A CONTEMPORARY CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE:
THE THOUGHTS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS
AND UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS ON SEEKING PUBLIC OFFICE

(A LIFE HISTORY METHOD)

BY

CHARLES T. YOUNG

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Christopher M. Span, Chair
Professor James D. Anderson
Associate Professor Yoon K. Pak
Professor Christopher Dunbar
Abstract

This research examines the historical evidence abounds with examples of how African Americans sought control and agency in the struggle for freedom throughout American history. More specifically, it is a study of their fight for economic, political, and educational rights from the 1960s to the present day. It critiques how ideas and terms such as “leadership” and “activism” have evolved in the African American experience, and how African Americans themselves have sought to participate in these forms of engagement. It argues that the people who brought attention to political, economic, and educational inequalities of African Americans during the 1960s, have been displaced or reduced because this ideal for leadership or activism has been lost on those serving African American communities. This dissertation is accordingly, a community research study on political (in)-activism in Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. It seeks to answer the following question: How, and in what ways, do levels of political activism on the part of African American community members (particularly Christian religious leaders and university professors) work to promote the academic success of African American students in local schools?
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Table of Contents

Chapter 1  
Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 1  
Nature of the Problem .............................................................................................................................. 2  
Significance of Study (Approach to a Local Community Insight) ........................................................... 2  

Chapter 2  
Review of Literature .................................................................................................................................... 5  
Historiography of African American Leadership ......................................................................................... 7  
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................................. 26  

Chapter 3  
Methodology ................................................................................................................................................ 27  
Scholars’ Theories on Life History Method ................................................................................................. 27  
Life History (Theoretical Frame Work) .......................................................................................................... 29  
Understanding My Research Questions ................................................................................................. 35  
Life History Method Interviews’ Technical Components ......................................................................... 36  

Chapter 4  
Discussion of Anticipated Findings ............................................................................................................. 37  
Introduction to the Participants’ Interviewed and Observation ................................................................... 37  
Thoughts on Certain African American Leadership Involved in Politics ..................................................... 44  
Has Political Activism Changed Over Time Across Generations? ............................................................... 54  
Does Same Race and Similar Cultural Values Matter with Education-Politics? ......................................... 62  
Local and National Newspaper Articles .................................................................................................... 71  

Chapter 5  
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................................... 88  

References ................................................................................................................................................ 96  

Appendix (A) Life History Interview Questions and Guide............................................................................ 104  
Appendix (B) List of Black and White Clergy and Scholar Candidates from The News-Gazette (1968-2016) Newspaper Articles ................................................................................................................. 106  
Appendix (C) Life History Interviews and partial Transcriptions .................................................................. 107
Chapter 1

Introduction

This research is guided by a single question: How, and in what ways, do levels of political activism on the part of African American community members (particularly Christian religious leaders and university professors) work to promote the academic success of African American students in local schools? It argues that prior to the 1965 Voting Rights Act, many African American leaders had a strong passion for direct political engagement and elective posts, but were systematically denied these opportunities. This systematic denial led to these African Americans achieving their political ambitions through community organizing and activism. In contrast to these historical considerations, the path for African American participants in politics, among African American religious leaders and professors, has waned in the past two decades. This is particularly true of their lack of pursuing elected office, especially for education purposes. Through archival research and individual interviews, this research has identified data that explain this perceived shift in political engagement in the African American community. It provides a case study of the thoughts and (in)-actions of local “African American” Christian religious leaders and university professors’ in the Champaign-Urbana community. These methods provide insights to their thoughts on why African Americans do or do not seek public office, go into certain professions, understand concepts such as leadership and activism, and the role gender, culture, and race play in their ideas and aspirations of African Americans, regardless of whether they seek a life in politics.
Nature of the Problem

For centuries whites have dominated the political system in local, state, and federal governments. It has only been in recent years that African Americans have had any meaningful opportunity to engage in politics. Despite the fact African Americans have been in the United States since 1619, African American males, in general, did not receive the right to vote until the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified in 1870. African Americans held public office for a brief period during the Reconstruction years (1865-1875), but lost most of these civic and political opportunities with the end of the Reconstruction era. More than a century later, and following the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans regained the opportunities to vote and hold public office, but the damage had been done and very few found a home in politics.

The most African Americans could obtain in this long struggle for equality was to engage in local religious and community activism. Their energies shaped the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement, of the first generation of African American political leaders following the Civil Rights Movement, and of how future generation of Africans should think about the roles of being an activist or politician for their communities. The “who” became a political leader and the “how” political representation is reproduced in African American communities do not seem to conform to the aforementioned historic patterns. It appears fewer contemporary African American church leaders and educators, particularly university professor do not engage in the political. For me the question is why.

Significance of Study

(Approach to a Local Community Insight)

This research topic and its questions originate from my own family involvement and interests in how the black community and it leadership engaged and advocate for advancing the
school experiences with of African Americans in the local public school systems. My family and I were born and raised in the community of Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. As longtime residents, we have had the opportunity to attend the local elementary, middle, and high schools. In addition, many members of my family and I have attended the local community college, Parkland, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Over the years, I have seen countless challenges facing public education in these two cities, but very little activism to adequately address these challenges. In 2014, it was recorded, “many of our public schools still face racial disparities and huge achievement gap problems between struggling African American students (including students of color) compared to successful white American students by in-

large” (Haslanger, 2014).

This problem has had an effect on the lives and educational outcomes of my three African American children, all of who went through the Champaign school system. The issues in the schools were, particularly problematic with our youngest son, because they tried to label him as having a learning disability and wanted to hold him back a grade. These issues were not new, but have been a systemic historic program that came to the forefront of the public’s attention in the mid-1990s by local black community members, leaders, and activists. Their activism made my wife and I see things differently. In 1996, their activism eventually led to a petition, and thereafter a filed court-ordered complaint, the Consent Decree against the Champaign Unit #4 School District. The Consent Decree “alleged discriminatory practices against many struggling African American students,” (Peter & Lucey, 2002, p.7). Notwithstanding, the complaint did not solve the problem, as one newspaper reporter illustrated that “13 years later in 2009 when this long legal issue concluded, little progress was made and millions of dollars were spent on this case, still leaving many black community members dissatisfied” (Heckel, 2009, B-2).
Many questions remain unanswered for me in the past fifteen years as it related to African American leadership and their ability to address the politics of education impacting the African American community in Champaign-Urbana. These unanswered questions have led me to conduct this research and hopefully provide a political analysis of how contemporary African American leaders and educators in a local community. It has led me to ask and hopefully answer: What motivates African American Christian religious leaders and university professors in Urbana-Champaign to seek elected public office? Is the desire to improve educational outcomes for underserved minority students, African American students in particular, a salient feature of their political aspirations for seeking public office?
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This chapter will present literature pertaining to the history of Black Nationalism and political activism and how it has been used in regard to topics of same race and similar cultural values, as well as, with constituents and their political representatives. Additionally, this is a model that has been used in a local community research study, one in which certain contemporary candidates sought elected office positions. For instance, according to much of the research on Black Nationalism, political and mass community activism has taken place, and been practiced throughout American history since the time of enslavement to the present (Du Bois, 1903; Grant, 2008; Goldman, 1973; McAdam, 1982; Morris, 1984; Washington, 1986).

Specifically, Black Nationalism became manifested into more elected political positions, starting in the 1970s and continuing into the early 1980s, engaging many local grassroots African Americans but also extending to leaders at the state and federal levels of government (Gaines, 1996; Singh, 1998; Smethurst, 2005; Thomas, & Franklin, 2001). However, beginning in the early 1980s, the political structure began to shift drastically, with a decrease in the amount of black leadership’s involvement in electoral politics throughout the United States (Obama, 2006; Smiley, 2001 & 2006; Smith, 1996; West, 1982).

Throughout American history to the present, the concept and practice of same race and similar cultural values has mattered, particularly in regard to African Americans’ choices, and in decision-making in the areas of education and politics (Bohm & Funke & Harth, 2010; England & Meier & Robinson, 1981; Davis, 2012; Kohli, 1995; Milner, 2006). As regards African American Christian religious leaders seeking public office, they have had a long history of becoming elected officials; however, in recent years, they have become less willing to take part...
in this tradition (Black, 2010; Boston, 2000; Cricks, 2012; Logan, 2014; Robbins, 1989; Roger, 2008; White, 2000). With regard to African American university or college professors seeking public office throughout American history, we see little evidence of or research on them becoming elected officials (Blunkett, 2012; Fandon, 2012; Meadows & Schaller, 2006; Perlmutter, 2011; Rice, 2008). However, there have been recorded instances, such as in national newspaper articles, of a few university professors that have sought public office (Burrell, 2012; Mangan, 2010; Mogilyansksya, 2012; Schmidt, 2010).

With respect to the terms “community activism”, “activism”, or “black activism”, there are common themes or meanings in the use of these words throughout the United States (Crosby, & Tuck, 2011). In Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, for example, according to newspaper articles, there are African American Christian religious leaders and university professors who have sought public office from 1965 to the present. These articles included these candidates’ biographies such as of Evelyn Burnett-Underwood an ordained minister to Reginald Alston, a full-tenured professor (unlisted writer, 1968; Lafond, 2005). However, for the complete listings of all the black and white Christian religious leaders and university professors’ candidates during this long time period, see (Appendix B).

In order to thoroughly contextualize this study in both national and localized settings, I will present research on the history of Black Nationalism and political activism. Specifically, I will address African American religious leaders and professors who have sought public office, with particular emphasis for how their activism pertains to same race and similar cultural values. In the latter part of this chapter, I will discuss the history of mass black community activism, from the increase in black political engagement, to the decrease in black political leadership, and forward to contemporary candidates who have sought public office in the Urbana-Champaign
area. There is a long history of scholarship on African American leaders and what inspired them to become active in their communities. However, not many sources have addressed the matter of African American religious leaders and university professors becoming elected officials for the purpose of addressing major social justice issues or changes within the local educational community. To better answer my research topic and questions, what follows is a chronological overview of the literature in the field on these topics.

**Historiography of African American Leadership**

Most of the literature in this section complements current literature on how African American leaders became active in their communities before and after slavery in the United States, and that research is rife with many examples. However, my interest begins in the early 20th century with America’s first historiography of a mass black consciousness movement that presented many new social, cultural, educational and political ideas. In research done by Historian Colin Grant *Negro With A Hat: The Rise And Fall of Marcus Garvey* (2008), he offers an historical analysis of one of America’s first and most influential African American pioneer leaders during the early 20th century: Marcus Mosiah Garvey. Garvey promoted the first mass “Back to Africa” movement, which offered, a separatist ideology of social, political, educational, and economic freedom for black Americans and other black people across the globe. His famous motto was “‘Up, You Mighty Race’”, which constituted a “Black Race Pride First” ideology that called for all people of African descent to repatriate to their “God given homeland of Africa”’ (180). Grant’s research discovered how important same race and similar cultural values are and have always been, as demonstrated historically by people’s shared values and common interests. My studies have some connections to Garvey’s mass “Black Race Pride First” ideology as it relates to my same race and similar cultural values theory matter experiences, in the context of
my investigation of the local community regarding African American Christian leaders and political representation of their constituents.

Garvey’s contemporary, sociologist and historian W. E. B. Du Bois’ studied the promotion of education and political involvement of the African American race. In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois asserted that black folks should be better educated, and that one in ten black men would become a leader of their race by continuing to seek more education, and by getting directly involved with social changes. He argued “of such weapons the greatest, perhaps, in the modern world is the power of the ballot, and the right to have a voice in the policy of the state; and that the greatest good to the greatest number could be attend” (75). During these early times, Du Bois’ research work convinced many that a proper education, and participation in the democratic system among the African American race, would provide a basis for what Du Bois believe were the true values for all Americans’ practice of democracy, assimilation, and patriotism. Similar to Du Bois’ argument, my topic also presented a model of how certain African American educated leaders serve as political examples for underserved minority students’ communities, particularly contemporary black students, for the purpose of improving their educational experiences and outcomes.

Between the 1930s and 1950s, the legal practice of segregation was at an all-time high, on which forbid African Americans from participating in the United States’ democratic system, which favored white elitism and power. In Sociologist Doug McAdam’s disciplinary study *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930-1970* (1982) he stated, “In many respects this conception is consistent with elite model. The perspective advanced here rests on the fundamental assumption that wealth and power are concentrated in America in the hands of a few groups, thus depriving most people of any real influences over the major decisions that
affect their lives” (36). McAdam’s scholarship recognized a history of white American elitism and its influential wealth and power in decision making over peoples’ lives. It also suggests that perhaps that distrust and fear may underscore the inconsistency in African American leaders (or particular leaders) pursuing elected office throughout American history. This recognition by McAdam is parallel to my paid ideas and thoughts of contemporary African American religious leaders and professors, and with regard to their seeming reluctance to pursue elected office positions in the contemporary era.

Also in mid-20th century America, many other social, political, and religious groups formed, such as the Black Nation of Islam, with its outspoken spiritual leader Malcolm X. It was Malcolm who first embraced the philosophy of “total separation,” thereby condemning America’s “legal practice of segregation” between blacks and whites. According to journalist Peter Goldman’s biographical study, The Death and Life of Malcolm X (1973), the author addresses Malcolm’s thoughts on America’s white elitist political system by writing, “[X was] adamantly against registering black people as Democrats or Republicans; he despaired of finding salvation for the blacks in the electoral process. He considered Marxism another political ideology invented by white men, to shift the position seat of power from one group of whites men to another of white men. He thought it had no relevance to the black man” (152). But later, Malcolm had a slight change of heart, and he came to believe that unless whites genuinely accepted blacks’ pure culture, true identities, and characteristics as equal human beings, with equal rights to whites, then perhaps America’s political system could work for the black race. Goldman’s biographical study concluded that Malcolm X’s ideology originated from Marcus Garvey’s philosophy (followers of Garvey aka “Garveyites”) and his “Black Race Pride First” model was adopted and practiced by the Black Nation of Islam (pro-black) organization decades
later. Goldman’s study was similar to Grant’s work on Garvey in regard to how same race and similar cultural values matters, which I also continue to highlight strongly throughout my work on current elected leaders’ and community members’ common themes, beliefs, and political interests.

At this time in history, many of these black social and community-activist groups particular formed in their churches by organizing, planning, and creating their own political platforms for the betterment of their communities. Social scientist Aldron D. Morris and his research contained in *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (1984) highlighted these important observations. The author pointed out, “The black church served as the organizational hub of black life; the church more than any other institution provides a setting where oppression could be openly discussed and resources could be developed to organize collectives resistance” (5). Morris’ research revealed how, historically, whenever blacks were able to gather socially for a particular cause, or at churches, or to elicit black groups’ personal inspired feelings, it produced many African American religious leaders to take the initiative in leading their followers to demonstrate, to fight for freedom, and to pursue social justice. This lesson is intertwined with my research topic and its central question: What motivates contemporary Christian African American religious leaders (in-addition to black university professors) to seek elected public office?

During the late 1950s into the 1960s, African American minister and community activist leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., epitomized Aldon Morris’ assessment outlined in *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (1984), and formed arguably one of the first organizations of the civil rights movement that stemmed from a church congregation. In a complication of King’s speeches, edited by historian, educator, and minister
James M. Washington (Ed.), on *I Have a Dream: Writing and Speeches: That Changed The World* (1987), he stated King that the “Black churches were the religious parent of African American culture; and the final major area of untapped power for the Negro is in the political arena. In the future we must become intensive political activists. We must be guided in this direction because we need political strength, more desperately than any other group in American society” (11). Washington’s study argued how King’s nonviolent resistance philosophy was the only effective strategy for social-political changes then, which led him to also form a religious-community group, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) organization, that was inspired by and dedicated to addressing these “systemic” challenges and problems. During this era, the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, and the model that it presented, established a pivotal moment in changing American history, one that inspired my research study. This was particularly so with respect to African American religious leaders and highly educated professional leaders who took charge of their black communities, especially in the areas of politics and education, by, in part, seeking elected offices, which my studies investigates.

Also during the 1960s, there were many female African American activists who were important actors and vanguard leaders for social and civil rights changes as well. Their involvement included their role in putting forward and passing two important pieces of historical legislation in the US Congress, namely the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. In a scholarly work by historians Bettye Thomas and V. P. Franklin, *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (2001), the authors reflected on these events by writing, “Many black women who were actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement, especially those in leadership positions, were the backbones of the churches. The evidence of their work can be seen everywhere” (90). Thomas and Franklin’s
work exposed African American women’s true identity during this period not as “inferior roles” to a “black male-centered model” or by not referring to “African American leadership” as “men’s only.” Rather, this period saw women as equal to their counterparts in leadership roles, within the black communities that time and for years to come. My research interest also correlates with Thomas and Franklin’s assertion about the importance of equality in leadership roles among African American women. This correlates to my concern regarding the “who” and “how” of political representation, as presented in my local black community today.

After the 1960s Civil Rights Era ended, empowering women and people of color in particular, many African American social and political groups took on this “black self-reliance ideology” during the 1970s. An English professor in Afro-American Studies, James Smethurst, who wrote *The Black Arts Movement: Literacy Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* (2005) elaborated on this black cultural awareness and argued that “the black race have to understand that nobody is going to take care of you, and people like you. So in the final analysis it is Black people who must solve the problems of Black people” (17). Smethurst’s research suggested that during this period of self-black consciousness and independent thinking there emerged a call to action that inspired many former civil-rights, and grassroots community activists including lawyers, educators, and religious leaders, to become elected officials in what would establish all-time highs of such participation. In my study, I agree with Smethurst’s findings on “black consciousness” and “self-race reliance ideology,” which is in-conjunction with my desire to seek out the thoughts and motivations of African American leaders today to help their own race educationally, yet also from a political point of view.

During the 1970s, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) a black political body was born. Professor of Politics Robert Singh, writing in *The Congressional Black Caucus: Radical
Politics in the U. S. Congress (1998), asserted “For the first time in American history, black federal legislators established a formal organization to represent African Americans nationwide, regardless of the districts and states in which they lived. The CBC has been inextricably linked to the changing socioeconomic and political fortunes and the evolving policy priorities and preferences of African Americans in the post-civil rights era (1965 to the present)” (2-3). Singh’s published work recognized how important the 1960s Civil Rights Movement was for African American history, which from centuries, of black people’s sweat, blood, tears, and deaths, produced for the “first time ever” in U.S. History, an all-black legislative branch, dedicated to their cultural issues on a national basis. Singh’s publication revealed a perfect model for my type of research work namely to emulate strong ties with the overall concept of African American leadership and its involvement with black community issues in general, but in particularly, as elected officials at the local level of government with improving African American students’ educational experiences and opportunities.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s and beyond, CBC’s top priority in legislation, initiative, and push was the “importance of education” as the key to making serious changes within many African American communities across the nation. However, this had not been anything new throughout African American history, or with other struggling, or marginalized minority groups. History of literature Professor Kevin Gaines, in his work Uplifting The Race: Black Leaders, Politics, And Culture In The Twentieth Century (1996), argued from a historical point of view, “The belief in education as an indispensable means of social advance for African Americans has remained a central tenet, aspiration, and ideology. ‘“Educate! Educate! Educate! Get all the knowledge within reach,”’ advised in the Atlanta Journal in 1905, adding, “then use it for the good of the race” (33). Gaines’ study has proved that both before and after slavery in the United
States, African Americans have always known the important call and role of obtaining a good education for liberating, improving, and advancing all people’s lives, but in particularly their own, particularly for better social mobility. In my studies as well, here is where I make similar connections to Gaines’ proven point, wherein I identify “black university professors” as perhaps running for elected office positions because, as “researchers” and “scholars,” they have attained the highest level of knowledge in their respective fields and demonstrated their dedication to continued learning.

However in the 1990s, political scientist Professor Robert Smith agreed that education was the key to improving black people’s lives, but in his We Have No Leader: African Americans in The Post-Civil Rights Era (1996), he blamed many community issues including education, for black leadership for not taking actual stances or being proactive enough with regard to challenges that impacted their race as a whole. Smith, stated, “The new generation of post-civil rights leaders has made things worse within the last 25 plus years, due to not having well organized and strategically planned solutions for black freedom. What Black Leaders, We Have No Leaders; these black leaders had no plan, no program of action and no organization to mobilize or to lead blacks in a direction that would deal with their communal problems” (275-276). Smith’s research findings discovered how many contemporary black leaders were well aware of new forms of sophisticated, institutionalized racism carried out by a white elitist American class system, and yet refuse to confront this new negative system of marginalizing people, in juxtaposition to black leaders during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. My own research seeks the validity for this type of assessments that has been made by scholars expressing similar views to those of Smith’s. These arguments take the form of my curiosity and
concerns, as if there is perhaps a pattern or trend that suggests “a lack thereof” of particular African American leaders pursuing elected positions.

In the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, there are two prominent nationally known African American figures and activists: American talk show host and liberal political commentator Tavis Smiley, and controversial Professor of Afro-American Studies, Philosophy, and Religion, Dr. Cornel West. Both of these figures have recently been challenging this notion of mine, the status quo of “lack thereof” of real contemporary black leadership communities, as contrasted with the successful black leadership communities during of 1960s Civil Rights era that Professor Robert Smith alluded to. In both Smiley’s \textit{How to Make Black America Better} (2001), and \textit{The Covenant with Black America} (2006), he stated, “Gains made in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s have slowed. We have not been able to eliminate or significantly reduce the academic achievement gap between African American, Latina/o, and Native American students and their counter parts who identify themselves as Asian Americans or European American” (102). Smiley continues: “We must demand that local communities provide the resources to educate all children, that the state and federal governments provide sufficient resources; and most of all hold all leaders and elected officials responsible and demand that they change current policy” (34). In addition to Smiley’s work, in \textit{Prophesy Deliverance!: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity} (1982), Dr. West argued, “Political liberalism in the Afro-American community is far from dead; though frail and beleaguered, it limps on” (144-145). The common themes that both Smiley and Dr. West highlighted from their studies were that after the period of the 1960s Civil Rights era, there was an increase in productive black leadership that improved minority lives, particularly in education, followed by a drastic, decrease in African American leadership, a trend that has not been corrected or improved as of late. However, both Smiley and Dr. West hold our current political
system and its processes accountable in contributing to a weakened state of black politics today, witnessed by negative outcomes at all three levels of government: local, state, and federal. Similar to Smiley and Dr. West’s findings, my own research topic also investigates how changes have occurred over time through many generations and their attendant views of “community activism” and the “role of black politics” today.

In 2008, major changes had taken place, or, some might even say asserted, “the prophecy of black American history has been fulfilled” with Barack Obama becoming the United States’ first African American President. In his then U. S. Senator’s autobiographical memoir, The Audacity Of Hope: Thoughts On Reclaiming The American Dream (2006), Obama combines this new era of black politics with some of its past practices and argues how many contemporary black leaders failed to finish what past black community leaders had begun, particularly from the 1960s era, stating, “We might start with completing the unfinished business of the civil rights movements namely, enforcing nondiscrimination laws in such basic areas as employment, housing, and education” (242). Obama’s political commentary recognized the importance of this era in American history, particularly for African Americans’ history in the context of becoming more productive citizens in many areas of life areas, one in which they continue to lack significantly. President Obama’s political rhetoric on the challenges of black Americans’ experiences is linked to my studies in regard to using the 1960s civil rights model as a true starting point for major changes, described as a “protest to politics movement” in “new diplomatic ways,” with the aim of blacks becoming more involved in decision-making positions, especially in politics.

This mass holistic view of the African American culture and race continuing to live up to the 1960s civil rights model today became problematic, as evidenced by a new generation of
research findings such as those of Associate Professor of Political Science Theodore J. Davis’ *Black Politics Today: The Era of Socioeconomic Transition* (2012). In this work, Davis pointed out, “The final characteristic of black politics today is that it has two dimensions. Unlike the politics of the earlier eras, black politics today has both an external as well as an internal dimension of class-based politics in black communities” (19). Davis’ work argues how the contemporary era of black politics is not as holistic among the African American culture as it once was during these early and post-civil rights years. He suggests that today there is more internal division among African Americans because of the different ideological and political views that act to create differences among party lines—for example, terms such as conservatives, moderates, liberals, extremists, radicals, and independents. Davis’ argument is intertwined with my studies, in which I look at “candidates” not from a traditional point of view, which would normally seek any eligible person who might want to pursue public office, but rather from a select group of non-traditional candidates, including African American religious leaders and university professors’ political and educational beliefs.

I realize that my approach to contemporary non-traditional candidates in our society may be different, given the fact that most research tends to support a more traditional approach, such as the work of Tyson King Meadows and Thomas F. Schaller’s *Devolution And Black Legislators: Challenges and Choices in the Twenty-First Century* (2006). As they suggest, “Given the legal background of many legislators, it is no surprise that about 20 percent are attorneys. About one of every six legislators comes from the field of education, as teachers, professors, or school administrators” (47-48). My work contradicts most of Meadows and Schaller’s findings; however, do agree with the last part of their quote that assert, “one of every
six legislators come from [other] fields,” as this unusual data relates to my local home town
research, which I will examine, discuss, answer and explain later in this dissertation.

