she faced as well as what she attributed those challenges to stem from being a minority. She shared, “There are not too many of us and so there is a gap. The question becomes, ‘Who do I reach out to?’ ‘Who can I talk to?’ Thank you for including me in this research because for me this represents an opportunity for sharing my experience with those who can make changes.”

When asked if she felt successful, she said, “Yes. I look at student data as the first determinant of growth. And when that reflects a positive trend, I am happy. But more than that, the appreciation I get from parents, as I teach elementary, also means a lot. I feel my continued success hinges on my continuing to learn and grow.”

When asked how she feels among a predominantly White faculty, whether she’s included and her perspectives sought, she shared, “On the elementary level, probably more than secondary, on the surface, I do feel included but there is a limit to how much I feel comfortable in sharing and I perceive there is only so much they share with me. I do see a difference with my students in the classroom in how I relate to them. I have a large number of minority students and in my room, I give a lot of love and encouragement to the children.”

Her impact she believed to be love and learning. She shared, “I try to impart a mix of love – encouragement, smiles, laughter--with learning. I want my children to feel they have a safe place to explore ideas and learn new things without judgments. By providing that example, they show me that love and learning in return.”

**Rachel: Part 2.** In reflecting on her induction story, she smiled when she said, “Ms. Harrison, there really isn’t a story. A retired teacher who was previously in that position reached out. The literacy coach reached out but not completely. There really isn’t a story.” She continued by sharing her knowledge of induction and her analysis of hers. She said, “Induction is a systematic approach to introducing one to a profession. This experience has been better than nothing at all in terms of people reaching out but being a minority in this district with not too many of us, we need a more systematic way of reaching out and networking with each other.”

Of her mentoring experience, she said, “I was a new teacher paired with a new teacher so we were both learning together. I was like, ‘really?’ It would have been so much better for both of us to have someone seasoned to help us navigate the things we could and could not anticipate in the classroom as a new teacher.”

While she could not speak to any factors the district had instituted or promoted that have led to a successful induction process for her as a minority educator, she did speak to the need for professional developments and seeking inputs from teachers as policies and procedures that should be included. She would further like to see speaking and recruiting from minority faculty in the district to students in college and the community.

Finally, the one outcome she would like to see is opportunity. She shared, “I would like to see more opportunities for growth and changes to keep us here. I would further like to see a more structured and deliberate approach to welcoming new teachers in the district, especially minority teachers.”

### **Interviewee 7: Esther, Introduction**

Esther is an energetic and commanding presence. When she arrived at my office for the interview, hurried but with her mega-watt smile in tow, she had been working in her father’s

church and had to get back. She had just that previous week served as an articulate face and a voice of comfort and outreach for her community. Gun violence had claimed the lives of eight people, two of them children in our school community, all very well-known, liked, and respected. Esther had a particular fondness for all of the victims as she had grown up with, knew, and loved them. While certainly in shock and pain, she offered loving support and words of comfort when interviewed by reporters for the local channels. Her father's church was one of the places that the community could come for comfort and any other needs as they had been collecting supplies and donations. She was coordinating this effort. In arranging our time to meet, she had numerous activities going on but graciously gave me some of her time. The following is the summarization of our discussion.

**Esther: Part 1.** When asked what encouraged her to want to become a teacher, she shared, "I wanted to become a teacher because I could see the state of education. There is a dire need for good, minority educators and I wanted to be a good, minority educator in a position to help children. Every child can learn. Plus, as a bonus, through various programs, my student loans will get paid off and so, this is a win-win!"

In being led to the district, she said, "Actually, I wanted to work at one of the schools in my hometown but the only jobs available in my actual hometown were Special Education positions. So I went to the Delta (a region in north Mississippi, often characterized by flat lands and depressed socioeconomic conditions). The Delta, for me, was hard because the conditions were so despairing. I stayed there one year. I then moved to another district. Finally, something became available here, much closer to home."

When asked about the challenges she believes she faces, she said, "The challenges I face are people thinking I don't know my craft. Second guessing me and my ability. I have my own

style based on the demographic I teach that differs from my White counterparts. And I am ok with that. I must wear many hats to reach my children.” Those challenges she attributed to the demographic in the city (minority) and how it differed from the power base (Caucasian). Being one of a small number teaching the subject area, she said, “I am truly a minority across the board.”

When asked if she felt successful, she flashed that mega-watt smile and said, “Yes, I do!” She went on, “My rapport with the students and the love they show for me, when my students come back to say thank you--all of those things I count toward my success and those can’t be measured through test scores. Test scores have their place but what impact we leave with these students is what matters most to me.”

Among her White colleagues, she felt well accepted with her opinions actually sought. She further felt included personally but the reason why was disheartening. She shared, “I’m actually pretty popular among my counterparts. I seem not to be considered “fully Black” because of where I attended college. I am generally accepted because of that. Unlike many of her African American colleagues throughout the district, Esther did not attend a Historically Black College or University.

She believed her impact for the students to be providing a face that looks like them to which they could relate--a role model. And on the question of whether or not she would remain in education, she laughingly said, “Emphasis on IF I STAY in education, it will be for one reason--the children!”

**Esther: Part 2.** Esther reflected on her induction story by saying that from her personal experience, induction was an orientation or a discussion of demographics. Compared to other districts, this, for her, had been an orientation that went over some district procedural things and

in all it was pretty decent. She said, “I enjoyed my induction experience here at the school. It is a family-oriented atmosphere. Given my other two teaching settings with which to compare, this was a much easier transition.” She did express having had a mentoring experience; however, that part of her induction experience here was not the most favorable as she shared the following, “I wasn’t provided a formal mentor, no. I have been provided an informal one. In some ways, I feel as though the mentor was working against me. The person wasn’t in the same field and really wasn’t able to provide much in the way of guidance. I had to do most things on my own.” When asked if the district has provided factors to promote a successful induction, she put a positive spin on the district’s contribution. She answered, “Indirectly, yes. The principal leadership at this campus that the district has provided has made the difference for me. It has given me time to establish rapport and find what works.”

When asked what she would like to see as it related to induction in promoting success of minority educators, she readily offered, “If the district is going to promote mentors, then it needs to be systematic. Mentors need training and expertise in subject area of mentee,” she went on from a truly personal place as she shared, with her smile diminished, “No new person needs a gossip as a mentor but someone who genuinely holds the best interest of the mentee and district at heart and wants to see success for his or her mentee.” After a moment she continued by saying, “Let teachers know expectations up front. Don’t hold people accountable for what they do not know.”

The one outcome she hoped would come from this was for new teachers to be better prepared for what they are getting into and provided a true support system. “Let teachers teach! Whatever personality people bring with them, allow them to have that personality. Don’t try to put them in a box!”

Finally, she shared, “Our children deserve a true educational foundation. The State Test doesn’t truly measure the kind of success our children need for life. We need to be encouraged to teach and if we teach--teach them to think, analyze and write. The State Test and what they need for life will take care of itself.”

### **Interviewee 8: Lydia, Introduction**

Lydia is such a kind-hearted, very spiritual person. Even when one encounters her with her family out and about, she often greets with a smile and when asked how she is, she responds, simply, “I am so blessed.” She had recently become a first-time homeowner at the close of the school year. She and her children were excitedly still arranging the home and she had taken a summer position as a way to offset some of costs of moving and getting settled. She asked that I interview her at the school campus, where she was teaching in a summer program. We interviewed in the back of the cafeteria away from her students and her other colleagues but where she could monitor her students as they ate. Given her always positive demeanor, truly I was anxious to gain her perspective of her experiences and their impact. The following is the result of our interview.

**Lydia: Part 1.** When asked what encouraged her to become an educator, Lydia shared that she became an educator because of a teacher who was a role model in our community and because of her love for children. She was living in a nearby city but, after marrying and having two of her children, she encouraged her husband to move back to her home for the family support. That’s how she ended up here in the district.

Of her challenges as a minority educator, she shared, “Coming back here was a little different. When I arrived day one to even put in my application, the person who took my application and resume’ looked me up and down and asked, ‘are you certified?’ She seemed

cocky and certainly, I didn't feel very welcomed. It was as though coming in the door, I was being second guessed on my ability based on my appearance. Sometimes, I still feel that." When asked to what did she attribute those challenges, she shared, "Ms. Harrison, I attribute it to race to be honest. There is just no way to look around it."

Like the other participants, she classified her success according to her students' success. She said, "My students make me feel successful. I don't necessarily look at the test scores because I teach Special Education but I do look to see if my child has made gains and when I see that, I see my success in that I helped them achieve that."

When asked about her feelings about being a minority educator among a predominantly White faculty and whether or not she feels included personally or her perspectives sought, she shared, "I can compare district to district. My first experience was in a nearby county with a large Caucasian presence but there truly was more teamwork. When I made it back home to my hometown, it struck me that the teamwork wasn't there. I felt like an outsider. Questions like, 'Why did you come from that county back home?' seemed to be more important than working together as a team. No my perspective was not solicited or received."

She believed her impact to be just presence among minority students. She explained, "I hope to project to students, whether they are mine or not, a minority professional - someone for them to look up to. I am a teacher. The teacher who encouraged me to want to teach was that role model for me. I hope I am that role model for someone else." Finally, she shared, "If I remain, it will be because of my love for children and my wanting to be a part of seeing them succeed."

**Lydia: Part 2.** Of her induction story, Lydia reflected, "My first year, we had group meetings. There was no consistency, however. You were kind of on your own but if you mess up it is on you. You're in trouble." She fondly recounted her first teaching experience by saying,

“Actually, my first ever experience was the best experience. The building administrator was a team builder and instilled that in each of us. ‘Team work makes the dream work’ was her motto and we all bought into it! If I messed up or simply did not understand something, I could go to my director or administrator for help and not feel like I was in trouble.” Here, she has never had a mentor but felt mentoring would be to help guide the person and help them become familiar with the school and how the program works.

When asked what inductive factors the district has instituted to promote her success as a minority educator, she shook her head and with a little laugh, said, “Nothing, aside from hiring me.”

Policies or procedures she would like to see as they related to induction in this district in promoting the success of minority educators would be to really perpetuate the concept of teamwork. She shared, “It should be a priority for us to work together as a team no matter cultural differences. Everybody should be held to the same accountability, same expectations.” She’d like to see fairness overall. She further described additionally policies and practices she would like to see as more team building district-wide and more activities to promote cultural awareness, cultural differences and the acceptance of those differences.

Finally, when asked about her hopes for the outcome of this study, she shared, “I would honestly like to see more minorities here in the district (as teachers and administrators) because our student population requires it. We need consistency, working together, team work and all cultural differences need to be either worked through or put aside. I think the district needs to actively seek minority applicants and be open to more minorities coming.”

## **Interviewee 9: Sarah, Introduction**

Sarah is the last veteran interviewed for the study. She is hilarious but it is a wry, dry humor that makes you think first, laugh later. The thought, “Still Waters Run Deep,” comes to mind when talking to Sarah. She has had a 30-year career here in the district and embodies a calm spirit that communicates she has seen a lot, has a wealth of wisdom and a lot of ideas but only if asked. Sarah, too, elected to come by my office for the interview. The following is the result of our interview.

**Sarah: Part 1.** When asked what encouraged her to become an educator, she shared, “Well when I was in college I actually tried very hard NOT to become a teacher because I had been around educators all my life. But I felt a pull toward education. Working with the Kids First program and other entities while in college just made me feel it was my calling even though I tried to fight it. (Kids First is a non-profit agency dedicated to helping parents help their children navigate divorce). I feel all students can learn just not on the same level or maybe not at the same pace and I wanted to be a part of helping them in that learning process.”

Her educational philosophy has changed through the years because the students have and now though learning is important, she has had to expand that philosophy to include discipline. She said, “My educational philosophy has changed from when I first began in that discipline is an issue. Though students can learn, maybe not at the same pace, etc., there has to be a measure of discipline so that the learning process can begin. When I first went in to the classroom, they would more easily follow directions but over the years that has changed.”

Since Middleboro is her hometown and her own mother had been an educator in the district, there was nothing in particular that led her to the district. She was already here. When she finished school, the district contacted her. She said, “It was a job and an opportunity.” She

further stayed because “I liked my co-workers and liked the school district pretty good. Felt it was an ok school district.”

When asked about the challenges she has faced as a minority educator, she reflected, “It has been the placing of students based on parent decision. Sometimes it is good because you do get people you know but far too often it leads to imbalance in classes - too many high performing students in one area or too many low performing children in one class.” In answering to what she believed those challenges could be attributed she offered, “I attribute this to the administration from the top down. I think administration is out to please parents more than educating the child. Parental involvement is always a good thing but sometimes it is overwhelming when considering the motivation behind the involvement and the demands they place on school district.” Sarah further shared, “When I go in, I do not ask who requested. I go in as if I do not know the child. I go in looking to address strengths and weaknesses. That helps me to focus on the child.”

She talked candidly about her success and what impacted her feelings of success this school year. Reflecting, she shared, “Other than this year, I have felt successful. This year has been more challenging, I got a little too involved with parents asking me to change things in the classroom and do things differently and they did not work. You can’t treat every child exactly the same but that comes from my knowledge of working with children. Every child needs something different. As far as discipline and being consistent is concerned, I will go back to talking to my parents and explaining what I expect of the children from day one.”

Sarah believed her impact has been getting to know the people, getting to know the community and trying to communicate the importance of getting a good education.

**Sarah: Part 2.** Her remembrance of her induction story was comical and poignant at the same time. Sarah laughingly recalled, “I was introduced and thrown into the classroom. I remember it really, really well. I literally finished in December and was in the room in January! Didn’t know at the time that the children I had were low achieving. Most in the class had all failed at least two grades. No one told me what to expect when I walked in the room. It was overwhelming. I learned from that experience that children can manipulate you if you let them or that they will do anything to get off subject. That experience really did help me. It was trial by fire. They were, maybe 10 years younger than me. I had no training and no support.”

When I asked about her knowledge of formal induction, she did ask what I meant and I did provide here a definition of formal induction. As is often the case with most current-day initiatives, many veteran educators are familiar with the process but it wasn’t called that when they came along or a name/title has been provided a practice that has long been done, just not ever given a title. The moment I started explaining what formal induction entailed, she was nodding her head in affirmation that she knew what I meant. Sarah then offered, “I like to go to meetings; I like learning new things and co-workers generally have great ideas that you can at least try in your classroom. I remember we once had a PLC in which a co-worker introduced comparing fractions to her students in a fun way. I tried that with my students and they got it. That way was less intimidating than the book way or what I had shown them. My induction was not what I expected at all. The teaching experience, the children, the setting--everything was totally different from even the practice teaching experience. If I had just some information about the children, it would have helped me when I went in. It would have helped me plan my lessons better. I see the PLC’s as at least something that the new educators have that puts them together with their fellow teachers of the same subject in the building.”

