# BLACK STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE INTEGRATED SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

How do the Students feel?

A Study of Black Students in Halifax, Nova Scotia

by

Basil A. Mortley

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

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*Your file    Votre référence*

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*Dedicated to students of African descent.*

*May the information you receive*

*lead to a better understanding*

*of who you are.*

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# ABSTRACT

## BLACK STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF

## THE INTEGRATED SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze the perceptions that students of African descent (Black students) have of the integrated school environment. Two hundred and sixty Black students attending sixteen junior and senior high schools located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, were surveyed. The participants were equally divided between males and females. At the time of the survey, they represented approximately fifty percent of the Black students attending public high schools in the city of Halifax.

The survey instrument also included two sections which allowed the students to state their impressions of the school environment in their own words. In one section, they were asked to indicate areas of concern not necessarily identified in the questionnaire, and in another, they were asked to state a positive change they would like to see in

their schools. The results revealed that the perceptions of students attending the junior highs were significantly less negative than those attending senior high schools; and male students had more negative perceptions of their school environments than their female counterparts. It also showed that, inspite of a history of racism in the education system which the students acknowledged was still reflected in their schools, the most important concern of the Black students was the paucity of information about Black people in the curriculum.

It was recommended that programs should be developed to address the way that Black students attending integrated schools are taught; and, the information they are taught should be more reflective of their African heritage.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Educational achievement, as well as positive social development of children, depends on school environments in which mutual respect, trust, tolerance and understanding prevail. Conversely, educational failures and dropouts, as well as angry, frustrated and confused children are the products of school environments in which distrust, intolerance and conflicts are common (Nelsen, 1974).*

# Preface

The educational history of people of African descent (Black people) in Nova Scotia, Canada, is rooted in a legacy of slavery, disenfranchisement, cultural genocide and systemic racism. Despite the efforts that have been made to redress this situation, many Black students currently feel alienated within the public educational process. Consequently, they perform at mediocre levels. Among those who succeed, most are unprepared for post secondary education. Others leave school before they graduate (over 60% in some Black communities, while the national average is approximately 30%).

This thesis is a study of schools in Halifax, Nova Scotia, as perceived by Black students. It deals specifically with their perceptions of junior and senior high schools in Halifax. It assesses their perceptions of the school environments by answering questions such as: Do they find cultural relevance in the information they are taught, the activities in which they participate, or the images portrayed in their schools or textbooks? and; do they feel that teachers and other school staff treat them fairly?

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The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter briefly outlines the migration of Black people to Nova Scotia. It then reviews the significant political decisions that affected their education from 1811 to 1964, and looks at the impact of these policies on Black students over the past fifty years (1944 to 1994). The chapter ends with a definitional framework for the study, and a review of some pertinent literature.

Chapter 2 gives a detailed outline of the methodology used in the study. It explains the manner in which the survey instrument was developed, describes the locations where it was conducted and the method used to collect the data. It also provides information about the participants.

Chapter 3 gives a breakdown of the responses that the participants made to the thirty-five statements listed in Section 2 of the questionnaire. It also indicates the priority that were given to each of the statements. Chapter four is comprised of a statistical analysis of the results found in chapter 3. The results were analyzed in order to determine if there were differences in the responses between the schools, school levels, grades, and gender of the students.

Chapter 5 is a compilation of the comments and suggestions that were made by the students themselves; and chapter 6 includes a discussion on the findings and recommendations for further action.

## Chapter 1:    Introduction

Historical Perspective

Black people have been among the earliest settlers in

Nova Scotia. According to Ferguson (1948), there is

evidence of their presence in Port Royal, as early as 1606.

A Black man was identified in a census of the people living

in Arcadie in 1686 (Ferguson, 1948). There were also

records of Black slaves in Nova Scotia  from 1750-1800.

However, the lack of agricultural land prevented slavery

from developing on a plantation scale (Smith, 1889).  In

1792, 1,196 Black people, disillusioned with the treatment

of Blacks in Nova Scotia, left for  Sierra Leone; thereby

starting the Back-to-Africa movement.  In 1796, some of the

lands that they vacated were occupied  by 550 militant

slaves called Maroons who were transported by the British

from Jamaica to Nova Scotia (Haliburton, 1973).  Eventually,

the Maroons also opted to live in Sierra Leone.  They left

Nova Scotia in 1800.

Many of the refugees who came to Nova Scotia after the

American Revolution (1778-1780) were Black.  Some were

loyalists who came as free subjects, and others were slaves

who had fought in the British army (Ferguson, 1948). Since

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that time, Black people came to Nova Scotia from various

sources, including run-away slaves and free Blacks from the

United States of America, and more recently, immigrants from

Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America.

According to Moreau (1987), The Black Nova Scotian's

slave heritage, formal educational inadequacies, economic

deprivation, social rejection by the White society, and

political powerlessness, dictated their educational history.

Few individual Blacks among the early Loyalists, Maroons,

refugees and free Blacks were privileged to have received

even a rudimentary type of education. Formal education of

any type was haphazardly provided. It was dependent on the

availability of Black or White missionary teachers, and

resources provided mainly by the White missionary societies.

Schools were housed in inadequate and cramped locations

(Moreau, 1987).

The education of Blacks in Nova Scotia from 1811 to

1964 could be encapsulated into six significant dates and

events. In 1811, an Act "for Encouraging the Establishment

of Schools throughout the province" was passed in the Nova

Scotia legislature. This Act provided for state-aided

schools and gave property owners the authority and resources

to build schools. This policy implicitly prevented the

people who did not own any land, particularly Blacks, from becoming involved in the educational process.

In 1836, "An Act to continue and amend the Act for the encouragement of schools" was passed. This piece of legislation enabled the state to allocate limited resources for education, to those districts that could not satisfy the criteria of the 1811 Education Act. A leftover portion was supposed to be set aside for the Black communities, but this rarely occurred.

In 1865, the "Act for the Better Encouragement of Education" was passed. Although this legislation initiated the 'free' school system, it tacitly sanctioned racial discrimination in education. With this Act, the Council of Public Instruction, which incidentally was comprised of members of the legislative assembly, was given the authority to establish separate departments under the same or separate roofs, for pupils of different races or sexes.

In 1918, the "Act to amend and consolidate the acts relating to Public Instruction" reinforced segregation. In 1954, with the passing of "the Education Act,"Nova Scotia became the last province in Canada to abolish segregated schools. All reference to race was removed from the Statute. Still, segregated schools existed in Nova Scotia

until 1964, when schools were consolidated. Today, the
Nelson Whynder School in North Preston, remains one of the
last predominantly Black schools in Canada. However, this
is partly due to its geographic isolation.

During the era of segregation, according to some
accounts,

> Black schools suffered financial difficulties caused by
> the Black communities' inability to collect school
> taxes. This meant that the communities had great
> difficulties attracting and retaining qualified
> teachers for their schools. Furthermore, when White
> teachers were hired, they had difficulty understanding
> the social and economic conditions, as well as the
> aspirations of the Black community (States, 1989,p.22).

By the 1940s, the Black community held many negative
attitudes toward the educational systems. Many Blacks who
attended predominantly White schools were discriminated
against by White teachers, while others who attended Black
schools, received an intermittent, sub-standard education.
Thus, few had hopes of obtaining a degree from one of the
many universities in the province (Moreau, 1987).

The problems of inadequate education for Black Nova
Scotians continue to persist, even in integrated settings
(Pratt, 1972; Pate, 1976: Moreau, 1987; States, 1989;
Upshaw, 1992). The question, therefore, arises as to
whether, or to what extent has education for Black Nova

schools in 1954? Many studies have shown that integrated schools have not been a panacea for Black students in other jurisdictions (Nelsen, 1973; Heid, 1984).

Pratt (1972) did a study on the effects of settlement patterns, religion, legislation, curriculum content, prejudice and discrimination, on the educational development of Black Nova Scotians. She also looked at the problems of Black education and examined how Blacks perceived the role of education in shaping their lives in the future. Pratt found that Black people in Nova Scotia have been alienated and deprived of the right to equal participation in the educational opportunities of their society. She concluded that the problems of education for Blacks today seemed to have changed very little from what they were in the past. She identified streaming, the lack of proper guidance and a biased curriculum as areas of concern. She argued that the present school curriculum is such "that it imposes a type of thinking on the Black student alien to his culture and forces him to deny who and what he is" (Pratt, 1972, p. 86).

Pate (1976) provided a historical profile of the life and educational conditions of Blacks in Nova Scotia. He posited that the foundation for the suppression of Blacks, both in their lifestyle and education in Nova Scotia, was

paved by the attitude permitting the early existence of a slave society and its attendant modification in the form of segregation. He concluded that the historical evidence clearly showed that White Nova Scotians rationalized their actions with the erroneous notion that Black people were inferior to Whites.

Monard (1992) did a study of Black learners in Nova Scotia. She found that the transition from the segregated school environment to the integrated setting created many problems for the Black learner. "On the whole," she argued, "the quality of education provided by the public school system does not address the educational realities of the Black learner and as a result, the educational progress of the Black learner is minimal" (Monard, 1992, p. 58).

According to Robert Upshaw (1992), after 1954 when schools were finally desegregated, it was very important that the government provide greater access for Blacks to share in the planning, operation and full benefits of the educational system. School boards, teacher training institutes and the Department of Education had no comprehensive plans to address the inequities in education faced by Black students. As a result of this neglect, racism was left unattended, and the identity and self-esteem

of Black students were further damaged. The day-to-day condition experienced by most Black children from 1954 to 1985, was one of assimilation (Upshaw, 1992), and cultural deprivation.

## Community Perspectives and Concerns

The historical portrait of the education of Blacks in Nova Scotia would not be complete without reference to the fact that various programs and organizations have been established since 1954, to facilitate equal access to educational opportunities for Black learners (Monard, 1992). Attempts have been made by the Black community and other institutions to make education in Nova Scotia relevant to the Black experience. Some school boards have formed committees linking them to the Black communities they serve. Some have developed race relations policies and practices, while others have taken piecemeal and *ad hoc* approaches designed to make changes in support of the Black population (Race Relations Report, 1991).

There remains, however, according to the 1991 Race Relations Report, no provincial race relations policy in the area of education, disproportionately few Black teachers, insufficient references to the Black experience in the

curricula, and the undermining of the self-esteem of the
Black child. The Black perspective, the Black experience,
and the Black contributions to Nova Scotia society have yet
to be institutionalized in the provincial education system.