In regard to my research, which focuses on improving educational outcomes for
underserved minority students, African American students in particular, as a salient feature of
African American leaders’ political aspirations, I connect my ideas to white American history
and it’s long held practice of “exploitations and political oppressions of others.” In a study done
by Psychology Professor Wendy Kohli’s in her work *Critical Conversations in Philosophy of
Education* (1995), she indicated how black communities needed to start standing up against years
of negative practices against them. Practices that continue today, especially through the
manipulation of politics. Further, she argued, “While promoting the exploitation of “Others”, it is
the product of politics that can hide or legitimize race, class, and gender oppression. Many social
institutions prevent us from seeing how a high “standard of living” abuses the whole natural
world: and in doing so, brutally exacerbates race, class and gender oppression. And the first
victims of this increasing ruination are the “underdeveloped”, the “poor”, and oppressed people”
(326-327). Kohli’s work highlights how the practice of politics and institutionalized racism have
historically played a meaningful role in oppressing people of color for various reasons, and how,
currently, people of color for the most part continue to be shut out of decision-making positions.

My research interest concurs with the Wendy Kohli’s findings, which also underscore my overall
topic about the importance of African American leaders seeking public office for the sake of
same race and similar cultural value matters for the purpose of politically representing a group of
historically and contemporaneously marginalized people.

And, with regard to the support of African American leadership of same race, and similar
cultural values with regard to political representation, we find current research done by criminal
justice professor Robert Bohm, political psychologist Friedrich Funke, and post-doctoral student Nicole S. Harth, in their work, *Same-Race and Same-Gender Voting Preferences* (2010). Additionally, political scientists Robert England, Kenneth Meier, and doctoral student Ted P. Robinson, in *Black Resources and Black School Board Representation* (1981), and Professor of Education and Social Work H. Richard Milner’s *The Promise of Black Teacher’s Success with Black Students* (2006), argued this same general point, starting with the first research team, which wrote, “High racial identification was associated with a stronger same-race preference” (250). The second research team wrote, “Literature suggests that a black political structure that interacts with black resources do effect black school board representation in positive ways” (976-977). And the third set of authors noted, “Cultural connections are often prevalent in relationships with Black teachers and Black students; and historically, have succeeded in fostering optimal learning opportunities for students, especially for Black students” (98). This line of thought represents the direction of my overall hometown study as it pursues these common themes, and gathers solid data from these scholarly research teams’ conclusions, with regard to the importance of same race and similar cultural values as they pertain to political representation and education.

Specifically with contemporary Christian African American religious leaders, as well as university professors who seek public office, unlike during the Civil Rights era, literature today seem to suggests that blending these two types of leaders into the political arena, can be perceived as either problematic, a conflict of interest, or leery. First, from a religious point of view, there are four relevant works: Professor of Political Science Dennis Rogers’ *Politics and the Pulpit in the African American Church* (2008); Professor Emeritus of Social Work Sadye Logan’s *The Spirit of An Activist* (2014); and Director of Communications at Americans United
for Separation of Church and State and author of several religious books, Rob Boston’s
*Preachers, Politics And Campaign* (2000), and Professor of Sociology Thomas Robbins’ *From
Private to Public Power, Religious Revival in American Life* (1989). All four of these articles
note the controversies that surround ideas with regard to the “separation of church and state”, and
the pros and cons within general religious beliefs, ideologies, affiliations, and denominations.
Roger argues, “Most Black Churches have an intrinsically anti-political agenda” (50-51). Logan
explains, “The state shall not have influence either to prohibit or to promote a person’s religious
beliefs” (47). Boston claims, “The provision in the IRS Code states that non-profit organizations
holding a 501(c) (3) status, which includes houses of worship, may not “participate in, or
intervene in any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public
office” (10). Last Robbins asserts, “Is American religion now experiencing a political
resurgence? Or do the institutionalized patterns of secularization, differentiation, and church-
state separation continue to be dominant and contain the political impact of religious ferment”
(28)?

However, my research topic and mission may be contrary to these scholars’ overall
findings on the separation of church and state conversation, as religion, as it was viewed and
practiced during the 1960s Civil Rights era was different than today. With regard to ideas of
“shared spiritual and secular” political views in moderation, Nathan Crick, Associate Professor
of Communication at Texas A & M University, argued in *Barack Obama and the Rhetoric of
Religious Experience* (2012) cited Obama in arguing, “Political action should be guided by the
dictates of doctrinal religion and secular attitude that policy decisions should be guided by
rational public opinion, suggesting that both religious/faithful and rational/scientific ways of
knowing can be contribute to democratic governance” (35-36). Also author, educator, and poet
Samuel Black, in *African American Ministers Becoming Political Leaders’ Essay* (2010) echoed this argument about how these “shared experiences” have always existed in the history of black religious leaders, adding, “Traditionally, African American ministers have been elected as leaders for various reasons. The most obvious is based on the fact that the church as the center of the community has traditionally come from the church as determined by the people in the community. Naturally, African American ministers were elected to represent the community over white politicians because they were most trusted by the town’s people” (1-2). Both Cricks and Black defend how important the combined knowledge of church and state can be if it is taught correctly and in a balanced way within individuals’ lives. My studies have shown this to be true, in the tradition of black politics involving religious leaders as elected officials.

A contemporary example of this can be seen by Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) member Emanuel Cleaver, who is currently a United Methodist pastor and politician representing the U. S House of Representative for the 5th district in the State of Missouri. In a dissertation done by graduate student Shauntee White, *The Rhetoric of Preacher, Politician Emanuel Cleaver* (2000), the author states, “Emanuel Cleaver was elected as the fifty-first mayor of Kansas City and, more specially, the first African American to hold the office; [and] as a United Methodist pastor of a 1,800-member African American church, Rev. Cleaver understood the power of the spoken word and oratorical skills required of a public person” (4).

White’s dissertation findings open up a continuing conversation today, similar of that of the early and post-civil rights model established in the 1960s, of how religious and political ideas and action can be successfully combined without too much controversy. Correlated with White’s findings, my dissertation topic also hopes to seek that similar spirit of political aspiration in my
research about various African American Christian religious groups in Urbana-Champaign and how their engagements impact local schools.

Likewise with today’s African American university professors perhaps seeking public office, they are not traditionally known for, or popular in for running for political office, as suggested by limited sources on this topic. According to newspaper writer and, editor Nicholas P. Fandon’s *Professor to Politician: Trading in Lectures for Campaign Speeches* (2012), the author explained how, “Very few, [professors] however, actually run for office. In the past 100 years, the list of prominent professors who ran and won national office is brief, and the list of those who ran and lost is not much long” (2). Currently, there have been a minimum amount of professors who have sought public office. Sources on this subject include, newspaper writer Alina Mogilyanskaya’s *In State Races, Some Academic Candidates Shrink From Ivory Tower’s Shadow* (2012); newspaper writer Peter Schmidt’s *At Central Michigan U., Professors Fight to Protect Their Political Ambitions* (2010); and newspaper author, Barbara Burrell’s *Practicing Politics: Female Political Scientists as Candidates for Elective Office* (2012), and newspaper writer Katherine Mangan’s *A Professor-Politician Stumps for Votes in Texas* (2010). All four of these author’s’ works argued how professors faced various challenges or were forced to be discrete about their candidacies because most state universities’ rules prevented them from seeking elected office positions while faculty members. Mogilyanskaya, referred to a few “U.S. scholars that ran for public office during the 2012 election cycle” (A18). Schmidt stated, “University employees had to obtain the approval of their supervisor, as well of as the provost or the vice president in charge of their department, before undertaking any political campaign or agreeing to be nominated for any appointed political position” (A6). Similarly, Burrell also wrote, “They stress that college professors have traditionally been discouraged from pursuing
professional service in politics and government” (83). Finally, Mangan noted how “around campus, she [Professor Rebecca Bell-Metereau] keeps quiet about the campaign. Her office offers no hint of her political aspirations. My colleagues have been supportive, but they’re not all that aware of what I’m doing. I’ve tried to keep my academic life free of politics” (A2). For additional listings of a few professors and faculty members of higher education seeking public office, see (Appendix B).

In addition to these set-backs for professors, British Labor Party politician David Blunkett’s Politics as Theory and Politics as Practice (2012) article also argued, “The term [politics] ‘The Polis’ is about engaging. Academics might observe and write, but that is to view the world from outside” (646). Blunkett’s work suggests that most professors are “too liberal” and that in higher academia it is too notoriously difficult to translate its work into terms that non-academics can relate to and understand. However, in regard to my argument with contemporary African American religious leaders’ experiences with politics, in my research I discovered a few examples about current African American university professors, most notably Barack Obama, once a Constitutional Law Professor to became the 44th President of the United States. Also, in Condoleezza Rice’s biography Condi: The Condoleezza Rice Story (2008) we noted that, “Rice, a professor at Stanford University, also held important positions in the George W. Bush administrations as National Security Advisor, and Secretary of State” (65). Mogilyanskaya, writing in her newspaper article, In State Races, Some Academic Candidates Shrink From Ivory Tower’s Shadow (2012), listed African American Professor Charles Dumas, as “the Democratic nominee in Pennsylvania’s 5th Congressional District race, and a professor in the School of Theatre at Pennsylvania State University, and a civil-rights activist who also holds a J.D.” (A18). And last, author and medical doctor David Perlmutter defending his stand in his article, Why
Politicians Should Be More Like Professors (A2) argued, “More than in any other trade, professors will sit down, work together with people with whom they hold deep ideological differences, and get the job done. The best characteristics of professors can be of great service to the country, and we should encourage and reward them as our leaders” (2-3). Although limited, but not completely so, it is within these similar sources and stories through which I continue my research work, seeking to find motivated African American university professors who are demonstrably interested in elected positions, for the purpose of better serving minority students, particularly black students.

In regard to the terms “community activism,”” activism,” or “black activism,” there are common themes that are shared or similar in meaning with each other. According to co-writer Emilye Crosby, Professor of History at State University of New York-Geneseo, and Stephen Tuck, Professor of History and Director of the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities, their article We Ain’t What We Ought To Be: The Black Freedom Struggle from Emancipation to Obama (2011), the authors define these terms in broad definitions as follows, “A critical approach centers on challenging the status quo and critiquing how various dimensions of power are wielded in society and within one’s own context, which many times involves focusing on pressing community issues, cultivating and empowering traditionally, grassroots’ social, economic, and educational experiences. For instance, in many ways, black Americans have sought to build their own world and resist those who interfered” (4). Crosby and Tuck’s definition of “activism(s)” in how it is and was used, has strong connections to my overall research study about local African American leaders according to how “activism” is viewed and described today, as well as over generational time as regards seeking public office.
Here I introduce many local newspaper articles from *The News-Gazette* newspaper, Champaign, Illinois, dating from to the late 1960s to today (2015). In investigating these newspaper articles, I was able to view the news coverage of my hometown of Urbana-Champaign with respect to mostly African American Christian religious leaders and university professors and their candidacies, including personal bios, profiles, and political agendas. These local races were covered including elections for public school board positions and a few other elected community posts. For example, according to a 1968 *The New-Gazette* (then known as *The Courier Newspaper*) profiled by an unlisted writer, described Urbana’s first black school board member and minister thusly: “The Candidates-IV Mrs. Evelyn Burnett 28 is a steno-secretary at the Afro-American Studies Commission of the University of Illinois, and on the Urbana District 116 Board of Education. The only black board member and candidate Mrs. Evelyn Burnett feels the schools are not integrated. “‘I wish we did have integration, but we don’t, she said, we have de-segregation’” (S-2). A contemporary (2015) article in *The News-Gazette* (2015), written by Nicole LaFond, concerned a conversation on my wife (an African American ordained minister) stating, “Alissia Young, a candidate for the Unit 4 school board is all about education for the family. From her day job at the University of Illinois’ child care resource service department, to her evening and weekend work leading Bible studies, to her home life, Young believes it’s essential for parents and families to be involved in every aspect of their child’s education” (B-2). Many more examples of candidates’ biographies will appear throughout this paper; these types of personal profiles will definitely be used and helpful with my research studies in viewing past to current African American Christian religious leaders and university professors as political candidates for the Urbana-Champaign public boards of education or other local offices. I will also highlight selected “letters to the editor” in the *The
News-Gazette’s that attempt to promote nonpartisan and unbiased views of these local candidates and politically related issues, as well as briefly mention a few white American Christian religious leaders and university professors who had or who currently are seeking local political offices. In addition, I will also be using other local and public news sources that pertain to my topic, and will expound more on these in the methodology section.

Conclusion

As to what has been seen from the literature review section on what motivates African American clergies and scholars nationally and locally in considering seeking public office and in relations to same race and similar cultural values matters, a long history of African American leaders and scholarship has been produced about them, primarily as inspirational community activists. However, in regard to seeking “both” African American clergies and scholars becoming elected officials, not many sources specifically address this topic, which is what I am really aiming to look into in order to further the nature of this contemporary conversation and understand it as the main goal of my paper.
Chapter 3

Methodology

In this chapter, I will first briefly explain the theories and scholars that help me make sense of my research. Following this, I will discuss the specific method I use for this study. For this study I will utilize life history qualitative research methodology in order to attempt to answer the following question: What motivates African American Christian religious leaders and university professors in Urbana-Champaign to seek elected public office? Is the desire to improve educational outcomes for underserved minority students, African American students in particular, a salient feature of their political aspiration for seeking public office? In order to answer this question, I will be interviewing many participants, and hope a heartfelt and rich conversation come out of it, as I will discuss in greater detail in the method section of this chapter.

Scholars’ Theories on Life History Method

Learning and gathering information can happen within social context, as well as, in an individual context. I will focus on the “individual component,” which is one of the basic tenants of life history method and theory, which draws heavily on the work of many scholars, but I only mention a few here. For instance, according Daniel Bertaux’s Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences (1981), he explains:

The crucial features of the life-history method are that the interviews are in-depth, no more than semi-structured, allowing informants’ full room to convey their own experience and views; and that the analysis is based on the interview text. The approach used by most of the researchers takes interviewees as informants about the various
context which shaped their life: thus they are used as sources to reveal what happened to the interviewee, how and why it happened, what he/she felt about it, and how he/she reacted to it or ‘proacted’ to realize his/her projects. This orientation thus aims at gathering both factual and interpretative information (13).

Also, the editors Pure Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat, and Tom Wengraf, in The Turn To Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative Issues and Examples (2000), point out the importance of the, “development in biographical methods; for biographies, which are rooted in an analysis of both social history and the wellsprings of individual personality, reach forwards and backwards in time, documenting processes and experiences of social change” (2). And, as in the echoing biographical work of Liz Stanley, The Auto/Biographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Autobiography (1992), the author states:

Biography is seen as simply another plausible version of what happened and what it meant. We should ask of biography and question ‘who says?’ And ‘who say’ is someone who has produced one more interpretation from among a range of possibilities, and who has produced it from one particular angle rather than any other. The conventional model of biography production is one which can be likened to the effect of a ‘microscope’: the more information about the subject you collect, the closer to ‘the truth’- the ‘whole picture’- you get. This need for ‘more information’ can take the form of amassing detail about the subject’s life and work, or the form of psychological insight which is seen to ‘reveal the subject’(158).

These scholars’ theories on the life history approach are connected to the similarities of auto/biographical, sociological, and anthropological research work that paint an overall picture of an interviewee’s life - what it is like to be this particular person(s), or another way putting it, by capturing a living picture of a people’s way of life. The interviewer should not ask “yes or no” questions, but instead “open-ended” questions, by which “life history” concept theory can also be seen or referred to as “narrative” method. As an interviewer, I use this framework and theory in order to better understand the context and central focus of my dissertation topic by use of historical practice and its open-minded approach.
Life History
(Theoretical Frame Work)

Why “Life History” as my methodology approach? The central feature of life history, is the technique of “interviewing, whose purpose is to develop an in-depth understanding of participants’ intersectional identities” (Bertaux, 1981; Chamberlayne, Bornat, & Wengraf, 2000; King, & Horrock, 2010). This interviewing technique is precisely why life history is so important to me in my own research. I will interview nine human subjects: six African Americans, and three white Americans, all Christian religious leaders and university professors who live and work in the Urbana-Champaign area. I will be asking between 11 to 13 questions based on their similar or differing professional and cultural statuses as it relates to my central research question.

I will also be audio-recording eight out of the nine participants (one only agreed to be recorded by hand-written notes, rather than by audio-recording). I am scheduled to interview these participants before the end of the spring school semester of 2015 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I will meet with individually them on different dates to for one-day-only interviews, lasting no more than one hour, at their convenience either at their homes, places of work, and places of worship in Champaign-Urbana area. What I will be looking at closely from each participant is how well they answer my questions from a historical, contemporary, and personal point of view, and hopefully they will also thoroughly describe their backgrounds, present identities and job-positions in references to race, class, culture, gender, education, and local politics. I want to understand the intersectional identities, mind-sets, and experiences of these religious figures and educators in relation to my dissertation topic. After
interviewing them, I will be writing an initial description of each participant’s intersectional identity and views according to my central research question, and how they might be similar or different.

Specifically, my research will constitute a contemporary life history, by means of a qualitative methodology analysis that consists of primary and secondary sources, dating back to the late 1960s, but especially within the last 25 years. Here I will examine the experiences of mostly African American religious leaders and professors, along with a few white American religious leaders and professors in the Champaign-Urbana area with regard to who has or has not historically or presently sought public office. I originally created this list of names dating back to the mid-1990s from the thoughts and observations of many local black community members and activists. This list includes complaints brought against the Champaign public school district by a group of us black community members, and the court ordered filing Consent Decree case, which I referred to earlier in Chapter One under the subtitle, “Approach to a Local Community Insight.”

Consequently, with these thoughts and this list of names in mind, the main reason these specific people and their positions were chosen—in particular, African American leaders—was due to their important roles, influential status, advanced knowledge, long-developing history of trust, and strong ties to the black community in Champaign-Urbana. I did not have a certain number of participants at the time; however, at the same time, I also did not want to interview too many people. What I did have in mind for sure was gender differences, and information that was not solely from a black race perspective. Most importantly, I definitely limited my choices of participants to specific local black Christian religious leaders and university professors’ thoughts, as previously mentioned, originally dating back to the desires of our local black community
group and possibly those idealistic candidates ran for elected post/black representation positions.

What I hope to achieve from these interviews, according to this type of life history qualitative analysis research, is to produce sufficient rich, honest, transparent, and truthful conversations with these participants, so that what we see are their life histories, experiences, and stories as they pertain to my research topic and questions, while at the same time not making them feel uncomfortable or disturbed, which could affect the essential values of this type of research approach.

According to Nigel King and Christine Horrock’s *Interviews in Qualitative Research* (2010), the authors elaborated on these observations by noting:

Any qualitative interview can lead you in unexpected directions to face unexpected challenges. The interviewer should try to avoid responding to what the interviewee says in a way that suggests he/she is making a judgment about their positions. Judgmental comments are problematic. Failing to listen to the participant’s response can lead to inappropriate questioning potentially leaving him or her frustrated or irritated at the interviewer. If you repeatedly have to make such requests, the interviewee may conclude that you are not really interested in what they have to say (52).

They continue by addressing positive interviewing outcomes, stating:

Most forms of qualitative interviewing are reliant upon the interpersonal skills of the interviewer. The researcher facilitates participation and the sharing of understandings, along with their characteristics ideally should include being a good listener, having an interest in people, having a lively personality, being warm and essentially believing in one’s work. Welcoming when greeting participants can assist in putting people at ease. Smiling and nodding can serve as a form of positive reinforcement throughout the interview, helping to regulate the flow of conversation. Notably, listening skills are one of the most essential aspects of moderate style (71).

In addition to this understanding of qualitative research style of interviewing people, here is the formal list of the participants’ names, status, and personal profiles that I created, as I prepared to interview them according to this technique. 1) African American Christian male preacher, Bishop Edward T. McGhee Sr., (my church pastor) who been living in Champaign, Illinois since the late 1970s, and founded this church then. Pastor McGhee has a sizeable, predominately black
congregation to this day. He is originally from Alabama, and very aware of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement in the South, but since moving to Champaign, he has become a well-known and influential preacher among the black community to the extent that he, is also known as a “prophet.” In all, this is why I wanted to interview him because of his background and his charismatic, appealing, and trustworthy personality as a preacher and a leader among many people in general, but more so with the people in his black community.

2) Rev. Dr. Evelyn B. Underwood, an African American female Christian preacher, and the wife of a Bishop at their local Champaign church. Minister Underwood has been in the ministry since the age of 19 and was the first African American preacher and elected official to serve on the Urbana School Board, beginning in 1968, as mentioned earlier in the literature review section (newspaper article, “Mrs. Evelyn Burnett 28” years old”). Underwood has been a community activist and an ordained minister since her young adulthood, and even now, in her more advanced age, she has continued to run for various local elected positions. Taking all of this into consideration, this is why I am excited to interview her (note as well that I was her co-campaign manager when she ran for the Champaign Circuit Clerk in 2012).

3) African American male Christian preacher, Rev. Dr. Eugene Barnes, who has been living in Champaign for more than 40 years, but who is originally from Kentucky, and has been an ordained Pastor for several churches in the past, and one in particular today located in Urbana, Illinois. Pastor Barnes was directly involved in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement as an activist, and had marched along with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. a few times, which is the main reason why I am interested in interviewing him today.
4) African American male university professor, Dr. James D. Anderson who has been living in Champaign for more than 40 years and is originally from Alabama. He is currently the Head/Gutgsell Professor for the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, within the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership. Dr. Anderson was a student activist in the 1960s on the University of Illinois campus, and had written and published several great articles and books on social-justice educational issues, making him a highly respected educator and scholar on the campus, as well as in the Urbana-Champaign community. Two great sources come to my mind that he published, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (1988) book, and *Race-Conscious Educational Policies Versus a “Color-Blind Constitution”: A Historical Perspective* (2007) article. This is what attracted me to want to interview him, plus given that he is a member of my dissertation committee, that has made it that much more exciting that is, having the opportunity to get to know him from the perspective of my research topics.

5) African American male professor Dr. Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua is originally from Decatur, Illinois, but has been living in Champaign since the late 1980s. He is currently an Associate Professor in the History of African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Cha-Jua has been a “community activist” for “pro-black” issues for as long as he can remember, he said. My interest in interviewing him stems from the graduate courses I have taken from him, plus his published books and articles on many “pro-black” issues. His work is in many ways in line with my own beliefs and speech about African American leadership.

6) African American female professor Dr. Violet Harris, who is an Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-
Dr. Harris is originally from Chicago, Illinois, but has made Champaign her home for more than 30 years. She said that she is “very sensitive to giving back to the community” through the type of research she does, a point she has always stressed in several classes of hers that I have taken. Dr. Harris also is a longtime friend of mine, adding to the many reasons why I want to interview her for my research topic.

7) White American male professor Dr. George Gollin, a Professor of Physics at the University of Illinois, is not originally from Champaign, but from New York and has been living and working here for a while according to some local newspaper articles I have collected on him. I became interested in Dr. Gollin after recently reading about him in these newspaper articles and seeing him on television ads as a professorial candidate running for an elected office here in Champaign-Urbana. I then became curious about how the notion of “professors may become politicians” would work. Therefore, I wanted to briefly interview him in relation to my topic.

8) White American female Christian preacher Rev. Deborah Owen, who is not originally from Champaign, Illinois, but has been living here for more than 25 years, and is a dear friend of my wife (Alissia Young a current school board candidate who is also an ordained minister, as mentioned in the literature review section). Rev. Owen is a minister and co-pastor of a small congregational church in Urbana, Illinois, but was once an adjunct-professor at Parkland College in Champaign, teaching about social justice issues before she turned to full-time in the ministry. For all these reasons I am interested in briefly interviewing her as well.

And last 9) a white American male Christian preacher, Dr. Steve R. Shoemaker, a retired minister from one of the University of Illinois on-campus churches, who has been living in Champaign since the early 1970s, but is not originally from Champaign. Dr. Shoemaker has been
publically known for his many years as having strong ties to Urbana-Champaign and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus as a “community activist” for diversity and social-justice issues. Because of his background I am interested in briefly interviewing him as well, which also could be helpful to my topic.

In addition to my interviewing process, I will also be gathering public news sources from other local locations within the community, such as from independent newspaper companies, the Champaign County Court Circuit Clerk’s office, the University of Illinois and Parkland College libraries, both Champaign and Urbana public libraries (particularly from their micro-film and online special archival database services), Urbana and Champaign School District administration information buildings; and both local Democratic and Republican parties offices’ election resources.