She further expounded on PLC's by saying, "PLC's, not only are they helping new teachers but it helps veterans. They're fresh out of college and brimming with ideas. I think when new teachers were partnered up with veteran teachers, we really help each other. I had a new teacher that I wasn't really mentoring in a formal sense but she was like my mentee. Her enthusiasm as a new teacher reignited my enthusiasm."

When asked what policies and practices she would like to see not related to induction to further the success of minority educators, she shared, "I would like to see an effort to recruit more Black educators and especially, more Black male educators on the elementary level. In my classroom, most of the children are minority. If they see someone who looks like them, it may do like I alluded to earlier in demonstrating the importance of education. Additionally, our district should focus more on reading, incorporating it more into all subject areas. It is still rather isolated in the curriculum."

At this last question of what her desired outcome for this study would be, she got a faraway look in her eyes in which she said simply, "I wish we could all be equal and not see color. Learn more how to help each other, encourage each other, and listen to each other. An encouraging word goes a long way." Here she sighed and paused as she went on, "Looking at the data and what research tells us, I think all of the children should be randomly placed in classes. The parents should not be able to dictate, the counselor should not even know. The names of the students should be put into a computer and the computer randomly selects the teachers. All of the children in a class should not be all high or all low (homogeneous grouping) but a mixture of students with varying abilities (heterogeneous grouping)."

## **Interviewee 10: Martha, Introduction**

Martha is an athlete, scholar, and busy lady! This was the beginning of a busy summer for her as she was busy balancing home life with a newborn while tending to her husband, young son, and teenaged son who had just come in while trying to conduct this interview. Early on, I had shared with her how much I appreciated her wanting to go forward but how much I, too, appreciated how much she had going on in her life. For Martha, having just finished her counseling degree and currently in school for administration, she felt strongly that this topic related not only to her but to the state of education in this country, in general, as it related to minority educators. It resonated with her and her own research and compelled her to want to participate. The following summarizes our interview.

**Martha: Part 1.** In answering what encouraged her to become a teacher, she said, “My sister! My sister told me there will always be a need for teachers.” Actually, Martha said that she said she never really wanted to become a teacher. She wanted to be in education but did not want to teach but her sister further pressed her to get certified with whatever she majored in saying, “Teaching is the starting point in education (for other educational careers) and that if you have children, your schedule as a teacher and your children’s’ schedules will coincide. That made sense. So, I listened to my sister!”

She was led to Middleboro School District by our current Deputy Superintendent. Martha shared, “I got my Master’s Degree in Guidance Counseling and at the time our Deputy was principal of one of the schools. He said he noticed I had a counseling degree and wondered if I could come over and teach history for him. As he took a chance on me, reached out to me, I took the history exam, passed it and taught for him.”

Some of the challenges she faced included not seeing a lot of effort from the children and not a lot of support from administration. “The accountability for learning,” she shared, “is misplaced. Then, as a minority teacher, it often feels like you’re stuck in that one position once you get it, with children who are not particularly motivated. On top of that, little is offered in administrative support because it’s not about what you know but who you know in terms of promotion.” Interestingly, she attributed those challenges as lifestyles of the children. She offered, “You never know a child’s lifestyle, what they face at home. When, as a teacher, I think about their future, I have to think if I fail them now will they even get to the ninth Grade? If I fail this child in seventh, will they gain or lose? So much they come to school with we just don’t know.”

When asked if she felt successful, she pondered a moment before responding, “Yes, at times but I also feel hindered at times as well.” She went on to say, “There are a whole lot of emotions tied into teaching. Looking at the whole child, learning the whole child takes an emotional investment. Children respond by the rapport created. It is rewarding to me and I do feel successful when the building of the relationship leads to success in the student’s achievement.”

Though her perspective was not always sought or solicited, all in all she characterized her department as pretty open. Many of her fellow teachers in the department were coaches; she, too, was a coach and so there was the networking and support that appears inherent in the coaching relationship.

She believed her impact to be sharing with students that, “No matter what you think, no matter your circumstances, life is what you make it and you will be ok.” Finally, in whether she planned on remaining in education, she shared, “It is rewarding to see kids graduate in 5 or 6

years after I have had them. If I remain, it will be because of the children. How can I reach them?”

**Martha: Part 2.** When asked to reflect on her induction story, she, like Ruth, referenced swimming and the sensation of water. She said, “It truly wasn’t the best at all. I felt left out to drown and I couldn’t swim! I was partnered with another teacher but she was in another subject area. She did help with lesson plans and gradebook on computer, things like that but in many respects, I was alone.” She further shared, “Though I’m not quite sure what I expected, I do know this wasn’t what I imagined, if that makes sense. I think patience is needed in introducing someone new to the district or to a school. Things are not always just going to happen (in terms of learning the system) overnight. Just as there are multiple ways our students learn, there are also multiple ways that we learn as adults. I think formal induction might have helped tremendously with this.

Though she did have a mentor, it was not a formal mentoring situation. Like Solomon and Paul, she really spoke to the personal aspects of having a mentor in place. Of mentoring, she said, “a mentor could be so valuable to a new employee, just having someone to confide in. Mentoring is a more personal and guided process. If it is a true mentoring situation, it can have a professional as well as a personal effect on you.”

While she could point to nothing the district had done in induction policies or procedures to support her as a minority in having a more successful experience, she did point to the need for the district moving more forward in the 21st century in terms of race relations and its day to day operations. She said, “The district is more traditional, more segregated in a sense. We need to open up and get out of those walls. We need to further incorporate technology and bring the world into our district and our classrooms. A more global experience could bring better

awareness of the need for cultural change.” Further practices she would like to see are pairing minority and other new teachers with just good teachers for the whole year in a mentoring situation. She said, “We need a whole year, at least, of having someone with whom to interact. It is impossible to take in all of the information and emotions involved in teaching in one day. We need a consistency in supports to navigate it all.”

Her final thoughts in part one about things she’d like to share seemed very personal as she said, “Don’t misuse us because you know we want to be here or now we have to be here for a while because of family obligations and such. Treat us like we matter.”

### **Interviewee 11: Ezekiel, Introduction**

Ezekiel possesses a laughing, carefree spirit! A muscular, athletic man--thunderous and articulate--his presence says coach and just fills the room! Ezekiel elected to come by one day after football practice and conduct his interview. He walked in with a huge smile and a booming, “Hello, how are you? You ready?” and was ready to begin. Ezekiel actually lives in a nearby city and had to commute down to the interview but since he was assisting with the football program that had just begun its summer practice series, it wasn’t such an imposition to come back to speak with me. The following is the result of our interview discussion.

**Ezekiel: Part 1.** Ezekiel had a lot of people in his family that were teachers and it actually served as a deterrent originally but as he pursued his advanced degrees and such, he found that he enjoyed the teaching aspect more than the research. He had a cousin who taught him history and his cousin shared with him, ‘Somebody has to teach you. I didn’t have to teach you but I chose to teach because someone taught me and it encouraged me to be a better person. Eventually you will teach someone something. So either in an educational setting or no, you will

teach someone to do something. Why not try it in education? You may find you like it and you will find that you are more influential in the lives of children. Eventually, that just stuck!”

Family is what led Ezekiel to the Middleboro School District. He shared, “My wife and I both teach and so it made it easier for us and our children go to school here. I also like the continuity. It is definitely a hometown feel where everybody knows everybody (which can be a positive and a negative) but to be in an area where everything is so interconnected and with my family here it is just makes everything work a lot better for us.

When asked about challenges he faces as a minority educator, he immediately said, “For someone to take you seriously. For minority students, if they see a man of my stature in another frame of reference say for instance a man from around the way that reminds them of me or even have a father of whom I remind them and that relationship is negative, then they put me in that connotation. When I see someone from an opposite race, they see me first as maybe some character they have seen rather than actually seeing me. So I spend the better part of the first couple of weeks or so winning them over. That’s probably the main thing, dealing with misconception and stereotypes.” He attributes such challenges to the environment in which our children come and stereotyping, saying, “Every year, you have to reprove yourself.”

Ezekiel described feeling successful in his teaching. Much like Paul who said there are good days and bad days or Solomon who talked about up and down years, Ezekiel said much of the same. That there are good and bad years. He offered, “I’ve actually been teaching for over 10 years and so you really don’t see the success until you see the finished product--our children. I think like the first time I felt really, really good is when I saw my first graduating class. Starting in middle school, when I saw my first group of students and who made it to graduation and those that didn’t, it did make me feel good to be a part of the graduates’ success.” He further shared

having students to come up to him later to say, “Hello!” and “Thank you!,” feels good. That is how he measured his success.

In sharing of his experience in being a minority among predominantly White staff and whether or not his perspective is sought or he is included personally, he said, “When you first get there you have to show them that you are about the business. You always have different gauges of teachers--those who are going to work, those who are going to fail and those who are not going to do anything--no matter the race. When you have more of another type (race) than just you, you have to basically you go with the flow. You have to just see what the school is doing first because your job is first. You really can’t worry about what others are doing around you - other than those with whom you may be paired or your hallway partners. You try to seek those opportunities to be an asset and add to the continuity. Often you find in those situations that they try to put their minority students and especially their minority problem students on you. Sometimes you make friends but the main thing is just keeping your job first.”

He felt his impact as a minority teacher in this district was bringing a different outlook. He described having worked in urban settings as well as setting much like this one before. The different experiences gained in each setting, he felt, contributed to what he brought to this one. He recalled how the violence of the urban setting would sometimes find its way into the surrounding area or onto the school campus and of this, he said, “The kids and sometimes my colleagues would marvel about it- the violence, its impact on school community, especially if our one of our students were hurt or even killed--but I tell them you deal with it. It hurts but you put in place things to try and safeguard yourself and you deal with it the best way you can. You don’t let it defeat or define you. You press on.”

He planned to remain in education because someone has to be here to teach the kids. In this he ventured into the home school choice of some and said, “If you look at the historical design of schools, it was for and about teaching not only the academics but the social and business rules of society. If you can’t make it socially, then you can’t make it. I hope to be a part of helping them adjust academically to be sure but to provide the skills to make it socially as well. Teachers are there to guide you. I don’t know everything but I tell my students that we learn from each other.”

**Ezekiel: Part 2.** Ezekiel was able to compare his induction story here to that of induction experiences from previous settings. He shared, “It was better than some. Some places just put your foot to the fire. On this campus, they showed me how to set up everything and that I understood the basics of how to handle the classrooms, how to use the grading system, discipline steps. On my last job, they just put us in and expected us to change the world and we didn’t even know how to put our grades in!”

His knowledge of formal teacher induction was that induction was making sure teachers understand how the system fully works for your district. He said, “The main thing is to let them (new teachers) know expectations and how the system works. Here, they did a pretty good job of it but the main thing I would say is probably,” and here he paused before saying, “probably they didn’t clarify certain things.”

Though he had not been assigned a mentor here, in another setting he had actually been a mentor. Of that experience, he shared, “The main thing in mentoring is to make sure that you cultivate a teacher. That you get them to a point of being self-sufficient. You want them to be a problem solver and take every avenue it takes to get to the child but also realize they have a team

to work with and seek supports when they need it. Every teacher has their own strengths as mentor, we have to capitalize on those strengths.”

Of what he feels the district did or promoted in induction to that have led to his success as a minority educator here, he said, “The district made us feel welcome through New Teacher Orientation. As a coach, the athletic department helped us understand the goal of the athletic department and the district as coaches but if they had someone to come in and work with you, I think the transition might have been much smoother.”

In brainstorming on policies related to and not related to induction that he would like to see implemented to promote minority educator success, he said, “I think if you are trying to bring in more minority educators, assign someone to them so they can not feel isolated. We need support through individual time for feedback and evaluation with our mentors. Further we need idea sharing through networking--providing that platform for discussion with their peers across district, veterans across district, writing, book studies. It’s not big, doesn’t cost a lot of money but is something that I think can work. It can further help change perspectives of all colleagues about others. May do much in helping to be taken more seriously.”

The one outcome he would like to see in this district is realizing we all have one goal. He said, “We want to make sure no matter who we are that we put in place those things that will aid in retaining teachers. Create a culture of opportunities and provide opportunities for all.” His closing thought was to make sure that no matter who it is, that we are dealing with children. “The way people look at the world is different,” he shared. Ezekiel continued, “With a diverse population, we don’t know what our children bring with them to our tables. We have to be prepared. Having those opportunities to share with our peers and veterans can help us in being more prepared to teach our children.”

## Resulting Conclusions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are some challenges minority educators face?
2. What are some practices identified by teachers that the district has instituted and/or promoted that have led to successful induction strategies for minority faculty?
3. What are some practices or policies related to induction that could assist minority faculty to have a more successful experience?

Using the research questions as a guide, at the conclusion of the interviews, I cataloged the information according to the response given and subsequent overarching thought conveyed from that response. This section is the resulting analysis of those themes as they related to the overarching research questions and for how they impacted the participants.

### Research Question 1

What are some challenges minority educators face?

**Voice and visibility.** In speaking of the challenges beginning educators face in the district, the concepts most often emergent among participant responses were voice and visibility, even if the actual words were not articulated. For example, Paul shared in his interview how his White counterparts were more apt to speak to one another in the hallway but not him, as though he was not there. Naomi actually spoke the word invisible in her interview in describing her relationship with administration when it came to her ideas or concerns.

**Limited opportunities.** Participants also spoke of what they perceived as limited opportunities for advancement and growth, few opportunities for acknowledgement of even their presence. Solomon observed that even department heads are leaders and that even if there are no opportunities available in administration per se, still minority educators should be at least provided the opportunity to lead departments. Ruth said that many of our minority students

struggle but when it comes time for ideas to help them succeed, often minority educators are excluded from conversations and positions that might allow them the opportunity to offer valuable insights.