In 1989, it was reported that there is no evidence that
Blacks are less motivated to achieve the same educational
standing as the rest of society. There were, however,
important factors to limit their access to universities
(Mackay et al, 1989). According to Verna Thomas (1989),
these primarily economic factors are compounded by:

(a)   the practice of "streaming" in the school system;

(b)   under-representation of Black teachers in the
      education system;

(c)   the lack of adequate preparation for guidance
      counsellors to deal with the particular problems
      of Black students, including the difficulties
      associated with sharing their educational
      experiences with members of a different socio-
      cultural and economic background;

(d)   inappropriate curriculum, i.e., the fact that
      Black students still feel that their ethno-
      cultural group does not find an adequate and
      positive place in the existing school programme;

(e) lack of role models and symbols within the school

system.

Upshaw (1992) concluded that the racist conditions that

Black students faced within the education system were:

- a lack of Black role models;

- insufficient recognition of Black contributions

to society;

- a fifty to sixty percent dropout rate;

- alienation of Black students in the school

environment;

- teacher insensitivity;

- inability of school administrators to deal with

racial confrontations; and,

- Black students guided to select non-university

programs.

In the same year Monard (1992), expressed sixteen

similar concerns with the public education system in Nova

Scotia, that were identified by the Black community. They

were:

(1) The lack of role models in the integrated

school environment;

(2) A noted disharmony among Black and White

students;

(3)   Alienation of Black students in the total
      school environment;

(4)   A lack of visibility of Blacks in the
      curriculum (text books);

(5)   A lack of clear understanding by teachers, of
      the Black culture, behaviour and activities;

(6)   A low expectation of Black students by
      teachers.  This leads to low self-esteem;

(7)   Black students are being guided to select
      non-university preparatory programmes;

(8)   Parents have identified negative
      relationships between school staff and the
      Black community;

(9)   Teachers' insensitivity towards Black
      students;

(10)  A concern about the inability of teachers to
      motivate Black students;

(11)  Parents intimidated by physical structure of
      large school buildings and school personnel;

(12)  Ineffectual discipline procedures;

(13)  Inability of administration to deal with
      racial confrontation;

(14) Deliberate avoidance of Black contribution to society;

(15) A high dropout rate of Black students; and

(16) The complacencies and ineptitude of a system often content to maintain the status quo.

In a study of the issues, concerns and desires of members of the Black community in Nova Scotia regarding the education system, the Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) identified eight major themes:

1) Racism and its Manifestations within the school environment

2) Teacher insensitivity and Low expectations

3) Curriculum Deficiencies

4) Ineffective Pedagogical Approaches

5) Student Factors

6) Parental Issues

7) Student Supports; and,

8) Community Issues

According to the resulting BLAC Report (1994), these themes emerged from the analysis of information and stories which were gathered for over fourteen months in 1992-1993 through interviews, focus groups and written submissions from a wide cross-section of the Black community.

The BLAC Report (1994) identified experiences and needs of "the Black learner" by categorizing respondents under one of three groups: early school leavers (or dropouts), graduates, and students. The respondents were asked to recall their school experiences, the roles of their parents, teachers and others in the school system, and their expectations for the future. The BLAC Report (1994) found a strong appreciation for teachers in their general support role to students.

The Report (1994) also indicated three aspects of the school environment as is relates to the Black learner: teachers, texts, and impact of racial discrimination. The following conditions were found to be important to their learning experiences:

- The need for Black teachers in schools;

- The need to sensitize teachers to the culture and needs of the Black learners; and,

- The need for a greater demonstration and understanding of the contributions of Black persons to our society, through texts and other approaches (BLAC Report, 1994).

The School Environment

According to Ellis (1988), school climate or environment is a popular metaphor for a complex phenomenon that is easy to perceive, but formidably difficult to define, measure, or manipulate. It refers to the aggregate of indicators, both subjective and objective, that convey the overall feeling or impression one gets about a school. As with many other concepts in education, there is no unanimous agreement as to exactly what constitutes school or classroom climate (Arter, 1987).

The definition of the school environment is also compounded by the interchangeable use of terms such as climate, environment, and culture. Moreover, some theorists make a distinction between school climate and classroom climate (Fisher et al, 1991). They argue that school and classroom climate can be assessed separately; and that both have an effect on students and staff (Fraser, 1986 a, b). The classroom then becomes the climate, an essential part of the entire school culture. The classroom climate can thus be a measure of the more complex school culture, each influencing and affecting the other (Garcia, 1992).

Some theorists view the school environment from a broad perspective. They see it as including everything that takes

place in a school: the type of leadership, classroom

instruction and management, physical surroundings, the value

structure of individuals, as well as relationships

(Anderson, 1982; Gottfredson et al, 1986). Others take a

narrow view of the subject. Fraser (1986a), feels that

educational climate primarily refers to the psychosocial

aspects of the environment. Fryans and Maehr (1990)

suggested that the school itself might be appropriately

conceptualized as a psychosocial environment.

There is a common thread, however, which links most of

these definitions; and that is, school climate is a

phenomenon which involves some element of group perception

(Saldern, 1986), and that it concerns those aspects of the

psychosocial, social and/or physical environment that

affects behaviour (Arter, 1987); and, consequently

performance.


## Impact of the School Environment.

School and classroom climate have consistently been

shown to be related to student achievement as well as how

students behave and feel about school, themselves and others

(Fraser, 1986a,b; Bhushan, 1986; Cognetta et al, 1985;

Haertel et al, 1981; Saldern, 1986; Anderson, 1982; Chavez,

1984; Anderson, Walberg, and Welch, 1969). Although these studies have been conducted in the United States of America, the theories they espouse are just as applicable to students in Canada, because most of the social and educational conditions are similar.

To some theorists, the school environment has a significant impact on students' psyche (Arter, 1987; Dumaresq and Blust, 1983; Kleese and Biernart, 1989; Mathews, 1991); however, the manner in which they are impacted vary from one study to another. Dumaresq and Blust (1983) argued that students' motivation and attitude are affected. Others make a correlation with students' self-esteem (Stephan, 1983; Miller and Carlson, 1982). As perceived by the adults of the school, i.e., the teachers and administrators, the classroom environment often entails a correlation with student behaviour, student achievement, and student self-esteem (Garcia, 1992). Consequently, improvement of the school environment often results in favourable changes in student behaviour (Kleese and Biernart, 1989). Most theorists agree that the school environment has a direct bearing on students' performance.

The family environment is also an important consideration (Scott and Walberg,1979). Family background

neither causes nor precludes school instructional effectiveness; however, leadership, expectations, atmosphere and instructional emphasis are essential institutional determinants of pupil performance (Lazotte, Edmonds, and Ratner, 1974). Educational achievement, as well as positive social development of children, depend on school environments in which mutual respect, trust, tolerance and understanding prevail. Conversely educational failures and dropouts, as well as angry, frustrated and confused children are the products of school environments in which distrust, intolerance and conflicts are common (Nelsen, 1974).

The school environment is more important for minority than White students, especially in regards to factors affecting motivation; and, the school environments have varying effects depending on the background of the students (Fryans and Maehr, 1990). According to Coleman (1989), the problem of low motivation and high failures among Black students are partly due to a shortage of "cultural capital"; a privilege enjoyed by middle and higher income families which appear to contribute to their children's success in school. However, many White students from poor and working class families also do well in school; and some Black students from middle and higher income families perform

poorly. It is the school environment, not necessarily the level of income which has a significant impact on students' performance. While much of the difference in achievement outcomes among urban schools can be explained by the student body's social status and/or racial composition, differing characteristics of the schools themselves greatly contribute to these differences (Brookover et al, 1979). The problems that Black students face in the school environment are reinforced by their historical and socio-cultural backgrounds.

Indeed, the characteristics of the school could play an extremely significant role in helping to overcome the social barriers and psychological deficiencies that many Black students' experience (Brookover et al, 1979). According to a review completed by Stockard and Mayberry (1985), the learning environment can enhance individual achievement somewhat beyond the level expected, given individual background traits, by developing an atmosphere in which students are expected and feel able to achieve.

According to Mathews (1991), there are higher levels of intrinsic motivation in academic learning for students from humanistic school settings, than for those in a more structured environment. Haertel, Walberg and Haertel (1979)

found that learning gains were positively associated with student-perceived cohesiveness, satisfaction, task difficulty, formality, goal direction, democracy and the material environment, and negatively associated with friction, cliqueness, apathy and disorganization.

Schools with negative environments undermine the self-esteem of Black students, thereby fostering a sense of academic futility Beady and Brady, 1993). Some theorists argue that their motivation also becomes adversely affected. Monard (1992) blamed the lack of motivation among Black students in Nova Scotia on teachers' inability to reach them. She also blamed their low self-esteem on the low expectations of the teachers. However, to the extent that the problems are school related; teacher insensitivity, though very significant, is but one of a combination of factors in the broader school environment which affects the performances of Black students.

## Student Perception of the School Environment

The school environment, whether it is perceived by theorists or adults in the school system, almost always entails a co-relation with student perception. Still, in much of the existing research on classrooms, we have tended

to ignore the intelligence that children bring to this social situation. The environments of the schools should be assessed on the basis of the students' perceptions, because it is on the phenomenological level of analysis, the level of students' experiences that the impact of the environment can best be understood (Nelsen, 1974).

Students are the principal stakeholders in the education system and it is important that their views are known and respected; in order that all students get the opportunity reach their full potential. This is even more critical given the fact that students have several learning styles, come from various cultural backgrounds, and are gifted in several ways. Therefore, in order to effectively teach all students, educational instruction and teaching techniques must be student centred, given (a) the diverse needs of the groups which make up the student population; and, (b) the changing demands of the global market place. In other words, in order for students to be properly prepared to participate in the workforce of the future, it is imperative that their needs be known and addressed.

Students often have a different impression of school and classroom stimuli, than teachers and other stakeholders. The evidence that students may not perceive what teachers

intend has enormous implications for evaluating and improving teacher effectiveness. The interventions of teachers can sometimes backfire because students interpret them differently than teachers intended. Furthermore, the capacity of students to process social information from classroom interaction and to apply it to themselves in the form of a stable internalized self-concept of ability, may differ from the capability of the teacher, given his or her perception of the classroom environment (Weinstein, 1982). Therefore, student perception can play a mediating role in the outcomes of the teaching process (Weinstein, 1982). It can also be informative about the role of the classroom context in influencing student behaviour and performance, and shed light on areas necessitating improvement (Garcia, 1992).

According to Weinstein (1982), knowledge of the rich social-cognitive life of students increases our sensitivity to the multiple challenges that classroom living poses for students, especially minorities and other disadvantaged students.

> There is much to be learned from students'
> interpretations of classroom activities. Student
> perception can inform researchers and teachers about
> the qualities of environments and about changes in
> environment that come about as a result of planned
> intervention programs. Student perceptions can also be

examined as outcomes in and of themselves; social-cognitive outcomes which reflect the effects of different educational environments (Weinstein, 1982, p. 35-36).