**Understanding My Research Questions**

There were a total of 11 to 13 questions asked. The 13 questions that were asked were the same for all three African American Christian religious leaders; however, for the three African American university professors, they were asked the same 12 questions. As for the two white American Christian religious leaders, they were asked the same 12 questions, according to their race and profession. The one white university professor was asked the same questions as that the three African American university professors were asked, except for one. For the list of questions see (Appendix A). The reason for this was because of their differences in life professions, status, and in race and culture, which caused me to take this approach with the two black and white groups in asking mostly similar questions with slight exceptions made in how they were worded. My 11 to 13 research questions, concerns, and conversations were also centered around the 1960s Civil Rights Movement era, and “a bridge” between today’s institution of the church,
particularly African American churches, and with higher academia and the role of local elections as they all relates to politics and learning about minority students, particularly those of African American students’ learning experiences. All nine of the participants’ responses were quoted throughout chapter four in the anticipated findings according to the topics and themes I discuss with them from the interview questions. However, for full understanding of the interview process and questions, I partially placed only the relevant and essential parts of the original transcriptions of the nine participants in the appendix of the paper for the audience to read at their convenience.

**Life History Method Interviews’ Technical Components**

I was very careful in not trying to edit much of the interviews, because of the nature of capturing the real essence and authenticity of each participant’s responses, interpretations, and meaning based on the theory of life history qualitative methodology technical understanding (Hagemaster, 1992). Therefore, in their responses and quoting them throughout this paper, there appear to be many misusages of proper language, grammatical mistakes made, slang words used and incorrect sentence structure. This is the intent of life history method and its technical component because of the genuineness in its attempt to capture the ordinary people’s every day vernacular, dialect spoken, Ebonics talk and language used, that makes it more real and substantial, than editing, correcting, or reinterpreting words and sentences a lot that could lead to altering and controlling the stories told by the interviewer’s bias ways for the most part.
Chapter 4

Discussion of Anticipated Findings

In this chapter, in the first section, and prior to the discussion and anticipated findings emerged in the data from these interviews, I introduce all nine of the participants from my observation according to the time, place, and atmosphere of these interviews. Then in the next section I discuss in great detail the evidence and data findings from these Christian religious leaders and university professors’ similar and different responses based on three central themes that I identified from my original 11 to 13 interview questions that were asked. The questions are: 1) what are your thoughts about certain African American leadership’ involvement in politics? 2) Has political activism changed over time across generations?, and 3) Does same race and similar cultural values matter with education politics?

In addition to these themes there will be related findings to the research and literature connect to the themes as an assessment to the value of the study. In the last part of the chapter I will include local and national newspaper articles from past to current political events as more evidence to this larger conversation between these clergies’ and scholars’ thoughts in order to see who has historically sought and continued to seek for elected positions particularly in the Champaign-Urbana area.

Introduction to the Participants’ Interviewed and Observation

The first person I interviewed was Rev. Dr. Evelyn B. Underwood on Sunday, January 25, at 5p.m., at her New Freewill Baptist Church, in Champaign, Illinois. Alone with her and in the quiet setting of her sanctuary, the interview took place several hours after the morning
worship service. The church is located in a predominately African American community neighborhood, and there were no distractions throughout the one-hour interview. Rev. Dr. Evelyn Underwood, which is what she preferred to be called, still had her fancy church clothes on, and seemed to be very excited and anxious, and was looking forward to this interview for a while, because she told me, “No one has ever interviewed me for a PhD research project.” I have known Rev. Dr. Underwood personally for a long time, and a few years ago this elderly woman suffered a minor stroke. This affected her thought patterns, as well as her speech, making it sometimes difficult to understand her. These difficulties included incorrect usage of grammar, slurred words, and getting off-topic to long personal stories of her life experiences. However, whenever this would occur, I would reiterate the questions to her by politely asking for clarity, and see to it that she stayed on track with the questions asked. In the end, I thought Rev. Dr. Underwood’s interview turned out quite well in the context of my research questions, topic and interest, given her body of knowledge, years of experience, and wisdom that she possessed. I prepared her with a paper copy of the same 13 questions that I had so that she could follow along with me. I read off the questions to her, plus I also audio-recorded her, which she did not mind.

The second person I interviewed was Bishop Edward T. McGhee Sr., my Pastor at the Church of the Apostolic Authority (CAA) on a Tuesday, February 3, 2015. The interview supposed to start at 11a.m., but the interview did not start until 11:30a.m., because he was running late, by coming in from out of town he said. “Bishop McGhee,” as we call him, is a very busy man, and the community knows him very well. As a full-time minister who does not work another job, he has frequent speaking engagements throughout the community and the state. I am the head Deacon at our church, and he and I met alone in the church office for about an hour, without any distractions. The church is located in a predominately African American community,
a low socioeconomic neighborhood. Bishop McGhee appeared to be relaxed; however, he was anxious to get started and to finish the interview because of his busy schedule, even though he knew about this meeting because I had been trying to schedule it with him for some time. I prepared him with a paper copy of the same 13 questions that I had for him so that he could follow along with me as I read off the questions to him. Bishop McGhee did not want to be audio-recorded, so we agreed that I would only record hand-written notes. I have been a member of the church since 1993; however the church has been established before I joined: it is now 35 years old. Bishop McGhee is known for having a “gift of prophecy”, which mean at times during the interview, whenever he would get excited, he would speak what I term “gibberish type of language or words,” which is related to his prophecy gift. I, and other members of our church are accustomed to his way of talking and recognizing it as “speaking-in-tongues” or “speaking-unknown-tongues” that the Christian Bible refers to. I made special notes of it throughout the paper whenever he did this. For example, I noted these expressed words in quotation marks and in parentheses whenever Bishop McGhee had these “unction-of-the holy-ghost” sporadic moments, as members of our religious denomination calls them.

The third person I interviewed was Minister, Dr. Steve R. Shoemaker on Tuesday, February 10, 2015, at his lovely home way out in the country, 10 minutes outside of Urbana, city limits, (but the location is still considered part of Urbana). His home is located in an isolated farming area off a single road, which at first I had a difficult time finding it. We met there at 10 a.m. It was a beautiful day just me, him and his big and friendly dog looking like the one from the classic movie “Lassie Come Home.” Dr. Shoemaker, which he preferred to be called, briefly told me how he had this house built for him and his wife some years ago because he’s a very tall-man 6 ‘9,” to be exact. Dr. Shoemaker, with his very heavy voice and full-length gray beard is
known for impersonating Abraham Lincoln in the community whenever he gets a chance, and many people know him this way. He took me in his study/library room, as he called it. Looking outside of a huge glass window room one has a beautiful view of his yard, nature, and this country space at its best, which I thought was a perfect location for me to do my interview with him. There were no distractions, and Dr. Shoemaker seemed to be excited about the one-hour interview and wanted to know the outcome once I finished, but at the same time he struck me as being very relaxed, as a retired person I believe in his 70s. He said he has been interviewed several times by university students because of his long life experiences with social justice issues and as a social justice activist. I prepared him with a paper copy of the same 12 questions that I had for him to follow along with as I read off the questions to him, plus I also audio-recorded him, which he did not mind.

The fourth person I interviewed was Professor George Gollin on Thursday, February 19, 2015, on the University of Illinois campus, in his office of the Physics and Loomis Laboratory of Physics building during his noon lunch hour. During this time, Professor Gollin, which he preferred to be called, did not eat lunch. He told me that he had previously run for Illinois congressional seat in 2013, and was excited about this interview to show people how professors’ research work can be applied to solving real life issues. There were many students passing through the building during this time, but professor Gollin closed his office door to make sure that we would not be distracted, so that just he and I could talk alone for one hour. He did not have to teach again until later on that day, which worked out perfectly. I prepared him with a paper copy of the same 11 questions that I had for him to follow along with me, as I read off the questions to him, plus I also audio-recorded him, which he did not mind.
The fifth person I interviewed was Reverend Minister Deborah E. Owen, on a chilly Sunday evening around 5p.m., on March 1, 2015. The interview took place at her shared church ministry called First Presbyterian Church of Urbana. She serves as a co-pastor at this small congregation, Disciples of Christ Community Church. I was there before Rev. Owen waiting in my car as she was running a little late after 5p.m. Then she arrived, apologizing to me because Sunday evenings she visits the nursing homes, ministering to the elderly and sick who live there. Rev. Owen appeared to be a very nice, kind, and easy-going spoken lady. The interview took place in her huge office, which is full of books that she said she loves to read, especially world history. She told me that she consider herself a social-justice type of minister, constantly associating herself with many people of color. She went on to talk about and their life history and experiences. It was just Rev. Owen and I in her huge office, without any distractions during our one-hour interview, which she was very excited about because she told me she has never been interviewed before. I prepared her with a paper copy of the same 12 questions that I had for her so that she could follow along with me. I also audio-recorded Rev. Owen, as she did not mind me doing this.

The sixth person I interviewed was Dr. Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, an Associate Professor in History of African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, on a Monday morning around 11a.m. on March 9, 2015 at his lovely, large home in Champaign. We met, in the basement of his house surrounded by many books, which I thought of as a perfect picture of a scholarly home library. Dr. Sundiata, which he preferred to be called, told me that he is heavily involved in his “African heritage” as a scholar. I entered his home and I saw many African artifacts, pictures, paintings, sculptures, rags, designs, and so on everywhere throughout his home. Also in the house at the time of this interview was his grandson, who Dr. Sundiata was
watching, and Dr. Sundiata’s little poodle dog. Both the grandson and dog interrupted our interview maybe once or twice, at which times I put the recorder on pause, before we continued. However, for the most part, the interview went very well, without many distractions. Dr. Sundiata told me that he was off work that day. Our interview lasted approximately one hour; he told me that he was interested in this interview as well as the outcome of my research work in this area of social justice and black politics. The atmosphere appear to be very relaxing, inviting, and somewhat humorous at times because Dr. Sundiata gave off this sense of humor vibration, which made me laugh, smile, or act funny. Yet he was also serious as we began our interview. I prepared him with a paper copy of the same 12 questions that I had for him so that he could follow along with me as I read the same questions to him. I also audio-recorded him, which he did not mind.

The seventh person I interviewed was Dr. Violet Harris, a long-time tenured professor in Curriculum and Instructions within the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. We were scheduled to meet on a Wednesday evening, March 18, 2015 after I got off work, in her office. However we started at 5:30 p.m. because she had been working with one of her doctoral students, and their session took longer than their planned time together. I waited patiently in the lounge across the hall from her office, as she promised me that we would be meeting up soon for the interview. When we finally met in her office full of books, materials, and papers everywhere, Dr. Harris, which she likes to be called, had nowhere for me to sit at first because her office space was taken from these material lying around everywhere, so she had to make room for me and my recorder. Dr. Harris told me she was quite excited about this interview just to see other people’s opinions as well, and to see where this research might lead. The atmosphere appeared to be tight at first between me and Dr. Harris because of her clustered
office. She was rushing to meet with me after running 30 minutes late, and she kept making references, hoping that her one doctoral student would not interrupt our meeting by knocking on her closed door to ask questions. However, that student never did, and the atmosphere eventually became relaxed once we got started with a few questions. The interview lasted one hour. I prepared Dr. Harris with a paper copy of the same 12 questions so that she could follow along with me as I read off the questions to her, plus I also audio-recorded her, which she did not mind.

The eighth person I interviewed was Rev. Dr. Eugene Barnes, a local pastor. We met on Sunday, March 29, 2015 at 5 p.m. at his Metanoia Worlds Without End Christian Center Church, located inside Lincoln Square Mall, in Urbana, Illinois. Rev. Dr. Barnes, which he preferred to be called, is a longtime social justice community activist preacher, a fact he kept reiterating to me prior to our interview. The interview actually took place inside of this huge mall in an old department store room that he was renting out for now until he purchases a place building for his church, he explained to me. The interview actually took place back in a room converted to function as his office. The room is located back of the store with scenery that resembles a warehouse. The interview lasted one hour, with only one distraction from one of his deacons who had to ask him a question almost at the end part of the interview. At that moment I put the recorder on pause, then resumed after he left. However, for the most part, there were no distractions, just he and I. Rev. Dr. Barnes appeared to be anxious; he indicated to me, that he wanted to see the other black ministers’ responses compared to his, once my project was done. Overall the interview went well. I prepared him with a paper copy of the same 12 questions that I had so that he could follow along with me as I read off the questions to him. I also audio-recorded him, which he did not mind.
The ninth and last person I interviewed was Dr. James D. Anderson, Professor in the College of Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, on Wednesday April 8, 2015, at 5 p.m. after I had gotten off from work. Dr. Anderson, which he did not mind being called, and I met in his small office in the College of Education Building, and like many other professors I have interviewed, he has a typically scholarly-looking office with books and papers everywhere: however, he had his books and papers in order. Dr. Anderson is serving on my Ph.D. research committee and is very familiar with this process. There were no distractions, the setting was quite pleasant, and the interview took approximately one hour, just like the other eight interviews. Dr. Anderson appeared to be very relaxed and ready to be interviewed given the fact that it was after hours for both of us. Neither of us wanted to stay any longer than necessary, but at the same time, he did not rush me or hurry through the time we spent together. Dr. Anderson looked professional, dressed in a suit while sitting behind his desk, relaxed. Whether he knew it or not, or whether it just my perceived thoughts about him, he gave off this image, or spirit of, mentoring me as if he was showing, teaching, and guiding me to how do research and interview people. I enjoyed this comfortable and rewarding feeling and his presence. I prepared Dr. Anderson with a paper copy of the same 12 questions that I had for him so that he could follow along with me as I read off the questions to him. I also audio-recorded him, which he did not mind.

**Thoughts on Certain African American Leadership Involved in Politics**

What emerged from the larger narratives of these interviews and what mostly agreed upon by these nine participants were a call, a demand, a need, and a responsibility for more African American people and their leaders to become involved in current politics. However, they stressed that this participation must first be based on having a strong interest and desire to do so
(Johnson, 2007; Mitchell & Covan, 2012; Smethurst, 2005; Smiley, 2001 & 2006; Smith, 1996, West, 1992). What I noticed from these black and white Christian clergy people and university scholars was how they defined “being involved in current politics” simultaneously with generally speaking about “civic engagement” and “community activism”, but not initially “seeking for public office,” which was my main concern. They explained to me how there were several ways to achieve involvement in community-political relations without necessarily being in elected political positions, in order for major educational changes to occur. Eventually, the majority of them made it clear to me that they did not have any strong interest in “literally running for political office,” for several reasons.

Throughout the interview, when asked specifically about “religious leaders” and “university professors” seeking public office, many of them answered what they thought, but steered away from these specifics groups, turning the conversations more toward the larger issues of the culture and race of African American people and leaders’ experiences in general to what they should, could, or perhaps might do more so with community-related issues. For the most part, many of these nine participants did not know many Christian black or white religious leaders or university professors personally that ran for or held local political positions. However, a few of them mentioned one or two local names of person they knew who had run for office or served as elected officials, but they also confessed that it appeared that many religious or academic leaders in general normally do not seek elected political office. The reason for this, as I was told by many of these local Christian clergy people or university scholars, was, initially, a lack of motivation, moral conviction, and spiritual interest. They pointed out the difficulty in the prospect of holding an elected office while trying to be a full- time, tenured professor, for
example, is almost humanly impossible because both each profession requires too much time, as opposed to trying to balance both simultaneously.

For instance, most professors’ average day-to-day operation and workload may vary based on the institutions for which that work, the title of their position, and time management, and overall, these factors can be overwhelming. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, Postsecondary Teachers* (2016-17), this edition reported:

Some postsecondary teachers must find a balance between teaching students and doing research and publishing their findings. This can be stressful, especially for beginning teachers seeking advancement at 4-year research universities (p.1).

In addition to this report, research work by Bellas and Toutkoushian’s *Faculty Time Allocations and Research Productivity* (1999) explained in-depth how:

Teaching, service, and research tend to be mutually exclusive activities and compete for faculty members’ time and attention. Total hours worked also influenced research output, with greater total time expenditures leading to great research output. As one would expect, faculty at research and doctoral institutions reported higher output than those at two-year institutions for broader measures of output. Full professors produced more research output than assistant professors, while lecturers/instructors produced less. Associate professors produced more research output than assistant professors, but only for the narrowest measure of output (8).

In keeping with these quotes, many of the professors mentioned to me, how trying to teach classes, continue to do research and publish, and serve the campus community through various required duties, combined with attempting to carry out official elected work to serve an entire community would be far too time consuming. As Professor Sundiata remarked:

At a research one institution, you probably put in somewhere in the neighborhood 50 or 60 hours a week, if you have an active research agenda, if you know you teaching two classes and then you are engaged in doing any kind of service to the profession as well as to the community it just wouldn’t be the time to effectively run for office let along serve.
It was also mentioned to me how trying to serve as both a professor and elected official could hinder one’s employment as a conflict of interest, jeopardizing one’s profession because of many state universities’ ethics guidelines could come into conflict with their duties as, elected official positions. In the latter role, acting a partisan official, such behavior could develop into a risky situation or perhaps constitute a violation of state universities’ employment and ethical policies. According to the University of Illinois Ethics and Compliance Office, for example:

Prohibited Political Activity under the Illinois State Officials and Employees Ethics Act-
university employees may not intentionally perform any compensated time other than vacation, personal, or compensatory time off and they may not intentionally misappropriate any state property or resources (including university property or resources) by engaging in any prohibited activity for the benefit of any campaign for elective office or any political organization or referendum question (p.1).

Therefore, to be successful as a professor seeking public office, as it was explained to me, it would probably be best for a professor to either take a leave of absence, go on sabbatical, or retire, because it would be too overwhelming and job risky for a full-time, tenured professor to hold both position. Although doing might perhaps not be impossible, holding both positions simultaneously, one would be much less likely to be successful at either. As noted by the University of Illinois’ Elected Official Leave Policy:

The Time Off for Official Meetings Act grant eligible employees unpaid leave time for the people of attending an official meeting of the public body to which the official has been elected within the State of Illinois (p.1).

The overall understanding that I gained from most of these university professors as to why many African American professors have not historically sought public office other than a lack of interest in doing so, was because their academic jobs subject to the universities’ required policies, rules, and expectations in relations to a demanding academic workload of research, teaching, writing and administrative duties that many times prevents them from pursuing outside political office. This is best summon-up by the American Association of University Professors
(AAUP) publication entitled, *Faculty Employment Outside of the University: Conflicts of Commitment* (2004), which reads, in part:

Faculty involvement in outside activities raises issues and concerns for professors in terms of their employment relationship with the institution about conflicts of commitment, that is, the amount of time spent by faculty outside their teaching, research, and service responsibility to the institution (p.1).

Professor Anderson seconded these quotes by saying:

I don’t think I would get involved as a professor in part because it almost impossible to separate being a professor from the University of Illinois, and the position the university take is that it doesn’t support one side or the other. You know we take an ethics exam for instance, and all faculty and staff has to take it, and it makes it very clear that you couldn’t be mailing or getting involved in things using the university computers available or anything like that or even in your affiliation for political purposes. But I have to do so as a citizen, but not so much as a professor at the University of Illinois.

Some additional supporting literature on “professors’ limited engagement in politics” is seen in the work of (Fandos, 2012; Meadows & Schaller, 2006). These authors’ work show how historically, most professors do not run for political office compared to other professions like lawyers do in high percentages, and also because of the reputation that many professors has as being too liberal, which is not a good quality to be like as a politician.

A few of the Christian clergy people believed strongly that it was more a matter of moral and spiritual convictions, obligations, and responsibilities for them as religious leaders than any other group of people to get more involved in politics. Rev. Underwood argued this by saying, “As a religious leader today, we must be involved in politics today. I don’t see anything in the Bible that says we should not be involved. We as religious leaders, we got to be in the fore-front in helping to lead our parishioners.” Rev. Barnes and Bishop McGhee went more in-depth explaining their positions about ministers’ involvement in politics. Rev. Barnes said:

As religious leaders, we have a responsibility to our neighbor and our neighbor is anyone that is in the near to us, who has a need. Where every there is some human hurt, then we have to help heal that human hurt. When we look at the Bible and see, we talk about
government, the component of government in the Bible mean power, and when it comes to power there’s a commoner that both church and state has, which is of course Jesus Christ. God has granted government a sword in term of maintaining the order out of chaos and the chaos is the results of what we theological call sin. People who run government are God’s ministers; whether they are officially called a minister…is immaterial, but that they are ministers of the power of God.

And Bishop McGhee mentioned:

As an African American religious leader, I do not have any opposition against black leaders getting involved into politics today, but it’s not for me. Some pastors can do both like pastor a church and be an elected official like Rev. Senator James Meeks out of Chicago. Religious and political views impact a large community similar to major prophets in the Bible did as opposed to minor prophets who effect smaller crowds like just their churches, congregations only; larger stages versus smaller stages. Politics keep order; you must be involved in politics and in our community because this can help the church out.

They also expressed to me, that this was all part of God’s plan as “ministers,” along with having a long history of African American ministers really involved in social justice and political issues at the ground level, serving their congregations and communities from the perspective of life’s pains and complex issues that require “care and guidance when needed” for the sake of salvation, and for making people better citizens.

The overall understanding that I gained from most of these Christian religious leaders was because of the nature of sin and evil in this world, they would probably make better politicians if they choose to, than would be the case for any other groups. They set an example with their genuine and godly manner of living by displaying a holy, clean, and righteous lifestyle of spreading and sharing the good news of the gospel, along with the truth of equality for all people, without discrimination. It is within this tradition and the long history of America’s issues with inequalities between blacks, whites, and people of color, wherein ministers, particularly black ministers, have been involved with these social-political issues that have either forced or influenced them to take interest, or resort to political activism, as many African Americans did
during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. This next lengthy passage by scholar Frederick C. Harris, in *Black Churches and Civic Tradition* (2001), explains how the average African American church functions with its rich tradition of day-to-day operation and community services:

> Like most religious traditions, black churches daily operations exist to meet the spiritual need of their members, leading them to devotion, salvation and to commit most of their sources to maintaining and expanding the needs of the institution. However, the history of black churches’ involvement in both civic traditions along with evidence from recent opinion surveys suggests that not only are black churches involved in a variety of social service activities but there is great enthusiasm among blacks for their churches to address the needs of the poor. Also, activist black clergy and churches have a long tradition in American politics that stretches back to the Reconstruction era when black men first gained the right to vote (pgs. 141,142).

In addition to this historical source, there are several descriptions of African American religious leaders that became great political leaders, as recorded in past and current literature (Black, 2010; Morris, 1984; Rogers, 2008; Washington, 1986; West, 1982). These authors’ work has shown how black church institutions and its leaders historically, has been used for bettering black social-political communities’ issues as a long tradition.

> This type of actual American history and experiences has created a closer bond and better trustworthiness in the relationship between community people and Christian religious leaders, especially in the context of black American history, which has produced people like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr., and Rev. Al. Sharpton, as well as many other past and current ministers all of whom were socio-political activists who have sought, or held political office. According to *The Audacity Of Hope* (2006), by Barack Obama, he noted this long history of commitment among black ministers/churches and black community members, writing, “Out of necessity, the black church had to minister to the whole person. Out of necessity, the black church rarely had the luxury of separating individual salvation from collective salvation. It had to
serve as the center of the community’s political, economic, and social as well as spiritual life” (p.248). Minister Shoemaker echoed this respected history of African Americans’ religious-political and community activism tradition by concurring with the current President: “Of course Barack Obama is the greatest example of that, and we finally have our first African American President. It would not have been possible without Martin Luther King’s brave, strong work, leadership, but other black folks, too.” However, by contrasting the tradition, history, and practices of religious leaders with university professors, the former are not as confined to required policies and rules that are tied to institutions or secular systems’ protocols, as are professors, who could easily jeopardize their professions by entering the political arena. On the other hand, religious leaders of different denominations having varying beliefs that may or may not allow these leaders to become heavily involved in politics. Therefore, from the viewpoints of history, past practices, and our current conversations, it appears that Christian religious leaders would probably make a better fit or it would be, easier for them to get involved in seeking direct political office than would be the case for professors.

Both of these Christian clergies and university scholar groups also conveyed to me how, whether a person was involved in politics or not, the idea of being in decision-making positions, elected, or appointed, is without a doubt, very important, because of the inherent power such positions lend. However they also made it clear that this was not the only way to affect major decisions or changes. Rev. Owen made reference to this point by saying:

Yes, I think it is important to be in those decision-making positions because the power and authority are already there. But nonetheless, that doesn’t mean that if you not appointed or elected person that you not going to effect change. You can still encourage and effect change by positively keeping people accountable, you know so to attend meetings, to be there when questions are being asked, to have that opportunity to make sure people are having the best interest of [regular citizens].
They also agreed how history has proven many times that movements operating at the grassroots’ level that is, social groups a bottom-up approach, were just as powerful and important as actions by those who are either elected or appointed to positions. Both professors’ Harris and Gollin agreed with this stance. Harris commented:

But I think grassroots changes are important and relevant, and you want to hold people accountable. A couple of changes in laws, lawsuits by elected officials…it has to be multifaceted approach; it just not one over the other, has to be multifaceted and multipronged and it has to be sustained…Hey by voting, your pocket book, by whatever means necessary.