**Misperceptions about their degree of preparedness.** Some spoke to the misperceptions and perceptions of administrators, parents and students that somehow the minority educator is not as learned in their craft. They further spoke to having to work harder to prove themselves capable and competent--particularly in core subject areas. Lydia's initial encounter in the district was being met with skepticism that she was even certified. Deborah described having to work twice as hard just to be given some acknowledgement and credibility.

**Institutional barriers.** Finally, some spoke to institutional barriers in policies and procedures that serve to malign their abilities. Deborah indirectly spoke of class compositions and resulting consequences inherent with a minority educator being "trusted" to deliver core content to higher performing (predominantly White) class make-ups. Sarah further expounded on the subject by naming the specific practice, teacher selection, which places in the hands of parents the ability to choose the best educator for their children. Such things as heterogeneous grouping and differentiation, practices that educators know in research makes a tremendous difference in student achievement, take a back seat to the will of certain parents, creating a school within a school. Rachel spoke, too, of her class composition and how it compels her to give a little more in expectations and patience to impact her students. Esther more emphatically implored, "Let teachers teach! Whatever personality a person brings with them, allow them that personality. Don't try to put them in a box!" The following table is a visual representation of the categorization of participants' responses to research question 1 and supporting quotes from participants reflective of the category.

Table 7

*Emergent Response Categories and Corresponding Quotes by Minority Middleboro Educators in Response to Research Question 1*

Emergent Response Category	Participants	Quotes
Visibility and Voice	Solomon	My thoughts were, ‘You’re around but where is the support?’ Feedback. ‘You’re doing a good job.’ We’re human. I want to know if I’m doing good or bad. What do I need to improve? It’s like I’m not even here. I don’t want to wait until the end of the year to do an observation or to be hit with things about my teaching abilities that my administrator sees need improving.
	Naomi	“They will placate and say, ‘Oh I got you or I understand’ but you don’t see any results or nothing toward yours suggestions! <u>Visibility and voice.</u> ”
	Deborah	“You can give your opinion but it is not valued. It’s their way of saying you don’t have a voice. I guess I feel ok about it. Feel I can come to work and work. It doesn’t make me feel inferior.
	Paul	“It can be discouraging. When they walk down the halls, they are more apt to speak to each other than they are to speak to me. There is this assumption that I can teach difficult minority children better than they which is not necessarily true. Even the faculty expects me to speak or act with a certain “Blackness” that I was not raised with. Being Black somehow makes it more difficult to make those personal connections with them (staff). I can eat lunch here with them in the building during the day but outside the building, not so much but I eat lunch every day. It would be nice to be asked to join a teacher group for lunch outside of school. It’s almost as though it’s not acceptable.”
Limited Opportunities	Deborah	“The challenges lie in opportunities, Ms. Harrison, opportunities for growth, opportunities as a teacher to be viewed on the same level as my counterparts! I always have to do more, have to be better than counterparts to receive any kind of recognition or to be acknowledged, congratulated! I feel like I have to work twice as hard! It’s more given than achieved for counterparts. They just don’t have to prove their abilities.”

*(table continues)*

Emergent Response Category	Participants	Quotes
	Martha	“The accountability for learning,” she shared, “is misplaced. Then, as a minority teacher, it often feels like you’re stuck in that one position once you get it, with children who are not particularly motivated.
	Rachel	“There are not too many of us and so there is a gap. The question becomes, ‘Who do I reach out to?’ ‘Who can I talk to?’
Misperceptions	Paul	The way students see you sometimes, it’s as though they don’t know how to accept or work with minority educators
	Lydia	“Coming back here was a little different. When I arrived day one to even put in my application, the person who took my application and resume’ looked me up and down and asked, ‘are you certified?’ She seemed cocky and certainly, I didn’t feel very welcomed. It was as though coming in the door, I was being second guessed on my ability based on my appearance. Sometimes, I still feel that.”
	Ezekiel	“For someone to take you seriously. For minority students, if they see a man of my stature in another frame of reference say for instance a man from around the way that reminds them of me or even have a father of whom I remind them and that relationship is negative, then they put me in that connotation. When I see someone from an opposite race, they see me first as maybe some character they have seen rather than actually seeing me. So I spend the better part of the first couple of weeks or so winning them over. That’s probably the main thing, dealing with misconception and stereotypes.”
	Esther	“The challenges I face are people thinking I don’t know my craft. Second guessing me and my ability. I have my own style based on the demographic I teach that differs from my White counterparts. And I am ok with that. I must wear many hats to reach my children.”

*(table continues)*

Emergent Response Category	Participants	Quotes
Institutional Barriers	Sarah	“It has been the placing of students based on parent decision. Sometimes it is good because you do get people you know but far too often it leads to imbalance in classes - too many high performing students in one area or too many low performing children in one class.” In answering to what she believed those challenges could be attributed she offered, “I attribute this to the administration from the top down. I think administration is out to please parents more than educating the child.”
	Deborah	“I attribute this to environment and culture. Culture here is prejudiced. It’s not equal. Even though they say it is, it’s not. As far as students you receive on your roster, it’s ‘give Black children to Black teachers,’ especially more challenging students. When teaching White children, the parents still want what they want no matter district or classroom procedures. If you don’t comply, they make your life difficult for that period of time with constant calls to complain or parent teacher conferences. Consequently, I feel like I’m not able to teach or serve my students properly. Honestly, I sometimes feel that if you doubt me that much just give me a classroom full of students who look like me and let me teach in peace!”

## Research Question 2

What are some practices identified by teachers that the district has instituted and/or promoted that have led to successful induction strategies for minority faculty?

Resoundingly, each person either answered nothing, nothing beyond the initial hire or simply smiled and said nothing at all. While each person shared that the district as a whole had done nothing beyond the initial hire and a one-day orientation (in some instances) to promote their success as beginning educators in the district, the range of emotions that emerged from their sharing of their induction story was amazing. Solomon felt alone as though he had no one to ask

for guidance or tell him what to do. He sought incremental feedback to improve his craft. Paul recalled feeling there was no intentionality or deliberateness in orienting new employees to not only day to day operations but expectations. Both Ruth and Sarah described entering the profession mid-year and literally having to learn to “sink or swim”. Rachel, Esther, Deborah, and Martha described mentoring attempts that were ill-conceived; none of them had a formal mentoring program, had sporadic contact with their mentors and still felt as though they did not have support or a resource to whom they could go while becoming acclimated to the district. Martha’s and Rachel’s experience saw one being paired with someone not in the same subject area while another was paired with another beginning educator. Deborah and Esther, in their experiences, described feeling that the mentor did not want to mentor them or worked against them. Lydia did describe having some group meetings but because she had come back home, was met with skepticism as to why and, consequently, felt alone even with a group dynamic. Martha and Ezekiel were coaches and through coaching, had the networking afforded them in that group that offered some level of support. Interestingly, each person alluded to a criterion of induction here and there in their experience, but their experiences were far from the totality and deliberateness of a comprehensive program.

What did become apparent was that at the school level, leadership at many of the campuses determined that their new teachers needed some level of introductory, inductive supports. While much of what was described by participants was not as successful as one might have hoped, it is commendable that in the absence of district leadership in this regard, individual leaders or individuals on some of the campuses filled in the gap.

As shared previously, for many teachers in our country, induction begins and ends more with placement, less with process. Researchers estimate that less than 1% of new teachers

receive the kind of supports that could actually be classified as comprehensive induction (Sun, 2012). As of 2016, only 29 states require new teachers to participate in some kind of support for new teachers and only 15 of those require it extend beyond the first year (New Teacher Center, 2016). Though I found in each participant something different that characterized his or her experience for them, common emotions from their induction experience was that of loneliness and fearfulness, feeling as though they had no one to ask for help and that much of what they learned they did so on their own. The following table is a visual representation of their responses as they related to both district and school level induction practices.

Table 8

*Individual Participant Experiences of District-Level and School-Level Induction Practices in Response to Research Question 2*

Participant	District Level Induction Practice Implemented	School Level Induction Practice Implemented
Paul	Nothing	Nothing
Solomon	Nothing	Nothing
Deborah	Nothing	Informal Mentoring (Unsuccessful)
Ruth	Nothing	Informal Mentoring (Unsuccessful)
Naomi	Nothing	Nothing
Rachel	Nothing	Former teacher who retired asked how she might help; assigned mentor who was a new teacher, too
Esther	Nothing	Informal Mentor (Unsuccessful)
Lydia	Nothing	Meetings with colleagues throughout district but was still not offered supports in learning the system
Sarah	Nothing	Nothing
Martha	Nothing	Informal mentoring; matched with mentor not in her subject area; networking through coaching relationships
Ezekiel	Nothing	Had someone to show him the lesson plan, grading formats; networking through coaching relationships

**Research Question 3**

What are some practices or policies related to induction that could assist minority faculty to have a more successful experience?

Repeatedly, the responses to this question from the participants were for the district to actually institute a formal induction program or a formal mentoring program, with training for the mentors. Some spoke to meeting routinely with new and/or beginning educators throughout the district along with mentors and/administrators and having professional developments catered to meet their needs as beginners. Curiously, whether or not the participant said the word, induction, in their description of practices or policies they spoke to the prevailing thought and elements of induction. Two participants, Paul and Solomon, had very rich experiences in previous settings in an induction program, one had a program that actually paid special attention to the needs of minority educators from which to draw their comparisons. In those previous settings described by Paul and Solomon, the overarching theme was that of deliberateness and intentionality from the district in crafting a program designed to meet their needs as new and beginning educators here in Middleboro. Esther's mentoring experience, for example, shed much light on the need for the kind of deliberateness and district guidance necessary for new and beginning teachers to feel supported. She shared, "If we are going to have mentors, they need to be trained and held to certain expectations, not there to gossip and belittle. No one needs a gossip." As shared earlier, comprehensive induction is characterized as having the following components (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Sun, 2012):

- Multi-year support for new teachers lasting at least two years
- Structured instructional mentoring from carefully selected and trained veterans who coach new teachers using a repertoire of strategies;
- Common planning time with other teachers;
- Frequent and formative standards-based assessment based upon a continuum of teacher development and individual goal setting;

- Embedded and ongoing professional development activities
- Evidence-based reflection that uses data to drive teacher instructional decision making to best meet the needs of students;
- Teacher networking that takes advantage of this generation's ability to communicate readily through technology, and
- Strong Principal Leadership.

Mentoring is part of a greater whole. As an important component of a comprehensive program, mentors need to be trained and develop specific skills to be successful in their role of supporting new teachers; providing new teachers the opportunity to collaborate with others helps both improve learning communities and reduce those feelings of isolation (Sun, 2012). In looking at professional development activities, there is a need for those activities for new teachers needs to be specific in content, focusing on the challenges of practices are part of their day to day work. Additionally, the sessions should be scheduled regularly to allow for progressive advances in knowledge and skill (Sun, 2012) while further encouraging collaboration, providing opportunities for new teachers to pose questions, engage in finding answers and reflect (Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Evidence points to the building level administrator and district leadership playing pivotal parts in crafting an environment for new teacher induction programs in which all participants are provided an opportunity to learn, grow and thrive. In the participants speaking to induction policies or practices, it was truly as though they had taken a page from research in their answers and reflections of what might have made the difference in their experience. The following is a visual representation of participant responses and the emergent theme of their conversation of policies and practices related to induction from a district perspective that could assist minority faculty to have a more successful experience.

Table 9

*Emergent Themes and Supporting Quotes from Participants in Response to Research Question 3*

Participant	Emergent Theme	Quote
Paul	Deliberateness and Intentionality; Visibility and Voice	“Acknowledgement that we are different. Acknowledgement of what strength that might bring.” “Twice a semester or once per year let’s open the floor for some honest conversation.”
Deborah	Deliberateness and Intentionality; Visibility and Voice	“An actual induction program - a sit-down formal induction with an entry and exit ending or concluding process. There should be mentoring periodically. Meetings with the principal or administrator of the building should occur periodically. Also mentors need to be trained and non-biased-no matter race, religion, whatever the difference.”
Solomon	Deliberateness and Intentionality;	“The district needs to have an induction day where new teachers are assigned mentors that day and meet that day - preferably a week in advance before school starts for returning teachers. Training sessions should begin that day. As a new employee, you have a lot of questions – gradebook, technology, etc. being able to have your mentor and training session that day can help out and just follow-ups throughout the year.”
Ruth	Deliberateness and Intentionality	“This district needs a formal mentoring program. You cannot just take a little fish that’s been cared for in a fish bowl and throw it into the ocean. Coming from a teacher program or in my case, an alternate route program, we’re like those fish and that classroom, is the ocean! And it doesn’t matter how strong a fish appears to be! If you are new to the profession or to the area, you need supports. You need someone to back you up and it needs to be consistent.
Naomi	Deliberateness and Intentionality;  Visibility and Voice	“True mentoring, especially for our African American Teachers. All new teachers should be in attendance for meetings with their mentor and professional developments. Administrators should periodically be in attendance at these meetings and professional developments, too. We have knowledge. We went to school, too. We need more voice. We need to be seen and heard for our expertise and what strengths we bring

*(table continues)*

Participant	Emergent Theme	Quote
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Rachel	Deliberateness and Intentionality Visibility and Voice	Spoke of the need for professional developments and seeking inputs from teachers
Esther	Deliberateness and Intentionality	“If the district is going to promote mentors, then it needs to be systematic. Mentors need training and expertise in subject area of mentee. No new person needs a gossip as a mentor but someone who genuinely holds the best interest of the mentee and district at heart and wants to see success for his or her mentee. Let teachers know expectations up front. Don’t hold people accountable for what they do not know.”
Lydia	Deliberateness and Intentionality	“It should be a priority for us to work together as a team no matter cultural differences. Everybody should be held to the same accountability, same expectations.”
Sarah	Deliberateness and Intentionality	“PLC’s - not only are they helping new teachers but it helps veterans. They’re fresh out of college and brimming with ideas. I think when new teachers were partnered up with veteran teachers, we really help each other.
Martha	Deliberateness and Intentionality	“We need a whole year, at least, of having someone with whom to interact. It is impossible to take in all of the information and emotions involved in teaching in one day. We need a consistency in supports to navigate it all.”
Ezekiel	Deliberateness and Intentionality; Visibility and Voice	“I think if you are trying to bring in more minority educators, assign someone to them so they can not feel isolated. We need support through individual time for feedback and evaluation with our mentors. Further we need idea sharing through networking – providing that platform for discussion with their peers across district, veterans across district, writing, book studies. It’s not big, doesn’t cost a lot of money but is something that I think can work. It can further help change perspectives of all colleagues about others. May do much in helping to be taken more seriously.”