Most of all, students are people; not objects to be manipulated by the arbitrary whims of adults, regardless of their noble intentions. Ultimately, education should be a collaborative process between the community, educators, parents and students, each with an equally important voice.


## Black Students in Integrated School Environments

There have been several studies done on the effects of desegregation on the self-esteem and academic achievement of Black students. In his study of desegregated schools in Washington D.C., Miller and Carlson (1982) found that some of the factors which affected the performance of Black students were anxiety and threat, self-concepts and aspirations, peer comparisons, expectations, peer relations, school effects, and teacher and student relations. These factors have diverse effects and are affected in diverse ways by desegregation. Miller and Carlson (1982) found that desegregated schooling has a moderate positive effect on the achievement of Black students. He also thought that it is nevertheless a requisite if the social issue of interracial acceptance is to be addressed.

Stephan (1983) also studied school desegregation in Washington D.C., to determine its effects on Black students' achievement, self-esteem, and racial relations. He found that desegregation has not increased the self-esteem of Black students. In some cases, their self-esteem has decreased. Tentative conclusions also suggested that racial relations have not been improved by desegregation.

There are a number of reasons to expect that variations in racial composition of desegregated schools will have a fundamental bearing upon minority students' experience in, perceptions of, and attitudes towards their school (Nelson and Uhl, 1976). The relative size of the groups will bear upon the complexity, prestige, influence, and power of the group within the school. The composition of the student body has a relationship to the achievement of Black, and other minority pupils (Coleman, 1991). The problems are often not related to the subjective aspects of behavioral observations, but to the complexity of interactions among and between groups of students (Stern, 1970).

Ethnicity is a conspicuous and fundamental basis for the formation of informal peer group and student subcultures. Similar lifestyles, norms, and values, and longstanding friendships within racially segregated

neighbourhoods, provide a firm basis for the composition of sub-groups within desegregated schools (Nelsen and Uhl, 1976). People tend to gravitate towards places with others who share the same personal idiosyncrasies, and they behave typically in ways that are consistent with the specific setting in which they have come together (Stern, 1970). Without the appropriate school environment, these groupings could have adverse effects on social relations within integrated schools. Characteristics such as the level of friendship and mutual support between school members, the uniformity of treatment for students, perceptions of a safe and orderly environment, and the accessibility of group membership and social mixing, are elements of concern (Genova and Walberg, 1980; Genova et al, 1981; Lanasa and Potter, 1984).

A study done by Nelsen and Uhl (1973) in Chicago, revealed that Black students - particularly Black females - perceived the social environment of desegregated schools in a generally negative manner. In classroom interactions, as well as other situations, minority women often face the effects of double stereotypes based on both race and sex (Hall and Sandler, 1982).

Heid (1984) found that Black students in New Orleans perceived their treatment in school as being less positive because of: (a) over-representation in lower achieving and lower status tracks, (b) more frequently disciplined, (c) higher suspension rates, (d) lower average course grades, and (e) less positive reinforcement. Nelsen (1974) found that, among the more 25 serious problem areas perceived by Black students in desegregated schools were: (a) limited participation of Black students in extracurricular, social, and other activities, and (b) discriminatory attitudes and practices of teachers and administrators, especially in regard to discipline.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

### The Research Instrument

The questionnaire used in this study (see Appendix A)
is a modified and simplified version of one used by Nelsen
(1974) called the High School Questionnaire (HSQ). The HSQ
was itself a revised version of the High School Environment
and Human Relations Inventory (HSEHRI), (Nelsen and Uhl,
1973). This instrument was chosen because, like the current
study, Nelsen attempted to get the perception of Black
students who had attended integrated schools. The HSQ,
however, was designed to assess the retrospective views and
reactions of Black students who had already graduated from
integrated high schools; whereas, this study focused on
students who were currently attending integrated junior and
senior high schools.

The HSQ was a longer, more complex document. It
attempted to determine which characteristics of desegregated
schools were sources of greatest dissatisfaction and/or
negative evaluations from the point of view of Black
students. Many of the questions in the HSQ reflected
Nelsen's objective to determine "negative evaluations" from

the point of view of Black students. This negative bias was reflected in many of the statements in the HSQ; however, the statements in the questionnaire used in this study were presented in a neutral tone, in order to obtain an unbiased assessment of the students' perceptions. For example, statements such as: "There are many instances of racial discrimination on the part of teachers at the school," and, "Discipline and punishment were not equal for Black and White students" were changed to "There are no instances of racial discrimination on the part of teachers at the school", and, "Discipline and punishment are equal for Black and White students."

The instrument used in this study was also adjusted to give a more balanced approach. For example, the statement "White teachers are more strict with Black students than they are with White students," was replaced with "White teachers are just as strict with Black students as they are with White students," and followed by the statement, "White teachers are just as strict with White students as they are with Black students." These statements were also used to check the consistency of the responses.

The 87 statements used in the HSQ are reduced to 35 in this study; and, three additional sections are included in order to get a more comprehensive view from the students' perspective. Section 1 is comprised of demographic data (e.g., school, grade, and sex). Section 2 consists of 35 statements pertaining to the students' impressions of their school. In this section, they were asked to indicate the extent to which each statement describes conditions at their school, by stating whether they agreed, were not sure, or disagreed. Since this survey is concerned primarily with the students' perception, in Section 3, they were asked to identify three of the statements in the questionnaire, that they considered to be most important. Section 4 asked them to state their most important concern(s) about their school, other than the ones that were mentioned in section 2 of the questionnaire; and, Section 5 asked them to name one positive change they would like to see at their school.

The thirty-five statements in the questionnaire could be subdivided into four areas. However, the statements were placed at random throughout the questionnaire in order to ensure that each issue was considered independently. The areas could be grouped as follows:

a)  The amount of Black personnel employed in the schools. Statements numbers 19, 20 and 21 fell in this category.

b)  Information about Black people. This included statement numbers 16, 29, 30, and 31.

c)  Inter-racial relations, which was further sub-divided into 3 sections:

    (1)  Teacher's attitudes, which included statements number 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 34, and 35. Properties such as discipline, racial discrimination, racial harmony, and teachers' expectations were included in this section.

    (2)  School policies, which included statements numbers 1,2,3,4, 13, 14, 22, and 33. This section dealt with properties such as discipline and the promotion of racial harmony; and,

    (3)  Inter-personal Relations, included statement numbers 8, 12, and 15. Properties such as cliqueness and conflicts were used to identify relations among students.

d) Students' participation in school activities and
their sense of belonging were identified in
statements numbers 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28.

## Method of Conducting Research

The researcher in this study, like the respondents, is
of African descent. His approach to the students was very
candid and open. The students were informed that he was
conducting a study of Black students in Halifax, Nova
Scotia, and their responses were being used as data for a
Master's thesis. They were asked to be honest and not
collaborate with each other about the responses. They were
also informed that their responses would be totally
anonymous, and that the survey was an opportunity for them
to express their impressions of the school system.

In all but one case, the students were gathered
together in one location; usually at the request of the
principal. At one school, the survey was conducted on two
occasions in order to accommodate students who were unable
to attend the first session but expressed a desire to
participate. They were all informed that their
participation was voluntary. In most cases, more than 50

percent of the Black students willingly completed the

questionnaire.  A breakdown of the number of participants,

number of Black students, and the total student population

in each school is outlined in Figure 1.

## Figure 1

| Location | Total Students | Total Black Students | % Black Students to Total Students | Black Students Surveyed | % Black Students Surveyed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 787 | 39 | 4.96% | 19 | 48.72% |
| 2 | 970 | 51 | 5.26% | 22 | 43.14% |
| 3 | 877 | 57 | 6.50% | 27 | 47.37% |
| 4 | 976 | 118 | 12.09% | 42 | 35.59% |
| 5 | 291 | 11 | 3.78% | 8 | 72.73% |
| 6 | 243 | 4 | 1.65% | 4 | 100.00% |
| 7 | 240 | 5 | 2.08% | 4 | 80.00% |
| 8 | 432 | 11 | 2.55% | 10 | 90.91% |
| 9 | 288 | 6 | 2.08% | 3 | 50.00% |
| 10 | 196 | 40 | 20.41% | 22 | 55.00% |
| 11 | 320 | 49 | 15.31% | 25 | 51.02% |
| 12 | 202 | 4 | 1.98% | 3 | 75.00% |
| 13 | 369 | 18 | 4.88% | 13 | 72.22% |
| 14 | 82 | 49 | 59.76% | 25 | 51.02% |
| 15 | 184 | 34 | 18.48% | 21 | 61.76% |
| 16 | 158 | 19 | 12.03% | 12 | 63.16% |
|  | 6615 | 515 | 7.79% | 260 | 50.49% |



Ratio White to Black Students



Ratio Black Students Surveyed
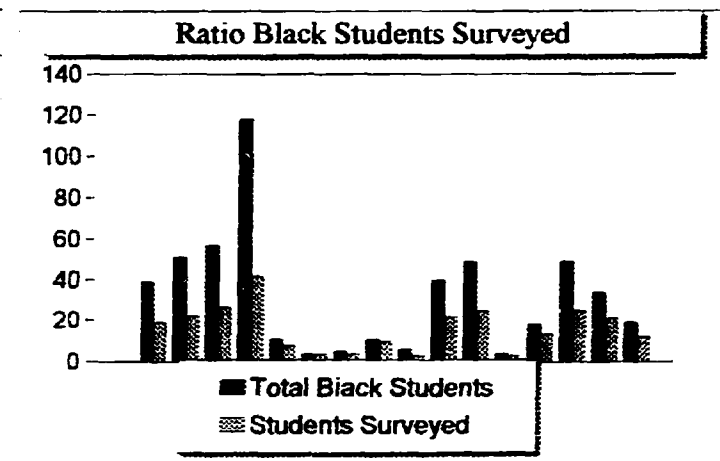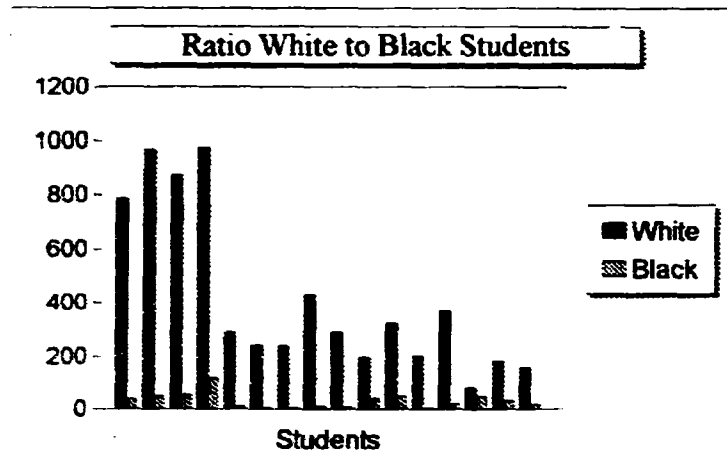
## Demographic Setting

The study took place in the City of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Most of the Black people who reside in Halifax are indigenous to Nova Scotia, while many of the remaining Black residents are immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean. According to the results of a census compiled by Statistics Canada in 1986, over sixty percent of the Black people in Halifax live within three public housing areas and most of the Black students who attend public schools reside in these communities. Less than 50% of the population in these areas (ages 20-64) has finished high school - the lowest ratios in the city, and unemployment ratios fall in the highest categories (above 30%).