Professor Gollin echoed this thought by saying:

[Decision-making positions] it’s a good way, but it’s not the only way, but I think that if you not in a position as a decision-maker, you got to be able to influence someone who is a decision-maker. So I think that either being in a decision-making position or being in a position to apply pressure is crucial to know and do.

Also, these religious leaders and professors highlighted how one of the highest elected positions in the United States is the office of the President, and as the first African American President Barack Obama, has been very helpful for the African American race in many ways. Additionally, there has also been a strong history of everyday people, and leaders, marching, conducting street protests, and organizing at the ground level, behind the scenes that has been instrumental in applying pressure on decision-and policy-makers to make socio-political changes. The grassroots activists who have influenced these elected and appointed leaders include such well-known figures as Fannie Lou Hammer, or Stokely Carmichael, or organizations such as the NAACP, and especially from the 1960s Civil Rights era, but also activists today. The research work of Doug McAdam’s Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency (1982), addresses the issues that exist between bottom-up grassroots movements and top-down decision-making positions and how the traditional model of elitism and power by decision-makers has always rested in the hands of white people. McAdams wrote:
Like the latter, the perspective advanced here rests on the fundamental assumption that wealth and power are concentrated in America in the hands of a few groups, thus depriving most people of any real influence over the major decisions that affects their lives (p.36).

This study stands alongside the research of many other past scholars’ past and the current work of various researchers (Kohli, 1995; Morris, 1984; Musgrove, 2012; Singh, 1998; Smethurst, 2005).

Many of the professors mentioned to me how they saw themselves as “resource tools” and “problem solvers” by helping to make changes without necessarily being in decision-maker positions. However, by making use of knowledge and evidence-based data available, they could use this data, or share it, and thereby influence others who might be in elected or appointed positions. A few examples of this shared influential knowledge by scholars are their published articles on important life issues in order to improve society, or by helping teachers improve their teaching, or by helping administrators improve school enrollment, and so on. In short, there are many different, significant ways in which professors can influence or affect socio-political changes that impact society without being in decision-making positions. Professor Gollin, gave the following example:

I pay attention to higher edu policy literature, and about steps we can take to make sure our four year schools like here are better aligned with our high schools and with our community colleges so that students flow from one level to the next, making the better able to succeed.

Professor Harris’ shared her approach:

What I tend to do is, What can I do to support students,? How can I use whatever skills and knowledge I have to help them gain entry, either into the U.of. I, or to another institution,? How can I help their families prepare them to become more literate and to succeed in school?

Professor Sundiata’s cited the following example:
I see myself playing a role in helping to rethink the present role of police in the schools. I see that role in helping to develop supplemental education outside of the public school setting, but with the idea that it impacts the achievement of black youth in the public school setting, and as well as how we engage in political organizing and how we battle against the school system in a number of ways.

And Professor Anderson said:

I think people often overlook the value of someone who is a follower, and I have always been in the community in those different roles; and you know, it’s always things you can do; there are always afterschool programs; I have worked with community members and we ran afterschool programs for a while and I know how difficult it is to run it, but we did. We use to hold prostate cancer meetings in this role for the community and we worked with the churches; get the doctors in, and they give talks, and we actually did the screening, and we use to do blood drives. So it’s so many things you can do that matter to people without being up-front to making a difference in the community without being recognized as a leader.

The overall understanding that I learned from these clergy people and scholars was how important it is, first and foremost, to be in decision-making positions, and that many leaders should be striving for it as a high priority. However, socio-political involvement’s not solely limited to elected positions, but also can occur through appointments, or by joining some kind of board by which decisions are made. Secondly, and as a second option, if one cannot, or chooses not to, or feels that these positions are not effective enough, one can still apply bottom-up pressure from outside, as we have seen through the tradition, practice, and ideology of grassroots’ movements. The authors have added further support to our understanding of grassroots’ activism (Du Bois, 1903; Grant, 2008; Logan, 2014; Marable, 2007; Morris, 1984; Smith, 1996).

**Has Political Activism Changed Over Time Across Generations?**

In this section, I describe “activism” or “political activism” as one in the same, as defined by the 1960s Civil Rights Movement term mentioned earlier in this paper by the collaborative work of professors’ Emilye Crosby and Stephen Tuck, in their description of “community
activism” or “black activism.” In *We Ain’t What We Ought To Be: The Black Freedom Struggle from Emancipation to Obama* (2011) Tuck provides the following definition:

A critical approach centers on challenging the status quo and critiquing how various dimensions of power are wielded in society and within one’s own context, which many times involves focusing on pressing community issues, cultivating and empowering traditional, grassroots’ social, economic, and educational experiences. For instance, in many ways, black Americans have sought to build their own world and resist those who interfered (p.4).

With this understanding of definition, the nine people that I interviewed, the majority of them, agreed upon that obviously, a huge difference has played in generational changes over time with political activism from the 1960s to the present also supported by these scholars as well (Daley, 2012; Logan, 2014; Marable, 2007; Smith, 1996).

Several key themes stood out among these Christian religious leaders and university professors in how they saw these tremendous differences in activism according to generational changes. For example, they explained to me how there were specifically fewer black religious leaders engaged in political activism in the past as regards to trying to make major changes, but by the 1960s, particularly with very intelligent and great leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and a few other ministers, leaders had a great impact on society. They also told me, during the 1960s, there were many black leaders from other professions, along with many diverse young people, who were involved and seen as tough political activists. In all, these local figures disclosed to me that they believed that the older generation had more backbone, resistance, and persistence than that of today, and were not afraid to confront the establishment, unlike today’s younger generation of activists that seem to be less committed, not as engaged, and non-confrontational.

Here are some different quotes from some of these Christian clergy people and university scholars regarding generational differences with political activism. Rev. Barnes said:
We have so many ministers right now talking about “I have a Dream”, but when Dr. King was advocating, there were very few ministers, very few, because they disliked the idea that he stepped out of the pulpit and went into the street even though we all saw how Jesus was in the streets.

Professor Gollin also said:

Well, we had great leaders in the ‘60s, there’s much less of that today. I grew up then and tremendous progress was made in racial issues, too; and we had the wonderful benefit of people like Dr. Martin Luther King, who helped focus the attention on the needs, to the just-begin fixing the horrors visiting on the minority community coming from the United States as slaves. So I think that there were better leaders then.

Rev. Underwood concluded by saying:

As ministers during that era;...because back then they were at-risk then. There’s no risk for us today; we are not putting our necks on the line today like back then. Well you have to see that I’m older, I’m 71 years old. Younger people are afraid of their jobs, and they feel they have a lot more to lose. I see that they been co-opted more, the younger generation. They have not gone through what their forefathers, their fathers and mothers have gone through, they have been spoiled, and we put our necks on the line.

There were also more differences that these religious leaders and university professors expressed to me with changes in political activism overtime among generations and how knowledgeable past generations were about their history and the future they wanted to pursue compared to the current generation. They told me how the older generation really believed in themselves and were more seriously committed to changing an entire system and culture, which caused them to become better organizers and planners than the present generation, their judgment. This more productive experience of generational and activist differences was explained best by the work of scholar Aldon D. Morris and his description of the previous generation’s positive impact on the Civil Rights Movement when he wrote:

The civil rights movement had a profound impact on American society. It significantly altered the tripartite system of domination, large dismantling those components which severely restricted the personal freedom of blacks and disfranchised them in the formal political sense. The movement altered and expanded American politics by providing
other oppressed groups with organizational and tactical models, allowing them to enter directly into political arena through the politics of protest (pgs. 286, 287).

This quote was echoed by three university professors and one Christian religious leader. For example, Professor Anderson said:

In the ‘60s generation they were strongly committed to change, they had good ideas to what they wanted to change, their agenda was very clear with civil rights or with the voting rights, and so on, and with education, and they were committed to it. People forget that the 60s was an era of the greatest prosperity in American history, and this generation believed that their aspirations could come true.

Second Rev. Underwood, went into great detail and talked about how:

The younger generation, they not as educated about their black history. They have not been brought up in the right kind of family, in a sacrificing and supporting family like our generation, so they can see that black people can do this, run for office as a culture. This is how we learned about carrying signs, marching; we listened and talked about the black movement times, and became aware of activism. We went to Chicago with Jesse Jackson’s group on Saturdays so we could get trained about black activism. We had the black University of Illinois students coming to teach us about dashikis, and black programs, African things, Malcolm X’s movies and books and stuff. The black artists and stuff coming into the University, and at the black culture centers and all that to get their messages across.

Third, Professor Harris appeared to concur with Rev. Underwood’s thoughts by saying:

In some way [today’s activism] it’s seem a little bit more spontaneous than what it was in the past. So for example, [historically] individuals who organized students for nonviolence like SNCC directly instructed people on social activism and it played a significant function in training people how to be nonviolent. They were well organized and were not spontaneous, but very thoughtful with a strong ideology attached to their beliefs, which had great results in voter registrations, and with law-suits from the NAACP.

Fourth, Professor Sundiata also appeared to have embraced all three of these ideas, along with highlighting his thoughts in great detail, stating:

Yes--well obviously today [activism]; theirs’ are less effective. In the ‘60s, people relied on newspapers, they relied on fliers, they relied on radio and television, and with this, at the heart of an effective political campaign, is your ground game; at the heart of an effective-movement-based-politics is an effective ground game and at some point, you have to meet people in their homes, in small focus groups, in their neighborhoods, at town-hall meetings, you got to canvass the community to build reporting ideas, that
seem to be something that the younger generation does not get. They think you can put everything on Facebook and effectively organize your community. You have to strategically understand that you have to organize the black community block by block, and house by house, where you sit and make decisions of what we think would be great ideas, and then you enter into the U.S. system to fight for what you believe in. We have to go back to large scale boycotts, demonstrations, we have to use every other tactics in our tool knit right, and electoral politics is one tactic period.

The work of Robert C. Smith is a testament to these local scholars and clergy people’s quoted assessments on how political activism has changed significantly between the old and new generations when he argued ferociously in his book *We Have No Leaders* (1996), stating:

The strategies employed by post-civil rights era black leadership have not been effective in arresting this situation, let alone reversing it. This suggests a need to rethink strategies both in terms of internal communal action and external political participation. There is nothing, however, not even hints, that suggests that the leaders of black America are willing to do this (p.274).

The last part of this political activism as seen in the generational divide was a conversation about the influences of technology and attendant changes in the political structure. Bishop McGhee, Rev. Owen, and Rev. Barnes spoke candidly how the use of technology today and local cities’ current policies have dictated political activism in our new society with regard to how it is viewed and carried out. Bishop McGhee pointed this out by saying:

I think activism has changed overtime because of how technology used today, making it were we not marching for civil rights anymore or not as much. But it’s the approach and the use of social media is how many people today get their messages across like with texting and the rest of it. Also because of technology today, many black leaders do not really get involved in politics like they did in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement era because advance technology like social media has taken over the demands of protest through recording and posting people’s good and bad ways…“Sha-ma…Glory Hallelujah”… (*Bishop McGhee quickly shouted out speaking-in-tongues and praised God, which indicated that he disagreed with this societal change*).

Rev. Owen echoed Bishop’s point, but went a little farther into details and shared how:

Activism has been often times more group oriented, and over the years, activism in this day and age is done more online kind of information sort of like “change.org”, which I think been most exciting to see how it’s really taking shape within a younger generation, seeing that kind of activism of saying I need people to connect, and to get online...
signatures (petitions) for things and so on. I think that—just the social media thing and that we have played into it all; and much more “activism” has become part of “individuals” (oriented)...sort of taking on these causes.

And Rev. Barnes explained these present-day changes through policy procedures, and saying:

Look at how community organizing was being enacted during the ‘60s, but now they have flipped the script. Now you need to go get a permit in order to have demonstrations and so on because what was being done 30 and 40 years ago have changed. So what had changed right now is organizing people in various regions in term of addressing a narrative and addressing it collectively, and then you go to the decision-makers to ask for permission to make changes [or to do activism]. But real changes come from the bottom-up.

In our contemporary society, definitions of what counts as civic engagement or political-activism in this digital age have become widely debated. For example, there are relevant articles on the subject such as How Social Media Jumpstarted the Black Lives Matter Movement (2015) by Conor Dillon, and (Re)Writing Civics In The Digital Age: The Role of Social Media in Student (Dis)Engagement (2012) by Joannah Daley. Dillon wrote in his article how:

African American civil rights protests in the 1950s and 60s used the power of the television to help their causes. Now one year after the death of Michael Brown social media is powering the Black Lives Matter movement (p.1).

In-addition to this wide-ranging debate, Daley argued in great detail how:

These events in the early sixties became a civil-rights war that engulfed the South for the rest of the decade—and it happened without email, texting, Facebook, or Twitter. Claims that social media can inspire a revolution are grandiose assertions that come from solipsistic individuals. Being an activist involves being killed. It involves putting your body on the line. It means presenting yourself physically, not on a web page. It means man-to-man confrontation. It means blood, sorry, and pain. Social media is not the place for “real” engagement: to this end, they have labeled many young citizens, most of whom are members of the “net generation”, as “slacktivist” rather than activists. Civic action or activism keeps young technology users from realizing their potentials as citizens (pgs. 1, 2).

However, Professor Harris gave technology some credit with regard to today’s activism because of the importance of its fast-moving information by acknowledging:
Yes, social media didn’t exist then as we have it now. It might have been different then, but you can mobilize people more quickly, and you can highlight issues more quickly through social media and you can break in aspects of action, but you can also bring in aspects of shame, and you can also bring in aspects of getting knowledge to people quickly so they can mobilize faster.

Continuing this conversation about the generational divide between young and old activists and social media, Minister Shoemaker was one of the few who did not see too much of a difference between the two, or major changes in political activism over the years. He noted:

In term of activism now, I think particularly for young people, of college age that a lot of those students also really care about civil rights’ issues for everybody, gay and lesbian folks; and the rich issues of this country. So I think today the younger generations of students are still motivated by similar issues and desires to improve things for people who are at a disadvantage like it was during the civil rights years.

To conclude this section, this debate continued with regard to the influences of political structural changes in activism over generations. Professor Anderson, a historian, explained this dynamic from the perspective of a historical time-line. Anderson’s explanation is supported by scholarly work such as Manning Marable’s Race, Reform, and Rebellion (2007), in which he pointed out the specific years when this major change of activism occurred, writing:

For black Americans, the central political characteristic of the 1980s was the conservative reaction to the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement, and apparent capitulation of both political parties to a more conservative and repressive social order (p. 194).

The above quote is similar to one in which Professor Anderson highlights the importance of this historical shift with political activism. He argued this point in-depth, stating:

Well, it changed; activism changed drastically overtime, and what you saw in time was a gradual breakdown of this type of activism in part because of the structural changes that took place. But I don’t blame the generations on this as much as I blame the structural changes that had occurred. It was that change dramatically in the ‘80s where young people started to feel, ‘No matter what I do, I don’t have much of a chance, and so the very meaning of “activism-change” dramatically; Oh yeah it was clearly the 80s, it was clearly the Reagan-Bush administration, where you saw this huge structural breakdown…Oh yeah, activism went down: you can see it going down in the ‘80s dramatically, I mean the ’70s was really the last two periods of activism, and there’s
nothing since the ‘70s that been a keen to that civil rights movement dating back to the mid-‘50s all the way through the ‘70s.

There have also been other studies that have concurred with this view of drastic political-structural, post-Civil Rights Movement era changes (Davis, Jr., 2012; Mitchell & Covin, 2012; Musgrove, 2012).

The overall understanding that I gained from these clergy people and scholars was that the majority of them agreed that political-activism has changed tremendously over time, creating a huge divide between past and current generations in how activism was developed and executed, viewed, and defined. I also learned that the majority of these participants tend to support the past definition and actions of political activism as more genuine and authentic as opposed to the new generation of activism, which they view on the whole as less genuine and less authentic. They blamed the lack of authenticity of the younger generation on a weaker and younger society that is influenced by fast information delivered through our technological-social media age of today. However, there were a couple of participants that did not see the younger generation as to blame or guilty for producing an ineffective generation of modern activists, but instead laid the blame on major changes on a political structural system shift that has taken place over time. But overall, these two also still share the majority views that the past generation of activists was more substantial, raw, and tenacious in carrying out collective strategic action of than what we see in today’s form of activism. And last, I learned that all of my participants were over the age of 50, which for the most part, and generally speaking, could be looked at as creating biased views according to different types of “generational questions” posed to an older group. That is, in fairness, the same questions were not asked of a younger group of local activists.
Does Same Race and Similar Cultural Values Matter with Education-Politics?

What I continued to discover from my interviews with these local Christian clergy people and university scholars’ was how they all agreed that same race and similar cultural values does matter with regard to life issues as long as it does not divide, separate, or discriminate against people’s racial and cultural practices (Bohm, Funke & Harth, 2010; England, Meier & Robinson, 1981; Fandos, 2012; Koli, 1995; Milner, 2009). They mentioned to me how these factors can be seen in both positive and negative ways, depending on how they are used. The religious leaders and the professors expressed to me how ultimately important shared racial and shared cultural values are in context of their spiritual faith, beliefs, and theology. Additionally factors include people’s biological make-up and physical, internal, and emotional characteristics as human beings. In regard to how same race and similar cultural values are used in both positive and negative ways, two ministers and two professors highlighted the negatives. Rev. Underwood said:

Historically speaking, within the control with same race and similar cultural values mean within the confines of what people have to control of you. I don’t think it’s necessarily good this way; the reason way is because of racism that controls you. Because of this control, this confines; and if you are black it’s very difficult for any white person to let you be in the position to make decisions, to be in a decision-making position. You know I have seen it!

At the same time, Rev. Underwood also talked about this control and confinement internally within the black race and culture, and made negative references to how black ministers act today. She continued, blatantly saying, “These crazy Negroes, they so heavenly minded, and they ain’t no earthly good. They not leading their people right and God is not pleased with this. But these people are so ignorant!” However, Minister Shoemaker only identified with Rev. Underwood’s
similar historical ideas with same race and similar cultural values in how it had and still does have negative connotations by admitting that, as a white American:

Well as a white person, I know there are certain privileges and certain power that comes just from being white. Because it has been the majority race in this country for so long, and white people have had positions of power and authority and privileges whether they were there historically or not. I have been the majority.

To Professor Gollin’s negative thoughts on this issue, he stated, “I think that it can become a really bad thing like racial issues, but people must learn how to grow up from it, you know. Our society divide the world because of what people say like, who is crazy, to people who say, who are not.

On the other hand, Professor Harris also expressed negative thoughts about how this term is used against black people, noting:

As human beings, and the ways that our society is structured, which they taught us to fear African Americans. We are taught to think of them [black people] as inferior; we live near them, and we don’t want to be around them because of the way we are depicted in every media outlet, which is that we are undesirable, only depicted as criminals, poverty-stricken, or as athletes, or entertainers as the only images, and why would you want to be associated with those people; which is what we have been taught.

These negative thoughts regarding how same race and similar cultural values do matter, even if the points are debatable and depend on how these thoughts are used, these negative examples, are also supported by Wendy Kohli’s scholarly work, Critical Conversations in Philosophy of Education (1995), which I quoted earlier, and here feel an urge to quote her again in this appropriate setting. Kohli wrote:

While promoting the exploitation of “others”, it is the product of politics that can hide or legitimize race, class, and gender oppression. Many social institutions prevent us from seeing how high “standard of living” abuses the whole natural world: and in doing so, brutally exacerbates race, class and gender oppression. And the first victims of this increasing ruination are the “underdeveloped”, the “poor”, and “oppressed people” (pgs. 326, 327).
In relation to Kohli’s quote above and the three prior negative quotes regarding same race and similar cultural values, the constructed word “race” alone in these quotes has been shown to have negative meanings both historically and currently in our society. Professors’ Sundiata and Anderson highlighted this important point. First, Professor Sundiata,

You know that race is very complicated concept and is created for the purpose of differentiating against people generally. If we look at the development of that concept certainly from the 18th century on it was a mean for oppressing groups of people, but yet we are forced to use the term right: ‘nationality’, or ‘people’, or ‘ethnicity’ is a more important term.

Professor Anderson simply articulated, “Race doesn’t mean a whole lot because what people really mean by this is just the color of your skin, that’s all the knowledge people have, and they not looking beneath that, but cultural values are better and more profound.” Now, switching from these negative meanings to the positive ones on this subject, three of the religious leaders briefly explained their views. First, Rev. Barnes, “In the end, as a Christian with this, there is no cultural barriers: however still, I’m more comfortable with my own culture, which I identify myself with as African American people of African American descent.” Also talking a positive stance, Bishop McGhee said, “It has values, which is good and culturally relaxing with it, but still at the same time, we have to push beyond this same race and cultural ways in order to embrace all races essentially; to ease tensions and problems.” And, Rev. Owen agreed with both Barnes’ and McGhee’ ideas of understanding the similar benefits of same race and cultural and comfortable identities than non-similar racial cultural groups mixing better, and in regard to how she felt about this term saying, “I think that sometimes there are those good opportunities that people within a certain race or cultural group can certainly better understand than other groups. The same way that is in a Hispanic community; the Hispanic community understand certain things a little bit better than other folks that’s non-Hispanic.”
As regards how same race and similar cultural values matter first of all with education, research has shown that “cultural connections” or “culturally informed relationships” have had positive effects on African American students’ academic performances. For example, Kalynada Smith dissertation, in her dissertation entitled, *The Obama Effect on African American Students’ Academic Performance*. Smith wrote, “Popular media accounts suggested that Obama serves as an ideal and positive role model for African Americans, particularly in the academic realm. This suggests that individuals experience an increase in their self-esteem when exposed to Obama, which leads to an increase in academic performance, and reduced stereotype threats” (p.5).

This respect to this culturally informed relationship, or connection, or to put it a similar way, a same race-cultural, positive role model image in the context of education, Professor Sundiata echoed this line of research by stating in great detail:

> On the education thing, if you have black teachers who are comfortable, knowledgeable, and comfortable with promoting, and using African Americans’ culture as a means to educate children as a pedagogical practice, the evidence shows that they are going to be more successful in teaching, and that it matters if that person, teacher, or student is from that same culture right, it’s called culture relevance pedagogy.

Continuing with the theme presented in the above quotes, Rev. Barnes spoke about his personal educational experiences, discussing it the topics of a lack of cultural identity, self-esteem issues, and a negative role model taught to him, similar to that found in Kalynada Smith’s work. He explained:

> Education for me was the same white negative stereotype. I had to discover my black roots myself; I had to do that independently because it was not taught in my school. All I had was pictures and symbols of Europeans, which to me, actually was my oppressors, and then I had to discover who I was. And, we as African Americans and Latinos: many of us are still lacking it, and because of it, there’s self-esteem problems associated with a lack of who I am, and without that, I cannot understand my full self-work. Educationally, we as a black culture need to have identifiers until we resolve the problems of who we are as identity crisis. Yes same race in education does matter.
Dr. Anderson spoke about this terminology in relation to flaws in the present educational system:

Every teacher should be familiar with the cultural values of their students they are teaching, and that this can be profound. Teachers should know their students’ norms, their clash, their stories, their experiences, and not by judging them, or insulting them. So it is very important for a teacher to understand the cultural values of the students, their parents, and their community, and understand cultural values does not run in your blood, it require you to study, and to be aware, and to have knowledge about what you are doing.

Just as same race and similar cultural values matter in regard to politics, research has also shown this to be true with “same-race-preference” in politics (Bohm, Funke & Harth, 2010; England, Meier & Robinson, 1981). The two African American clergies, Rev. Underwood and Rev. Barnes, and the two African American scholars, Professor Sundiata and Professor Anderson, overall agreed that same-race-preferences do matter in politics. However, during the course of my interviews, the one white American clergy, Minister Shoemaker, did not see it this way.

Now, Rev. Underwood explained in a lengthy quote about Carol Ammons, a local black female political candidate who ran for public office, when she said:

Yes it means something to me, the fact that somebody like sister Carol Ammons running for state office as an example; same race and similar culture values means a lot to me; you should go vote for sister Carol; she’s going to work for us; she is an African American and she understands what all we have gone through; she worked the community and she understands the plight and the core of African Americans, rather than that Caucasian lady (Carol Ammon’s female opponent) who don’t understands our cultural needs, you know, and she has not gone to the black churches because she don’t understand our religion, and the political issues that we care about.

