A STUDY OF BLACK WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES RELATED TO RACISM

AND SEXISM IN SCHOOL

by

HOLLY MARIE BARTLETT WARD

(Under the Direction of Penelope A. Oldfather)

ABSTRACT

Through a theoretical lens of Black Feminist Epistemology, this bounded qualitative interview study examines the question, "How do Black women across three generations view racism and sexism in the context of their educational experiences?" Their narratives illustrate that integration of schools was not a panacea for all African Americans and that struggles for educational opportunities persist.

Primary data are derived from semi-structured and open-ended interviews conducted in a conversational manner, consistent with principles of feminist interviewing. Additional data include multiple interviews, field notes, photographs, and additional relevant artifacts.

Nine women shared stories of educational experiences gained through school, work, family, community, church, and everyday occurrences. The analysis makes visible their experiences of racism and sexism. Findings indicate that racism was present for all participants, but they did not feel that racism prevented them from having successful lives. Sexism was also present, but was overshadowed by participants' experiences of racism. Participants' negative experiences were valued for contributing to their growth and identities. The core category of the findings was "Strong Women." The term, "strong women," denotes independent, determined, supportive, and successful women. The women described confidence, sisterhood, learning through struggle, and their faith in God as important to their survival as Black women. Participants received support in their lives through the communities of strong women that deeply valued education. They perceived that integration had both positive and negative influence on their lives and resulted in loss of community, described teacher expectations for achievement of Black students and a general decline in the quality of education across the three generations of participants.

INDEX WORDS: Racism, Sexism, Black Women's Education, Black Feminist Epistemology, Schooling, Cross-Race Research, Cross-Generational

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Jon Ward, who believed in me, encouraged me, and supported me throughout every phase of this endeavor. Thank you for your love and for being a wonderful husband.

In Memory

This dissertation is in loving memory of Ella Esther Day (Granny). 1907-1999.

She taught me the value life experiences.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> If anyone should ask a Negro woman in America what has been her greatest achievement, her honest answer would be, "I survived!" (Murray, 1995, p. 186)

This qualitative feminist interview study examines Black women's experiences of racism and sexism in school. Oral history is used to recapture the stories of the past. Participants include three sets of African American women across three generations (i.e., daughter or niece, mother or aunt, grandmother or great aunt) in the same family. The research employs a theoretical framework of Black Feminist Epistemology.

Statement of the Problem

There are few studies of Black women and seldom have researchers addressed how gender influences their educational experiences (O'Connor, 2001). There is limited research focusing on Black girls and their academic risk (Irvine, 1986; Grant, 1984; Fordham, 1993), but even fewer studies showing how Black girls successfully negotiate their experiences with educational risk (O'Connor, 2001). This study fills a void regarding how Black women experience school within families across three generations. To understand the historical implications of the women's experiences, the following brief introduction of African American educational history is included with subsequent information in the following chapters.

Educational History

From the end of Reconstruction until the late 1960s, Black Southerners were a part of a social system that denied them citizenship, the right to vote, and voluntary control of their labor power. Although slavery was outlawed, Black Southerners remained an oppressed people. Black education developed within this context of political and economic oppression. Hence, although Black Southerners were formally free following Reconstruction when American education was developed, most of them had limited access and inadequate opportunities for education.

A central theme in the history of the education of Black Americans was the persistent struggle to create a system of formal education (Anderson, 1988; Banks, 1995; Spring, 1997). Initially, ex-slaves attempted to create an educational system that would support and extend their emancipation, but their children were pushed into a system of industrial education that presupposed Black political and economic subordination. This conception of education and social order, which was supported by Northern industrial philanthropists, some Black educators, and most Southern school officials, conflicted with the aspirations of ex-slaves and their descendents, resulting in a bitter national debate over the purposes of Black education at the turn of the 20th century (Anderson, 1988; Spring, 1997).

Because Blacks lacked economic and political power, White elites were able to control the structure and content of Black elementary, secondary, normal, and college education during the first third of the twentieth century (Anderson, 1988). Nonetheless, Blacks persisted in their struggle to develop an educational system that fit their own needs and desires. However, the focus for education was primarily on Black men

(Anderson, 1988). Black women were instrumental in working for education, but continued to have limited educational access (Cooper, 1988; Terrell, 1995). Black women's inequities, brought on by multiple oppressions of racism and sexism, and classism contributed to years of educational restrictions, which continue to affect their lives and; it is a constant challenge to create equality (Davidman & Davidman, 2001; Joseph, 1995).