The Black residents in Halifax who live outside the inner-city are mostly immigrants, or indigenous Blacks who relocated from other Black communities in Nova Scotia. There is very little statistical data on the Black people who reside outside the inner-city communities, partly because they are scattered throughout the wider communities on the outskirts of the city. The Black children from these sectors are represented in some of the smaller groups in this study.

## Administration of the Survey

The survey was administered to 260 students attending 12 mixed schools operated by the Halifax District School Board, during June, 1994. One hundred and fifty of the respondents attended 8 Junior High schools. They represented approximately 58 percent of the Black students who participated in the study. The other 110 students surveyed attended the 4 high schools. There were better responses, in terms of the numbers of participants, from the junior high schools, partly because it was easier to get the cooperation of the younger students.

There were an equal number of males and females in the study; however, the proportion of males to females varied with each school. The number of students per school varied from as few as 4 students in one case, to as many as 40 in another. Since the study focused on group perceptions of the school environments, individual differences were not considered. Some emphasis was placed on the descriptive aspect of the study - specifically Sections 4 and 5, in order to get a clearer view of the students' perceptions. However, on each of the 35 statements in Section 2, all the responses were pooled to yield the mean scores for males and

females within each school.  Item means and standard
deviations were computed by sex, grade, and school.  The
numbers and kind of responses, along with the priority given
(in terms of importance) were also computed.

# Chapter 3: Quantitative Results

Table 1 is a summary of the actual responses (in percentages) to the items in the questionnaire. The last column is comprised of the percentage of respondents who chose each statement as one of their most important concerns (Priority).

As the results illustrated, most of the participants acknowledged that there was a limited number of Black personnel within their schools. Approximately nine percent of the students were concerned that there were few, if any, Black counsellors (Q20) and administrators (Q19) at their school; but they were mostly concerned about the lack of Black teachers (Q21). Nearly seventy-five percent of the students disagreed with the statement, "There are Black teachers at the school (Q21)," and, almost thirty percent chose this as one of their most important concerns.

The results showed that there was strong reaction to all four statements which attempted to determine the students' perception of the amount of information about Black people that was disseminated in their schools (Q16, Q29, Q30, Q31). The shortage of information in the

curriculum (Q30), and the lack of images of Black persons

displayed throughout the schools (Q16), were the primary

concern of most of the respondents.

Table 1.

Summary of Responses to Questionnaire

| Statements | Agree | Not Sure | Dis-agree | Priority |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. All students who break the rules are given the same punishment whether the are Black or White. | 40.00% | 23.08% | 36.92% | 11.54% |
| 2. Discipline and punishment are equal for Black and White students. | 36.54% | 24.23% | 39.23% | 8.08% |
| 3. The school has programs that are designed to promote mutual understanding between Black and White students. | 27.69% | 33.85% | 38.46% | 1.53% |
| 4. The administration at the school does its best to promote racial harmony among students. | 36.92% | 36.15% | 26.92% | 3.46% |
| 5. White teachers are just as strict with Black students as they are with White students. | 38.85% | 21.54% | 39.85% | 5.79% |
| 6. White teachers are just as strict with White students as they are with Black students. | 35.39% | 24.62% | 40.00% | 0.00% |
| 7. There are no instances of racial discrimination on the part of teachers at the school. | 21.15% | 40.00% | 38.85% | 5.39% |
| 8. Most students at the school hang out with people from their own race. | 51.92% | 7.69% | 40.38% | 4.61% |
| 9. Some teachers favour Black students. | 20.39% | 32.31% | 47.31% | 2.69% |
| 10. Some teachers favour White students. | 56.15% | 25.77% | 18.08% | 11.92% |
| 11. The teachers at the school make an effort to bring about racial understanding and harmony. | 30.39% | 36.92% | 32.69% | 6.54% |

Table 1 continued

| Statements | Agree | Not Sure | Dis-Agree | Priority |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Black and White students are usually seated in separate parts of the classroom. | 17.31% | 10.77% | 71.92% | 3.46% |
| 13. Black students are not allowed to wear certain kinds of clothing. | 18.08% | 11.92% | 70.00% | 3.46% |
| 14. White students are not allowed to wear certain kinds of clothing. | 11.92% | 11.92% | 76.15% | 0.39% |
| 15. There are no outbreaks of racial conflicts among students at the school. | 17.69% | 27.31% | 55.00% | 8.08% |
| 16. There are enough pictures and portraits of Black persons displayed at the school. | 17.31% | 14.23% | 68.46% | 12.69% |
| 17. There are school activities in which no Black students participate. | 31.15% | 25.39% | 43.46% | 11.92% |
| 18. There are school activities in which no White students participate. | 8.08% | 21.92% | 70.00% | 0.77% |
| 19. There are Black persons in administrative positions at the school. | 23.08% | 31.15% | 45.77% | 9.23% |
| 20. There are Black counsellors at the school. | 38.46% | 10.00% | 51.54% | 8.49% |
| 21. There are Black teachers at the school. | 21.15% | 5.00% | 73.85% | 29.62% |
| 22. Few Black students are elected to the student council. | 47.31% | 26.92% | 25.77% | 6.15% |
| 23. There are no Black students in the school band. | 40.39% | 41.92% | 17.69% | 0.39% |
| 24. Black students do not participate enough in school programs and activities. | 30.00% | 24.23% | 45.77% | 1.15% |
| 25. Black students are sometimes not welcome to participate in school programs and activities. | 21.54% | 27.69% | 50.77% | 3.09% |

Table 1 continued

| Statements | Agree | Not Sure | Dis-Agree | Priority |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26. White students are sometimes not welcome to participate in school programs and activities. | 6.54% | 17.69% | 75.77% | 1.92% |
| 27. Black students sometimes do not make enough of an effort to participate in school programs and activities. | 0.39% | 0.00% | 99.62% | 3.85% |
| 28. Black students are not represented in some activities because of their limited numbers. | 41.54% | 32.69% | 25.77% | 4.23% |
| 29. There are not enough subjects which are of special interest and relevance to Black students. | 73.85% | 16.92% | 9.23% | 21.15% |
| 30. There is not enough information given about the contributions of Black people to Canadian life. | 80.77% | 12.31% | 6.92% | 37.69% |
| 31. Black people are not visibly represented in the textbooks and resource materials used in the classroom. | 23.85% | 16.15% | 60.00% | 25.77% |
| 32. Black students do not feel they are part of the school, and therefore, do not feel any loyalty to the school. | 38.85% | 28.85% | 32.31% | 13.08% |
| 33. Inter-racial dating is frowned upon by school authorities. | 35.39% | 40.00% | 24.61% | 10.39% |
| 34. Teachers encourage Black students to do their best at all times. | 48.85% | 24.23% | 26.93% | 10.00% |
| 35. Teachers treat Black students as though they have the ability to succeed. | 53.28% | 27.03% | 19.69% | 19.62% |

Eighty-one percent of the respondents agreed that there was not enough information given about the contributions of Black people to Canadian life (Q30). Only seven percent disagreed. The largest amount of students, nearly thirty-eight percent, chose this statement as one of their biggest concerns. Seventy-four percent agreed that there were not enough subjects which were of special interest and relevance to Black students (Q29); only nine percent disagreed. Twenty-one percent of the participants chose this as one of their most important concerns.

Sixty-eight percent of the respondents disagreed that there were enough pictures and portraits of Black persons displayed at the schools (Q16); only seventeen percent agreed. Almost thirteen percent chose this as one of their main concerns. Sixty percent of the respondents disagreed that Black people were visibly represented in the textbooks and resource materials used in the classroom (Q31), but twenty-four percent agreed. Over twenty-five percent of the students chose this as one of their most important concerns.

The results showed that the participants generally perceived that teachers favoured the White students more than the Black students. Nearly twelve percent of the respondents chose the statement, "Some teachers favour White students (Q10)," as an important concern. Fifty-six percent

of the students agreed with this statement, and eighteen percent disagreed. Less than three percent of the participants chose, "Some teachers favour Black students (Q9)," as a primary concern; although forty-seven percent of the students disagreed with this statement, and twenty percent agreed.

Forty percent of the respondents were not sure if there were instances of racial discrimination by teachers at their schools (Q7), and thirty-nine percent disagreed. Only twenty percent agreed, and five percent chose this as one of their most important concerns. Just over thirty percent disagreed that the teachers at their schools made an effort to bring about racial understanding and harmony (Q11). Thirty percent agreed, but almost thirty-seven percent were not sure. Nearly seven percent of the students chose this as one of their most important concerns.

Approximately forty percent of the respondents disagreed that White teachers are just as strict with Black students as they are with White students (Q5), but almost thirty-nine percent agreed, and twenty-two percent were not sure. Still, nearly six percent of the students chose this as one of their important concerns. Similarly, forty percent of the students disagreed that, "White teachers are just as strict with White students as they are with Black

students (Q6)." Over thirty-five percent agreed with this statement, and almost twenty-five were not sure; but none of the students chose it as one of their important concerns.

Ten percent of the respondents chose the statement, "Teachers encourage Black students to do their best at all times (Q34)," as one of their most important concerns. Almost forty-nine percent of the students agreed with this statement, but twenty-seven percent disagreed, and twenty-four percent were not sure. Over half of the respondents agreed that teachers treated Black students as though they have the ability to succeed (Q35). Nineteen percent disagreed, but twenty-seven percent were not sure, and nearly twenty percent of the students chose this issue as one of their most important concerns.

There were mixed results about whether the respondents perceived their schools as promoting racial harmony. Almost thirty-seven percent of the students agreed that the administration at their schools did its best to promote racial harmony among students (Q4), but thirty-six percent disagreed and twenty-six were not sure. Under four percent of the respondents chose this as one of their most important concerns. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents disagreed that their schools had programs that were designed to promote mutual understanding between Black and White

students (Q3), but almost twenty-eight percent agreed, and thirty-four percent were not sure. Less than two percent of the students chose this as one of their important concerns. As can be seen in Table 1, there was greater concern about disciplinary policies at the schools.