Similar to Rev. Underwood’s thoughts, Rev. Barnes also noted:

In the political arena, it’s going to be difficult for someone to be able to receive a message looking like someone who is different from you, and is trying to address some problems; it’s going to be hard for me to accept you because you may not know what my situation really is.
Professor Sundiata thoroughly expressed his thoughts with how same race, culture, and politics actually worked in the case of Obama’s Presidency, by remarking:

To say that black people voted for Obama because he was black, is to reduce blackness to skin color. People voted for Obama because they believed that the policy that he had expressed, was closer to what they wanted, and Obama expressed those politics because of his particular background and experiences in Chicago. Now the group in the United States that had voted on the base of race is white people. They choose not to vote for black candidates because they black. They choose not to vote for Latino candidates because they Latinos; they far more guilty for that type of prejudice.

And last, Professor Anderson also addressed this issue about Obama’s presidency, in addition to other local elections on which there appear have been some contradictory actions on behalf of African American people:

Yep, people did come out and vote for Obama sometimes because of the same skin color, but if you go down to places like Ferguson, Missouri, where they came out to vote for Obama more than 50%, but in the local school board elections, it went down to 11% and then, you have no blacks on the school board. I think it’s far more important for blacks to vote for the local elections than to vote for Obama. Yes, but in the end, it’s more the shared values and experiences that draws people politically together than skin color or race.

However, Minister Shoemaker did not agree with the others on the same-race-preferences in politics because of his religious convictions. As he put it, “So, in term of politics, I tend to vote for those kinds of culturally diverse views and issues that grant equality and equal opportunities for all people at the same time because all of us are children of God and we all should have equal chances in life.” Here is a few more supporting literature on same race and similar cultural values matter with education-politics (Du Bois, 1903; Goldman, 1973; Grant, 2008; Marable, 2006; Morris, 1984; Smith, 1996). Each one of these scholars’ work revealed how importance same race and similar cultural values are in regard to many life issues, particularly with America’s history of discriminating and marginalizing certain racial groups over others. However, their work also shown that this term is not just limited to certain people to benefit
more from or by overcoming certain challenges, but if everyone was treated equally, then same race and similar cultural values would not matter at all.

In conclusion, my overall understanding from my interviews with these Christian religious leaders and university professors in listening to their personal experiences from centered around these three central themes: What are your thoughts about certain African American leaders’ involvement in politics?, Has political activism changed over time across generations? And, does same race and similar cultural values matter with education-politics? There were several key issues on a larger narrative scale that emerged as a result of views they held in common or differed on. For example, they identified a need for more African American people to get involved in current politics; It more easier for African American ministers to get involved or to seek public office than African American professors because of the two clear distinctions in their professional role, responsibilities, and expectations; the importance and understanding of being in decision-making positions first and foremost, however these positions are not the only way to make effective changes; the huge differences between past and current generations in how they think and respond to political activism; and for the most part, how same race and similar cultural values still matters in education-politics, which unfortunately it continues to create bias ideas and separating living conditions as a society. In addition to these interviews, I also learned from the participants’ what make them tick, their interest, and the, who, what, when, where, why, and how of things according to these issues. Also, what kind of people did the 1960s Civil Rights Movement attract, influence, and motivate in the context of the cause and how, if at all, does this relate to today’s activists and current social issues of concerns? From these sources, I discovered that the past generation of primarily black American people and leaders had more of a personal and spiritual conviction for what they were doing, or some sort of
deep hurt and pain to overcome, or a need to prove to society at large that major changes could occur by any means necessary, which in turn led from grassroots’ activism to seeking political office. Unlike today’s society of black activists, or political office seekers, I learned that members of the current generation of leadership appear to be less personally convicted, have not experience the pain of racism to the same extent as the generation of the ‘60s, and is less interested in proving a point, in order to change society from its negative ways.

However, I also learned that today we do have large scale political-activist movements, such as the “Black Lives Matter” Movement, but not as many compared to the past. In addition, today’s movements seem to be less risky and dangerous than those of the past, and not as much of a major threat to the established order when compared to previous movements. During the 1960s, in the United States, there was a huge outcry against racism and segregation, to moving toward eventually desegregation, and many people sacrificed their time and blood or lost their lives dying for the cause, particularly when compared to today’s major issues. I learned how it appeared that black religious leaders and diverse youth groups that were involved in political activism in the 1960s, sacrificed more time in being away from their churches and schools, to strategically plan for many streets protests and sit-ins to effect large social changes. These events occurred with minority groups then, because of the system outside forces of overt racism by nation law, than today’s less social forces of institutionalized racism that’s more sophisticated, producing perhaps less effective black activists and/or political seekers.

I also learned how political activism in time and in action has been defined in different ways, than how over time. For example, today this concept is described more by according to people’s deeds and volunteerism; it is fast and quick with results; it is publishing academic research articles with a strong voice; it is seen more frequently today through social media
innovations; it is more a matter of diplomacy and less racial; it is spontaneous yet reactionary to issues and not as proactively and strategically planned, and it is less traditional, moving from the holistic approach of large black and brown mass movements gathering, to more individualized movements. It has been argued by scholars that fewer blacks and people of color today do not see or identify themselves as part of this huge holistic cultural approach of mass movements as was the case in the past. This could be a reason why today’s younger generation is seen as less likely to get involved, become engaged, or be motivated about and interested in large political-activist activities and practices. This understanding was noted in Theodore Davis’ *Black Politics Today: The Era of Social economic Transition* (2012), when he talked about the change in black politics, mass appeal, and modern-day activism writing.

During the protest and political years in the 1960s, black politics appeared to have more of an appeal to the masses of black people as a whole. In today’s time, it’s more connected to smaller black class groups according to socioeconomic status; and how the impact of race on black quality of life has become more individualized, or relegated to subgroups concerns (p.19).

Finally, what I also learned, particularly from the three white Americans’ perspectives from the interviews, that I concluded, was that it appeared to be more personal as well as culturally natural for them to become engaged in political activities as normal citizens and true Americans without really thinking about it, because they had more of a natural sense of belonging, or a need to do, than the six African American participants as a whole. I came to this conclusion after analyzing the entire interview process, which is much more detailed in the appendix part of this paper (see page 109). Many of my thoughts, or interpretation, and what have expressed in this concluding part are supported by most of the authors’ cited literatures in this chapter. However, additionally, there are more supporting sources that I have referred to and learned from. These include journals, newspaper articles, and websites such as (Alven, 1976; Boston, 2000; Crick, 2012;
Freeman, 2012; Gaines, 1996; McWhorter, 2001; Nadon, 2014; Perlmutter, 2011; Robbins, 1989; Vaidhyamathan, 2008; White, 2000; www.vahistorical.org).

Local and National Newspaper Articles

This last section consists of a collection of candidates and elected officials’ profile materials, mostly from local newspaper articles or election ads from the Champaign-Urbana area, along with a few national newspaper articles. Most of these brief bios will start in the late 1960s and continue to the present as evidence for inclusion in this larger conversation about past and present black and white Christian religious leaders and university professors’ involvement in local politics, particularly with regard to both cities’ public school boards. I also listed a few other local and state electoral positions from people in other professions as additional evidences about this conversation. While gathering these candidates and elected officials’ profiles for my specific research topic, I define “professors” and one who holds a “Ph.D.” as one and the same, whether they are in the same job profession (for example, teaching) or not, or retired, but because of the advance knowledge that they have acquired, as evidence that the conferral of that degree. I also define “pastors” and “ordained ministers” the same way, as one and the same, whether they are overseeing a church or not, or retired, but because of the common value of having either of those titles in addition to that relationship of trust between them and most people in their worship communities.

According the City of Champaign’s website, there are “approximately 25 African American Christian churches, and close to 100 White American Christian churches in the Urbana-Champaign area” with plenty of black and white religious leaders. Also according to the University of Illinois, Parkland College, and Champaign-Urbana public and private schools’ websites: “One of the greatest research one institution in the world,” “a top rank community
college,” “21 public schools in Champaign,” “12 public schools in Urbana,” and “20 private schools” in the twin-cities,…are all located in this community with plenty of black and white professors and people who hold Ph.D.’s. The lists below of various biographies might not be all inclusive with regard to these local candidates and elected officials’ professions, race, gender, or education status, because of factors of time, and place, or how and when they were printed that may differ according to the newspaper company, schools, county clerk office, and the different political parties’ affiliations all of which are sources for this material. Specifically, the accuracy of some of this biographies information required additional research on my end for the sake of clarity. This issue can be seen more so with the archival materials than the newer information. Therefore, with this understanding, and moving from the 1960s to the 2016 biographies of found in lists of local people, details about their profiles, may vary.

We start with the Urbana School Board, with its traditional seven seats, for person serving an elected four-year term, or appointed positions. Evelyn Burnet (Rev. Evelyn Underwood ‘Burnett’ being her name from her first marriage, in 1968) an African American female and an ordained minister. In her interview, she told me, “I was the first black, black person on the school board, Urbana School Board, a black woman too, and a young ordained minister back then too.” According to the Champaign-Urbana Courier (1968), (which in 1979 became the News-Gazette) printed the following headline in the paper:

MRS. BURNETT EXPLAINS CANDIDACY FOR BOARD: Mrs. Evelyn Burnett a candidate for the Urbana School Board (S-2).

Three days later in the same paper, a photo caption of her, reading:

The Candidates-IV, Mrs. Evelyn Burnett: The only black board member and candidate (S-2).
According to Urbana Free Library online Local History and Archives’ information website, the list of Minister Burnett’s (Rev. Underwood) elected position continued from 1968 to 1977 citing information such as the following:

1969/Mrs. Burnett the first black American and black woman on School Board goes on Tour; 1974/Evelyn Burnett to seek Third School term; 1977/Underwood-Burnett is Re-Elected, Zwoyer Ousts Desmond.

Also in 1968, Dr. Anna Wall Scott, an African American female ran for the Urbana School Board at the same time Minister Burnett did, but lost. Dr. Scott retired as a Professor of Sociology at Parkland College after working for 40 years, during which time I had the pleasure of taking one of her classes. The *Champaign-Urbana Courier* (1968) recorded that, “Mrs. Scott announced she was in the race” (S-2). The same Urbana Local History and Archives website also listed more of Professor Scott’s political efforts noting, “1967/Mrs. Anna Wall Scott Files Petition” and “1969/Mrs. Scott is a Candidate”.

A white American male, Professor Peter Ewald Yankwich who was a chemist at the University of Illinois actually served on the Urbana School Board from 1959 to 1972 while he worked at the University from 1948 to 1988 apparently doing both jobs. An *Urbana School District 116 2014-2015 Board of Education* printed document listed Professor Peter Yankwich among six other board members to have served between “1959-1968”(p.20, 21), and Urbana Local History and Archives also cited him, as follows: “1970/Urbana School Board Member Prof. Yankwich Seek Re-Election; 1972/Prof. Yankwich Elected Chairman of School Board.” I also personally know an African American male, who was not either a professor or a minister who served on the Urbana School Board, as evidenced by the *Urbana School District 116 2014-2015 Board of Education* printed document, which listed him as, “Carlos Donaldson-1981 to 1983”(p.19). I also personally know an African American female by the name of Dr. Larine
Cowan, who received her Ph.D. in Educational Policy Studies from the University of Illinois, and who was on the same list as Mr. Donaldson was mentioned on it recorded as, “Larine Cowan (appointed 7/95-11/95)” (p.17), and was to have served as appointed for five months between July to November 1995.

Last, a personal friend of mine for many years, an African American female who is neither a professor nor a minister, Ms. Benita Rollins-Gay, is on the same list as Mr. Donaldson and Dr. Cowan recorded her as “Benita-Rollins-Gay (2016-2)” (p.1), the only African American currently serving on the Urbana School Board.

Between the years of 1978 to 1980 (2 years), 1984 to 1995 (11 years), and 1996 to 2002 (7 years) there have not been any other African Americans serving on the Urbana School Board. According to the Champaign County Clerk office’s website, under election history, the site explains all local government election processes that go back to 1968, however, the older the information, more limited it becomes. For example, the archival information on candidates who lost races may only reveal their names and party affiliation. For candidates who won and became elected, or who were appointed, the information may reveal more personal information on the individual such as with their race, profession, residency, and education. Current information on candidates reveals even more personal information on them when compared to the older information however those sources may also choose what is more relevant according to the political atmosphere at the time of a particular election. What the County Clerk’s office website and the Urbana School Board documentation have noted throughout the years from 1968 to the present, is the fact that the majority of the seven board seats has been consistently held by white Americans, but it is not certain whether most of these seats were held by white ministers or professors because of the inconsistent information in how it has been printed or catalogued.
The second list is from the Champaign School Board with the same structure as Urbana namely, having seven elected seats with four-year terms. The first African American board member was a female community activist, Kathryn Humphrey (maiden name Wilson). I personally knew her too because she was the aunt of my brother’s wife: however, she was not a professor or a minister, but rather a community activist, something she talked about in an oral of the local history community book, which was entitled, Katherine B. Humphrey-A Verbatim

Transcription of an Oral Interview (1983). In this work she stated:

I want to talk about the ‘60s, how the Civil Rights Movement affected me personally and affected my community. The Civil Rights Movement, I was very excited. I was excited with Dr. King, and I had seen Dr. King several times before he became so famous. I saw him at the National Baptist Convention, and right after he had conducted that march in Montgomery; we had him to come to the Women’s Auxiliary. And he was there, and he was signing all of his books, and the book he signed was-Oh, I can’t think of the name of it-but I have it some place (p.8).

Mrs. Humphrey (Wilson) served on the Champaign school board from 1968 to 1971, the exact same year that the Urbana School Board had its first elected black (and first elected black female). Minister Evelyn Burnett (Rev. Underwood). Humphrey also referenced this in the above-cited book saying, “And then I have also served on other boards, like the school board of Unit 4 Community School District-Champaign School Board” (p.6).

Even though Mrs. Humphrey was not a professor or a minister, I decided to include her brief story in this evidence list because of her role as the first African American (and female African American), to have served on the Champaign School Board. This elected service to the community was along with her community activism and involvement, which my paper addresses in great detail. Additionally, here are more citations from the same Urbana Local History and Archives’ online information website of Mrs. Humphrey (Wilson):

1967/Mrs. Wilson Files for Unit 4 Board; 1968/NEGROES SET FIRST VOTE-GETTERS IN BOTH COMMUNITIES (referring to both Humphrey-Wilson &
Underwood-Burnett); 1970/Mrs. Humphrey Replaces Sessions On Unit 4 Board; 1971/Mrs. Humphrey in Race.

A white American male, Professor Peter Berry Shoresman who worked for the University of Illinois in the College of Education for 26 years, served on the Champaign School Board from the early 1970s to the early 1980s, taking on both responsibilities simultaneously as indicated in his obituary Thursday, July 19, 1990 The News-Gazette, which reads as follows:

**UI Professor was ‘Outstanding instructor’**
Education lost a quality teacher researcher and school board member with the passing of University of Illinois professor emeritus Peter B. Shoresman, colleagues say. Mr. Shoresman, 56, who died Tuesday, retired a year ago after 26 years with the College of Education. But he continued to work on a teacher education pilot project in conjunction with the UI and the Urbana school district. Mr. Shoresman served several terms as a school board member with the Champaign district. He served on the board from 1971 to 1977 and again from 1978 to 1981. He served as board president in 1978-79 (A 8).

An African American male, Dr. Thom Moore who worked for the University of Illinois as an adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology for 31 years from 1973 to 2004 before retiring, also served on the Champaign School Board from 1988 to 1991 and again from 1993 to 2001. According to the Champaign Unit 4 board of education-localwiki.org/ website entitled Champaign Unit 4 School History of Board Members it mentions Dr. Moore in two groups of seven board members:

11/97 Supt. Mike Cain, Don Nolen (P), Margie Skirvin, Nicole Storch, [Thom Moore](#), Scott Anderson, Mark Klaus, Avis Barker, and again, 11/99 Supt. Mike Cain, Mark Klaus (P), Margie Skirvin, Nicole Storch, [Thom Moore](#), Scott Anderson, Phil Van Wess, Jim Butler.

I, an African American male who ran for the Champaign School Board in 2002, am neither a professor nor a minister, but decided to mention myself because I was serious about running then, and may consider it again in the future after completing my Ph.D. The News-Gazette took a photo shot of me then and printed a brief bio that read:

**Charles Young**
Age: 35  
Address: 332 Paddock Drive West, Savoy.  
Born in Champaign County  
Occupation: Building Service Worker, Housing, UI.  
Any political experience? None  
Family: Married and a father of three children (B-2).

Also two other African American males who were neither a professor nor a minister, whom I both knew, served on the Champaign School Board. Nathaniel Banks served on the board from 2003 to 2007, all while working for the University of Illinois as an Assistant Dean of Students for Minority Student Affairs. He worked at the University of Illinois for 30 years before retiring in 2010. For part of his tenure, Banks was on this school board with Norm Lambert who served from 2003 to 2005. Lambert worked at Parkland College as a counselor before passing away in 2005. The Champaign Unit 4 board of education-localwiki.org/ website also have both Banks and Lambert listed among their fellow board members, which I’m only citing three of the different board members according to groups, along with their superintendent:

4/03 Supt. Arthur Culver  
Nathaniel Banks  
Norm Lambert  

4/05 Supt. Arthur Culver  
Nathaniel Banks  
Norm Lambert (died that summer, replaced with Reginald Alston)  

4/07 Supt. Arthur Culver  
Nathaniel Banks.

An African American male, Professor Reginald Alston (cited above) replaced Norm Lambert after he passed in 2005 as recorded once again from Champaign Unit 4 board of education-localwiki.org/; “Norm Lambert (died that summer, replaced with Reginald Alston),” Dr. Alston served on the Champaign School Board from 2005 to 2007. Professor Alston worked for the University of Illinois in the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health, while also serving on this board for two years.
On April 1, 2011, *The News-Gazette* published a story about five white candidates, and one black candidate by the name of Jamar Brown, with his picture along with the other candidates running for the Champaign School Board. The headline and subheading read:

**Unit 4 Candidate Forum—**
5 vying for 4 open seats also give views on extending school day (B-2).

Note, that Jamar Brown is not a professor or a minister, but an African American who served on the Champaign School Board from 2011 to 2014, as indicated on the Champaign Unit 4 board of education-localwiki.org/ website. Members are listed in groups of seven, but I only list in groups of three from six different dates:


On April 14, 2012, *The News-Gazette* printed pictures of eight candidates, including two blacks, one Hispanic, and five whites. My wife was one of the candidates, an African American ordained Minister, named Alissia Young, and the other African American female is a pastor’s wife name Carolyn Savage, whom I know her very well from the community. The remainders of the five candidates are not professors or ministers, according their biographies printed into the paper. The headline read:

**Champaign Schools Meet the Eight Board Applicants.** Board to interview 8 candidates in open-session (B-2).

On March 15, 2013, *The News-Gazette* highlighted a picture of one African American male candidate, along with five white board members. This particular candidate also is not a professor
or a minister because I know him too. The paper listed his name and the following caption to accompany a photo of him:

Champaign school board candidate John Williams III, right, answer a question Thursday as fellow candidates listen at a candidate forum (A-6).

On March 17, 2013, the same newspaper continued to write more about William’s biography. At that time William was the only black candidate:

John A. Williams III  
402 Taylor Thomas Lane, C.  
**Age:** 30  
**Occupation:** Academic Talent Search program at University of Illinois (B-2).

On July 13, 2013, *The News-Gazette* showed pictures of six more candidates who entered the Champaign School Board race, including with three African American males, two white males, and one Hispanic female. According to the newspaper biographies of the candidates, none are professors or ministers. I only cited three of the blacks’ names and ages from this newspaper source, as follows:

**Six Applicants Sound Off**  
Azak David Cobbs, Age: 55  
Michael Jeffries, Age: 66  
Kerris Lee, Age: 30 (B-1).

On August 6, 2013, *The News-Gazette* reported on one of the African American male names, Kerris Lee, who was appointed to a school board seat. The caption to the accompanying photo read:

Champaign School District-Newest board member takes his seat Kerris Lee, right, shakes the hand of fellow Champaign school board member (B-1).

On February 21, 2015, *The News-Gazette* published an article with a photo about my wife (the ordained minister) running for the Champaign School Board, along with this caption:

Alissia Young, shown at the University of Illinois Child Care Resource Service
in Urbana where she works, is a candidate for the Unit 4 board (B-1).

Currently serving on the Champaign School Board as of 2015, he is the the only African American male who I went to school with, this member works for the Champaign Police: Department, Jonathan Westfield. According to the Champaign Unit 4 localwiki.org/ website, it lists him as follow:


More recently, one of the white board members decided to resign from her position and was replaced on February 2, 2016 according to The News-Gazette printed article by an African American female who holds a Ph.D.: Gianina Baker. She was appointed to the Champaign School Board as newspaper reports:

Champaign School Board Gianina Baker has a doctorate from UI in education policy. The Champaign school board chose a black woman with a Ph.D. in education policy from the University of Illinois to fill the seat of former President Laurie Bonnett (B-2).

Between the years of 1971 to 1988 (17 years), there were no African Americans that served on the Champaign school board during this period. However, compared to the Urbana School Board overall, Champaign board has had more African American representation, because from 1988 to the present (28 years), eight blacks have served on the Champaign board. One, who had a Ph.D., served for 15 years, and one who was a professor, served two years. Currently appointed is an African American with her Ph.D., filling the position until the end of her term in 2017. The reminding of the five blacks who served during the rest of this 28 years period were neither ministers nor professors.

All of this shows how, between the two local cities school boards, black professors and ministers, who lived in the Champaign area, have had more of an interest and pursuit in seeking
public office than those black leaders in the Urbana district, from 1968 to the present. The similar showing of these two local boards according to the Champaign County Clerk office, demonstrates that throughout this long history, the majority of the Champaign and Urbana school boards’ seats have been dominated by whites during each election term, but it is unclear whether these seats were held by white ministers or professors.

Now, since I interviewed minister Shoemaker and Professor Sundiata who both talked about their community involvements, as well as the others whom I also interviewed too all of whom agreed that there were other ways to resolve political issues besides running for office. I decided to include these two recent newspaper articles about these men, to underscore the latter point. First, from an article in The News-Gazette (2015) that referred to Shoemaker:

Steven Shoemaker, a retired pastor who attends the Philo Presbyterian Church, says his church’s leaders would be discussing hosting a Syrian refugee family despite Gov. Bruce Rauner’s stance on the issue (A-6).

And The News-Gazette (2015 & 2016) prints a weekly Sunday’s commentary:

Sundiata Cha-jua: Real Talk, A Black Perspective-
Why we say ‘Black Lives Matters’ (C-3) [and]
The importance of African-American history (C-3).

Also a few other listings of local and state ran/elected political positions and boards of people’s bios according to their nationality, education, and professions. According to The News-Gazette (2007) it shows two pictures of African Americans who I know very well that said:

Giraldo Rosales and Patricia Avery win place on April 17 Ballot for Champaign City Council. Giraldo Rosales has enjoyed serving as Champaign City Council member at-large. Patricia Avery was the first African American, first woman and first Democrat to be elected Chair of the Champaign County Bound (B-2).

Rosales has been and currently the Assistant Dean of Students at the University of Illinois for many years, while Avery was and still is the President for the local chapter NAACP organization
of the Champaign County. October 26, 2010, *The News-Gazette* listed and picture two whites’
candidates for the Champaign County Board, but I only cite one:

**Name:** Eric Thorland; **Party:** Democratic; **Age:** 49; **Residence:** Rural Mahomet; **Occupation:** Research engineer, University of Illinois, and farmer (B-3).

October 30, 2010, *The News-Gazette* printed four white candidates and I only cited one of them, a white male professor candidate:

**Champaign County Board-The Candidates-**
**Name:** Ralp Langenheim; **Party:** Democratic; **Age:** 88 **Residence:** Urbana; **Occupation:** Professor of geology and consultant geologist (B-2).

On April 11, 2011, *The News-Gazette* printed six white candidates and I only cited one of them, a white retired female professor:

**Candidates for Parkland College trustee:**
**Name:** Donna H. Giertz; **Occupation:** Retired professor, Parkland College; **Political experience:** Parkland College trustee since 2005; Champaign Township trustee (B-3).

On March 8, 2012, *The News-Gazette* printed a headline about Rev. Underwood again (an ordained minister), but this time running for the Champaign County Circuit Clerk, and I was one of her campaign manager at the time, during which the paper wrote a photo caption that read:

**Democratic Debates: Candidates seeking office, none thing more.**
**Below:** Democratic candidates for county circuit court clerk, from left, Evelyn B. Underwood (C-1).

On November 20, 2012, *The News-Gazette* printed an article about nine black and white candidates for two races, one for Urbana mayor, and the other for Champaign City Council District 1. I only cited the four African Americans, with the rest being white Americans, and none of these candidates are professors or ministers, but I mention them here:

For Champaign City Council District 1, Gina Jackson; Will Kyles, the District 1 incumbent; for mayor, incumbent Democrat Les
Stratton; Ward 3, Democrat Carol Ammons (B-2).