### **Other Commonalities that Emerged from the Research**

The participants actually had much in common. This became evident in part one of the interview process, the Data Participant Sheets. Both Ruth and Sarah entered the profession mid-year and likened that experience to being thrown into water without knowing how to swim.

Naomi, Ruth, Sarah, Martha, and Paul had been contacted by someone in the district when employment opportunities arose. Paul and Solomon had like experiences in induction elsewhere. Martha and Deborah were each still in school, studying administration. Ezekiel, Deborah, and Lydia had more teaching experience overall than two of my veterans.

Delving more deeply, family and a sense of community is a cornerstone, for each educator interviewed; this showed up repeatedly in what led them to Middleboro and what has allowed most of them to remain. For 8 of the 11 participants, this is their hometown; they have a great sense of community pride and they have immediate family in the area. The remaining three grew up in nearby communities and were familiar with Middleboro. Two have spouses from the area, currently live here, and consider themselves to be a part of the local community now.

Each participant--new, beginning, and veteran--from their educational philosophies, came from strong homes, no matter the composition (i.e., single parent, grandparents, or traditional two-family homes) that promoted the importance of education. They each spoke of education as a non-negotiable. For those parents and grandparents who did not finish school or did not complete college, encouraging his or her child to finish seemed the actualizing of his or her own educational aspirations that did not materialize whatever the reason – having to work, raise a family, etc. For those parents who did finish and/or were educators themselves, they wanted opportunities for their children to succeed and saw education as the catalyst for that success. For all, the high school diploma was a family goal without exception but many of them spoke of parent or grandparent that saw early on in them an interest or an intelligence that spoke to going further. Given each participant's strong foundation, choosing to teach was seemingly a natural transition from home to work in that each described teaching and learning as passions and themselves as a means of providing a passionate role model and change agent for their children.

Each, in some way, articulated his or her desire to help someone in the next generation to be successful, much like parents had helped them. Some spoke, specifically, of wanting to provide that role model for minority students in the district who, they felt, need to see themselves reflected in the classroom and in positions of leadership. In speaking with them, I could see clearly what their parents and grandparents saw--intelligence, articulation, acute ability to perceive and interpret without being unduly--just a presentation of the world around them and how it impacts them professionally and emotionally.

Not surprisingly, each participant defined his or her success through their students. From reviewing student data and tracking student growth to seeing older students and/or parents greet them with thank you or having them reach out to them to say thank you, each participant found their success in the success of their students and their reactions to them. Interestingly, none of them spoke to any measure of success beyond that of students. Success was not holistic. They did not speak of success among peers or with administration through ideas or other professional opportunities. It was as though they had determined to focus on the children so as not to address the other areas where success may be lacking. Consequently, each person spoke of his/her legacy from a dual perspective. They felt charged with that of going to great lengths to help students succeed and provide opportunities for their growth as individuals while feeling that extra need and drive to reach out specifically to minority students in helping them realize their potential.

### **Themes Interrelated to Research Questions**

Though not actual research questions, when asked about policies they would like to see related or not related to induction and what their hopes might be for the outcome of this study, over and over again, no matter the specificities they offered in the response, the recurrent theme was that of opportunities for minority educators in the district. Their ideas ranged from

opportunities to grow and advance in their careers, opportunities at the district-level to actively seek and recruit more minority educators, opportunities to network and connect with other colleagues, mentors and administrators across the district for more visibility and true opportunities to be acknowledged and appreciated for the knowledge they bring to the field.

Both Sarah and Deborah spoke to opportunities to teach and be acknowledged for their knowledge and experience in discussing class compositions and what those compositions represented. Sarah expressly defined a district practice that further perpetuates the idea of one teacher being superior to another which is the parent selection process. She pointed to how the parents being able to select teachers or teams at the lower elementary grades creates a system of elitism and exclusivity, despite the knowledge and preparation of all teachers to do the job. Deborah pointed to how certain class compositions can elicit more suspicion from parents, students other colleagues on her ability to get the job done.

Naomi, Ruth and Solomon, spoke to the idea that minority educators should be afforded the opportunity to be acknowledged for having some idea in how to better reach minority students in looking at achievement gaps and remediation efforts. Either through the soliciting of input or the actual affording of certain leadership positions such as academic coaches, department heads, etc., provide minority educators an opportunity to speak to the needs of minority students and actually implement some of the ideas and strategies

### **Unexpected Themes That Arose from the Research**

In our interview conversations, there were three participants who spoke to underlying themes of which I had not considered. The first was Ruth who attributed many of her challenges as a minority educator to the fact that her course is predominantly taught by White male coaches and with the competitive nature of our sports' teams throughout the district, coaching seemed to

take greater precedence than the course itself. In addition, the course is not a subject area tested course until high school, while the other core subject courses are introduced in statewide assessments as early as third Grade. These caveats about the course lend themselves to a certain culture of the course, which I have found intriguing.

Looking more deeply at what she shared, the course is taught district-wide by coaches of all athletic disciplines from Grades 7 through 12. In fact, 8 out of 11 teachers of this course in Grades 7-12 are coaches. Below seventh grade, the course is taught by non-coaches; however, the course is treated as a hybrid course, often paired with science. Another interesting fact is that district-wide competitive athletics do not begin until Grade 7, coinciding with the time we see a greater presence of coaches teaching this course. Athletics here, particularly football, are huge events. Instead of attending PLC's that are designed to promote collegial conversations about student achievement and data during their planning periods, the teachers/coaches of this subject are allowed to be dismissed to either work there at the junior high school campus in preparing for upcoming athletic contests or report to the high school campus to begin preparing if they assist with coaching on the high school campus. They have common planning times not only within their assigned school but across the district. The planning periods for coaches begin at the last period of day on each campus and practice begins during that last period and extends after school. The coaches, themselves, are rather laid back and that laid back nature, the lack of urgency in the delivery of course content seems to extend to the course and define its culture.

As an administrator, given the trainings and college and career-ready standards we profess in our district and regional meetings, I honestly believed each course had a similar tenor of importance. But through this interview, Ruth provided a view of the culture of this course. In her efforts to impart seriousness and validity to the course, Ruth felt alienated from her

colleagues. Further, the subject area itself does not bear the same level of accountability responsibility as the other subjects since it is only tested once throughout a student's K-12 educational career. Though it does determine whether or not a student graduates, testing in this subject is not a defined subject area assessment until they are sophomores in high school. Consequently, students and parents, she felt, rejected her attempts to impart its seriousness at an earlier stage. She pressed on anyway because she knew the students would one day have to take seriously the course content to graduate but felt alone.

Solomon also addressed the dominance of coaching but from a differing perspective. Solomon spoke to being even further alone as a minority educator because he was male but not a coach. This is, again, a phenomenon that I had not at all anticipated, but after he shared his perspective and then I heard from both Martha and Ezekiel who both affirmed the supports and networking afforded those in coaching, I looked even deeper into what Solomon had shared. Author Donald G. Nicolas shared, "If I am being candid, I can attest personally to the fact that in many schools, the only abundance of Black men comes in the form of custodians, food-service employees and transportation workers. In addition, in conversations with my colleagues, it is widely understood that if Black men are educators, they more often than not are physical education teachers or coach in some capacity. Black men are largely underrepresented in our nation's classrooms; they make up less than 2% of our country's teachers" (Nicolas, 2014). If nationally African American men represent less than 2% of our country's teachers and within that number, there is an expectation that if they teach, they, too, must coach and to not do so creates further isolation for those who do not, then that further compounds an already difficult issue. In this district, of the 11 African American male educators in our five mainstream campuses, 8 were coaches. Of the 3 who were not coaches, 2 were at the same campus.

Finally, Deborah provided, perhaps, the most unexpected dynamic in her interview. For all of Deborah's district-wide acclaim in being a star teacher, she feels even further scrutinized and even further isolated in her efforts to teach because being trusted to teach higher performing White students brings with it a parental expectation that "they want what they want" and a district expectation to let them get what they want. One would think that having the support of educational consultants, administrators and her student performance would be significant enough to validate her as an educator but in her interview but it seems to have just the opposite effect. She communicated having to work hard just to be acknowledged and having to prove herself over and over again. She shared that her counterparts, from what she saw, did not have to work as hard and did not have those demands placed on them--no matter their student group.

CHAPTER V:  
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

**Overview**

It takes a full cast of players, working together in an educational community, to educate a child. Each role is important in maximizing the student's potential to learn and grow (Loeb, 2016). The bus driver greets students each morning and afternoon and works diligently to get them to and from school safely and without incident. The cafeteria worker prepares their meals. The custodian makes sure their surroundings are clean and sanitary. The librarian helps students select a book or conduct research. The counselor offers personal, career and academic supports. The administrator makes decisions reflective of what is best for the child and school community; his or her job, it seems, is never done. But the one player responsible for the hands-on, daily interactions, lessons and life-lessons that directly impact the life of a child is the classroom teacher (Loeb, 2016).

The teacher has the task of instructing, of learning along with their students, interpreting data reports, teaching to different abilities and strengths - all in one classroom with a state assessment looming at the end of the year that measures not only student performance but teacher performance as well (Lanier, 1997). The teacher has to further nurture, counsel, support and interpret the needs of students that extend beyond the classroom-all while meeting deadlines from supervisors, grading papers, creating lesson plans, managing student behavior all while trying to craft out a life of their own. The teacher is called upon to wear many hats simultaneously (Lanier, 1997). Their job is huge when done well and is emotionally and

physically taxing and yet, in this country, we often put our new teachers in the classroom and simply encourage them to do their best with little or no support. For the new teacher, having supports is so critical to their overall well-being and success. Research has shown that without this support, many new teachers leave the profession (Sun, 2012; Partee, 2014).

For the new minority teacher, this is even more true as they navigate the demands listed above while feeling they have to further prove their own preparedness and aptitude to colleagues, administrators, parents and students. They further have to seek opportunities for their voices to be heard, for their expertise and knowledge in the field to be acknowledged and recognized. In the face of such frustrations, minority educators leave (Partee, 2014). To further compound the issue, our minority student populations continue to rise and so too, our achievement gaps due in large part, research suggests, to the absence of teachers with whom students can culturally identify. We see fewer numbers of minority students who have even met the initial requirement of graduation from high school, to even seek becoming an educator or any other professional occupation (Bireda & Chait, 2011). With such dwindling numbers of minority educators with which to begin, with our minority populations growing each year in our schools systems and these students needing to see in positions those teachers with whom they share a cultural connection and the expectations inherent in such a relationship (Schott Foundation, 2015; Shanker Institute, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2004), our country can no longer afford to lose them as their lack of presence continues to contribute to mounting issues within our educational system.

The purpose of this study was to study the inductions experiences of minority educators in a rural Mississippi District

## Summary of the Findings

Again, in speaking of the challenges beginning educators face in the district, Research Question 1, the words most often emergent were voice and visibility. Participants spoke of what they perceived as limited opportunities for advancement and growth, few opportunities for acknowledgement of even their presence and the perception of administrators, parents and students in their having to work harder to prove themselves capable and competent--particularly in core subject areas. They attributed such challenges, overwhelmingly, to race and prejudice inherent in this society and community. Relatedly, success as described by participants was not holistic but rather defined by how successful the children they taught were. They looked at such things as data and growth indicators; they appreciated the “thank you” provided by students and parents and used those things to ultimately define their success as educators. Although this is admirable and certainly what our children need – nurturing and caring educators genuinely concerned about their overall success, it seemed they relegated themselves to this being the sum total of their accomplishment in Middleboro. Adults in any occupation are deserving of the kind of success that allows them acknowledgement for a job well done, input in decision-making and their opinions sought on issues of importance or when issues will directly impact them. In all that the participants shared, it was obvious holistic success, in this regard, escaped them here in Middleboro.

When asked what are some practices identified by teachers that the district has instituted and/or promoted that have led to successful induction strategies for minority faculty, Research Question 2, each person essentially answered nothing and spoke to the feelings of isolation and aloneness associated with the experience. Finally, when asked what are some practices or policies related to induction that could assist minority faculty to have a more successful

experience, Research Question 2, resoundingly the responses to this question from the participants was for the district to actually institute a formal induction program or a formal mentoring program, with training for the mentors or they described a system of professional developments, mentoring and collaboration across district--the primary elements of induction. Their view of induction was two-fold in that not only could it provide the much needed support and networking opportunities so sorely absent from their experience but so necessary for new teachers, especially new minority teachers, but that it could also be a start--to better communication, understanding, visibility, and acknowledgement. That the act of induction, they articulated, might serve as a catalyst for change in the district culture as it relates to the way minority educators are viewed among their non-minority peers and the community at large. They went on to further speak of a need for opportunities among minorities in the district to grow and advance.

### **Linking Participant Responses with those of Previous Interviews Presented in Literature Review**

In listening to the participants through the interviews, it was as though a focus group had been created that included educators from this study along with the minority educators from the previously mentioned studies, from rural to urban, Wyoming to Louisiana. The responses from these participants, in terms of challenges faced by minority educators, very closely mirrored the reflections provided by other interviewees in other studies as shared in the literature review. What amazed me most as researcher is that even those with the quietest personalities who I assumed would be more reticent in their response or more reserved, spoke from a place of honesty and were much less inhibited than I imagined. This topic seemed to resonate with each participant in some fashion. Veteran teachers, too, spoke to the feelings of invisibility and limited opportunity. Taken from the Wyoming Study,

Sabrina experienced professional isolation in an all-White school that made her the “raisin in a sugar cookie.” Les amplified her sense of isolation by crediting parents of his students for making it an issue that he was different. Lack of support from students, parents, and administrators palpably increased the level of invisibility felt. (Castaneda et al., 2006)

Participants in Middleboro even went a step further in describing their challenges on a political platform--not what you know but who you know. They, too, spoke to having to work harder to prove themselves and not feeling heard or suggestions not being realized. The Shanker Institute points to more than half of all minority teachers who leave the profession doing so based more on job dissatisfaction or the desire to pursue a better job or better career opportunities (Shanker Institute, 2015, p. 23). Gloria Partee shared in her study that often the factors that lead to attrition for minority teachers are more organizational--low levels of administrative support, lack of classroom autonomy and lack of collective faculty decision making influence (Partee, 2014, p.5). Input and feeling welcome in offering opinions and ideas are paramount to professionals as they are demonstrations of respect; minority teachers are no exception to this. Even if those opinions are not always used, feeling empowered enough to have a voice to use them is powerful (Partee, 2014). Naomi shared, poignantly, “They will placate and say, ‘Oh I got you or I understand’ but you don’t see any results or nothing toward yours suggestions! Visibility and voice.” The bottom line is that professionals do like to be treated professionally. Input and feeling welcome in offering opinions and ideas are paramount ideals to professionals as they are demonstrations of respect; minority teachers are no exception to this.