Nearly twelve percent of the respondents chose the statement, "All students who break the rules are given the same punishment whether they are Black or White (Q1)," as one of their most important concerns. Forty percent agreed with this statement, thirty-seven percent disagreed, and twenty-three percent were not sure. Eight percent of the respondents chose the statement, "Discipline and punishment are equal for Black and White students (Q2)," as one of their most important concerns. Thirty-nine percent of the students disagreed with this statement, and thirty-seven percent agreed. Like the previous statement, almost a quarter of the respondents were not sure about this issue.

Some of the students were concerned with the restrictions placed on their freedom to wear whatever kind of clo···ng they wanted to, but many were not. Seventy percent of the respondents disagreed that Black students were not allowed to wear certain kinds of clothing (Q13). Just over three percent of the students chose this issue as one of their most important concerns. On the other hand,

seventy-six percent of the respondents disagreed that White students were not allowed to wear certain kinds of clothing (Q14), and less than one percent chose this as one of their most important concerns.

The responses to statements which dealt with relationships among students produced mixed results. On one hand, the respondents acknowledged that cliques were generally formed along racial lines. Almost fifty-two percent of the respondents agreed that most students at their schools hung out with people from their own race (Q28). Forty percent disagreed, but less than five percent chose this as one of their most important concerns. On the other hand, over seventy percent of the respondents disagreed that Black and White students were usually seated in separate parts of the classroom (Q12); only seventeen percent agreed. Just above three percent chose this as one of their most important concerns. Fifty-five percent of the students disagreed that there were no outbreaks of racial conflicts among students at their school (Q15), but over twenty-seven percent were not sure. Almost eight percent chose this as one of their most important concerns. Ten percent of the students were concerned that inter-racial dating was frowned upon by school authorities (Q33). Forty percent of the respondents were not sure about this issue.

The results also showed that over forty-three percent
of the participants disagreed that there were school
activities in which no Black students participated (Q17).
Thirty-one percent of the students agreed, twenty-five
percent were not sure, and twelve percent choose this as an
important concern. A majority of the students, seventy
percent, disagreed that there are school activities in which
no Whites participate (Q18). Only eight percent agreed with
this statement, and less than one percent chose it as one of
their most important concerns.

Almost forty-six percent of the respondents disagreed
that Black students do not participate enough in school
programs and activities (Q24); thirty percent agreed. Three
percent chose this as one of their most important concerns.
Although forty percent of the students agreed that there
were no Black students in the school band (Q23), less than
one percent chose this as an important issue. Forty-seven
percent agreed that few Black students are elected to the
student council (Q22), and just over six percent perceived
this as an important concern.

About half of the respondents disagreed that Black
students were sometimes not welcomed to participate in
school programs and activities (Q25). Twenty-one and a half
percent agreed, but over twenty-seven percent were not sure,

and just over three percent of the students chose this as an important concern. Almost seventy-six percent of the students disagreed that White students were sometimes not welcomed to participate in school programs and activities (Q26), and only six and a half percent agreed. Under two percent of the students chose this as an important concern.

Almost all the participants (99.62%) disagreed that Black students did not make enough of an effort to participate in school programs and activities (Q27), but just under four percent chose this as an important concern. Nearly forty-two percent of the students agreed that Black students were not represented in some activities because of their limited numbers (Q28); twenty-six percent disagreed. Over four percent of the respondents chose this as one of their three most important concerns.

Finally, the results showed that almost thirty-two percent of the students who were surveyed disagreed that Black students did not feel they were part of the school and, therefore, did not feel any loyalty to their schools (Q32); but nearly thirty-nine percent agreed, while the rest of the students were not sure. Just over thirteen percent of the respondents chose this statement as one of their three most important concerns.

## Important Concerns

The following are some of the most important concerns, in order of priority, that the respondents selected from the questionnaire:

1) Ninety of the 260 students chose Q30, "There is not enough information given about the contributions of Black people to Canadian life".

2) Seventy-seven students chose Q21, "There are Black teachers at the school".

3) Sixty-seven students chose Q31, "Black people are visibly represented in the textbooks and resource materials used in the classroom".

4) Fifty-five students chose Q29, "There are not enough subjects which are of special interest and relevance to Black students".

5) Fifty-one students chose Q35, "Teachers treat Black students as though they have the ability to succeed"

6) Thirty-four of the students chose Q32, "Black students do not feel they are part of the school

and, therefore, do not feel any loyalty to the school".

7) Thirty-three of the students chose Q16, "There are enough pictures and portraits of Black persons displayed at the school".

8) Twenty-seven of the students chose Q33, "Inter-racial dating is frowned upon by the school".

9) Twenty-six of the students chose Q34, "Teachers encourage Black students to do their best at all times."

10) Twenty-four of the students chose Q19, "There are Black persons in administrative positions at the school".

11) Twenty-one of the students chose Q15, "There are no outbreaks of racial conflicts among students at the school".

12) Twenty-one of the students also chose Q2, "Discipline and punishment are equal for Black and White students".

13) Fifteen of the students chose Q5, "White teachers

are just as strict with Black students as they are
with White students", whereas, none of the
students chose Q6, "White teachers are just as
strict with White students as they are with Black
students."


At the other end of the spectrum:

- No student chose Q6, "White teachers are just as
  strict with White students as they are with Black
  students."

- Only one student chose each of the following
  statements, "White students are not allowed to
  wear certain kinds of clothing," and, "There are
  few Black students in the school band."

- Two students chose, "There are school activities
  in which no Whites participate."

- Three students chose, "Black students do not
  participate enough in school programs and
  activities."

- Four students chose, "The school has programs that

are designed to promote mutual understanding
between Blacks and Whites."

- Five students chose each of the following
statements, "There are school activities in which
no Blacks participate", and, "White students are
sometimes not welcome to participate in school
programs and activities."

## Chapter 4: Statistical Analysis

### Results

The statistical method used to analyze the data
gathered from Section 2 (Appendix A) was Fisher's F ratio.
The results showed very little differences between the
individual schools; however, there were significant
differences between the junior and senior high schools, the
grade levels, the ages, and sex of the participants.

### Junior High Schools versus Senior High Schools

Test by Fisher's F ratio for differences between the
junior and senior high schools produced the results shown in
Table 2. As this table showed, the perceptions of students
attending the junior highs were, in many cases,
significantly different from those attending senior highs.

# Table 2

### Responses affected by School Level

Means

| Statements | Jr. High | Sr. High | Mean Diff. | Sig.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1. All students who break the rules are given the same punishment whether they are Black or White. | 2.24 | 1.745 | 0.495 | p = .0001 |
| Q2. Discipline and punishment are equal for Black and White students. | 2.213 | 1.645 | 0.568 | P = .0001 |
| Q3. The school has programs that are designed to promote mutual understanding between Blacks and Whites. | 2.107 | 1.6 | 0.507 | p = .0001 |
| Q5. White teachers are just as strict with Black students as they are with White students. | 2.14 | 1.791 | 0.349 | p = .0016 |
| Q6. White teachers are just as strict with White students as they are with Black students. | 2.113 | 1.736 | 0.377 | p = .0005 |
| Q7. There are no instances of racial discrimination on the part of teachers at the school. | 2.14 | 1.391 | 0.749 | p = .0001 |
| Q8. Most students at the school hang out with people from their own race. | 1.913 | 2.391 | -.487 | p = .0001 |

* Only significant differences are reported using Fisher F-test.

Table 2 continued..

| Statements | Jr. High | Sr. High | Mean Diff. | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q10. Some teachers favour White students. | 2.253 | 2.555 | -.301 | p = .0018 |
| Q11. The teachers at the school make an effort to bring about racial understanding and harmony. | 2.18 | 1.7 | 0.48 | P = .0001 |
| Q12. Black and White students are usually seated in separate parts of the classroom. | 1.327 | 1.627 | -0.301 | P = .0018 |
| Q15. There are no outbreaks of racial conflicts among students at the school. | 1.773 | 1.427 | 0.346 | p = 0.346 |
| Q16. There are enough pictures and portraits of Black persons displayed at the school. | 1.673 | 1.236 | 0.437 | p = .0001 |
| Q17. There are school activities in which no Blacks participate. | 1.74 | 2.064 | -0.324 | p = .0025 |
| Q19. There are Black persons in administrative positions at the school. | 1.893 | 1.609 | 0.284 | p = .0044 |
| Q21. There are Black teachers at the school. | 1.687 | 1.182 | 0.505 | p = .0001 |
| Q22. Few Black students are elected to the student council. | 2.053 | 2.436 | -0.383 | p = .0002 |

**Table 2** continued...

| Statements | Jr. High | Sr. High | Mean Diff. | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| Q24. Black students do not participate enough in school programs and activities. | 1.687 | 2.055 | -0.368 | P = .0006 |
| Q25. Black students are sometimes not welcome to participate in school programs and activities. | 1.547 | 1.927 | -0.381 | P = .0001 |
| Q29. There are not enough subjects which are of special interest and relevance to Black students. | 2.573 | 2.745 | -0.172 | P = .033 |
| Q30. There is not enough information given about the contribution of Black people to Canadian life. | 2.673 | 2.827 | -0.154 | P = .0333 |
| Q31. Black people are visibly represented in the textbooks and resource materials used in the classroom. | 1.813 | 1.4 | 0.413 | P = .0001 |
| Q32. Black students do not feel they are part of the school and, therefore, do not feel any loyalty to the school. | 1.907 | 2.282 | -.375 | P = .0003 |
| Q33. Inter-racial dating is frowned upon by school authorities. | 1.913 | 2.? ? | -.459 | P = .0001 |
| Q34. Teachers encourage Black students to do their best at all times. | 2.413 | 1.955 | 0.459 | P = .0001 |

Comparing the perceptions of students attending junior and senior high schools by Fisher's F ratio produced some very significant results. As Table 2 illustrated, in some cases, the mean differences extended from one side of the median point (in the case of the junior high schools), to the other side of the median (in the case of senior high schools). In all cases, the perceptions of the students attending senior high schools were more negative than those attending junior high schools.

There were significant differences between the students attending the two school levels in their perception of Black teachers at the schools (p =.0001). Significant differences were also found in their perceptions of: the amount of information that was available at their schools about the contributions of Black people to Canadian life (p = .0333); the amount of subjects of special interest and relevance to Black students (p = .033); the amount of pictures and portraits of Black persons that were displayed at their schools (p = .0001); and, the representation of Black people in the textbooks and resource materials used in the classroom (p = .0001).

Significant differences were found between the two

levels of students, in their perception of teachers'
attitudes. There were significant differences in their
perception of whether teachers made an effort to bring about
racial understanding and harmony (p = .0001), or whether
they made an effort to encourage Black students to do their
best at all times (p = .0001).