On July 24, 2013, The News-Gazette pictured Professor George Gollin, the white male whom I interviewed, and earlier this same year he ran for State Congress, as The News-Gazette so noted:

**13th Congressional District-UI Physicist joins race for Davis’ seat as Democrat**
George Gollin, 60, a University of Illinois physicist from Champaign, announced Tuesday that he is joining the race (B-2).

On August 20, 2013, The News-Gazette printed an article about a white male who held a Ph.D., who worked for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as a social-policy analyst and was also a candidate for the 13th Congressional District race, as the paper reported:

A third Democrat David Green, Ph.D., 63, is jumping into the 13th Congressional District race, joining Madison County Judge Ann Callis and University of Illinois Professor George Gollins. Green a social-policy analyst at the University of Illinois’ Center for Prevention Research and Development, a part of the Institute of Government and Public Affairs (B-O).

On March 10, 2014, The News-Gazette printed an article about four white candidates running for the Champaign County Board, I cite below the two of them who are professors:

**Meet the Candidates for the Champaign County Board-**
Patti Petrie Democrat; **Occupation:** County board member; retired after teaching urban and regional planning at the University of Illinois; current business P2 consulting; re-elected in 2012. **Education:** Bachelor’s degree, University of Colorado; master’s urban planning, UI; Ph.D., UI (B-2).

A second article in the same edition continued:

C. Pius Weibel Democrat; **Occupation:** Senior geologist at Illinois State Geologist Survey, Prairie Research Institute, University of Illinois. **Political experience:** County board member, 2004-2012; county board Chairman, 2006-2012. **Education:** Bachelor’s degree, University of Wisconsin, 1978; master’s degree, University of Illinois, 1982; Ph.D., UI, 1988 (B-2).

Six days later, The News-Gazette printed an article about a white male who had earned a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois; he was running for State Congress, listed as follows:

Michael Firsching; **Occupation:** owns private veterinary practice; **Political experience:** served on Edwardsville school board and Madison county regional school board;
**Education:** B.S., Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, 1978; doctorate in veterinary medicine, University of Illinois, 1982 (A-3).

On March 18, 2014, a campaign flier with a picture of Carol Ammons who is an African American, female but not a minister or a professor, but our current state representative, read:

**“Vote for Carol Ammons-State Representative Democrat Illinois 103rd District”**

On August 25, 2014, *The News-Gazette* listed a white male University of Illinois researcher with a background in political science (about which I Googled his status and picture) as a candidate for the Champaign County Clerk position, which read:

**Dems again have their man-**
UI researcher set to challenge Hulten this fall.
Scott Hays, a researcher at the University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs (A-10).

On January 8, 2015, *The News-Gazette* wrote a piece about a white male pastor, who was running for a district senate seat. I attended this gathering, about which the paper wrote:

**52 District Senate Seat-12 hopeful draw a crowd-**
Candidates seeking to serve out the two years remaining on Champaign Democrat state senate term. Rev. Robert Rasmus of Urbana, a minister at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Urbana (A-1).

Champaign’s now ex-mayor, Don Gerard, a white male who worked full-time for the University of Illinois while he served as mayor for four years, was asked by a reporter from *The News-Gazette* how he was able to hold both responsibilities as an U.of.I employee and the mayor of the city of Champaign. Below, from the March 26, 2015, edition, I cited a small portion of the interview:

**Champaign Mayor Candidate Q & A: Don Gerard**
**Facilities Manager for School of Integrative Biology University of Illinois. Question asked:** How much time per week do you expect to devote to being mayor, a part-time position? **Answer:** “I spend my mornings, breaks, lunch hours, evenings and weekends “‘being the mayor’”, both in person and on the social network” (A-1).
Lastly, in March of 2015, Professor Joe Petry, a white male who also ran for mayor against then Mayor Don Gerard, and I had a chance to meet at a candidates’ forum. Petry is a clinical professor of economic and finances for the College of Business at the University of Illinois. On March 27, 2015, he was asked by The News-Gazette, how he would be able to manage both jobs if he was elected mayor and he replied:

“My position as a professor allows me a lot of flexibility to adjust my schedule as needed. I believe I will be able to devote more than enough time to being mayor” (A-1).

Finally, one more list of biographies on a national level from a book by Mogilyanskaya quoted in The Chronicle of Higher Education (2012) newspaper with white American professors and faculty members in higher education who have sought for political office. For example, she lists six quotes from this article entitled, In State Races, Some Academic Candidates Shrink From Ivory Tower’s Shadow:

Republican incumbent Scott Brown’s echoing moniker for Elizabeth Warren, the Harvard Law School Professor who is challenging him in this election’s closely watched U.S. Senate race in Massachusetts (p.5).

Christopher T. Henrichsen is trying to present himself as a candidate who isn’t “too Harvard.” A political-science instructor at Wyoming’s Casper College and a doctoral student at Idaho State University. Mr. Henrichsen says: “I’m a community-college instructor running against a millionaire Republican incumbent” (A18).

Angela K. Zimmann, a Democrat, has taken a leave from her job as a writing instructor at Bowling Green State University in order to take on a Republican incumbent. Apart from her role as a faculty member at Bowling Green State, she also serves as a Lutheran pastor in Riga Township, Michigan (A19).

Cynthia A. Dill, the Democratic nominee, who is running as an independent, and is an adjunct faculty member at Southern Maine Community College. She is also a civil-rights lawyer and served in both Maine’s State Senate and House of Representative (A20).

Angus S. King Jr., is a former Maine governor and a lecturer at Bowdoin College is a front-runner candidate in this fall’s Senate race in Maine (A20).
Duane D. Milne, running for his fourth term this year. Representative Milne, of Pennsylvania’s 167th Legislative District, is in a unique position straddling the statehouse and the university. A tenured professor of political science at West Chester University of Pennsylvania, he has also been the Republican representative of his district since 2006 (A20).

I did some additional research about this list of bios to confirm that all of these faculty members in higher education were white Americans (according to Googlesearch.com).

And last, since I have generally listed and looked into black and white religious leaders, university professors, political-activism, and those who seek public office, albeit with more emphasis on African American leaders than white leaders, I thought it would be appropriate to list one last newspaper article on a well-known African American professor, minister, and scholar Dr. Cornel West, of Princeton University. On Tuesday, August 11, 2015, in The News-Gazette, it printed a picture of Dr. West being arrested in Ferguson, Missouri, the caption for which reads as follows:

**Protests in Ferguson, Mo. BACK TO BRINK**
Cornel West, center, joins other protesters on the steps of the Thomas F. Eagleton Federal Courthouse as members of the Federal Protective Services stand watch Monday in St. Louis. Among those arrested at the courthouse was scholar and civil rights activist Cornel West (A-3).

Since collecting these additional local and national newspaper articles about non-school boards’ elections that pointed out who had sought, or been elected to political positions from 2007 to the present, most of these candidates and elected officials are pre-dominated represented by whites rather than blacks, and there is a particular lack of “professors” so named. However, during this time period between black and white ministers seeking public office, black clergy people have better represented than black professors. By studying these past and current local and national newspaper articles I have seen more evidence about this larger conversation between black and white clergy people and scholars, and how it appears that white professors
and black ministers have a stronger interest in getting involved, politically or are more willing and perhaps able to seek public office than white ministers or black professors.

I also learned from these analyses to take into account, from a local perspective, “uncertainties” for example, the election for the Champaign County Clerk’s office, as well as, the Champaign Unit 4 Board of Education information, specially, what has been made known to the public, versus what has not been revealed both of, which could possibly factor into more black professors or white ministers taking an active interest in politics too. At the same time, such participation could also remain the same, as we cannot really know for certain. In the end, I have various types of evidence and let the evidence speaks for itself.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the thoughts and ideas of certain local black leaders, namely, African American Christian religious leaders and university professors with regard to directly seeking public office positions to perhaps improve the academic success of underrepresented African American students in the Champaign-Urbana school system. This has always been the goal of my dissertation with these attendant concerns, with which I am very familiar. Later, pursuing this project propelled me to write about it, originating from the late 1990s court ordered Consent Decree implementation against the Champaign School District, a case that considered discriminatory practices toward African American students and the lack of diverse staff in their schools. I knew this was a normal practice with the Champaign schools, a situation that continues to it exist today, along with many public schools across the nation according to most recent reports from scholarly work such as Sally Haslanger’s Studying While Black: Trust, Distrust, and Opportunity (2014), and according to The News-Gazette, September 29, 2015 newspaper article, that wrote:

Champaign Unit 4 School District-Racial disparity still at issue:
Progress seen on discipline, hiring; more yet to do, board told. Champaign-Community members who were involved in the Champaign school district’s consent decree in the late 1990s-and the settlement agreement in 2009-told school board members Monday night that there’s still work to be done to address disparity in discipline numbers and academic opportunities for African-American students. We would hope as we look at school openings, we would continue to keep in mind the unwarranted impact on black kids who are continuing to struggle in our school systems across our community (B-2).

With this understanding, as evidenced by this quote on local school district issues, my topic which focus on why black Christian clergy people and university scholars tend not to run for elected political offices. As I originally stated in Chapter One, the Significance of Study, and as
noted in an article in *The News-Gazette* that, “community members who were involved in the Champaign school district’s consent decree in the late 1990s,” (B-2), we, the local black community, had decided to focus more on seeking these types of leaders prior to and after the consent decree was filed against the Champaign school system. For example, blacks and their churches have had a long history with pursuing social justice, education and political issues, as well as, developing a close-knit, spiritual bond, and trustworthy relationship, other like-minded people, organizations, or institutions. Also, although we would like to see more of our contemporary black Christian churches do more in the black community, it seems as though many of them here and across the nation have faded away from facing these real social and economic-political issues as was the case in Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

As for black professors, we wanted their expertise, advance knowledge, and their continuing in-depth research practices and skill-set in order to articulate and argue our values, interests, and needs in ways that the average person or candidate may not know how to do, in regard to helping struggling African American students educationally and politically. Also, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that these professors belong to, has its highly respected name, plus its reputation as being a top-notch, research one and flag-ship institution with world-renowned scholars right here in our very own backyard. Both the black clergy people and scholars in the local community have the type of attributes we were looking for as elected officials on the Champaign School Board, or example, to possibly improve our black students’ academic achievements and the schools’ lack of diversity issues, and so on. I included two white Christian religious leaders and a white university professor in this study to provide perhaps a standard model, to see if the stereotypical image that society paints them to be holds true, or
whether they are seen as better than the average in regard to what extent leaders in the white community in the church or academia run for political office.

For example, the quote below came from an election-related advertisement, along with an attached letter to it, which has a white male pictured. He was running for the districts’ Illinois state representative position last year. The letter can be read as an example of this this stereotypical image presumably true and a standard model for others who say that whites with their Ph.D.’s degrees naturally knows better how to run for political office. The letter highlights the candidate’s parents, who hold Ph.D.’s, who wrote the campaign piece for their son, who holds a law degree. I only cited small part of the letter, which read:

*A note from Dr. Paul Rosenberg and Dr. Karen Altay Rosenberg* [the parents]  
Dear Friend: By now, you’ve probably read a thing or two about our son, Sam Rosenberg [candidate]. Sam received his law degree from the University of Illinois, and his brother is currently pursuing his Ph.D. and M.D. there. Sam wants to continue to give back to the community. That’s why he is running for State Representative. Sincerely, Dr. Paul Rosenberg [and] Dr. Karen Altay Rosenberg (Paid for by Sam Rosenberg for State Representative. Printed in house.).

This quote, mentioning the candidate ‘wanting to give back to the community’ could also underscore the stereotypical image that society promotes as another standard model namely, that people in white culture knows how to do things naturally. Therefore, I decided to write about the particular nine people who I interviewed from the perspective of a graduate student taking a “neutral stand” on these ideas. Although I briefly mention my own story, I hope it’s not too persuasive or biased. Rather, my aim was to focus only on testing my research work with regard to my theme and according to participants’ responses, interests, actions, and statements that emerged from the interviews I conducted.

I used the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and its immediate aftermath as one of U. S. history’s most important periods, and discussed, and listed examples in American history as a model for current African American leaders to follow in order to improve, or overcome,
particularly, with regard to educational and political barriers. This 1960s model drew from its past a strong black historical model of leaders from slavery up to the present who travailed over many challenges throughout the course of black traditions and practices in American history. This is why I opened up my research by listing the historiography of African American leadership in chronological order, based on much scholarly literatures, and including supporting and opposing arguments that pointed out the main goals and objectives of my work.

For example, my work started out in early 20th century America, highlighting each meaningful decade and its progress with respect to African American leadership through Black Nationalism, and political activism, and how same race and similar cultural values have always mattered with blacks in education and politics. This includes matters of overt racism and institutionalized racism and on to the debates over how the contemporary post-civil rights’ era of black leadership has been affected by a failed collective American system, a period that has seemingly witnessed the specific decline in black leadership internal because of issues.

For example, one side of this debate can be seen in a book written by the famous black civil rights’ activist, clergyman and scholar, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr in *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967) in which he argued:

> The final major area of untapped power for the Negro is in the political arena. However, Negroes are traditionally manipulated because of our failures so far to achieve effective political alliances, and the Negro’s general reluctance to participate fully in political life (p.148).

Dr. King continues:

> The same test must be applied to the churches and church bodies. Some churches recognized that to be relevant in moral life they must make equality an imperative. But toward those churches that shun and evade the issue, that are mute or timorous on social and economic questions, we are no better than strangers even though we sing the same hymns in worship of the same God. As for educators-education without social action is a one-sided value because it has no true power potential because when we go into action and confront our adversaries, we must be armed with knowledge as they (p. 155).

Forty years after the Civil Rights Movement is a desecration of brave and noble black Americans who gave their lives for us. Martin Luther King did not sit in those jails cells so that black professors could make speeches about the hell they live in and then drive to their $200,000 homes in Lexuses and plan their summer vacations to Antigua (p.47).

From these quotes and different black historical ideologies, these debates and arguments gradually move into contemporary history nationally, at which point it became a concern to me, and our black community locally, questioning the validity of black leadership in Champaign-Urbana, particularly in the area of seeking public office. This lead to conducting my research through a life history methodology approach by interviewing six African Americans, a mixture clergy people and scholars, and two white American clergy man, and one white American scholar, a total of nine participants. What I was primarily seeking was evidences based on their various experiences. In addition, newspaper sources were also used at the very end to support, as well as, contrast their Interviews. My collective findings’ outcomes showed that, beyond what the interviewees said was true based on their experiences or opinions, there was other information that either showed, proved, or raised the prospect of what they did not know.

Finally, I really tried to understand the participants’ stances particularly those of the African American Christian religious leaders and university professors’ and their interest or lack thereof in seeking public office, such as with the local school boards in Champaign-Urbana. Five of the six blacks did not have any interest in running, and one had already served, but was too old now as I was told. Of the three whites, two have already served, and the one was not interested either. Most of the participants believed that there were other ways to make affective political changes without being elected to a position. After hearing their responses as one source
of my evidences, I used key words and terms such as “perhaps,” “seems like,” “could be,” “for the most part,” and “appear,” to describe my final outcome, taken from their answers as a fair assessment only whenever I used data in opposition to their statements. In quite a few instances, I was not surprised about some of the outcomes because of what prior research had already confirmed to be true, such as, for the most part, that many black clergy people and scholars today have no interest in seeking public office. I can attest to this because from a local perspective, I never saw or heard anything about most of my participants running for any of the local political offices, but thought I would be able to discover some kind of interest while interviewing them because they were very acknowledgeable about local political and educational issues.

However, I did learn from these interviews that it was more difficult for professors to seek public office than religious leaders because 1) “it could be” their demanding academic workloads and schedules and additional research expectations that are strongly tied to most universities’ dos and don’ts and sensitive policies. 2) The distinct role of a “traditional teacher,” which is to teach one how to gain knowledge through learning materials and not by a living-by-example-model. As contrasted to professors’ roles, religious leaders’ jobs are not tied to any type of professional institutional setting or rules that on surface prevents them from seeking public office. Their “traditional jobs of preaching” is also strongly tied to doing and serving people who are in need by showing acts of love, care, and action through real-life experiences. This tradition pertaining to religious leaders has created a long social history of social interaction and community involvements compared to professors, on the whole, because of their tradition as “ministers and to serve” that provides a model for how to live and to do so by examples.

The impact of this research had little effect on me personally because the acts I discovered, I knew already; however, I just had to confirm this knowledge, according to proof
and evidence that I complied. The evidences from this particular study appears to that first, whites professors have more of an interest than black professors in wanting to share their professional skills and values with the community, even if that involvement requires them to become elected officials. Second, black ministers feel more spiritually compelled compared to white ministers to get involved with the community, even to the extent of becoming an elected official, for the purpose of improving public services or public policies.

However the limitation of my study with respect to the interviews is that there is an uneven number of opinions with regard to race between the black and white clergy people and scholars. At the same time, the intent of this research is to let the evidences speak for its self. With my overall understanding of this study, I learned to become more curious regarding black Christian religious leaders and university professors specifically, in seeking out the connection between what I believe are their professional gifts, talents, and advance skills and the potential for them becoming elected officials at least in this local community. To that end, my interest in this subject represents a continuing conversation and the potential for additional investigation as part of a future research project.

I believe that this concept of mine with respect to contemporary African American leadership’s professional or personal gifts and talents needs to be stretched or shared more in relations to community affairs, particularly with black students’ educational experiences, for the purpose of enhancing the overall field of education. Since I am from this community, I am planning to take my personal connections of trust and familiarity, along with these additional skill sets and advanced knowledge from what I have learned from this great university, to pursue public elected office again in order to try to help any, but specifically, underserved black students toward achieving educational success. I believe that as an African American male, I can
make a huge difference with this additional information and knowledge that others might not
know or have had access to, by seeking to be move into decision-making positions a reality,
which I believe is badly needed and one we need to see come more into focus.
References


Unlisted Writer. (1968, April 5) Mrs. Burnett Explain Candidacy For Board: Mrs. Evelyn Burnett a candidate for the Urbana School Board [and] “Mrs. Scott announced she was in the race.” The Courier Newspaper, S-2.


**Websites**


APPENDIX (A)

Life History Interview Questions and Guide

Here is portion of a total of 99 transcription pages from actual interviews of the nine participants in the study. The entirety of the transcription interviews are in storage my personal keep sake. There were a total of 11 to 13 questions asked based on the participants’ differences in life professions, status, and in race and culture (between the black and white groups’ interviewees). There was not too much of a difference in the questions, except for some slight differences in how they were worded as indicated in the list below.

1. As an African American Christian religious leader or a university professor, tell me, how do you feel about getting involved in local politics today, like many black leaders did during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement Era?

2. What do you think motivates Christian religious leaders or university professors in the Champaign-Urbana area to seek public office?

3. To you, how has “activism”, if any, changed overtime, particularly since the 1960s movement according to our different and new generations in how we see things, and how we get our message across?

4. What is your view(s) of the “separation of church and state” in general, should it be combined or not? The notion of the separation of church and state says: that you can’t mix education and religion in public school setting.

5. How do you feel about religious ideas or scholarly research work as part of Champaign-Urbana Public School District policies, and how they may shape minority students’ educational experiences today? For example, having prayer in the schools, or applying your personal spiritual beliefs and principles to life situations, or to critical scholarly thinking, problem solving skills based off research findings, facts, proof and evidences!

6. What does “same race” and “similar cultural values” mean to you, if anything, with regard to religion, education, and political issues? For example, how important is interacting with your own race, religion, background and cultural affiliation with regard to these three topics?
7. In what way(s) if any, do you see yourself as an African American leader in the black community, playing a positive role in our public educational system?

(Altered question for the three White Americans interviewed: In what way(s) if any, do you see yourself playing a positive role in our public educational system?)

8. Many people may look up to religious leaders and professors as “leaders” and “intelligent” people; explain what does this mean to you, and what qualifies one or a group as “great and intelligent” people?

9. How important is being in “decision-making positions” for real major changes to occur? Is being appointed or elected the only true way to achieve this, such as serving on numerous boards such as school, community, state boards etc.?

10. How important is it to you, if at all, to seek public office to better shape minority students’ learning experiences?

11. In what way(s), if any, does politics play in the composition and mission of our shape our Christian churches?

12. (Two questions, one for each group, 1st) Explain to me the difference between the words “Pastor” and “Minister”, and their role(s) if any, with regard to civic engagements, community involvements, and political activities for instance, do’s and don’t’s!

(2nd) Explain to me, the difference between the words “tenured” and “non-tenured”, and their role(s) if any, with regard to civic engagement, community involvement, and political activities for instance, do’s and don’t’s!

13. What does this quote mean to you, when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said: “The final major area of untapped power for Negro is in the political arena. In the future we must become intensive political activists. We must be guided in this direction because we need political strength, more desperately than any other group in American society.” (Book title: Martin Luther King Jr. I Have A Dream: Writing & Speeches that Changed the World, 1986, page 158)
APPENDIX (B)

List of Black and White Clergy and Scholar Candidates from
The News-Gazette (1968-2016) Newspaper Articles

(Note: The first list of candidates’ names is related to the Champaign-Urbana school boards, and other local and state elected positions)

African American, Minister Evelyn Burnett (Rev. Underwood);
African American, Dr. Anna Wall Scott; White American, Dr. Peter Ewald Yankwich;
African American, Dr. Larine Cowan; White American, Dr. Peter Berry Shoreman;
African American, Dr. Thom Moore; African American, Dr. Reginald Alston;
African American, Minister Alissia Young; African American Minister Carolyn Savage;
African American, Dr. Gianina Baker; White American, Dr. Eric Thorland;
White American, Dr. Ralph Langenheim; White American, Dr. Donna H. Giertz;
White American, Dr. George Gollin; White American, Dr. David Green;
White American, Dr. Pattsi Petrie; White American Dr. C. Pius Weibel;
White American, Dr. Michael Firsching; White American, Dr. Scott Hays;
White American Minister, Rev. Robert Rasmus; White American Dr. Joe Petry

(Second list of candidates’ names, taken from a Chronicle of Higher Education (2012) newspaper article)

African American, Dr. Charles Dumas; White American, Dr. Elizabeth Warren;
White American, doctoral student, and Instructor, Christopher T. Henrichsen;
White American, Instructor, and Pastor, Angela K. Zimmann;
White American, adjunct faculty member, Cynthia A. Dill;
White American, former governor, and lecturer, Angus S. King Jr;
White American, Dr. Duane D. Milne
APPENDIX (C)

Life History Interviews and partial Transcriptions

The interview of Rev., Dr. Evelyn B. Underwood, January 25, 2015:

**Question 1:** As an African American Christian religious leader or a university professor, tell me, how do you feel about getting involved in local politics today, like many black leaders did during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement Era?

Rev. Underwood’s response:
As an African American leader, I feel it is important to be involved in politics. I am not a pastor, but I’m a pastor’s wife, as well as an ordained minister for a long time, and been an elected official at the same time.

**Question 2:** What do you think motivates Christian religious leaders or university professors in the Champaign-Urbana area to seek public office?

Rev. Underwood’s response:
What motivated me to seek public office is I felt I could do more, in public office. I have always been called into the ministry and; I had sat on the school board as a member.

**Question 3:** To you, how has “activism”, if any, changed overtime, particularly since the 1960s movement according to our different and new generations in how we see things, and how we get our messages across?

Rev. Underwood’s response:
The younger generation have not had the heart ship; they have not had to go through back doors; they have not had to suffer, they have not had to sacrifice; they had it given to them by us. They not are willing to suffer like us.

**Question 4:** What is your view(s) of the “separation of church and state” in general, should it be combined or not? The notion of the separation of church and state says: that you can’t mix education and religion in public school setting.

Rev. Underwood’s response:
I don't believe in separation of church and state, and don't too many black people believe in that… we go with the flow. There are certain things that…we know that the U.S. Constitution doesn't really talk about.

**Question 5:** How do you feel about religious ideas or scholarly research work as part of Champaign-Urbana Public School District policies and how they may shape minority students’ educational experiences today? For example, having prayer in the schools, or applying your personal spiritual beliefs and principles to life situations, or to critical scholarly thinking, problem solving skills based off research findings, facts, proof and evidences!
Rev. Underwood’s response:
Not religious beliefs; no don't think that; I believe that critical thinking is important, because if one can think critically one will not follow any and everything, now character building is one thing, but religious beliefs No.

Question 6: What does “same race” and “similar cultural values” mean to you, if anything, with regard to religion, education, and political issues? For example, how important is interacting with your own race, religion, background and cultural affiliation with regard to these three topics?