Being held suspect or having their education and training questioned was a topic that resounded loudly from participants in this Middleboro study through Wyoming and all points in between. Esther shared her greatest challenge, that of, “people thinking I don’t know my craft. Second guessing me and my ability. I have my own style based on the demographic I teach that

differs from my White counterparts. And I am ok with that. I must wear many hats to reach my children.” From the Wyoming study shared earlier in the research, teachers there in that study also voiced feeling that the public at large appeared to carry a general attitude that educators of color were poorly or inadequately prepared even after school training and preparation for the field, the idea of being held suspect (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 18).

Along with “being held suspect” was the idea of misperception. When educators were suspected of possessing inferior academic credentials, they were frequently misperceived as unprepared professionally (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 18). In the classroom, that invisibility looks like lack of support from students, parents and administrators (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 19). Teachers of color in rural contexts cope with suspicions, misperceptions and the resultant invisibility and isolation from colleagues, administrators, parents and students with whom they must interact (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 19). (Harrison, 2017, p. 34)

Teachers in this setting spoke to those very same phenomena and how they impact them professionally here. Paul said in his interview, “The way students see you sometimes, it’s as though they don’t know how to accept or work with minority educators.” Lydia shared in her interview, “It was as though coming in the door, I was being second guessed on my ability based on my appearance. Sometimes, I still feel that.”

The final link between teachers in the literature and the Middleboro study came in their shared definition of success. The participants in this Middleboro study hinged their success on the successes of their students. They did not worry so much about how they were viewed by administration or even with their colleagues but the love and appreciation shared by their students served as reward. In essence, it was as though they had inextricably tied their successes to those of their students and seemed to not allow themselves to concentrate on professional successes or the lack thereof with administration. Those in subject areas had data as well to illustrate their progress toward student goals. Sarah said, in the legacy she hopes to leave, that her efforts impart the importance of education to her students and the community at large.

Naomi, for instance, hoped her legacy was that of simply helping students succeed. Not surprisingly this was much of the same sentiment shared universally by the participants in the interviews and other research studies presented here. Taken from the views shared by the Urban Science Teachers in that study the authors share, “These participants focused not only on teaching the child for the current year but also on teaching the child for a lifetime. They saw their role as contributing to the future life of each child in their classroom.”(Fraser-Abder, 2010, p. 244). Middleboro Teachers shared that sentiment, too, and though extremely noble it is still somewhat poignant that participants in this study as well as those presented in the literature seemed to relegate their successes only to those of their students. Certainly when students thrive, so, too, does the educator but it seemed when it comes career advancement, visibility and viability in their respective districts among colleagues, administrators, parents and policy-makers, that there was a kind of silent resignation that advancement, acknowledgment and visibility were not soon to come.

#### **After the Interviews: A Look at Minority Teacher Turnover in Middleboro School District**

Just in the small amount of time spent with each participant in getting to know them through their perspectives and the insights they shared, I established a bond with them. I looked forward to being able to be something of a support or resource for them even following the interview process and shared as much with each of them. Unfortunately, however, Solomon and Ezekiel will not be returning to the Middleboro District. Solomon is not pursuing a career in education this year and Ezekiel moved to another district. Further, Martha was moved from her core subject class to a physical education course. Naomi did receive something of a promotion and, consequently, is now in Career Technical Education.

District-wide, not only was there movement within the interview group in minority teachers but we also saw movement elsewhere. The one African American male Social Studies/Science teacher in Grades 1-5 retired; another African American educator in Social Studies/Science, Grades 1-5 moved to a counseling position in a neighboring school district. Four minority special education teachers are no longer working in the district; two resigned to seek opportunities elsewhere and two retired. Yet another core subject teacher was moved to the gym in Physical Education. The head coach of the high school basketball team who also taught Social Studies elective courses retired. Finally, the only certified African American male Assistant Principal in the district (as the other two males are still working on classes and/or testing requirements to complete their administrative credentialing) moved to a nearby district for greater opportunities. In the lower elementary grades (Grades 1-5), those educators were not replaced with African American educators nor were the teachers who were moved to physical education from their core subjects. The head coach's presence in the classroom is now gone and he, too, was not replaced in the classroom by another African American. Instead, only his coaching position was replaced as another African American male was recruited from a neighboring district to serve as a part-time Assistant Principal at one of the elementary campuses and head coach of the high school basketball team. His day at the elementary campus ends at 11:30 a.m. so that he can report to the high school and work on his team. None of the Special Education teachers were replaced by minority special education teachers. Only the African American male Assistant Principal was replaced by an African American female.

The aforementioned moves in the Middleboro District reflect the trends illustrated in research about minority teacher attrition, pointed to the research caveats about minority educators seeking better opportunities and highlighted the growing problem of replacing

minority educators with other minority educators when there is such a shortage. These moves also validated the participants' observations about opportunities within district and about their being acknowledged as truly instrumental in the field and in the district as some were moved from core subject courses when they are already scarcely represented there.

### **Researcher Positionality**

All of the interviews spoke to that time in me when I, too, began in this district as a teacher. This is actually my second time being in the district--this time in a leadership position. Years ago, I was right where they are. My advantage was having a family friend and neighbor who was like an aunt guiding me. She was my church member, too, and so that familiarity made it easier when I had difficulties or there was something I didn't understand. Like much of what the participants shared about mentoring, she was my informal mentor. She taught English with me at the high school and was department chairperson. Though my undergraduate major was in Educational Psychology, I had also taken an alternate route to obtain my certification in English. I can relate to Ruth fully when she said nothing could really prepare one for the classroom. Like Martha, I had lower performing children and I also had some higher performing students and had to work hard like Deborah just to maintain but I had support. Our department did function as a unit. This was at the dawn of subject area tests and so not really knowing what to anticipate, we worked together to create and provide materials for our students to be successful and I did not feel the scrutiny and mistrust often described by these current day educators. But that was 20 years ago when we, as minorities, were more represented in the classrooms.

Today, through these interviews, these educators describe a loneliness and an aloneness. They describe a culture in our schools, some schools more prominent than others, in which a kind of scrutiny, mistrust of abilities and isolation to which I could not relate then as a beginning

teacher some 20 years ago but can to some degree now. When I began here for the first time, not only did my department, high school English, have my mentor, but I had filled the position of an outgoing African American male English teacher. There were African American teachers represented in each of the core subject areas and more than just one teacher.

Now, their teaching environment often has them being the only one in a school or even across several grades. Nationwide, numbers of minority educators have dwindled in the hundreds of thousands and that can be seen here. This trend in minority educators continues to do so as the numbers of minority students rises in public schools. Just as those numbers rise, so, too, does the ever-widening achievement gap between minority students and their White counterparts, keeping potential future educators from even receiving a high school diploma. While those minority students who do make it to college find more lucrative, less taxing career opportunities than education.

### **Critical Race Theory: Middleboro District**

As each participant spoke to his or her experience, without even knowing who the next participant was, they affirmed each other and validated their perceptions of race and how it applies to them in this district. Racism was and is for them a tangible and unfortunate part of their work experience. Their accounts of their experience point to the overall assertion of critical race theory that holds racism as such an ingrained and permanent fixture in our society and day to day experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

### **Experiential Knowledge of Minority Educators in Middleboro**

Experiential knowledge says that the lived experiences of people of color is legitimate and provides a “unique voice of color” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Without even hearing each other’s experiences or perspectives, one voice emerged from the interviews presented in this

study of Middleboro Educators. These shared experiences of oppression in this district are key to understanding the analysis of CRT as it relates to Middleboro for its African American Teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

### **Permanence of Racism in Middleboro**

They spoke to a certain permanence of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998) here as it seems so engrained it is natural. Not having themselves reflected in academic positions of leadership such as department heads or academic coaches resonated with them that somehow their expertise does not matter or could not be trusted enough to lead a department or analyze data in a fashion to lead instructional strategies and teaching practices that might better promote success, especially among minority students who by and large comprise the data. The head basketball coach who retired was both coach and teacher. His “Blackness” was only replaced on the basketball court, not in the classroom, as if, like Solomon shared, the expectation of the Black male is to coach and that somehow his worth is defined there. The further movement of Martha and another African American subject area teacher from their respective subject areas to Physical Education is further evidence of where their perceived value seems to lie.

### **The Social Construction of Race in Middleboro**

The social construction of race in Middleboro, another tenet of CRT, becomes readily apparent when doubts are cast on the preparedness of minority educators to teach higher performing White children but as, Paul reflected, “There is this assumption that I can teach difficult minority children better than they which is not necessarily true. Even the faculty expects me to speak or act with a certain ‘Blackness’ that I was not raised with.” It seems minority teachers are more than capable of dealing with minority children but not so much when given

White children to teach. A person's ethnicity is not something that can be conveniently picked up and put down when certain circumstances arise and the examples provided here in Middleboro point to this construction of race in this context being used at will to do just that.

### **Whiteness as Property in Middleboro**

Over and over again, when asked about induction it what really became evident was that while they were interested in realizing the support opportunities inherit in induction, they really desired the networking and possibility for interaction with colleagues of all races and administrators so that their administrators, colleagues, etc., may finally SEE them and acknowledge their worth. Intentionality and deliberateness; visibility and voice; opportunity and growth--these were echoed themes throughout the interviews. Feeling disconnected or disenfranchised because of the culture of the environment that seemed to promote one race over another was echoed. Throughout the interviews, the issue of race and how it impacts their lives as professionals daily entered the discussion and remained. Much of what participants shared here point to the tenets of Critical Race Theory as it relates to the educational setting. As shared earlier in the study,

What we as a society have seen in education since the passing of Brown v. the Board Education has been a step forward and backward as it relates to the educating of minority students. The dismantling of many minority schools during desegregation was larger in many respects than the dismantling of a building but rather represented in some ways the dismantling of cultural connection and confidence, self-worth and pride and the dismantling of careers of thousands of minority educators. While the passing of the legislation did lead to minority student access to, sometimes, better facilities and materials, it did not, necessarily, lead minority students to better teaching and learning, much of the cultural and nurturing connections made with their teachers was now gone, as their teachers, schools and all things familiar were gone and now the question of the institutional, educational practices and how they impact minority students and educators is still largely unanswered or answered negatively. Such institutional practices in our nation's schools like the disproportional numbers of suspensions and expulsions of minority students and disproportionality of minority students in special education persist. Additionally, dropout rates among minority students remain high as does the achievement gap between White and minority students. These barriers, alone, serve to lessen the

numbers of qualified minority students for college and university enrollment. In college, the numbers point to not only difficulty for minority students in passing licensure exams but the lure of more lucrative careers for those who complete their studies. Once minority teachers make it to the field, their experiences of invisibility or relegation to certain roles and expectations is palpable. (Harrison, 2017, p. 49)

The teachers here, unconsciously, spoke to the tenet of “Whiteness as Property” (Ladson-Billings, 1998) in that they did not feel their race entitled them to any particular level of acceptance or even acknowledgement; however, they saw their counterparts readily accepted because of their Whiteness and being the overwhelming majority. Instead, what they saw for themselves is that their race created invisible barriers and hurdles for them to cross in gaining some semblance of visibility. They further pointed to misperceptions of their preparedness or “trustworthiness” to teach higher performing White children as they and their credentialing was not accepted at face value. Instead, as Deborah pointed out in her interview, she had to work twice as hard or as Ezekiel shared he had to prove himself and each year, had to repeat that process again and again of proving where White colleagues were not charged to do so.

### **Commitment to Social Justice of Middleboro Minority Educators**

Through their willingness to share their experiences we see a commitment to change in Middleboro, a desire to see things done differently or better for minority educators to come. Their desire for change became even more pronounced in what they shared as the outcome of a teacher induction program. For these participants, they readily saw the networking and sharing of supports and ideas inherent in teacher induction but they also saw the opportunity for induction to be its own change agent. The inevitable brainstorming, discussions and presentations in induction, the proximity it would provide them to not only other new and beginning colleagues but also administrators and district level policy makers and leaders would allow them to,

perhaps, be viewed as viable, credible and valuable parts of the academic environment of Middleboro and do much to promote that view throughout the community as well.

### **Interest Convergence in Middleboro**

To satisfy certain federal guidelines in hiring practices of minorities, there is intentionality in seeking and hiring minority teachers. “There has been considerable advancement through federal legislation post-*Brown vs. Board of Education* to the protection of employment rights of individuals, and which specifically prohibit employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. Federal Affirmative Action law further provides a legislative framework for the hiring and placement of minority workers (Smith, 2016). The legal message to employers, including school districts, is that employment practices had to be monitored for those that were exclusionary in effect as well as intent. In other words, the courts suggest that failure to eliminate either could result in a determination of employment discrimination (Smith, 2016). Policymakers fail to state what exactly schools, local authorities, and the government should be doing to escape the charge of institutional racism but instead places the responsibility for making race equality a central part of their functions on the schools, themselves. This is vague and makes the structuring of specific, statutory duties necessary. In education, the statutory instrument places specific duties on governing bodies of schools to “prepare a policy for promoting race equality, assess the impact of its policies, monitor, publish annually the results of its monitoring” (Parsons, 2008). In other words, left to the schools or any entities own devices, it leaves the monitoring of policy to that entity. And if there is no acknowledgement that racism even exists, then it serves to create a vicious circle of oppression against the very people policy was designed to protect.

The Middleboro District, then, is present at College Fairs and Career Events throughout the state in an attempt to hire teachers, to lure prospective, qualified applicants to the district – minority or otherwise. Middleboro further has its own Equal Employment Opportunity Policy which says, “The board shall not discriminate in its policies and practices with respect to compensation, terms or conditions of employment because of an individual’s race, color, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, height, weight, age marital status, political beliefs, disability, or handicap which does not impair an individual’s ability to perform adequately in that individual’s position or activity (Middleboro School District, 2016). But this is where that common interest between minority applicant and district ends. Once in the teaching position, Martha touched on and summarized that something in the undercurrent that pervades the treatment of minority educators in her interview when she said, simply, “Don’t misuse us because you know we want to be here or now we have to be here for a while because of family obligations and such. Treat us like we matter.”