The students also differed in their perception of the
discliplinary policies of teachers. The assertions that
White teachers were just as strict with Black students as
they were with White students, or White teachers were just
as strict with White students as they were with Black
students, yielded significant differences in their responses
(p = .0016 and p = .0005 respectively).

Significant differences were also found between the
junior and senior high students in their perceptions of
relations among students. As Table 2 showed, they had
significantly different perceptions about whether most
students at their schools hung out with people from their
own race (p =0001), or whether Black and White students were
seated in separate parts of the classroom (p = .0018).
There were also different perceptions about whether there

were outbreaks of racial conflicts among students at their schools (p = .346).

The students also had different perceptions about school activities. There were differences in their opinions of whether there were school activities in which no Blacks participated (p = .0025), or whether Blacks did not participate enough in school programs and activities (p = .0006). Significant differences were also found between the two group of students in their perceptions of whether Black students were not welcomed to participate in school programs and activities (p = .0001); or, whether Black students felt they were part of the school and, therefore, did not feel any loyalty to it (p = .0003).

Comparisons between the students from the different grade levels by Fisher's F ratio revealed a pattern in the responses of the respondents, and clarified the differences that were identified between the junior and senior high students. The scope of these differences varied with each issue, but there was a great deal of consistancy in the pattern. For example, the responses to the issue of Black teachers at the schools, showed the most significant differences between grades 7 and 11 (0.652); 7 and 12

(0.632); and 7 and 10 (0.635). There were also significant

differences between grades 8 and 11 (0.564); 8 and 10

(0.547); and, 8 and 12 (Significant at 95%). This pattern

of differences occured with each of the issues in which

there were significant differences between the two school

levels, but in varying degrees. Since there is a

correlation between age and grade, analysis for differences

between the different age groups produced results similar to

those identified between the different grade levels.


## Gender Differences

By a fortunate coincidence, the two hundred and sixty

participants in this study were evenly divided between males

and females. Analysis for gender differences produced the

results shown in Table 3. Significant differences between

the perceptions of males and females were found on several

issues.

As Table 3 illustrated, the female students were more

inclined to agree that White teachers were just as strict

with Black students as they were with White students (p =

.0251). Similarly, there were significant differences in

their perception of the notion that White teachers were just

as strict with White students, as they were with Black students (p = .0454).

There were also significant differences between the female and male students in their perception of race relations in the schools. The female students were more inclined to believe that the teachers at their schools made an effort to bring about racial understanding and harmony (p = .0123).

Table 3

Responses affected by Gender

| Statements | Means | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Diff. | Sig.* |
| Q5. White teachers are just as strict with Black students as they are with White students. | 1.869 | 2.115 | -0.246 | p = 0.025 |
| Q6. White teachers are just as strict with White students as they are with Black students. | 1.846 | 2.062 | -0.215 | p = 0.0454 |
| Q11. The teachers at the school make an effort to bring about racial understanding and harmony. | 1.854 | 2.1 | -0.246 | p = 0.0123 |
| Q25. Black students are sometimes not welcome to participate in school programs and activities. | 1.808 | 1.608 | 0.2 | p = 0.0436 |
| Q29. There are not enough subjects which are of special interest and relevance to Black students. | 2.731 | 2.562 | 0.169 | p = 0.0339 |

* Only significant differences are reported using Fisher F-test

Significant differences were found between the male and female students regarding their perceptions of the curriculum. The female students were less likely to agree that there were not enough subjects which were of special interest and relevance to Black students (p = .0339). There were also significant differences in their perception of students' involvement in school activities. The female students were less inclined to agree that Black students were sometimes not welcomed to participate in school programs and activities (p = .0436).

## Chapter 5: The Students' Point of View

The responses given by the students in Sections 4 and 5 of the survey instrument authenticated the areas of concern identified in the survey instrument:

1) The need for Black role models within the education system, in the form of teachers, counsellors, administrators, and other school personnel.

2) The paucity of information about Black people in the curriculum; and,

3) Matters pertaining to race.

It must be clarified, however, that these 3 themes are not mutually exclusive or listed in order of priority. They are separated in order to facilitate a clear presentation of the diverse comments made by the students. The following sections are comprised mainly of these comments, with minor adjustments in grammar and spelling.

### The Need for Black Role Models

In spite of the statement in the questionnaire "There are Black teachers at the school," almost all the respondents cited the lack of Black teachers as one of their

principal areas of concern. Some students simply stated

that there were no Black role models at their school. Most

were more specific, stating categorically that Black

teachers were urgently needed. Many of them made innovative

suggestions such as "Black teachers should volunteer in our

school." One student recommended that, "Our school should

give more support to Black students by hiring Black teachers

(since there are none), who would be role models for us, so

that we can also become somebody and finally move up in the

world." Another used a more pleading tone. He wrote, "At

least they could afford to hire one Black teacher."

Some of the students wanted Black teachers not only as

role models, but also as people with whom they could

identify when they had problems. One student indicated that

he would prefer to have a Black staff member to talk to, if

he were to have a problem. He noted that he would rather

talk to a Black teacher than a White one, because he or she

would understand him better. Another stated, "If you want

to relate to a 'Black problem' that you are having in

school, and you want to talk about it, there are no Black

teachers to talk to." The concerns of many of the

participants were voiced by one student who put it very

simply, "There are no Black teachers or counsellors at our

school, therefore, it is difficult to relate to anyone."

The appeal for role models was not limited to teachers. The participants also made requests for Black janitors, administrators and support staff at their school. According to one student, "School is like another world. There is nobody in authority that I can identify with; not even the janitor is Black, far more the principal, psychologist or some other person in a position with authority." Another stated candidly, "The school board should hire Black teachers, administrators and counsellors, and teach us about Black history and achievement." These concerns were stated in different forms by numerous participants. The tenor of their statements was captured by the student who wrote, "For Black students to succeed, we must see people like ourselves in positions of authority."

Ultimately, the students' concerns about role models were expressed as part of a larger need for cultural identification. This was implicit in their numerous pleas for cultural recognition. "I think there should be teachers who understand our culture. Teachers should try to include things about Black people, to make the Black students feel as though they belong. We belong." This need was also apparent in comments such as, "Black teachers will

understand us better, and help us when we need help because they belong to our culture."

Some of the participants felt that Black teachers would be more concerned about their success, and would motivate them more than the White teachers. This was indicated in statements such as, "I would like to know why teachers don't phone home when a Black student is slipping. The teachers push the White students until they start doing their work, but they allow the Black students to fall way behind. All they might say is that you have to do better or you will fail." One participant stated boldly that White teachers do not care about Black students. Others thought that White teachers should have more patience with Black students.

Some of the participants were sympathetic to White teachers. For example, one wrote, "Black students should have more respect for the school, and the White teachers." Another wrote, "I would like to see more Blacks with a positive attitude." However, the majority of the comments indicated that many of the students felt that their needs were not being met by the White teachers.

## Accommodating the Black Perspective / Afrocentricity

If afrocentricity is defined as a point of reference from which the African world-view becomes an integral part of the educational process, then the need for an afrocentric approach to education was a consistent theme in the comments and suggestions of the participants. "They expect us to act like White people," one wrote. "Everything we have to do, they want us to do it like White folks; and everything we are expected to learn, it is always from the White point of view. We are not White, we are Black. I am fed up with this shit." Another wrote, "I wish they would see things from our point of view. Also, there should be courses on the evolution of Africans, from kings and queens to slaves and oppressed people, to scientists and politicians. The greatest conquest of any race of men, and the greatest survival."

Many of the participants were yearning to see themselves in a more positive light. "There should be more positive information on or about Black people, so that they could be seen for the good they have done, and not just the bad images that are portrayed on television." There was also a constant plea that schools set up an academic

environment in which the self esteem of Black students can

be boosted.  One participant put it succinctly,

> "Black history is not taught in the school system;
> therefore some Black students, thinking that Black
> people have made no contribution to history, lose
> faith.  They believe that Black people are incapable of
> doing constructive things.  If they could only learn
> about famous Black inventors, heroes, etc., and our
> great contribution to the world, I am sure that they
> would notice a change for the better.  Learning of your
> own past and heritage builds self-esteem, confidence
> and pride; things that Black youth today definitely
> needs."

"Before we prepare for the future," one student wrote,

"we should learn about our past."  Another claimed that so

far, in school, all she has learnt about was the history of

White people and a little about aboriginal people.  "The

only thing we hear about Black people in school is slavery,

and our parents already told us about that."  Another wrote,

"The only Black person I learnt about is William Hall.  What

about all those other important Black people?"  Some

participants suggested that there should be more information

about the early Blacks who came to Nova Scotia.  Who were

they, where did they come from?  Where and how did they live?

How did they survive?  Others wanted to learn about Blacks

in the rest of Canada and other parts of the world.

One participant suggested that teachers, regardless of

the subjects they teach, should take Black students into consideration.

"The only time we learn anything about ourselves is during Black History Month," one participant lamented, "and even then it is not steady." Most of the comments on Black History Month took a similar tone. Almost all the participants wanted to see Black History introduced as part of the curriculum. They believed that it would not only be beneficial to Black students, but would also help White teachers and White students to learn about Black people and understand them better. This, they thought, will also contribute to better relationships between the two groups.

Some students felt that most of the problems Black students face were due to ignorance. One wrote, "The most important concern I have is that there is a lot of ignorance among both Black and White students. During Black History month, some of the White kids in the school ripped down the posters. That made me really mad." Many felt that by adding Black history to the curriculum, Black students will be more self-assertive, and there will be better race relations.

Besides introducing courses in Black history, some participants felt that some of the other subjects should also reflect a more multicultural perspective. "Canada," one participant wrote, "is a multi-cultural society, but we only learn about one culture." Another questioned, "Why don't they tell African stories in English and teach about other races in Social Studies?" "That is why I like Multicultural Day," one participant explained, "because we have a chance to learn about different races."

A few of the respondents were concerned that Black students were not participating in enough extra-curricular activities. Some suggested that this may be because there were not enough activities of interest to the Black students. "I would like to see more Black students participating in school activities, and I would like more activities specifically directed towards Black students. For example, Black speakers at assemblies who will speak about helpful things, not only about drugs." Others thought that there should be more activities involving Black culture like visits to the Black Cultural Centre and the Coloured Children's Home. One suggested that there should be more academic activities such as the Summer Math Camp for Black students.

The participants did not see themselves as an essential part of the school environment. They did not complain about participating in it, but wanted their teachers to be more flexible, and accommodating to their specific needs. One suggested that, "All teachers should be educated on how to teach children outside the majority. They should learn how to present material without biased opinions or thoughts, to reorganize their racist views, and try to change them."