Rev. Underwood’s response:
I don't think it's necessarily good, the reason why is because of racism. Cause in heaven it's not going to be like that. But, it's because of racism and generally the white society in America they don't want to be with us.

Question 7: In what way(s) if any, do you see yourself as an African American leader in the black community, playing a positive role in our public educational system?

Rev. Underwood’s response:
Yes I do, as the President of the Ministers Alliance of Champaign-Urbana vicinity during my tenure, I saw myself and the Ministers Alliance period, we worked in the system. We were going into the schools and a lot in the Champaign-Urbana schools, and we were working with parents and students.

Question 8: Many people may look up to religious leaders and professors as “leaders” and “intelligent” people; explain what does this mean to you, and what qualifies one or as a “great and intelligent” people?

Rev. Underwood’s response:
I don't know if I meet any of that, but I think, a lot of people who are intelligent a lot of people are great leaders, and who will be in both category? I think, I believe Mr. Mandela would both a great leader and intelligent, and I think of course Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., would be in both category; somebody locally here…Mmm? You don’t find too many people who will stand up for what you believe in, if it mean that they not going to get money, or lose their job, then I can’t stand that!

Question 9: How important is being in “decision-making positions” for real major changes to occur? Is being appointed or elected the only true way to achieve this such as serving on numerous boards such as school, community, state boards, etc…?

Rev. Underwood’s response:
You know, I'm going to say this out loud, and you know but, if you black in America, it very difficult, look at my eyes, it very difficult, to make real changes if you black!! I don't care, the President of the United States is black now, it's still very difficult for him if he tell you the truth to make decisions cause some white person going to try to keep a black person from ever making decisions! I SEEN IT, I SEEN IT, (Underwood said this very emotionally).
**Question 10:** How important is it to you, if at all, to seek public office to better shape minority students’ learning experiences?

**Rev. Underwood’s response:**
It would be better at the state level because of public policy; public policy would be better at this level in order to shape, because at the board of education level…it's not good enough because I've been there.

**My eleventh question:** In what way(s), if any, does politics play in the composition and mission of our Christian churches?

**Rev. Underwood’s response:**
Do you mean politics as it relates to the political politics of the church and not the politics as it relates to political? Internal politics; in our decision making, Yes, Yes we have voting, and we appoint. I think in our church we do have it. We have annual elections, and we have open elections and it’s done in a fair and open manner. And everybody open to elections except for the Pastor. I don’t know about other churches.

**Question 12:** Explain to me the difference between the words “Pastor” and “Minister”, and their role(s) if any, with civic engagements, community involvements, and political activities like perhaps the dos and don’ts!

**Rev. Underwood’s response:**
The pastor is just the pastor of the church. Yes, there's no different, the pastor is the leader of the church. The pastor is the elected leader of the church by the people.

**Question 13:** What does this quote mean to you when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said: “The final major area of untapped power for Negro is in the political arena. In the future we must become intensive political activists. We must be guided in this direction because we need political strength, more desperately than any other group in American society.”

(Book title: Martin Luther King Jr. I Have A Dream: Writing & Speeches that Changed the World, 1986, page 158)

**Rev. Underwood’s response:**
That is right; I think so too, we got to have political strength, thou we ain't going to make it! We need to stop messing around!! We need political strength, we just messing around!!!

The interview of Bishop Edward T. McGhee Sr., 2/3/15:

**Question 1:** As an African American religious leader or a professor, tell me, how do you fell about getting involved in local politics today like many black leaders did during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement Era?
Bishop McGhee’s response:
As an African American religious leader, I do not have any opposition against black leaders getting involved into politics today, but it’s not for me “Sha-ma…Glory Hallelujah”… (Bishop McGhee quickly speak-in-tongues)!!

Question 2: What do you think motivates religious leaders or professors in Champaign-Urbana area to seek public office?

Bishop McGhee’s response:
I don’t know any religious people in Champaign-Urbana that seek public office, but I know other religious people in the Chicago area that seek public office.

Question 3: To you, how has “activism”, if any, changed overtime, particularly since the 1960s movement according to our different and new generations in how we see things, and how we get our messages across?

Bishop McGhee’s response:
I think Activism has changed over time because of how technology used today, making it were we not marching for civil rights anymore.

Question 4: What is your view(s) on the “separation of church and state” in general, should it be combined or not? Church and state says: You can’t mix education and religion in public school settings.

Bishop McGhee’s response:
My views; the philosophy on church and state is that it has to be separated, church views are different, and they are toward spiritual order and not natural order “Sha-ma…Glory Hallelujah”… (Bishop McGhee quickly speak-in-tongues again).

Question 5: How do you feel about religious ideas or scholarly research work as part of Champaign-Urbana Public School District policies, shaping minority students’ educational experiences today? For example, like having prayer in the schools, or identifying your personal spiritual beliefs and principles to life; and/or critical scholarly thinking, problem solving skills based off research findings, facts, proof and evidences!

Bishop McGhee’s response:
I think they should have prayer in schools with God in public schools; this helps negative issues; person issues, I’m open to all prayer views and cultures.

Question 6: What does “same race” and “similar cultural values” mean to you, if any with religion, education, and political issues? For example, how important is interacting with your own race, religion, background and cultural affiliation with these three topics?

Bishop McGhee’s response:
We have to push beyond the same race and culture ways in order to embrace all race essentially because this ease tensions and problems.

**Question 7:** In what way(s) if any, do you see yourself as an African American leader in the black community, playing a positive role in our public educational system?

**Bishop McGhee’s response:**
As an African American leader, I see myself as a positive role model with children and I have a good vibes with the public school system.

**Question 8:** Many people may look up to religious leaders and professors as “leaders” and “intelligent” people; explain what does this mean to you, and what qualify one as “great and intelligent” people?

**Bishop McGhee’s response:**
My views of “intelligent” is, if you impact people’s lives to change, then this is how people view you as “intelligent” and a “leader” which I agree with because this is the “greatest thing” when you can impact people lives to make it better. People look up to religious leaders because many of them be lacking a father, mother etc…role models, and good leaders touch the spirit and natural side of people, then they become intelligent and great leaders to them.

**Question 9:** How important is being in “decision-making positions” for real major changes to occur? Is being appointed or elected the only true way to achieve this like serving on numerous boards such as school, community, state boards etc…?

**Bishop McGhee’s response:**
Being “elected” and “appointed” is good, but “volunteering” is better I think because it’s not a board, and boards don’t really show your views; that is more like politicians. “Volunteering” it comes from your heart, which this have the greatest impact on others to make real changes if you volunteer more than just being elected or appointed-Volunteerism is better to me!

**Question 10:** How important is it to you, if any to seek public office to better shape minority students’ learning experiences?

**Bishop McGhee’s response:**
I’m not interested in running for public office, but public office is not a bad thing, it’s a different platform, but you can reach out to all kind of resources with it, which is good.

**Question 11:** In what way(s), if any does the role of politics play or shape our churches?

**Bishop McGhee’s response:**
Yes we do have “politics” in our churches for order!

**Question 12:** Explain to me the difference between the words “Pastor” and “Minister”, and their role(s) if any, with civic engagements, community involvements, and political activities like perhaps the dos and don’ts!
Bishop McGhee’s response:
A pastor watches over the spiritual souls of people, which this makes best citizens in communities, which is to love all people. “Ministers” are extended arms and hands of a pastor, and to reach out to the community so they can bring them back to the church.

Question 13: What does this quote mean to you when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said: “The final major area of untapped power for Negro is in the political arena. In the future we must become intensive political activists. We must be guided in direction this direction because we need political strength, more desperately than any other group in American society.”
(Book title: Martin Luther King Jr. I Have A Dream: Writing & Speeches that Changed the World, 1986, page 158)

Bishop McGhee’s response:
That more black preachers need to be more involved into politics, but I’m not personally designed to be on the front-line of politics, but I’m designed to be more on the back of the line of politics. My mother was involved in the civil rights movement and I was on the bus with her many times in Alabama going through a lot of segregation to desegregation issues during those days.

The interview of Minister, Dr. Steve R. Shoemaker, 2/10/15:

Question 1: What do you think motivates religious leaders or professors in Champaign-Urbana area to seek public office?

Dr. Shoemaker’s response:
I think what motivates most religious leaders or professors are their sincere desires for the public good. I ran for public office myself at the time I was Director of the University YMCA and I was also teaching at the University.

Question 2: To you, how has “Activism” if any, changed overtime, particularly since the 1960s movement according to our different and new generations in how we see things, and how we get our messages across?

Dr. Shoemaker’s response:
I was in college in seminary in the 1960s, and I was very much an activist in those years. And in those days, we seem to be motivated I thought with positive motives; we wanted to improve the civil rights for blacks then.

Question 3: What is your view(s) on “separation of church and state” in general, should it be combined or not? Church and state says: You can’t mix education and religion in public school settings.

Dr. Shoemaker’s response:
I believe in separation, the separation should be maintained; we always tried to have it in this country, but not always successful. So I think we should try to maintain separation between church and state.

**Question 4:** How do you feel about religious ideas or scholarly research work as part of Champaign-Urbana Public School District policies, shaping minority students’ educational experiences today? For example, like having prayer in the schools, or identifying your personal spiritual beliefs and principles to life: and/or critical scholarly thinking, problems solving skills based off research findings, facts, proof and evidences!

**Dr. Shoemaker’s response:**
Well the McCollum court case was very important here locally. McCollum took the city of Champaign school board to court for forcing, teaching different religions in the schools.

**Question 5:** What does “same race” and “similar cultural values” mean to you, if any with religion, education, and political issues? For example, how important is interacting with your own race, religion, background and cultural affiliation with these three topics?

**Dr. Shoemaker’s response:**
Well as a white person, I know there are certain privileges and certain power that comes just from being white! Because it has been the majority race in this country for so long, and white people have had positions of power and authority and privileges whether they were there or not.

**Question 6:** In what way(s) if any, do you see yourself playing a positive role in our public educational system?

**Dr. Shoemaker’s response:**
Well I tried to take advantage of it myself obviously, I stayed in school along time, and went to college, then seminary and got a PhD after that, so I tried to take advantage of education, then I tried to get my own children a decent education when we lived in Raleigh, North Carolina, and I ran for the school board and lost but I least cared about it enough to try to offer myself to bring some new ideas.

**Question 7:** Many people may look up to religious leaders and professors as “leaders” and “intelligent” people; explain what does this mean to you, and what quality one as “great and intelligent” people?

**Dr. Shoemaker’s response:**
Well we have some recent examples, bad examples, they might not have been too intelligent for Professor Salaita to put on his twitter account some of his things he said about Israel and Jewish people, even though he was a professor he got into a lot of trouble. So I think you have to be wise in ways you make public statements.

**Question 8:** How important is being in “decision-making positions” for real major changes to occur? Is being appointed or elected the only true way to achieve this like serving on numerous boards such as school, community, state boards etc...?
Dr. Shoemaker’s response:
Well it can certainly help, I was appointed once to be chair of a committee of the city of Champaign when we lived in Champaign to try to come up with some programs that the city could use to help the homeless.

Question 9: How important is it to you, if any to seek public office to better shape minority students’ learning experiences?

Dr. Shoemaker’s response:
I was part of what I cared about when I ran for office, both for the community position and the Champaign County Board. Also earlier when I tried to get on the school board in Raleigh because the schools have not always been fair to minority students, African American or Hispanics, or immigrants; and certain policies can help make that better I think, better teachers education.

Question 10: In what way(s), if any does the role of politics play or shape our churches?

Dr. Shoemaker’s response:
Well when I was called to be a pastor at McKinley Presbyterian church back in 1981; I been in the south and one thing I got involved in with was the union movement in the textile industry there. And as a pastor in the south I was very outspoken and I chair a committee for the North Carolina Counselor Churches.

Question 11: Explain to me the difference between the words “Pastor” and “Minister”, and their role(s) if any, with civic engagements, community involvements, and political activities like perhaps the dos and don’ts!

Dr. Shoemaker’s response:
Well in some settings the word mean the same thing with the word clergy, and with the religious leader usually in a Protestant church, if it's a Catholic church it’s called a "Priest", and of course if it’s in a Jewish setting you be called a "Rabbi", but in a Protestant church pastor and ministers mean the same thing for many people.

Question 12: What does this quote mean to you when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said: “The final major area of untapped power for Negro is in the political arena. In the future we must become intensive political activists. We must be guided in this direction because we need political strength, more desperately than any other group in American society.”
(Book title: Martin Luther King Jr. I Have A Dream: Writing & Speeches that Changed the World, 1986, page 158)

Dr. Shoemaker’s response:
Well, I think he was very perceptive. I think that was quite accurate. I think that there have been some improvements since he said that, as a result of black folks getting more, and more involved in politics.

The interview of Professor George Gollin, 2/19/15:

Question 1: What do you think motivates religious leaders or professors in Champaign-Urbana area to seek public office?

Professor Gollin’s response: I don’t know of specific religious leaders who ran for professional office. My discussion with my colleagues almost none of them would run for office. Mms… make me think that we tend to share motivations for running for public office, which is how we identify lots of problems that are out there, and we feel that our skill set might help us resolve our problems.

Question 2: To you, how has “Activism” if any, changed overtime, particularly since the 1960s movement according to our different and new generations in how we see things, and how we get our message across?

Professor Gollin’s response: Well we had great leaders in the 60s, there’s much less of that today!

Question 3: What is your view(s) on the “separation of church and state” in general, should it be combined or not? Church and state says: You can’t mix education and religion in public school settings.

Professor Gollin’s response: I agree that the church must be kept absolutely out of state sanction settings, that includes situations in with the possibilities of coercion exists. We keep religion out of the public setting, that is in our constitution and it must be respected.

Question 4: How do you feel about religious ideas or scholarly research work as part of Champaign-Urbana Public School District policies, shaping minority students’ educational experiences today? For example, like having prayer in the schools, or identifying your personal spiritual beliefs and principles to life; and/or critical scholarly thinking, problem solving skills based off research findings, facts, proof and evidences!

Professor Gollin’s response: Now how do I feel about scholarly research as part of Champaign or Urbana Public school district policies? I think that we still learning a lot of from working educational psychology about how students learn and how to improve learning outcomes.

Question 5: What does “same race” and “similar cultural values” mean to you, if any with religion, education, and political issues? For example, how important is interacting with your own race, religion, background and cultural affiliation with these three topics?
Professor Gollin’s response:
I think that a lot of what determine almost entirely who it is that say my wife and I socialize with is who we gotten to know at work. Okay living in this community people we see frequently tend to be university types and it's just the accident of where we are so most people who are highly educated most of them are white.

**Question 6: In what way(s) if any, do you see yourself playing a positive role in our public educational system?**

Professor Gollin’s response:
So like I said before you know my sensibility are most strongly focus on just being a teacher and since I taught almost exclusively at the college level, what I find myself thinking about are good ways to help our students who are in the K through 12 system and they make a transition into post high school, post-secondary education.

**Question 7: Many people may look up to religious leaders and professors as “leaders” and “intelligent” people; explain what does this mean to you, and what qualify one as “great and intelligent” people?**

Professor Gollin’s response:
Okay so leaders and intelligent people are two separate attributes, but put them together and I think what you get is that a good leader who is intelligent is someone who is able to start and drive a conversation in a good direction.

**Question 8: How important is being in “decision-making positions” for real major changes to occur? Is being appointed or elected the only true way to achieve this like serving on numerous boards such as school, community, state boards etc…?**

Professor Gollin’s response:
It's a good way, but it's not the only way, but I think that if you not in a position as a decision maker, you got to be able to influence someone who is a decision maker.

**Question 9: How important is it to you if any, to seek public office to better shape minority students’ learning experiences?**

Professor Gollin’s response:
We all should do this, run for public office, but I think also that rather than viewing the desire to get into office to fix things being aimed at better shaping minority students learning experiences.

**Question 10: Explain to me, the difference between the words “tenured” and “non-tenured”, and their role(s) if any, with civic engagement, community involvement, and political activities like perhaps the dos and don’ts!**

Professor Gollin’s response:
Okay non-tenured to my mind mean you referring to people who are tenure track but not yet tenured that's what I'm thinking with Assistant professors, adjunct people who are just brought in to teach courses they don't have the same situations as an Assistant Professor does there's not expectations of tenure, they don't work as hard and they have minimum benefits.

**Question 11:** What does this quote mean to you when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said: “The final major area of untapped power for Negro is in the political arena. In the future we must become intensive political activities. We must be guided in this direction because we need political strength, more desperately than any other group in American society.”

(Book title: Martin Luther King Jr. I Have A Dream: Writing & Speeches that Changed the World, 1986, page 158)

**Professor Gollin’s response:**
This is a great quote, it's very sensible, we see for example, the republican party vigor attempts to deny citizens the rights to vote, they aimed mostly at minority communities not just African Americans but also Latinos and so there's nothing like getting out to vote, it change the way things are!

**The interview of Minister Reverend Deborah E. Owen, 3/1/15:**

**Question 1:** What do you think motives religious leaders or professors in Champaign-Urbana area to seek public office?

**Rev. Owen’s response:**
Well I think what mostly motivates religious leaders and professors is exactly what would motivate anyone else, is that they feel a call to help, transform, or change a situation to better the community.

**Question 2:** To you, how has “activism” if any, changed overtime, particularly since the 1960s movement according to our different and new generations in how we see things, and how we get our message across?

**Rev. Owen’s response and answer to question 2:**
Activism has been often times more groups oriented and so you have the Labor Movement and the initial idea of Labor Unions working for better work practices and then of course in the 60s the Civil Rights Movement and that became really spearheaded by religious leaders primarily, then and over the years to activism.

**Question 3:** What is your view(s) on the “separation of church and state” in general, should it be combined or not? Church and state says: You can’t mix education and religion in public school settings.

**Rev. Owen’s response:**
I think just in term of learning history you end up sort of mixing religions with education if you going to have a full broad base public education. So to understand history is to understand religious history and how that influenced civilizations.
Question 4: How do you feel about religious ideas or scholarly research work as part of Champaign-Urbana Public School District policies, shaping minority students’ educational experiences today? For example, like having prayer in the schools, or identifying your personal spiritual beliefs and principles to life; and/or critical scholarly thinking, problem solving skills based off research findings, facts, proof and evidences!

Rev. Owen’s response:
I certainly think in term of religious ideas that students in a public school system including Champaign-Urbana, should have the opportunity to have a prayer time if they so choose, but again not to be forced into anything, and so in term of shaping minority students educational experiences you know I would see that as completely open to both majority and minority.

Question 5: What does “same race” and “similar cultural values” mean to you, if any with religion, education, and political issues? For example, how important is interacting with your own race, religion, background and cultural affiliation with these three topics?

Rev. Owen’s response:
I say that is something that's already being sort of practiced within our communities and somewhat in a sad way I guess and a good way and a sad way both, is that you know this community it have had different ministerial groups based on race which is sort of amazing to me when I can to this community.

Question 6: In what way(s) if any, do you see yourself playing a positive role in our public educational system?

Rev. Owen’s response:
I think the first part of the positive things just being aware and knowledgeable about what's going on in the educational system. And to the extent it's possible to become engage in term of actively participating on a very basic level as a voter to make sure you vote in people to a school board or other elected officials who are going to take seriously the concerns that you have.

Question 7: Many people may look up to religious leaders and professors as “leaders” and “intelligent” people; explain what does this mean to you, and what qualify one as “great and intelligent” people?

Rev. Owen’s response:
Well, I would say religious leaders are not as high on the list as they once were. There's a lot of intelligence that comes from common sense, and just the ability to listen to a power that's greater than you, so for religious people; so say they wanted guidance by like what God has to say, so I think, obviously, I'm pretty bias on that point, so I think that does make more intelligent if they can acknowledge that there's someone greater than he or she is. And in term of greatness, I can't really speak to that.
Question 8: How important is being in “decision-making positions” for real major changes to occur? Is being appointed or elected the only true way to achieve this like serving on numerous boards such as school, community, state boards etc…?

Rev. Owen’s response:
I think of in term of just a quick answer Yes! I think it is important to be in those decision making positions…because the power and authority are already there. But nonetheless that doesn't mean that if you not appointed or an elected person, that you not going to effect change because I think that one person can do tremendous things if you do it with passion and with a sense of a call.

Question 9: How important is it to you if any, to seek public office to better shape minority students’ learning experiences?

Rev. Owen’s response:
Not in this point in my life; I think that you know the best person to seek public office in term of bettering it and better shaping minority students’ learning experiences is the person that really has that as a heart.

Question 10: In what way(s) if any, does the role of politics play or shape our churches?

Rev. Owen’s response:
Well my first answer would be that I hope that it's the reverse, the churches that are shaping the role of politics…Mmm instead of politics playing or shaping churches. But I think in some ways, politics has engaged churches because churches has said; is that's the type of politics you going to do we want to change the politics, so that's on one side of things. So yes there is voting that takes place here in our church.

Question 11: Explain to me the difference between the words “Pastor” and “Minister”, and their role(s) if any, with civic engagements, community involvements, and political activities like perhaps the dos and don’ts!

Rev. Owen’s response:
I think there again it depends on the denomination or the religious group and so again for Pastors and Ministers it would depend within Christianity on the group and the denomination in orthodoxy and in Catholicism it's just going to be a Priest you know the head of the local parishes or church congregation;…so either one of these groups probably would be fine to be engaged in the community, so there's no restrictions and in fact we do have people within the congregation who actively involved in the school districts. You know I'm within the Presbyterian denomination I'm thinking not here in this community but in Indianapolis there was a pastor of a large Presbyterian church, Rev., Dr. Headnut who eventually became the Mayor of Indianapolis and so very, very involved, you know there are others I'm thinking…a person in Kansas City where there it was true also with different denominations but very active Ministers, Pastors in that community and then ran for office and became the Mayor.
Question 12: What does this quote mean to you when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said: “The final major area of untapped power for Negro is in the political arena. In the future we must become intensive political activists. We must be guided in this direction because we need political strength, more desperately than any other group in American society.”
(Book title: Martin Luther King Jr. I Have A Dream: Writing & Speeches that Changed the World, 1986, page 158)

Rev. Owen’s response:
Well I think that the time that he wrote it was very true, that untouched powers was in the political arena because of there weren't so many African American involved in political life in term of elected office, and so the encouragement of any minority not just African Americans I mean he was speaking specifically to African American communities, but for any kind of way in which you if you are not engaged because you part of the minority that opportunity to step into political life is going to give you more authority opportunity to influence more people.

The interview of Professor Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, 3/9/15:

Question 1: As an African American religious leader or a professor, tell me, how do you feel about getting involved in local politics today like many black leaders did during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement Era?

Dr. Sundiata’s response:
Well I'm not sure about what you mean about getting involved in politics, if you mean running for electoral office that's one kind of things, but umm I'm not interested in running for electoral office and I don't know very many religious leaders who are, I think Dr. Underwood is the only religious leader that I am aware of that run for office since I have been here.

Question 2: (I accidentally forgot to ask Dr. Sundiata this question, which was): What do think motivates religious leaders or professors in Champaign-Urbana area to seek public office?

Dr. Sundiata did not get a chance to answer this question directly, but later I felt that he answered it in an indirect way, through other questions that were similar to this question 2, which was questions 1, 7, 10, and 11.

Question 3: To you, how has “activism” if any, changed overtime, particularly since the 1960s movement according to our different and new generations in how we see things, and how we get our messages across?

Dr. Sundiata’s response:
Yes well obviously today there's less effective; boarding on being completely ineffective. Two, there's much greater you know movement; people use media and they use the media that's available in their historical area. In the 60s people relied on newspapers, they relied on fliers, they relied on radio and television. Today you have social media and the internet, but at the heart of an effective political campaign is your ground game.
**Question:** What is your view(s) on the “separation of church and state” in general, should it be combined or not? Church and state says: You can’t mix education and religion in public school settings.

**Dr. Sundiata’s response:**
Well I support the civil rational church and state, you don't want a theocracy, you know a lot of the people in the United States particularly conservatives and then just some black people who are deeply religious but not necessarily conservative, think that when you took God out of the schools you know but American public education was always racist, and that had nothing to do whether you had prayer in schools or not.

**Question 5:** How do you feel about religious ideas or scholarly research work as part of Champaign-Urbana Public School District policies, shaping minority students’ educational experiences today? For example, like having prayer in the schools, or identifying your personal spiritual beliefs and principles to life; and/or critical scholarly thinking, problem solving skills based off research findings, facts, proof and evidences!

**Dr. Sundiata’s response:**
One is strictly ideology in imposing one's beliefs without any bases in necessarily evidence. The other is rooted in evidence, so the vary two are very different things, certainly I don't believe that there should be a state religion but I'm not opposed to children being exposed to religious ideas if by exposure to religious ideas would mean introduce to principles, right, in a comparative way.

**Question 6:** What does “same race” and “similar cultural values” mean to you, if any with religion, education, and political issues? For example, how important is interacting with your own race, religion, background and cultural affiliation with these three topics?