### **Institutional Racism and its Daunting Effects**

On the one hand participants’ desire to see intentionality in how district leadership treats and addresses their concerns. They further desire to see a type of two-fold intentionality in the design of any induction programming--offering networking and support while creating an opportunity through its design for a cultural shift in attitudes toward minority personnel. While on the other, the district promotes a two-fold undercurrent of intentionality that is disturbing as it relates to minority educators as it negates and counteracts those hopes. The intentionality held by the district, instead, seems to undergird racist practices by way of institutional racism. Institutional racism is a name given to a process of differentiation and discrimination, but removes individual motive and responsibility from consideration. It attributes cause to the

operation of an entire system (Parsons, 2008). As mentioned earlier, there are federal guidelines--demands--placed on public entities that require there be policies enacted to protect certain minority groups but is left to that same entity to monitor and evaluate itself. So while these formal educational goals and mission statements may incorporate language promoting diversity and acceptance, informal policies and practices within institutions maintain the existent power structures within those same institutions (Hansman, Spencer, Grant & Jackson, 1999).

### **Exclusion of Minority Personnel from Leadership Positions**

The lack of leadership roles in such areas as department heads and academic coaching, the relegation of Black male personnel to the practice field or gymnasium, the placating or complete ignoring of concerns, the scheduling of students and teacher selection by parents prior to a school year even beginning bespeaks another kind of intentionality in design, too. Such practices are typical of institutional racism and tend to drive the relations between Middleboro School District and its minority staff. Taken from the article, “A White Teacher Reflects on Institutional Racism,” the author shares the following of a similar situation in a school in which she worked:

In one case an experienced African American male with a recent master’s degree was passed over in favor of a new graduate who was White. Both shared similar theoretical perspectives on current approaches to the teaching of reading and writing. The administration admitted that both were strong candidates but saw the young White teacher as having an edge because he interviewed well. They failed to recognize that the intangible edge during an interview will typically go to the person who most resembles those conducting the interview. If we rely on that subtle “impression” as the definitive factor, then people with different ethnic and racial backgrounds will almost always be at a disadvantage. What surprised and saddened me most, however, was that the administration could not see how critical it was for our African American students to have a strong academic role model and what an important contribution the minority candidate could have made to conversations on various issues within the school, particularly those related to the students of color. (Hanssen, 1998, pp. 695-696)

What was reflected by this author was a perfect summary of what Solomon, Naomi, Paul, and Deborah shared in their discussions of either their experiences in Middleboro or their perceptions. Moving the academic teachers to the gymnasium and replacing the coaching component of the head basketball coach's responsibility with an African American male yet replacing his academic duties with a White teacher speaks volumes about where the district sees minority educators excel and promotes the idea of worth for African American males being drawn from athletics. The exclusion and replacements sing a melody of support for the tenets of CRT very clearly as the social construct of race, Whiteness as property and validation of the experiences by these educators prevails loudly. The continued exclusion of minority educators in Middleboro in those key academic positions operates in discordant harmony with the hopes held by these very same educators for social change and social justice.

### **Teacher Selection and Ability Grouping**

As shared indirectly by Deborah, who spoke of her difficulties in being "trusted" to teach higher performing White children, Rachel and Esther, who spoke to the racial and ability composition of their classes, and Sarah, who expressly spoke of the teacher selection process, the district engages in a practice that promotes the superiority of certain teachers over other by virtue of their race. It further promotes an environment of "the haves and have nots, segregating individual schools in the district into Black and White classrooms. This practice mirrors closely the national climate of public education under this country's current leadership. Betsy Devos, Secretary of Education for the United States, is deeply committed to providing alternatives to public education through school choice, a theory of education reform that rests upon a belief that public education will get better if parents are given a choice in schools (Hale, 2017). This is

reminiscent of the establishment of schools for students of color while simultaneously informing the creation of alternatives to desegregation (Hale, 2017).

Barred from the American social order, Black educators, in effect were forced to rely upon private means to meet the educational needs of their own children. African Americans established schools controlled by the community. Such “community-controlled schools were by necessity administered by African Americans, taught by African Americans and attended by African Americans. These school matched the aspirations of a population that viewed education as an *entrée*’ into the upper echelons of professional society as well as the means to inculcate vocational skills that led to employment in a changing economy. (Hale, 2017)

Fast forward to our contemporary society, an honest perspective of the voucher system and charter schools really would not yield charter schools or even private schools for that matter. Instead, these would be community controlled schools that connect to a larger, historical reference steeped in the traditions of segregation (Hale, 2017).

Here in Middleboro, on a smaller scale, teacher choice does likewise in creating a school within a school concept. The practice of teacher selection is actually an elitist construct that suggest one teacher is better than another for teaching a certain group of students without even giving other teachers an opportunity. Often, the parents who take advantage of teacher selection are White and assign their children to White teachers. There exists in this framework an elitist privatization within the public school and by promoting this policy, the district does much to keep in place those structures that serve to oppress. To compound issues even further, is the issue of tracking. Again, as referenced in the interviews, the grouping of lower achieving students (often minority students) into ability groups and relegated to minority teachers further fuels the chasm already created by teacher selection. It creates a divide among the students and teachers and flies in the face of what research suggests about the benefits of heterogeneous grouping (Hanssen, 1998).

The evidence provided through the participants' interviews made it difficult to say if the experiential knowledge shared by these participants is an articulation of the region. Much of what they shared is echoed in research with minority educators around the country, particularly those educators in rural settings no matter the location of the rurality. From Wyoming to Louisiana in the previous studies, much of what was shared here was shared in some respects there, as well (Castaneda et al., 2006; McCoy, 2006). What was very clear was that race and racism impact each of these educators professionally and consequently, personally, each day that they enter their classrooms.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Not having a substantial pool of participants from which to draw was a limitation. The district personnel office was very helpful for me in verifying those minority teachers with 1-5 years within the district; however, they did not go further in sharing any additional placements that applicants may have held. Four resulting categories did emerge in the research based on the information provided via the Participant Data Sheets. Those categories were (1) New Educator--having taught 1-5 years, all experience gained in Middleboro; (2) Beginning Educator--having taught 1-5 years, experience(s) outside Middleboro and in Middleboro within that period of time; (3) Beginning Middleboro Educator--having taught 1-5 years in Middleboro but combined experiences exceed 5 years; and (4) Veteran Middleboro Educator--having taught in Middleboro more than 5 years. The advantage there was that within the beginning educator and beginning Middleboro educator is where I had the richest responses to induction as some had the experience of participating in an induction program in previous settings but all participants in each category were able to acknowledge the benefits of induction to their overall teaching experience--either imagined or actually experienced.

Additionally, in each of the core subject areas, the numbers of minority teachers district-wide were even lower than I realized in arranging the study as I went higher in grade levels. There is only one minority teacher, Grades 5-12 in one of the core subject areas, beginning or otherwise. In another core subject area, there are only 5 minority teachers, Grades 5-12. Four are Grades 5-12; 1 is Grades 9-12. Of that 5, only 3 are new. In yet another core, there are 6 minority teachers--5 of them are Grades 5-12. Of that number, 1 is retiring and 2 are leaving the district, leaving only 2 beginning teachers. The final core had 5 minority teachers, 4 of whom were Grades 5-12 and only 2 who were new or beginning. Additionally, in Grades 5-6, two of the core courses are actually hybrid courses in that they are taught by the same instructor, during the same class period so the number of instructors in two of the core subjects is actually the same instructor, twice. I would have liked to have delved further into that phenomenon of being the only instructor or the only instructor in a particular grade band but to do so would compromise confidentiality. Also, though I wanted to compare experiences in one grade band of one subject to another, because of the limited number of minority educators in the district, it would have been an identifying factor and thus, comprise confidentiality.

### **Implications for Policymakers**

There were immediate as well as long-term implication goals for district-level policymakers that seemed to arise from the perspectives shared by these participants. The primary implications tended to arise in the areas of the developing and facilitating of a true, systematic induction program for all teachers in Middleboro and efforts to address and acknowledging institutional racism as it applies to minority staff in Middleboro School District. In all, the participants suggested Middleboro move forward through its practice and policies in acknowledging the contributions and valuing the worth of minority educators.

## **Development and Implementation of Teacher Induction Program**

When asked what are some practices identified by teachers that the district has instituted and/or promoted that have led to successful induction strategies for minority faculty, Ezekiel said the same thing as the other participants--nothing--but he further articulated that district leadership did have in place people at his campus who saw the need to provide something. So indirectly the district was responsible for the school level leadership that responded to new and beginning teachers' needs through implementing their own programs. It is admirable, as Ezekiel pointed out, that individual schools or individuals within schools recognized the need for providing some structure to support new teachers. The mentors described by participants at their respective campuses did so simply because their leader asked. Some campuses seem to be more accepting and more inclusive of its new and beginning minority personnel than others but the efforts of those from campus leadership to provide mentoring supports and/or assign veteran teachers to new teachers or efforts from individual teachers who created informal mentoring opportunities are a great foundations upon which to build. Being a new teacher is hard and demanding. Being a new minority teacher is hard, demanding and laced with undertones of prejudicial contexts of which they must navigate and try to succeed, often being the only one or only one of few in that setting. What is needed, however, is a district-led, district-wide, systemic and intentional approach to providing supports for all new educators that is reflective of the elements of induction. Another implication is the researching and implementing of a comprehensive induction program for Middleboro School District New and Beginning Educators.

Each interviewee either said they would like to see a formal teacher induction program implemented in Middleboro or certain elements of formal teacher induction infused throughout

the new teacher induction experience here in Middleboro. As shared earlier, formal teacher induction is comprised of (a) multi-year support for new teachers lasting at least two years; (b) structured instructional mentoring from carefully selected and trained veterans who coach new teachers using a repertoire of strategies; (c) common planning time with other teachers; (d) frequent and formative standards-based assessment based upon a continuum of teacher development and individual goal setting; (e) embedded and ongoing professional development activities; (f) evidence-based reflection that uses data to drive teacher instructional decision making to best meet the needs of students; (g) teacher networking that takes advantage of this generation's ability to communicate readily through technology, and (h) strong principal leadership (Sun, 2012). Those participants that reflected the need for professional developments were clear that those professional developments should reflect their expressed needs and should include presenters of all races. Some of the areas of professional development informed by this study and these participants include (a) classroom management as participants often mentioned being thought capable of dealing with more difficult students just by virtue of their race, (b) finding a voice among colleagues--strategies for how to be recognized for their contributions and craft in the field here in Middleboro, and (c) providing them voice, seeking their inputs as professionals on specific topics of interest and concern to them. Those that expressed a desire for mentoring were very clear about the mentor needing training to adequately perform those duties. All participants felt that administrative presence should be a visible and viable part of the mentoring and/or induction process from beginning to end, district-wide.

**The importance of formal teacher induction for minority educators.** For the minority educator, not only are the aforementioned induction tasks of induction and subsequent outcomes important but they represent much in the way of inclusivity and acknowledgement--much of

what the participants saw was lacking in their own experiences. Minority educators often have to address feelings of even further isolation, often being one of a small number of minority educators in a given school or district; having to further prove one's preparedness and aptitude and having ideas being heard and respected as an educator by administration, parents, students, and peers (Castaneda et al., 2006, p. 18). For rural educators in the south, these feelings seem to be even more magnified as undertones of prejudice persist (McCoy, 2006) as somewhat evidenced here in the challenges this group of educators face each day. Deborah's experience highlights more than even the others in this predicament. The expectations of Paul's peers that he exhibit a certain "Blackness" in speech and in dealing with students, Esther's acceptance within her subject area group seemingly because she attended a historically White university in the state are all indicators the undertone that exists for minority educators here in Middleboro. Efforts that target the first years of teaching are critical to combatting the "sink or swim" environments that new teachers--both White and of color--experience and impact their perceived self and collective effectiveness and efficacy and retention in schools. (Partee, 2014). It was interesting that both Ruth and Sarah spoke analogously of their first experience in terms of having been thrown in deep water and having to learn to swim or drown. Induction could be so critical to the concept of empowering teachers to work collaboratively and independently across district and racial lines in crafting their skills.

**The importance of formal teacher induction for minority educators in Middleboro.**

It was interesting that many of the participants viewed the possibility of an induction program as not only a much-needed support and networking possibility but a powerful tool in public relations both within and outside district. As the district and community are small, they looked at the collaborative and collegial nature inherent in the induction process as a means of promoting

the worth, credibility and expertise of minority educators throughout the community--additional components not articulated in the overall outcomes of formal teacher induction programs but relevant and important to this group of educators. Through the bringing together of new and veteran teachers of all races coupled with administration in a formal induction program, the process itself could mark the beginning of a cultural shift in this district. With its professional developments, mentoring, networking in and outside individual school buildings; through meetings and discussions with new teachers and veterans on a routine basis over the course of a year or even two years, the process itself could not only serve as a building tool for a stronger, more cohesive district atmosphere but could certainly be a catalyst for change. For Middleboro, induction could bring with it opportunities to see fellow educators, no matter their ethnicity, as true colleagues and experts in their fields. It could, they felt, afford the opportunity to be seen in a different light and by more than just those with whom they share a building. Further it could provide a platform for some of the misperceptions of minority educators and their preparedness and ability to be dispelled.

For the participants, many of them spoke to the need for strong, substantive and inclusive programs that include real mentoring from mentors trained to do the task with fidelity, illustrating mastery in such concepts as--teaching strategies, classroom management techniques, lesson planning, etc., but also in life concerns of new teachers. For Solomon who experienced the passing of family members, it would have been a great asset to have a seasoned professional on which to call for support and for that person to acknowledge their human feelings and respond in kind. Naomi was the one who most eloquently said, "Being open to the kind of dialog that could be shared in induction between new teachers of all races, veteran teachers and

administrators could serve in this district as a powerful catalyst for promoting understanding and respect among people of all races. It could be a start in making us visible.”

Though one of the stated reasons induction programs are not pursued in this country is due to cost of implementation, much of what the participants shared here was very cost-effective in implementing a program. Solomon mentioned in his previous experience that his mentor was the district Math Coordinator, someone already in the district. Naomi mentioned having teachers and other personnel identified as successful within district to serve as presenters in professional developments. Mentors could be comprised of veteran teachers whose incentive may be something as simple as a paid day off throughout the semester or additional planning time throughout the semester. The training tools and professional development workshops mentors may need to attend may cost but certainly, that does not compare to the financial and human capital lost when teachers, especially minority teachers not well represented from the onset, leave the field.