## Race Relations

The participants were acutely aware of the prevalence of racism in the society at large, and many were directly affected by it. As one lamented,

> "It is no fun being called a nigger. When one Black person walks into a store, twenty people would stare at him and some would follow him around; but if twenty white guys walk into a store, no one thinks twice about it. On the streets, Whites kill, rape, sell drugs, rob banks and not get sent to jail. On the other hand, a cop sees a Black guy in a fight, and without getting the facts, he will chuck him in his police car and cart him off to jail."

They were also aware that from time to time, some White students displayed racist attitudes. Many complained about the numerous i) ஹ்னces of racial remarks by White students. One even noted that it seems the racist comments were increasing daily. Some suggested that nothing was being

done about the situation because some of the teachers and administrators also were racist.

While many of the participants were concerned, but were able to ignore the occasional snide remark from fellow students, they had great difficulty dealing with racist attitudes from teachers. They felt that in many cases, teachers were treating them unfairly, simply because they were Black. The problem with having to deal with these attitudes in teachers was especially troublesome because on one hand, teachers were in a position to judge their performances, and on the other, teachers were able to influence those performances.

According to one participant, "Teachers treat us as if we are not as smart as the White students. They call on them more often, and they help and encourage them more than they help us. When it comes to exams, they mark us much harder." Another wrote, "Some Black people are treated like special cases, like they do not have the ability to succeed. They are always getting 'dissed' in front of everyone by the teachers." As one participant put it, "I am concerned about the stereotypical attitude of some teachers. They seem to have low colerance for Black students and a lot of patience for White students." Another cautioned. "I am

concerned that young Black students coming to the school would see the way the school is now; how people in authority - teachers, principal, etc., treat Black students, and they won't care about school, and may quit."

There was a strong impression among the participants that they were the victims of unequal treatment by teachers and administrators in their schools. They believed that the rules were different for White and Black students, and many believed that discipline and punishment were more severe for Black students than they were for White students. There was no shortage of suggestions by the participants as to how these problems should be addressed.

A few of the participants proposed radical solutions such as, "Black students should realize that if any justice must be done, they have the power to enforce it themselves. If they want representation, they must represent themselves. This is the only practical and lasting solution." Another wrote,

> "I would just like to see Black students, as well as the Black community, become independent of, rather than dependent on the White man. When the slave mentality, or deeply rooted inferiority is overcome and uprooted, only then can we uplift ourselves from the disguised slavery we find ourselves in."

Some felt that Black youth should not only play a part in promoting and developing the schools, but they should also

be actively involved in the Black community, especially in places like North Preston and the North End of Halifax. Others were obviously disillusioned. They felt their needs would never be satisfied. Some of the students suggested that any hope for changes had to start in the home.

Remarkably, many of the comments and suggestions had a much more positive and hopeful tone. A few of the participants actually had a good impression of their schools. "This is a great school to go to," one student wrote. He continued, "The education is great and the teachers are nice." Another wrote, "I don't really have any serious concerns about my school. Racially, I think that the Black people tend to stick together too much, and are looked at as 'intimidating' to other people. I think they are more hesitant to join school activities such as the band and student council, but it is not the school's fault."

Many of the participants suggested that there should be absolutely no tolerance for any kind of prejudice against anyone regardless of race or religion. In fact, one participant said, "I would like to see positive changes in all people, not just Blacks and Whites. Teachers and students must learn to trust and respect each other no matter what race they may be." Many clearly indicated that

all students should be treated equally, colour of skin should not be a factor. "Teachers should treat students equally, not according to their colour but according to their work habits."

Some of the students suggested that there should be sensitivity training for teachers and students. "Racism applies to all races. I think in order to ease the problem, we should educate each other about each of our races, equally." A few thought that both teachers and students should not only learn about others, but should also learn to be more open in their attitude towards them. "By understanding others, teachers will learn to treat everyone, Black, White, Chinese, or Indian in an equal manner."

The participants suggested that schools should do much more to promote racial harmony. "I wish the school had more programs that are designed to promote mutual understanding between Black and Whites. One participant wrote, "The entire school should do more activities together." Another noted that, "There is a lack of programs or activities to promote good race relations." Many believed that "The administration in our schools should promote racial harmony among all students." One hopeful participant wrote, "In our cafeteria, I would like to see all the students, Black or

White, sitting together, relating to each other on an equal basis." Many suggested that, "Teachers and students must learn to care for each other."


## Additional Comments

Given the freedom to express themselves, the range of comments from the participants extended beyond the areas formerly defined. There were numerous one-time comments, some as basic as requests for longer gym periods or the inclusion of rap music in the cafeteria; others were more profound. One student suggested that Black students should be educated in separate schools. Another suggested that students should have a say in which teachers are retained. One respondent was critical of the survey instrument. "The problem with the questionnaire is that it is too general. For example, there is not a great number of Black students within the school, but the ratio of those involved in activities is probably equal to Whites."

A few were very appreciative of the opportunity to express the way they felt about their schools. Their gratitude was expressed in statements such as "Thanks for bringing these issues in the limelight," and, "These things were bugging me for a while now. I am glad I got a chance

to talk about them. I hope something will be done about the situation." Others expressed their appreciation verbally.

Many students felt that the level of expectation for Black students should be increased significantly. They claimed that schools were not doing as much to help Black students to excel as they were doing for White students. Some thought that Black students needed better representation. They felt that, perhaps because of their limited numbers, Black students did not have the chance to be voted in for head-boy or girl, so they did not get the same representation as White students. Some students suggested that there should be entrepreneurial classes specifically for Black students so that they will be more self-sufficient when they graduated. "Ultimately", one student lamented, "all the Black students need is a fair chance to succeed."

Some of the participants made their own adjustments to and on the survey instrument. In some cases, instead of making a single mark to indicate whether they agree, disagree, or were not sure of a particular statement, participants made as many as ten marks in order to emphasize their position, and/or indicate the importance of the issue in question. Most of the additional marks were made in

agreement of statements such as: "There are not enough subjects which are of special interest and relevance to Black students," and, "There is not enough information given, about the contributions of Black people to Canadian life." Some were made in disagreement to statements such as: "There are Black teachers at the school," or, "There are no outbreaks of racial conflicts among students at the school." Another used multiple marks and asterisks to express her disagreement with the statement: "Discipline and punishment are equal for Black and White students."

Occasionally, a participant qualified his or her response. For example, in response to the statement, "The teachers at the school make an effort to bring about racial understanding and harmony," one student wrote, "some teachers," in the agree column. Another qualified, "Teachers treat Black students as though they have the ability to succeed," with, "it usually depends on the teacher." However, for the most part, the participants followed the instructions on the questionnaire to the letter.

# Chapter 6:  Conclusion

## Discussion

The differences between the perceptions of the younger and older students in this study were statistically significant.  There were possibly several factors  which contributed to these differences.  For example, there might have been more programs organized specifically for Black students in the younger grades; or students in the younger grades might have had less information on some of the issues, or used different kinds of texts.  Regardless of the reasons, it was quite apparent that the students in the higher grades had a more negative perception of the school environment than those in the lower grades.  In some cases, the junior high students had positive perceptions; whereas, the perceptions of the students attending the senior highs, especially in the higher grades, were negative.

Since there were very little differences between the schools in their responses to the survey, unlike Nelsen and Uhl's (1973) contention, the size of the groups in this study had little bearing on the students' perceptions of the school environment.  Twelve of the sixteen schools surveyed

had a Black student body of less than fifty students. One

had less than five and the largest Black student body was

one hundred and eighteen. However, the results did not

identify any significant differences between the schools.

The participants in this study had negative perceptions

of the school environment, but for reasons different to

those found by Nelsen (1974) in Chicago, and Heid (1984) in

New Orleans. Nelsen identified:   (a) the limited

participation of Black students in extracurricular, social,

and other activities, and (b) discriminatory attitudes and

practices of teachers and administrators, especially in

regard to discipline.  Although the participants in this

study also recognized these perverse issues, they did not

perceive them as being their most important concerns (Q24,

Q5, Q6).

The participants acknowledged that there was limited

participation by Black students in extracurricular

activities, but very few of them appeared to be concerned

about this.  For example, only five students were concerned

that there were school activities in which no Blacks

participated (Q17).  They were also very conscious about the

discriminatory attitudes and practices by teachers and

administrators, especially in regard to discipline (Q2, Q5,

Q6). Although many of the students perceived this as an

important issue, it was not chosen amongst their first

fifteen priorities. Even with the opportunity to express

themselves, there were no hostile reactions to these

negative aspects of their school environments. The comments

from the students in this study were hopeful and

constructive. They were concerned about the issues they

perceived were directly pertinent to their personal

development.

Heid (1984) found that Black students in New Orleans

perceived their treatment in school as being less positive

because of: (a) over-representation in lower achieving and

lower status tracks, (b) more frequently disciplined, (c)

higher suspension rates, (d) lower average course grades,

and (e) less positive reinforcement. Only two of these

issues, (b) and (e), were alluded to in this study, but

neither was considered by the participants as being among

their most important concerns.

A careful examination of the evidence in this study

revealed two important factors: (a) In spite of a background

that is wrought with adverse circumstances, and

notwithstanding the perceived insensitivity to their needs,
Black students held no animosity either towards their
teachers or their fellow students. On the contrary, the
Black students wanted to have more positive relations with
White students and teachers. This corroborated the findings
in the BLAC Report (1994), that Black students found a
strong appreciation for teachers in their general support
role to students; and (b) The appeal for Black role models
and the repeated requests for more information about Black
people were, in reality, part of a larger plea for self-
identification.

Although almost forty percent of the students did not
think that their school had programs that were designed to
promote mutual understanding between Blacks and Whites (Q3),
only four students chose this as one of their most important
concerns. Forty percent of the students did not think that
discipline and punishment were equal for Black and White
students (Q2). Yet, only twenty one students chose this as
an important concern. Thirty-nine percent of the students
did not agree that there were no instances of racial
discrimination on the part of teachers at the school (Q7),
and fourteen of the students chose this as one of their most

important concerns. Although many of the participants perceived that they were not treated fairly, they were not consumed by these issues. Half of the respondents perceived that teachers treated Black students as though they had the ability to succeed (Q35), and almost twenty percent chose this as an important concern. Many of their own remarks attested to the fact that they were primarily concerned with learning about themselves and seeing themselves in a more positive light.

The students in this study were clearly aware of the factors which contributed most to their negative perceptions of the school environment. These factors were similar to those indicated by Pratt (1972), Monard (1992), and the Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) report (1994). They were: the need for Black role models in the school system, and the paucity of information about Black people. These were the factors which the students identified as being their most important areas of concern.

The lack of information about Black people in their schools (Q30) was their primary concern. This issue was identified by ninety of the two hundred and sixty

respondents, and it was also frequenty mentioned in their own comnents.