**Dr. Sundiata’s response:**
You know that race is a very complicated concept, and we know that it's simply a classificatory scheme. And its values is that it is a something that is creative for the purpose of differentiating again people in generally if we look at the development of that concept certainly from the 18th century on it was a mean for oppressing groups of people.

**Question 7:** In what way(s) if any, do you see yourself as an African American leader in the black community, playing a positive role in our public educational system?

**Dr. Sundiata’s response:**
First, I do see myself as an African American leader in this community. I think I'm a resource for leaders in this community. You know we… several years ago…we organized two sections in different summers were we worked with teachers in the public school system to try to teach them how to infuse African American history and culture into their curriculum.

**Question 8:** Many people may look up to religious leaders and professors as “leaders” and “intelligent” people; explain what does this mean to you, and what qualify one as “great and intelligent” people?
Dr. Sundiata’s response:
Well I do think that when people achieve certain benchmarks in a society that you should began in a way; you know I believe you should began in treating all people with respect if a person has achieved credentials and certain degrees you should began by respecting, you know by calling them reverends, calling them doctors, or whatever those terms are, and that you should start there. Now that doesn't necessarily say, I assume when you say intelligent you mean more intelligent than the average person?

Question 9: How important is being in “decision-making positions” for real major changes to occur? Is being appointed or elected the only true way to achieve this like serving on numerous boards such as school, community, state boards etc....?

Dr. Sundiata’s response:
I'm not; I recognized in order to get things done in the current system you have to have people in those positions; they have to be at the table. I know from lived experiences that if you have black people who are rooted in the community and they express the values, concerns and pursuit policies and the interest of the black community, that when you have those kind of people in the room you get different outcomes okay, than when you don't. But I also recognize that power and influence can flow outside of that realm.

Question 10: How important is it to you if any, to seek public office to better shape minority students’ learning experiences?

Dr. Sundiata’s response:
It's not importance to me, its importance if someone does it, you know I backed Jamar Brown campaign, I walked for him, I gave money to him to host a fundraiser for him, and it's important to me that we have black people on these boards and in these positions who will represent the interests of the community. It's not important that I do that, that's not my role. But I did run for office back in 1979, I ran for the school board!

Question 11: Explain to me, the difference between the words “tenured” and “non-tenured”, and their role(s) if any, with civic engagement, community involvement, and political activities like perhaps the dos and don’ts!

Dr. Sundiata’s response:
You know I would imagine that if we just talking in general there's no difference if the question is community, civic engagement, if what you mean if there are restrictions, then there's no restrictions you know in term of policy, but there restrictions in term of how much time you have. Often people, people, who are non-tenured positions they don't have the same expectations in term of research.

Question 12: What does this quote mean to you when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said: “The final major area of untapped power for Negro is in the political arena. In the future we must become intensive political activists. We must be guided in this direction because we need political strength, more desperately than any other group in American society.”
Dr. Sundiata’s response:
Okay ummm, you know that's given when King said that, I understand why he said it, it follows an argument before by a man name "Bear Ruston" and Bear Ruston argued that he in fact wrote an article and got it from Protest to Politics, and in his argument was that black people needed to; that the movement needed to shifted from protesting their oppressors, being engaged in boycotts, pickets, demonstrations toward joining the electoral process and registering people to vote and running for office.

The interview of Professor Violet Harris, 3/18/15:

**Question 1:** As an African religious leader or a professor, tell me, how do you feel about getting involved in local politics today like many black leaders did during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement Era?

**Dr. Harris’s response:**
I'm not certain what my role should be, if you asking am I going to go down to Ferguson for example and protest or get arrested as Professor Cornel West did last year, NO, uhhh I would prefer to work in different ways but that's not to say that I will not be compelled to go out and participant in civil disobedience that would result in my arrest.

**Question 2:** What do you think motivates religious leaders or professors in Champaign-Urbana area to seek public office?

**Dr. Harris’s response:**
There's only been a couple of Professors maybe one or two that I've known in my tenure here who sought political office. One was in the College of Business and he was a Dean, and I think he taught courses too, and he sought elections to the school board, and he was a member. The other person sought election to the school board and he won as well. So those are the only Professors who were African Americans of African Descent of whom I'm aware who have sought political office.

**Question 3:** To you, how has “activism” if any, changed overtime, particularly since the 1960s movement according to our different and new generations in how we see things, and how we get our message across?

**Dr. Harris’s response:**
In some ways it's seem a little bit more spontaneous than what it was in the past, so for example I'm thinking about an individual such as Fannie Lou Hamer who organized students for the nonviolent...SNCC and the ways in which she directly instructed people on social activism, she instructed Stokley Carmichael, or the ways in which the Highlander schools played a significant functions in training people how to be nonviolent.
**Question 4:** What is your view(s) on the “separation of church and state” in general, should it be combined or not? Church and state says: You can’t mix education and religion in public school settings.

**Dr. Harris’s response:**
I whole heartily support the separation of church and state without question. There are too many people who use religion for self-gratifying purposes and there too many people who have restricted views of religion that I would not want to be under their control. People who at-hear that women can't be in the pulpit imagine what they would do that kind of ignorance, the kind of ignorance that you see associated with people who say you can, too much education, they only; African Americans are the only people; their religious leaders are the only people I have ever heard say something so ignorance. I never heard people from other religion denominations or other races or ethnicity from their pulpits or whatever they are in the religious institutions saying something so stupid, so I whole heartily support the separation of church and state.

**Question 5:** How do you feel about religious ideas or scholarly research work as part of Champaign-Urbana Public School District policies, shaping minority students’ educational experiences today? For example, like having prayer in the schools, or identifying your personal spiritual beliefs and principles to life; and/or critical scholarly thinking, problem solving skills based off research findings, facts, proof and evidences!

**Dr. Harris’s response:**
I totally do not support it...because there are too many religious views and who is to decide which religious views and prominence, are we going to allow somebody who supports Sharia law to say that I'm sorry you girls over the age of 10 can't attend school....Yeah for example most of the work I do has to do with language acquisition which is fundamental to all knowledge, and so if you going to teach people how to read, write, and think critically, then you have to use the latest research and ideas drawn from practices in order to do that.

**Question 6:** What does “same race” and “similar cultural values” mean to you, if any with religion, education, and political issues? For example, how important is interacting with your own race, religion, background and cultural affiliation with these three topics?

**Dr. Harris’s response:**
Not necessarily; I think it depend on the individuals,...People who look like you could be just as impressive as people who don't look like you, and can be just as narrow minded as people who don't look like you. So at some point yeah you may have had shared experiences and under gone shared cultural processes than your individuals and so you can't be expected to think alike, act alike, or believe or associate alike. You should allow for people to be with whom they wish to be with, you should allow for people to have diverse perspectives.

**Question 7:** In what way(s) if any, do you see yourself as an African American leader in the black community, playing a positive role in our public educational system?

**Dr. Harris’s response:**
I don’t see myself as an African American leader playing a role in public education system. I have not solemnly an election to the school board, I don’t attempt to go to any of the planning committees or anything of that sort.

**Question 8:** Many people may look up to religious leaders and professors as “leaders” and “intelligent” people; explain what does this mean to you, and what qualify one as “great and intelligent” people?

**Dr. Harris’s response:**
Well I think we need a new paradigm, just because one has a leadership role by virtue of their education or their position doesn’t necessarily mean that they should be the individual that you follow. What you want to look for I think in my opinion is who is the person that going to engage in processes and work with people so they can lead themselves, and for me.

**Question 9:** How important is being in “decision-making positions” for real major changes to occur? Is being appointed or elected the only true way to achieve this like serving on numerous boards such as school, community, state boards etc. ....?

**Dr. Harris’s response:**
I don’t think it important to be elected or appointed of an office as people think, I mean at what happened to all the cities that have elected black Mayors, look at Newark, look at Detroit unless you have control of the institutions that help to under-grid those institutions, its rather difficult unless you control. I hate to say this but the means of production unless you controlling the vast amount of capital, the kind of changes you going to provide are not that significant in some ways as elected or appointed officials.

**Question 10:** How important is it to you if any, to seek public office to better shape minority students’ learning experiences?

**Dr. Harris’s response:**
It’s not important to me at all; it’s not for me; it may be for someone else and I will support them in their efforts but it’s not something I inspire to, I don’t!!

**Question 11:** Explain to me, the difference between the words “tenured” and “non-tenured”, and their role(s) if any, with civic engagement, community involvement, and political activities like perhaps the dos and don’ts!

**Dr. Harris’s response:**
One of the realities as a faculty member who is African American; there are responsibilities pressed upon you that your colleagues who are not African Americans or to some extent Latino or Asian or Native Americans have to face. You have to work with people, students who aren’t your own students; people in the community want you to do this or that and everything, they want you to provide them this and to help with that, and to write this, and to write that for them to tutor their kids; to do all this sort of stuff, and in addition in all the things that you have to do to become tenure. So there are burden of responsibilities that is pressed upon you that take your
time no matter whether you are tenured or non-tenured and you have decision to make. Am I going to allocate some of my time to those efforts? There some people who do absolutely nothing for the community, absolutely nothing and they appear to be fine with that stance. And then there are others who engage a lot, but...with various community groups and with individuals.

**Question 12:** What does this quote mean to you when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said: “The final major area of untapped power for Negro is in the political arena. In the future we must become intensive political activists. We must be guided in this direction because we need political strength, more desperately than any other group in American society.”

(Book title: Martin Luther King Jr. I Have A Dream: Writing & Speeches that Changed the World, 1986, page 158)

**Dr. Harris’s response:**
Okay I think that Dr. King in reference to this quote about the untapped power for the Negroes political area was that he was looking at it from the perspective of particular historic period in the 1960s when voters rights were utterly restricted, the irony of that is that we in an era where people are tempting to take us back to that time period when we were not allowed to vote, and so yes of course I thoroughly agree with that statement that we need to retain our political rights in conjunction with other rights because it's so ironic that the very same conditions have emerged in the 21st century that people fought against in the 1960s, 50s, 40s etc...in term of voting rights.....Yes he was talking about the current times and the future because as we see so obviously for us it's not a guaranteed right to vote, for other people it may be guaranteed, but for us it's not a guaranteed right!

The interview of Rev., Dr. Eugene Barnes, 3/29/15:

**Question 1:** As an African American religious leader or a professor tell me, how do you feel about getting involved in local politics today like many black leaders did during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement Era?

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response:**
I was involved in the NAACP back in 1964 and this was in the church where the NAACP had its greatest growth, so we were being trained at that time in term of (NVDA) Non-Violent Direct Action and of course we were waiting at that time when we got a call from Dr. King and I was in north Chicago, Illinois and we were in our training, we were waiting to get involved in the Civil Rights Movement back at that time, but then of course April 4th 1968 short changed us.

**Question 2:** What do you think motivates religious leaders or professors in Champaign-Urbana area to seek public office?

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response:**
As religious leaders we have a responsibility to our neighbor and our neighbor is anyone that is in the near to us, who has a need. It is hard for the man who does not have bread or the individual who does not have homes to hear the gospel of the Kingdom with those situations.
**Question 3:** To you, how has “activism”, if any, changed overtime, particularly since the 1960s movement according to our different and new generations in how we see things, and how we get our messages across?

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response:**
You recall the Black Panther at one time they were very active organization and until they became reactionary, and when they became reactionary, then they disappeared from the scene. Dr. King came with an alternative program, he was addressing some of the socioeconomic problems and at the time what he was doing was so unique especially in term of nonviolence direct actions and taking action.

**Question 4:** What is your view(s) on the “separation of church and state” in general, should it be combined or not? Church and state says: You can’t mix education and religion in public school setting.

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response and answer to question 4:**
Both the church; when we look at the Bible and we see, we talk about government, the component of government in the Bible mean power, and when it comes to power there’s a commoner that both church and state has which is of course Jesus Christ whether not the state wants to rely on it, that’s where the power comes from, all authority comes God and then government becomes the deputy of it.

**Question 5:** How do you feel about religious ideas or scholarly research work as part of Champaign-Urbana Public School District policies, shaping minority students’ educational experiences today? For example, like having prayer in the schools, or identifying your personal spiritual beliefs and principles to life; and/or critical scholarly thinking, problem solving skills based off research findings, facts, proof and evidences!

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response:**
When we talk about religion we have to realize that religion is man way of having God accept him. The point of reference that we need to understand is that there’s nothing from man to do it that has not already been done by God through Jesus Christ. But the Apostle Paul comments in the book of Roman to study to show though self-approve, a work person who needed not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth. Paul himself was a doctor of law; education is intricate part of any type of education.

**Question 6:** What does “same race” and “similar cultural values” mean to you, if any with religion, education, and political issues? For example, how important is interacting with your own race, religion, background and cultural affiliation with these three topics?

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response:**
Again let’s go back to the concept which are earlier explained that there is not us and them, there is no church and the world; there is this world concept and within the world is the church. The responsibility of the church is to call the world to fellowship with Jesus Christ, so as a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ my responsibility is to call all man into fellowship with Jesus Christ with that there is no cultural barriers.
**Question 7:** In what way(s) if any, do you see yourself as an African American leader in the black community, playing a positive role in our public educational system?

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response:**
On a reasonable level and on a national level, I tend to be, I am a community organizer and as an organizer I'm not one or the group, I'm responsible for we are not interested in putting an band aid on the bullet wound, we are looking at systemic change.

**Question 8:** Many people may look up to religious leaders and professors as “leaders” and “intelligent” people; explain what does this mean to you, and what qualify one as “great and intelligent” people?

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response:**
We have so many celebrities today, including some of our religious leaders we look at those who have the mega churches and because of the wealth and the fame and notoriety that they have then people are instantly draw to them because of that's what they want. But have we ever examines the character which would control the conduct, the conduct, character before conduct. I think that when someone stands up and call himself a leader we should test them in term of their character and asks what do we want in a leader?

**Question 9:** How important is being in “decision-making positions” for real major changes to occur? Is being appointed or elected the only true way to achieve this like serving on numerous boards such as school, community, state boards etc...?

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response:**
In 2012, I got this revelation in term of looking and dealing with youth all my life; we need to involve are youth in decision making process, but first of all we have to be able to share with them some of the dynamics of society that they are being brought up in.

**Question 10:** How important is it to you, if any to seek public office to better shape minority students’ learning experiences?

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response and answer to question 10:**
If we are able to hold public office we won't be able to make proclamation of that but the value system that we carry with us would be inherit, should be inherit in whatever we do and whoever we effect…No I'm not interested into politics; personally myself it would limit my ability to be able to speak freely concerning issues that true to my heart.

**Question 11:** In what way(s), if any does the role of politics play or shape our churches?

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response:**
The politics affects us all; politics early on was simply a definition with playing on words. The church has a responsibility to the world. Devoid of politics because we already have a head in which we have given commands. Politics is based more less on ethics of a right and a wrong, in,
in, in religious world, if you will, there's no ethics, there's only God's commandments… So yes it's okay to vote in the church!

**Question 12:** Explain to me the difference between the words “Pastor” and “Minister”, and their role(s) if any, with civic engagements, community involvements, and political activities like perhaps the dos and don'ts!

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response:**
Often times the words pastors and ministers are interchange, but pastor would designate a local head of a congregation. And a minister would be a deputy under the pastor, although a minister can be a pastor at the same time, but when you start looking at order then the pastor would be the would be the head, and then the ministers would be the deputies of the pastors.

**Question 13:** What does this quote mean to you when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said: “The final major area of untapped power for Negro is in the political arena. In the future we must become intensive political activists. We must be guided in this direction because we need political strength, more desperately than any other group in American society.”
(Book title: Martin Luther King Jr. I Have A Dream: Writing & Speeches that Changed the World, 1986, page 158)

**Rev., Dr. Barnes’ response:**
In…you know when I see this, I'm thinking about and looking at Dr. King and have studied him and watched how he done things; Dr. King was attempting to shape a future society it called the Kingdom of God and he in this; he was saying we must become intensive political activist. So Dr. King was looking at education, educating people not so much in a political sense but making us aware of what was wrong in society in how it can be corrected.

**The interview of Professor James D. Anderson, 4/8/15:**

**Question 1:** As an African American religious leader or a professor tell me, how do you feel about getting involved in local politics today like many black leaders did during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement Era?

**Dr. Anderson’s response:**
Well I think if I would get involved in politics I would get involved as a citizen. I don't think I would get involved as a professor in part because it's almost impossible to separate being a professor from the university and the position the university take is that it doesn't support one side or the other. There have been numerous efforts by politicians to get the university to way in to say that they support them, and many universities can't really do that as a campus university.

**Question 2:** What do you think motivates religious leaders or professors in Champaign-Urbana area to seek public office?

**Dr. Anderson’s response:**
I don't know what motivates them and I don't see or nothing…I don't see that many religious leaders seeking public office in the Champaign-Urbana area. I think part of the problem is that if
you seek public office you almost have to let go of your secular norms and beliefs and affiliations because, we live in a country with an Amendment you know Constitutional rights that underscore the separation between church and state.

**Question 3:** To you, how has “activism” if any, changed over time, particularly since the 1960s movement according to our different and new generations in how we see things, and how we get our message across?

**Dr. Anderson’s response:**
Well it changed; activism has changed drastically over the times I think. In the 60s generation you had the young people and old people alike, they were strongly committed to change, they have a good idea what they wanted to change you know their agenda was very clear with the civil rights or the voting rights and so, education, and they were committed to it, and what you saw in time was a gradual breakdown of this type of activism in part because of the structural change that took place, people forgets that the 60s was an era of the greatest prosperity in American history.

**Question 4:** What is your view(s) on the “separation of church and state” in general, should it be combined or not? Church and state says: You can’t mix education and religion in public school settings.

**Dr. Anderson’s response:**
Yeah our Constitution is very clear on separation of church and state, and even though it doesn't use those exact words, what it says is that government can no way foster any preference for religion or such as, and that people should be free to worship according to their will, and so if you have public education, now that favoring this point of view or that point of view and that's always the case somebody wants public education to teach their religious values.

**Question 5:** How do you feel about religious ideas or scholarly research work as part of Champaign-Urbana Public School District policies, shaping minority students’ educational experiences today? For example, like having prayer in the schools, or identifying your personal spiritual beliefs and principles to life; and/or critical scholarly thinking, problem solving skills based off research findings, facts, proof and evidences!

**Dr. Anderson’s response:**
Well I think for any school system there are re-searchable questions as to what works in education and what can improve the quality of learning, what can improve the quality of leadership, what makes schools better and I really think when those decisions are informed right by solid research, we can actually make better decisions. So research does have a role I don't it, doesn't it not the plan of sin that solve every problem but it is trying to decide whether small classes work better than large classes, or whether you know what's the impact of bilingual classes in term of helping children to learn who native language which is Spanish as opposed to English, if you want to know whether a student who takes AP classes do better on Standardized Test than students who do not, I mean there are all kind of questions that are re-searchable questions in where you can have a control groups and study these questions.
**Question 6:** What does “same race” and “similar cultural values” mean to you, if any, with religion, education, and political issues? For example, how important is interacting with your own race, religion, background and cultural affiliation with these three topics?

**Dr. Anderson’s response:**
Well cultural values mean something to me that mean you know, race doesn't mean a whole lot because what people really mean by that is just the color of your skin, that's all the knowledge people have, we people encounter around some quote unquote sense of race all they looking at is the color of your skin, they not looking beneath that. They not really attaching any meaning to that they simple looking at that and then they attach their own perception on stereotypes of that who you are. So that really doesn't help in the education of people.

**Question 7:** In what way(s) if any, do you see yourself as an African American leader in the black community, playing a positive role in our public educational system?

**Dr. Anderson’s response:**
I never seen myself as a leader you know, I always seen myself, you know; I mean I was right there in the mist of the Civil Rights Movement and then where I grew up in my county in Alabama, I mean there were Selma not too far away, Montgomery and the, and the Civil Rights Movement, the Montgomery Bus boycott; Birmingham was the north of me, and the movement was all around me and so I really did recognized the leaders in that movement. It was King and Chillingworth, and Abernathy, even in Tuscaloosa where I went to college, T. Y. Rogers who was a great leader of the Tuscaloosa Action Committee and took me on my first marches, Civil Rights marches, but I saw myself as someone who would supported someone; I was a follower, and I think people often overlook the value of that.

**Question 8:** Many people may look up to religious leaders and professors as “leaders” and “intelligent” people; explain what does this mean to you, and what qualify one as “great and intelligent” people?

**Dr. Anderson’s response:**
Well I think what I know from my own experiences, from my own upbringing, is that people often confuse about what is intelligent, and they see it almost as magical so someone might look at me now and say, oh he is intelligent, but they had not seen me, you know, when I was in Elementary school or High school or growing up, they wouldn't had said the same thing, and one thing I always remembered, in my household, you know, it was my mother, me and my brothers four of us and my grandmother, that's how I grew up, and my grandmother was a daughter of a slave you know, her father was born in slavery. She never learned to read or write and she would actually sign with an X, but she was, she was so intelligent, and there's not many people would look at her and say she was intelligent because they misunderstand, they confuse it with letters, they confuse it with degrees, but her natural intellect was absolutely superb in term of how she could figure thing out including figuring us out as well, and what she impart in us about life.

**Question 9:** How important is being in “decision-making positions” for real major changes to occur? Is being appointed or elected the only true way to achieve this like serving on numerous boards such as school, community, state boards etc....?
Dr. Anderson’s response:
I always said; …always said that if you are at the table and you an active participant, then you have power when the decision are made, and you will be far better off than not being there at the table and having the decision made for you. So particularly in the field of education like with equality, people making decisions even as we speak, they cutting education funding meaning, they making decisions on curriculum whether it's on common core, or no child left behind, but we are not at the table when these decisions are made! But those decisions are made on behalf of African American children and other children of color, and there are very few people of color who are at the table when decisions are made.

**Question 10:** How important is it to you if any, to seek public office to better shape minority students’ learning experiences?

Dr. Anderson’s response:
No, I never been interested in running for public office, I never been interested in public office and no, I really always; even before I knew I was interested in teaching, and teaching, you know, young people, first I was going to be a high school teacher and when that didn't work out, you know, I came back to become, you know, a teacher at the college university level, but that's always been, you know, my goals, my ambitions. It’s never occur to me to be in politics-yeah!

**Question 11:** Explain to me, the difference between the words “tenured” and “non-tenured”, and their role(s) if any, with civic engagement, community involvement, and political activities like perhaps the dos and don’ts!

Dr. Anderson’s response:
I don't think it's a difference with who can run for office and who can’t; I think what happens is, with tenure, indefinitely tenure you have a job for life, and what I will say; and you talking about at the university level right? So if an Assistant Professor coming in I will say to them, look you may get a lot of requests, lots of demands to do services inside the university and outside the university, but tenure probationary period it's really a five years period because in the sixth year, you already going up and you going up on the work you have done over five years, so what I want to get across to them is that, you need to be selfish for five years, you need to be selfish, cut down on; it is not that they ask you to do things that you love to do, and it may be some group in the community, or maybe a group of parents of someone asks you, and there's nothing in your life that you want to do more than that, but what right is to be selfish because here what I say to them, I want you to be selfish for five years, so you can be unselfish for the next 35. And if you get tenure and you have a job and it's secure and then you can decide to do public engagement, your service, your community involvement, but not at the expense of you not getting tenure and then you're not around to help anybody.

**Question 12:** What does this quote mean to you when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said: “The final major area of untapped power for Negro is in the political arena. In the future we
must become intensive political activists. We must be guided in this direction because we need political strength, more desperately than any other group in American society."

(Book title: Martin Luther King Jr. I Have A Dream: Writing & Speeches that Changed the World, 1986, page 158)

**Dr. Anderson’s response:**

He was exactly right, his ancestors, and I don't think he would had known this, and right where he operated and this is what I was talking in my Brown speech, right there in Montgomery, Alabama with the constitution convention of 1868, you know his ancestors came from those counties around Montgomery the black belt counties into that constitution convention, and there were delegates to shape the constitution. That constitution not even provides for public education for children they put it in there. They wanted, that is the white delegates wanted to put in their constitution at that time a provision mandated segregating schooling, and they blocked it, it wasn't in there. Now when this rare book came out, Where Do We Go from Here? Dr. King even had a better understanding of us than we had of ourselves, you know, cause he talked about the Black Power Movement in that book, and for a while, and if we could had understood, what he understood, then we would had been more wiser, and put things in much better use, and so…. I read that now after a while and you can go back in time to his ancestors, and they would say, you right, this is how we made a difference, this is how we got resources because we were delegates, we were lawmakers, we were at the table when the decisions were made, and we protected our constituency, and once we got disenfranchised, and once we were moved out and we were at the tender mercy of people who really did not look out for our concerns, and what King is saying, we don't ever want to be in that position again were we have to depend on others to look out for our concerns.