### **Addressing the “Elephant in the Room,” the Perception of Racism and Invisibility of Middleboro Minority Educators and the District’s Call to Respond**

Voice and visibility and the perceived lack thereof among study participants, was a topic so often repeated in not only these educators but in numerous studies of African American and minority educators across the country that it honestly could be its own course at a university or topic of study for further research. Much of what they articulated here in Middleboro spoke to the culture of a district that through its policies and practices, intentionally or not, promotes a culture of mistrust in the abilities of minority educators to teach effectively and limited opportunities for them to advance, of institutional racism. From Esther being more accepted by colleagues because “she’s not fully Black” due to her college affiliation to Deborah who was given a mixed ability, mixed race class make up but not trusted fully to teach them by parents or

administration and consequently miserable because every step she takes is scrutinized to Naomi who feels not at all successful with her administrators as not a single concern or suggestion she has rendered has ever been acknowledged or taken to heart, the experiences of these educators as presented in these interviews were quite telling. Yet another, rather immediate, implication is to address the uncomfortable “elephant in the room,” the perception of and experienced racism of Middleboro minority educators.

Unlike overt racism, which is readily recognizable (denying housing to an African American couple but offering the same to a White couple, not allowing entry at certain restaurants based on race, White Only and Colored Only Restrooms, etc.) and has mostly been addressed through civil rights legislation in the 60s, institutional racism maintains that there exists a contradiction between the formal policies and procedures enacted to protect minority groups from discrimination and prejudicial acts while promoting informal policies and practices that hold in place certain structures and procedures that favor the majority culture (Hanssen, 1998; Hansman et al., 1999). At the time of hiring, for example, institutional racism can affect how qualifications are perceived and weighed, in ways that systematically disadvantage Black relative to White applicants. In a situation where a person is clearly qualified or clearly unqualified for a job, bias is seldom expressed because the appropriate decision is clear. However, bias is expected when the appropriate decision is ambiguous (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2005), as evidenced here in the promoting of minority to leadership positions. Much of what the participants in Middleboro shared lends itself to institutional racism and its devastating effect on their professional growth and feelings of worth.

In response to these feelings of marginalization, district-level policymakers have a call to address racism, intentional or otherwise, districtwide. Because of its pervasiveness, subtlety and

complexity, the traditional techniques for eliminating bias that have emphasized discrimination are not useful in addressing institutional racism. It simply must be addressed at multiple levels (Dovido & Gaertner, 2005). The immediate implication for Middleboro School District policymakers is to provide a platform for acknowledging and addressing the feelings of minority educators in the district. Through needs assessment, suggestion boxes or direct contact with administrators, the floor has to be opened for discussions of race, prejudice and how the perception of such impacts its minority educators. In addition, whatever the platform, minority educators must be afforded the safety to speak on such issues without fear of repercussion or jeopardizing their positions. This is not an easy task, not a comfortable task but a necessary one if the district holds recruiting and maintaining minority educators as a priority. If leadership feels ill-equipped to start such conversations, they may look to consult with agencies designed to promote diversity for mediation activities or mediation counselors. Then after the listening has been done, it is important that Middleboro School District Policymakers respond in a fashion that shows support and a willingness to change certain practices that dominate the culture of the district and alienate its minority educators.

For example, Sarah spoke to the practice of teacher selection by parents and how it has served as a challenge to her as a professional educator. Deborah shared in her interview that the practice in the district is to, “give the Black children to the Black teachers, especially the difficult ones” and that now because she has some classes that have White students, she is not fully trusted to provide the instruction to them. The district by promoting such a policy is endorsing institutional racism, intentionally or not. No matter the intent of the policy, the district has a responsibility to remove such a practice and communicate to its parents and community their faith and trust in each teacher’s ability to provide quality education. Only when a teacher has

demonstrated a lack of ability in that regard, should there be an addressing of parents concerns to include student placement. Further, Middleboro has a responsibility to promote the ideals of research that point to heterogeneous grouping and cultural appreciation and awareness as research-based, best practices designed to increase the achievement of all students.

Solomon, Naomi, and Ruth all shared that within the positions of academic coaches, instructional coaches and department heads, there are few minorities in Middleboro District who hold such positions. Each of these positions, though not administrative, are positions of leadership (as Solomon pointed out) that encourage collegial cooperation and working together with colleagues to enact ideas and strategies that might help students better grasp concepts and make greater gains in achievement. The district composition, alone, suggests that more minority students are in need of additional remediation strategies but the opportunities for minority educators to provide such input and ideas in these positions are provided. Additionally, their input is not sought or acknowledged in providing strategies and supports that might better reach these students. These are just two examples that could be easily and quickly addressed with long term implications for better acknowledgement and appreciation of the talents and contributions of minority educators in the Middleboro School District.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The premise of this study should certainly be further explored with minority educators across the country. Much of what was shared by participants in this study was shared by other participants in similar studies as presented in the literature review. The emotional impact of being one of only a few or the only minority represented in a school and all of the implications that holds from being held suspect to being invisible varies so much from one participant to the other. But the question of what to do with the information and how best to address it among

minority teachers even beyond induction remains. Perhaps an online survey could be generated from the U.S. Department of Education to be conducted with new and beginning teachers countrywide that looks at their needs as a beginning teacher and allows feedback for any needs they may have as it relates to race and prejudice. Perhaps the results of the survey and these studies could be analyzed further by the department to provide guidance to states and districts in the building and implementing of induction programs designed to meet the needs of its teachers.

Further, it would be interesting to hear the perspectives of White Educators in their assessment of their induction experiences as a comparative study. It would also be interesting to hear from the perspectives of students on such topics as minority teacher presence and value, their thoughts on institutional barriers that present themselves in the school setting, etc.

The two-fold outcomes of teacher induction as presented by these educators was fascinating as it delved into not only the internal supports of efficacy, networking and collaboration held as traditional outcomes of the teacher induction process but new, resulting external ones of culture and community change. As the cultural implications of induction for rural communities, especially, was not referenced in the literature as it relates to minority educators and their perceptions in districts, this, too, is worthy of further research.

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APPENDIX A:

LETTER TO MIDDLEBORO SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT  
REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

March 2, 2017

Superintendent of Schools, Middleboro School District  
P.O. Box 540  
Middleboro, MS 39602

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Superintendent of Schools:

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study with teachers in the Middleboro School District. I am currently a doctoral student at the University of Alabama, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled Induction Experiences of Minority Teachers in a Rural Mississippi School District.

I hope to interview beginning and veteran minority teachers and gauge the positives the district provides in promoting their wanting to stay in education in this community. Nationally, teacher turnover is a crisis and minority teacher turnover is particularly daunting, especially as our minority student population rises. It is my additional hope that the information obtained will be of benefit to ours and similar districts in providing those structures that promote teacher retention, particularly among minority teachers.

If approval is granted, I will conduct two interviews with teacher participants, approximately 30-45 minutes in length. The interviews will be conducted at a mutually agreed upon location and outside of the school day. The results will be synthesized in the final projects and implications for policymakers shared upon request. The thesis project and individual results of this study will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. Should this study be published, only synthesized results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either your district or the individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. You may contact me at my email address: [ljharrison@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:ljharrison@crimson.ua.edu).

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Alternatively, kindly submit a signed letter of permission on your institution's letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this survey/study at your institution.

Sincerely,

LaRenda J. Harrison, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Enclosures

cc: Dr. Roxanne Mitchell, Dissertation Committee Chair and Advisor

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print your name and title here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX B:

LETTER FROM MIDDLEBORO SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT  
GRANTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

March 2, 2017

IRB Number: 8840

Title of Research: Induction Experiences of Minority Teachers in  
A Rural Mississippi School District

Researcher: LaRenda Janee' Harrison

To the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, AL, Institutional Review Board,  
As a representative of the Middleboro School District, I confirm that the school district grants permission for the proposed research to be conducted once IRB approval has been obtained. The research will take place in each of the 5 mainstream campuses but primarily outside of school grounds.

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

This letter confirms that the school district has policies and procedures in place as required by the PPRA and the proposed study complies with these policies.

*If applicable, check one of the following:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Written consent to disclose student information is required.

\_\_\_\_\_ Written consent to disclose student information is not required. The school district has entered into use-restriction and data security promises with the investigator in accordance with PPRA.

\_\_\_\_\_The research does not fall under FERPA Guidelines.

**Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)**

*Check one of the following:*

\_\_\_\_\_ The research falls under PPRA regulations and the IRB cannot waive written parental permission and the research proposal includes plans to adhere to PPRA regulations.

\_\_\_\_\_ The research does not fall under PPRA regulations.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of School District Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title of School District Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of School District Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX C:  
TELEPHONE INTRODUCTION OF RESEARCH STUDY FOR  
RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

**Study Title: Induction Experiences of Minority Educators in a Rural Mississippi District**

**Investigator's Name: LaRenda Janee' Harrison, Doctoral Student in Educational Administration**

**Institution: The University of Alabama**

Telephone Introduction of Research Study for Research Participants

Hi, this is LaRenda Harrison (Janee'). I am calling in regard to a research study I am conducting through the University of Alabama in completion of my dissertation. This research study is entitled, "Induction Experiences of Minority Teachers in a Rural Mississippi School District." I would be honored for you to assist me by participating in this study! Middleboro School District is aware of my research topic and has provided approval to conduct research. The data collection for this study is comprised of a Participant Data Sheet and two face-to-face, 30-45 minute interviews. If you would provide me your preferred address, I would like to send you an official letter that further describes the nature of the research and includes the participant data sheet. None of the questions will ask you about personal matters and your answers will be kept confidential. Further, while I do not anticipate any risks with your involvement in this study, your name will not be used but a pseudonym to further protect your interests. Your participation will hopefully help the district and other districts similar in size and composition to ours capitalize on their strengths in the induction and retaining of minority teachers while revisiting those policies and/or protocols that are perceived challenges to minority teachers' growth and retention. Thank you for speaking with me and thank you, in advance, for any assistance you can offer in this study.

APPENDIX D:  
INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

**Study Title: Induction Experiences of Minority Educators in a Rural Mississippi District**

**Investigator's Name: LaRenda Janee' Harrison, Doctoral Student in Educational Administration**

**Institution: The University of Alabama**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

This is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Doctoral degree in Educational Administration at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa under the supervision of **Dr. Roxanne Mitchell**. The study is called Induction Experiences of Minority Educators in a Rural Mississippi District. The following questions and answers detail information I would like to share with you about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

**Question 1: Is the researcher being paid for this study?**

No, the researcher is not being compensated for this study.

**Question 2: Is the research developing a product that will be sold, and if so, will the investigator profit from it?**

No, the research is not developing a product that will be sold.

**Question 3: Does the investigator have any conflict of interest in this study?**

No, the investigator does not have any conflict of interest.

**Question 4: What is this study about? What is the investigator trying to learn?**

Teacher Turnover is at epic proportions throughout the country and is costing our nation's school districts billions of dollars, as each time a teacher leaves, he or she takes with him what the district invested and then causes the district to start afresh with recruiting personnel to replace. Minority teacher turnover is particularly daunting as the numbers of minority teachers and applicants is far lower than those of their White counterparts. As our minority student populations continue to rise in our nation's schools, it is important that we retain teachers with whom they share cultural connections in bridging achievements. Induction is being heralded as a means of offering support, networking and a sense of professionalism and purpose--a key element in retaining teachers in the field, particularly minority teachers. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to reflect on your induction experience as a minority teacher here in the Middleboro School District.

**Question 5: Why is this study important or useful?**

This study will focus on those strategies and experiences that have led to your wanting to remain here in the district so that policymakers may capitalize on those strengths while also looking at some of your challenges that, if organizational, can be reduced or eliminated to promote retention.

**Question 6: Why have I been asked to be in this study? How many people will be in this study?**

You have been asked to participate in this study as either a minority educator in the Middleboro School District who has been teaching 5 or fewer years as data suggest that the most significant amount of teacher turnover occurs within the first 3 – 5 years of teaching (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016) or as a veteran minority teachers (those with 6 or more years).

Using purposive sampling, eight teachers who make up the beginning teacher criteria listed above have been contacted initially along with 3 veteran educators-teachers having taught in the district for more than five years, to ask for their participation in this research. Their purpose in the study is to offer insight from a more seasoned perspective of minority educators in the district.

Participant selection of the initial eight beginning teachers has been established according to Core Subject Area Teachers, because of their impact with larger numbers of students coupled with the demands of curricular and instructional expectations, followed by beginning Special Education and Elective Teachers. For veteran teachers, one elementary teacher; one secondary teacher and one special education teacher will be contacted.

**Question 7: What will I be asked to do in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a participant data sheet and take part in two interviews.

**Question 8: How much time will I spend being in this study?**

The study will consist two interview of approximately 30-45 minutes in length to take place in a location you determine. Also, the participant data sheet, which you complete prior to the interview, may take approximately 15 minutes to complete. At most, you may spend approximately 1:45 minutes in this study.

**Question 9: Will being in this study cost me anything? Will I be compensated for being in this study?**

The only cost to you from this study is your time. And in appreciation of your time, you will receive a \$10 gift card to a local restaurant for completing both the participant data sheet and both interviews. If you start the study but do not finish, you will receive a coupon to a local restaurant instead.

**Question 10: Can the investigator take me out of this study?**

I may take you out of the study if I feel the study is too upsetting to you, though I do not see this as a concern.

**Question 11: What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. The risk of your becoming tired from the interview has been minimized by two interview sessions rather than one; however, we can add breaks or reschedule should you need. If I find that the process is upsetting, I may, again, opt to remove you from the study.

**Question 12: What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?**

While there are no direct benefits to you, your input may help other educators have more positive experiences as they enter teaching as a profession.

**Question 13: What are the benefits to science or society?**

The benefit of this study is to offer research based implications for policymakers and administrators that may be useful in improving the induction and overall teaching experiences of minority educators while decreasing attrition rates among minority educators in the Middleboro School District. Results of this study will hopefully prove helpful to district leadership in developing more inclusive strategies in induction and retention that promote attracting and sustaining minority teachers in core subject areas, particularly, thus improving visibility and cultural connections for our growing minority student population in attempts to further bridge minority student achievement gaps in our district. Further, the information gathered in this study may assist other districts with similar demographics among student and minority teacher populations in instituting programs that promote better retention among minority teachers.