The overwhelming importance given to the paucity of information about Black people in the schools, especially by the older students, alludes to a crisis of identity among Black students. The largest number of the students chose this issue as as their most important concern. This lends support to the agrument that Black students still feel that their ethno-cultural group does not find an adequate and positive place in the existing school programmes (Thomas, 1989).

The fact that their third and fourth priorities dealt with the limited representation of Blacks in the textbooks and resource materials (Q31), and the lack of subjects which were of special relevance to Black students (Q29), gave credence to Pratt's (1972) contention that the curriculum presently used in public schools in Nova Scotia, imposed a type of thinking on the Black student that was alien to his culture.

The second priority was the need for Black teachers (Q21). Seventy-seven of the students chose this as their most important concern, and it was mentioned in one form or

another, by most of the respondents. Many of them asked for more Black teachers because they felt that Black teachers would provide more information about Black people. Some wanted Black teachers because their presence would give more direct visibility to the positive contributions of Black people; and others wanted Black teachers because they would represent good role models.

The importance given by the students themselves to the lack of Black role models in the schools, is also indicative of an identity crisis. Over seventy-five percent of the students lamented about the need for Black role models in their schools. Just as many respondents were concerned about Black people not being portrayed in a positive light, or Black students not being given a fair chance.

The results showed that the students needed teachers who were sensitive to their specific needs. They requested Black teachers, but in the context of teachers who would be more familiar with their culture, and as such, be better able to assist them. It was very likely that to some of the respondents, the colour of the teachers was incidental to the information they imparted, and the way they imparted that information. Most of all, the Black

students wanted open-minded teachers who would be more understanding of the cultural distinctiveness of Black people, and school policies that would accommodate diversity rather than promulgate a totally Eurocentric agenda.

The Black students wanted to learn about themselves by learning about African people throughout the world, but they did not want to be isolated from other students. Many of them suggested that there should be programs which would promote better relations between the Black and White students. As one participant wrote, "I like Multicultural Day because it gives me a chance to learn about other people." Another wanted to see all the students sitting together in the cafeteria, and relating to each other. Many of the comments were in this vein, attesting to the premise that Black students wanted to assert their identity, but not at the expense of their relationship with the other students; more likely, to the benefit of the school as a whole. According to one of the students, "By understanding others, teachers will learn to treat everyone, Black, White, Chinese, or Indian in an equal manner."

The findings in this study differed from Nelsen's (1973) contention that Black female students are more

cynical about the school environment than their male counterparts. Nelsen found that this cynicism was even more apparent on the issue of discipline. Contrary to Nelsen's (1973) findings, the female participants in this study had a more positive impression about fairness of discipline than the males (Q5, Q6). In fact, the females were more inclined to believe that their teachers actually made an effort to bring about racial understanding and harmony (Q11). It appeared that Black female students in this study were less affected by what Hall (1982) called "the double dilemma", that is, the problem which stemmed from being both Black and female.

Without the contrast of Black segregated schools, it is difficult to assess whether Black students in Halifax, have benefited from the integrated school environment. Stephan (1983) found that desegregation had not increased the self-esteem of Black students in New Orleans. He argued that in some cases, their self-esteem had decreased. However, to the extent that the school environment has a direct bearing on students' performance, any negative perception of that environment by Black students meant that their performances will be adversely affected.

The students in this study did not feel that their needs and expectations were being met. Therefore, like the participants in Nelsen's (1973) study, they had a negative perception of their school environment. Beady (1992) argued that schools with negative environments undermined the self-esteem of Black students, thereby fostering a sense of academic futility. If this argument is correct, then it is fair to assume that part of the reason why there is a higher proportion of dropouts and failures among Black students in Halifax, is because of their negative perception of the integrated public school environments.

Schools have a responsibility to educate all students. Given the diverse make-up of the student body of schools in Halifax, if they are to be effective, both the curriculum and the manner in which instruction is delivered must be adjusted accordingly.

The mere fact that teachers are required to obtain a teaching certificate before entering the profession, does not necessarily prepare them to effectively teach students of African descent; and this applies to both Black and White teachers. Obviously, if it is the objective of teachers to ensure that students of African descent get the opportunity

to develop their full potential, then a certain cultural

sensitivity is mandatory.

Every living organism needs its own particular cultural

environment in order to grow and flourish. The African

Canadian student is no exception. Furthermore, because they

belong to a sector of the Canadian society which has been

culturally deprived, and systematically discriminated

against, Black students deserve specific attention.

Education has a pivotal role to play in civilizing society.

It is, therefore, reasonable to suggest that schools should

be in the vanguard of the movement to ensure that African

Canadians get a fair chance to become a dynamic segment of

the Canadian mosaic. In view of the above, the following

recommendations should be considered for future action.


## Recommendations

### Short-term strategies

1. A longitudinal study should be conducted in order

to determine the extent to which the school environment is

directly related to the negative perceptions that Black

students have of their schools. Studies should also be done

to determine why the students in the higher grades have more

negative perceptions than those in the lower grades, and why the male students have more negative perceptions than the females.

2. Because of: (a) The limited number of Black teachers currently employed in the Halifax public school system, and (b) An educational history which impeded most African Canadians from obtaining a degree (Moreau, 1987), far more, becoming formally involved in the teaching profession; an organization such as the Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC), or the Black Educators Association (BEA), should be given the mandate to select African Canadians who, by virtue of their professions, abilities, or contributions to the African Canadian communities, would be seconded to work in integrated schools, as teachers (role models) for designated periods.

3. African Canadian Studies should be included in the core curriculum at all public schools in Halifax.

## Long-term strategies

4. A program should be developed with a title such as, "The Dynamics of Teaching Students of African Descent." This should be a scholarly program, developed perhaps, as a

Doctorate thesis or a comprehensive research project, in

order to fully explore the dynamics of teaching students of

African descent in integrated settings.

5. After the study has been developed into an academic

program, it should be a mandatory requirement that all

teachers, administrators, and counsellors employed in the

public school system successfully complete the course.

6. The entire curriculum in public schools should be

revised, and any biases against any ethnic group should be

removed. It should then be redesigned in a form that would

be more inclusive of the non-anglo-celtic cultures that have

played, and continue to play a significant role in the

development of Canada. As Redden (1989) so clearly stated,

"It is not sufficient just to include a unit or even a

course in social studies on a particular group, i.e.,

Blacks, Native peoples." Such a focus, she continued,

"tend to isolate the group and not to show its role in the

total picture." (Redden, 1989, p216).

Redden (1989) argued that such a focus tended to

restrict the availability of the information only to those

who study the particular unit or course. Her comments

echoed the statements made by many of the students in this study:

> It is important that all students be exposed to many cultures/ethnic groups in a variety of ways and at all grade levels. The music program should include song, dance, rhythm, composers from a number of cultural/ethnic groups. Physical education should reflect the games and sports of various groups; it must also consider the socialization practices of specific groups.. English language, arts, and literature should reflect cultures from around the world.. The contributions of individuals, regardless of ethnicity, to science and mathematics should be made known.
> Courses/programs need to include specific information on the history and culture of cultural/ethnic groups. Historic events, situations, conflicts, and interpretation from diverse cultural/ethnic perspectives need to be presented (Redden, 1989, p. 216).

Like the participants in this study, Redden (1989) believed that the contributions made by groups to the development of Canada need to be taught in Canadian schools. She also advocated, and this study concurs, that there is also the need to help students understand how racism, bias, and prejudice affect the behavior and experiences of all groups.

# APPENDIX A

## Section 1.

## Student Information

School: _____

Sex:     Male ( )        Female ( )

Age:     _____

Grade:   7 ( )    8 ( )    9 ( )

## Section 2.

### Instructions

Respond to each statement by marking the appropriate box to indicate whether you agree, are not sure (about the answer), or disagree.

### Example:

|                          | Agree | Not Sure | Disagree |
|--------------------------|-------|----------|----------|
| Classes are very large.  | √     |          |          |

# Section 2.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

|  | Agree | Not Sure | Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. All students who break the rules are given the same punishment whether they are Black or White. |  |  |  |
| 2. Discipline and punishment are equal for Black and White students. |  |  |  |
| 3. The school has programs that are designed to promote mutual understanding between Blacks and Whites. |  |  |  |
| 4. The administration at the school does its best to promote racial harmony among students. |  |  |  |
| 5. White teachers are just as strict with Black students as they are with white students. |  |  |  |
| 6. White teachers are just as strict with white students as they are with Black students. |  |  |  |
| 7. There are no instances of racial discrimination on the part of teachers at the school. |  |  |  |
| 8. Most students at the school hang-out with people from their own race. |  |  |  |
| 9. Some teachers favour Black students. |  |  |  |
| 10. Some teachers favour White students. |  |  |  |
| 11. The teachers at school make an effort to bring about racial understanding and harmony. |  |  |  |
| 12. Black and White students are usually seated in separate parts of the classroom. |  |  |  |
| 13. Black students are not allowed to wear certain kinds of clothing. |  |  |  |
| 14. White students are not allowed to wear certain kinds of clothing. |  |  |  |
| 15. There are no outbreaks of racial conflicts among students at the school. |  |  |  |
| 16. There are enough pictures and portraits of Black persons displayed at the school. |  |  |  |
| 17. There are school activities in which no Black students participate. |  |  |  |

| | Agree | Not Sure | Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18. There are school activities in which no White students participate. | | | |
| 19. There are Black persons in administrative positions at the school. | | | |
| 20. There are Black counsellors at the school. | | | |
| 21. There are Black teachers at the school. | | | |
| 22. Few Black students are elected to the student council. | | | |
| 23. There are no Black students in the school band. | | | |
| 24. Black students do not participate enough in school programs and activities. | | | |
| 25. Black students are sometimes not welcome to participate in school programs and activities. | | | |
| 26. White students are sometimes not welcome to participate in school programs and activities. | | | |
| 27. Black students sometimes do not make enough of an effort to participate in school programs and activities. | | | |
| 28. Black students are not represented in some activities because of their limited numbers. | | | |
| 29. There are not enough subjects which are of special interest and relevance to Black students. | | | |
| 30. There is not enough information given about the contributions of Black people to Canadian life. | | | |
| 31. Black people are visibly represented in the textbooks and resource materials used in the classroom. | | | |
| 32. Black students do not feel they are part of the school and therefore do not feel any loyalty to the school. | | | |
| 33. Inter-racial dating is frowned upon by school authorities. | | | |
| 34. Teachers encourage Black students to do their best at all times. | | | |
| 35. Teachers treat Black students as though they have the ability to succeed. | | | |

# Section 3.

Select which three of the previous statements you think is the most serious and write the numbers in the space provided below.

# Section 4.

In addition to the statements made in the previous questionnaire, what is(are) the most important concern(s) you have about your school.

# Section 5.

Name one positive change you would like to see in your school.

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