**Question 14: How will my privacy be protected?**

The study will consist two interview of approximately 30-45 minutes in length to take place in a location you determine. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher.

**Question 15: How will my confidentiality be safeguarded?**

All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. ID numbers will be used for notes resulting from interview data. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Upon completion of this study, all audio recordings will be erased. Shortly after the interview has been completed and data transcribed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or

clarify any points that you wish. All information obtained will be kept in a locked file cabinet at my home. Only researchers associated with this project (Dr. Mitchell and I) will have access.

**Question 16: What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?**

The alternative to being in this study is not to participate.

**Question 17: What are my rights as a participant in this study?**

Taking part in this study is strictly voluntary. If you start the study, you can stop at any time.

There will be no effect on your relations with me or the University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

**Question 18: Who do I call if I have questions or problems?**

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at **205-535-6784** or by e-mail at **ljharrison@crimson.ua.edu**. You can also contact my supervisor, **Dr. Roxanne Mitchell** at **rmitchell@ua.edu**

If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, please call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348-8461 or toll free at 1-877-820-3066.

If you have any comments, suggestions, concerns or complaints resulting from your participation in this study, please contact the IRB Outreach website at [http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO\\_Welcome.html](http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html) or email the Research Compliance office at [participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu](mailto:participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu).

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

LaRenda Janee' Harrison, Researcher, The University of Alabama

CC: Dr. Roxanne Mitchell, Faculty Advisor and Doctoral Dissertation Committee Chairperson

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I have read this consent form. I have had chance to ask questions. I agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

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Signature of Research Participant

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Date

Yes, I agree to be have my interview audio recorded.

No, I do not agree to have my interview audio recorded; however, I will participate in the interview process.

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Signature of Investigator

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Date

APPENDIX E:  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

## Interview Questions for Beginning Educators

### Part One Interview Questions

1. What encouraged you to become a teacher and how does it coincide with your educational philosophy?
2. What led you to the Middleboro School District?
3. What are some challenges that you believe you face as a minority educator, in general?
4. To what do you attribute those challenges? Explain.
5. Do you feel successful as a teacher? What are some things that make you feel successful?
6. How do you feel about being a minority teacher among a predominantly White faculty? How are you included personally? How is your perspective solicited or received?
7. What do you believe to be your impact as a minority teacher in this district?
8. If you plan on remaining in education what are some reasons why?

### Part Two Interview Questions

1. Reflect on your induction experience in the Middleboro School District thus far. What is your induction story?
2. From your studies or personal experiences, what do you know about formal teacher induction? In what ways has your induction experience here been what you anticipated and in what ways has it not?
3. If you have been assigned a mentor, can you describe that relationship? What do you see as the overall goal of the mentoring process?
4. What are some factors that the district has instituted and/or promoted that have led to a successful induction process for you as a minority educator here?
5. What are some practices or policies related to induction that could assist minority faculty to have a more successful experience?
6. What are some practices or policies you would like to see done differently or put in place in the induction process to promote your further success as a minority educator among your predominantly White colleagues?
7. What is one specific outcome you hope would arise from this study as it relates to minority educators in this district?

8. Is there anything else you'd like to share on which I haven't touched?

### Interview Questions for Veteran Educators

#### Part One Interview Questions

1. What encouraged you to become a teacher and how does it coincide with your educational philosophy?
2. How has your educational philosophy changed from when you first began? Why?
3. What led you to the Middleboro School District?
4. Why did you choose to stay in the Middleboro School District?
5. What are some challenges that you have faced as a minority educator?
6. To what do you attribute those challenges? Explain.
7. How did you overcome your challenges or do they still exist? Explain.
8. Do you feel successful? How? Explain.
9. What do you believe has been your impact or legacy as a veteran minority teacher here in this school or this district?

#### Part Two Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your induction experience in the Middleboro School District. Of what did it consist? What is your induction story?
2. From your studies or previous experience, if applicable, what do you know about formal teacher induction? In what ways has your experience here been what you anticipated and in what ways has it not?
3. In what ways might a formal induction program have enhanced your overall experience in this district?
4. What are some factors that the district has instituted and/or promoted that have led to a successful induction process for you as a minority educator here?
5. What are some things you would like to see done differently or put in place in the induction process to promote your further success as a minority educator among your predominantly White colleagues?

6. What are some additional practices or policies not related to induction that you would like to see in this district to further promote your success?
7. What is one specific outcome you hope would arise from this study as it relates to minority educators in this district?
8. Is there anything else you'd like to share on which I haven't touched?

APPENDIX F:  
DATA SHEET FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS



3. What is your educational philosophy?

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4. What subject area do you teach? Is that your area of study?

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5. How many years teaching experience do you have? Is this your first teaching assignment?

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APPENDIX G:

E-MAIL CORRESPONDENCE TO PARTICIPANTS FOR ATTACHMENTS OF INFORMED  
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION AND PARTICIPANT DATA SHEET

Dear Participant,

Per our conversation, thank you so much for agreeing to take a look at my project and potentially participate! Having support in getting to this milestone is golden for me, as I shared when we spoke. Please find attached the official description of the project/Informed Consent for Participation in Research as well as a Participant Data Sheet. If you agree to participate, please submit both documents back to me via your most desired means of communication. I will provide you copies of what you shared should you desire. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me! I will touch bases with you soon! Thank you, again!

LaRenda J. Harrison

APPENDIX H:

E-MAIL CORRESPONDENCE EXAMPLE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS  
FOR MEMBER CHECK OF TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

Dear Participant,

Let me update you on my progress!! I made it! I defend either sometime in late September (this month) or early October! I know that any accomplishments made thus far were due in large part to your participation and I so appreciate you! One of my final reviews of the dissertation is to touch bases with each interviewee for what is called a member check, a final run-through fo the interview. What I have attached is the raw version of our interview together, taken strictly from the audio recording and notes. Please note the following:

1. To ensure confidentiality, each interviewee was given a pseudonym. I chose names from the Bible. You are Deborah.
2. The District appears as Middleboro School District.
3. I took out distinguishing words and phrases in the actual finished document. If anything here appears distinguishing, it has been addressed in the final dissertation.

That being said, would you please give the transcript one last review by Friday and determine if there is anything else you may like to add? I know this is fast but I have a publishing deadline on October 27<sup>th</sup> and want to cover as many bases as I can prior to the defense because I know there will be other areas my committee will ask me to address.

Since Thanksgiving is an underrated holiday but I am so thankful to each participant, I will provide you the actual abstract, interview results as they appear in the finished document, implications and gift card to show my appreciation. I know this is long in coming but out-of-pocket tuition and editing expenses has gotten the very best of me.

Thank you so much!

APPENDIX J:

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FOR  
RESEARCH PROJECT, "INDUCTION EXPERIENCES OF MINORITY EDUCATORS IN A  
RURAL MISSISSIPPI DISTRICT"

May 8, 2017

LaRenda Harrison  
ELPTS  
College of Education  
Box 870302

Re: IRB # 17-OR-170, "Induction Experiences of Minority Teachers in a Rural Mississippi School District"

Dear Ms. Harrison:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

*(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.*

Your application will expire on May 7, 2018. If your research will continue beyond this date, please complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, please complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, please complete the Request for Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved stamped consent forms to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Stuart Usdan, Ph.D.  
Chair, Non-Medical IRB  
The University of Alabama

**Study Title: Induction Experiences of Minority Educators in a Rural Mississippi District**

**Investigator's Name: LaRenda Janee' Harrison, Doctoral Student in Educational Administration**

**Institution: The University of Alabama**

Dear

You are being asked to take part in a research study I am conducting as part of my Doctoral degree in Educational Administration at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa under the supervision of **Dr. Roxanne Mitchell**. The study is called Induction Experiences of Minority Educators in a Rural Mississippi District. The following questions and answers detail information I would like to share with you about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

**Question: Is the researcher being paid for this study?**

No, the researcher is not being compensated for this study.

**Question: Is the research developing a product that will be sold, and if so, will the investigator profit from it?**

No, the research is not developing a product that will be sold.

**Question: Does the investigator have any conflict of interest in this study?**

No, the investigator does not have any conflict of interest.

**Question: What is this study about? What is the investigator trying to learn?**

Teacher Turnover is at epic proportions throughout the country and is costing our nation's school districts billions of dollars, as each time a teacher leaves, he or she takes with him what the district invested and then causes the district to start afresh with recruiting personnel to replace. Minority teacher turnover is particularly daunting as the numbers of minority teachers and applicants is far lower than those of their White counterparts. As our minority student populations continue to rise in our nation's schools, it is important that we retain teachers with whom they share cultural connections in bridging achievements. Induction is being heralded as a means of offering support, networking and a sense of professionalism and purpose - a key

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EXPIRATION DATE: **S-7-11**

element in retaining teachers in the field, particularly minority teachers. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to reflect on your induction experience as a minority teacher here in the Brookhaven School District.

**Question: Why is this study important or useful?**

This study will focus on those strategies and experiences that have led to your wanting to remain here in the district so that policymakers may capitalize on those strengths while also looking at some of your challenges that, if organizational, can be reduced or eliminated to promote retention.

**Question: Why have I been asked to be in this study? How many people will be in this study?**

You have been asked to participate in this study as either a minority educator in the Brookhaven School District who has been teaching 5 or fewer years as data suggest that the most significant amount of teacher turnover occurs within the first 3 - 5 years of teaching (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016) or as a veteran minority teachers (those with 6 or more years).

Using purposive sampling, eight teachers who make up the beginning teacher criteria listed above have been contacted initially along with 3 veteran educators-teachers having taught in the district for more than five years, to ask for their participation in this research. Their purpose in the study is to offer insight from a more seasoned perspective of minority educators in the district.

Participant selection of the initial eight beginning teachers has been established according to Core Subject Area Teachers, because of their impact with larger numbers of students coupled with the demands of curricular and instructional expectations, followed by beginning Special Education and Elective Teachers. For veteran teachers, one elementary teacher; one secondary teacher and one special education teacher will be contacted.

**Question: What will I be asked to do in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a participant data sheet and take part in two interviews. The interviews will be conducted approximately 2-3 days apart.

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EXPIRATION DATE: - 7-18

**Question: How much time will I spend being in this study?**

The study will consist two interview of approximately 30-45 minutes in length to take place in a location you determine. Also, the participant data sheet, which you complete prior to the interview, may take approximately 15 minutes to complete. At most, you may spend approximately 1:45 minutes in this study.

**Question: Will being in this study cost me anything? Will I be compensated for being in this study?**

The only cost to you from this study is your time. And in appreciation of your time, you will receive a \$10 gift card to a local restaurant for completing both the participant data sheet and both interviews. If you start the study but do not finish, you will receive a coupon to a local restaurant instead.

**Question: Can the investigator take me out of this study?**

I may take you out of the study if I feel the study is too upsetting to you, though I do not see this as a concern.

**Question: What are the risks (dangers or harms) to me if I am in this study?**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. The risk of your becoming tired from the interview has been minimized by two interview sessions rather than one; however, we can add breaks or reschedule should you need. If I find that the process is upsetting, I may, again, opt to remove you from the study.

**Question: What are the benefits (good things) that may happen if I am in this study?**

While there are no direct benefits to you, your input may help other educators have more positive experiences as they enter teaching as a profession.

**Question: What are the benefits to science or society?**

The benefit of this study is to offer research based implications for policymakers and administrators that may be useful in improving the induction and overall teaching experiences of minority educators while decreasing attrition rates among minority educators in the Brookhaven School District. Results of this study will hopefully prove helpful to district leadership in

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CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 5-B-17  
EXPIRATION DATE: 8-7-11

developing more inclusive strategies in induction and retention that promote attracting and sustaining minority teachers in core subject areas, particularly, thus improving visibility and cultural connections for our growing minority student population in attempts to further bridge minority student achievement gaps in our district. Further, the information gathered in this study may assist other districts with similar demographics among student and minority teacher populations in instituting programs that promote better retention among minority teachers.

**Question: How will my privacy be protected?**

The interviews will take place in a private area where the conversation cannot be overheard by others. Additionally, we will conduct the interviews in a location that you determine.

**Question: How will my confidentiality be safeguarded?**

All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. ID numbers will be used for notes resulting from interview data. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Upon completion of this study, all audio recordings will be erased. Shortly after the interview has been completed and data transcribed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information obtained will be kept in a locked file cabinet at my home. Only researchers associated with this project (Dr. Mitchell and I) will have access.

**Question: What are the alternatives to being in this study? Do I have other choices?**

The alternative to being in this study is not to participate.

**Question: What are my rights as a participant in this study?**

Taking part in this study is strictly voluntary. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. There will be no effect on your relations with me or the University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board is the committee that protects the rights of people in research studies. The IRB may review study records from time to time to be sure

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CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 7-17  
EXPIRATION DATE: 7-11

that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.

**Question: Who do I call if I have questions or problems?**

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at **205-535-6784** or by e-mail at **ljharrison@crimson.ua.edu**. You can also contact my supervisor, **Dr. Roxanne Mitchell** at **rmitchell@ua.edu**

If you have questions about your rights as a person in a research study, please call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer of the University, at 205-348-8461 or toll free at 1-877-820-3066.

If you have any comments, suggestions, concerns or complaints resulting from your participation in this study, please contact the IRB Outreach website at [http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO\\_Welcome.html](http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html) or email the Research Compliance office at [participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu](mailto:participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu).

After you participate, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that is online at the outreach website or you may ask the investigator for a copy of it and mail it to the University Office for Research Compliance, Box 870127, 358 Rose Administration Building, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0127

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

LaRenda Janee' Harrison, Researcher, The University of Alabama

CC: Dr. Roxanne Mitchell, Faculty Advisor and Doctoral Dissertation Committee Chairperson

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IRB  
CONSENT FORM APPROVED: 8/6/11  
EXPIRATION DATE: 1/7--11

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I have read this consent form. I have had chance to ask questions. I agree to take part in it. I will receive a copy of this consent form to keep.

---

Signature of Research Participant

---

Date

Yes, I agree to be have my interview audio recorded.

No, I do not agree to have my interview audio recorded; however, I will participate in the interview process.

---

Signature of Investigator

---

Date

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