Since the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) Supreme Court decision, there have been prominent legal victories, notable setbacks, and persistent negative trends related to school desegregation and the equalization of school funding (Banks, 2003). There are still significant problems concerning equality of education. Dramatic inequality of educational opportunity still prevails in many schools and is accepted as the natural order of things by a majority in the American population (Davidman & Davidman ,2001).

The assumptions, attitudes, stereotypes, and customs deeply embedded in our educational institutions created an environment that adversely affected the success of many Black women. However, as the lead quotation suggested, Black women have "survived" and have made a difference in their communities and throughout the world (Murray, 1995). The respect I have for their lives led me to the focus of this research. As I prepared to conduct this study I reflected upon my own educational experiences and how they influenced my beliefs, values and assumptions.

Subjectivity Statement

Through review of educational research and experiences in my own life, I recognized that Black women were a population that often went unnoticed and unsupported in their academic endeavors. However, I observed a strong sense of

independence and self-reliance that allowed individual Black women to succeed, which influenced my interest in the research.

The majority of my doctoral coursework was dedicated to the investigation of equity in schools and the exploration of race and gender in the educational environment. My studies allowed me to further explore questions I had about the injustices of our society. I found evidence that schools were often places filled with discrimination related to race, class and gender that adversely affected the lives of many individuals.

My own early experiences in school were crucial to the development of my awareness of issues related to race, class, and gender. One experience that profoundly affected my thinking was in middle school, where I first remember encountering racism. A new White student walked into my homeroom and I introduced myself. As we began talking, she shared that she had recently moved from Atlanta, Georgia. I was curious as to why she had moved to Gainesville, Georgia. Her response was unexpected and one that has stayed with me throughout my life. She said, "We had to get out, they were moving in and destroying the property value."

Naively I asked, "Who do you mean is moving in?" She replied, "You know, the Blacks, we had to get out before they took over." I stood there in shock. As a 12-year-old I had no idea of what to say to her. I did not know how to discuss this with my parents or how to respond. I tucked it in the back of my mind and struggled with how to understand what she said and what it meant, not only to me, but also to our society.

Why would a family to be so concerned about Black people that they would relocate to Gainesville, Georgia? I neither understood how my new classmate could feel that way nor realized how it would affect my life. I began to recognize that my school

population was predominantly White. There were only three or four Black students in my grade, none of whom I ever had classes with. There was only one Black teacher, and he taught remedial math classes.

I struggled to understand why I had not been aware of racial issues earlier. I began to examine my environment. I questioned things I had previously accepted. I began to be critical of the culture in which I lived. The world that protected me as a child did not seem to be fair to everyone, particularly Black Americans. I began to question gender and cultural inequities and to explore how cultural inequities affected success in schools. I began to look at life with a higher expectation for equality. These early school experiences related to racism and many additional cultural experiences were the impetus for my current interest about racism and sexism in school. They have influenced who I am today.

Who I Am Today

I am a woman, White, American, and Southern. I am a daughter, sister, mother, and wife. I am student and a teacher. I am a Christian and a liberal Democrat. I am a lover of books, gardening and jogging. I enjoy traveling, but also being alone. I am middle class. However, I am much more than these labels identify.

My cultural identity is often one of contrasts. I am usually in the majority by race, but in the minority by thinking. I am a Southerner, but I have lived in the North and loved it. I can make biscuits from scratch, but I do not drink sweet tea. I love hot weather, but I wish we had more snow. I often feel as an outsider in my own culture.

I grew up Southern Baptist with conservative Bible teaching. I was involved throughout college with the Baptist Student Union and went on several mission trips to

places including Alaska and New York City. I lived in Budapest, Hungary, for one year while teaching English for the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. It was there that I came to the realization that Christians in the United States did not have all of the answers.

I went to Hungary seeing the world with a limited perspective and returned home seeing the world through different ideas. I saw that God had made the entire world, but the United States was no longer the center for me. Many of the Christians in Hungary had a stronger and more meaningful faith than I had ever seen before. Their faith had recently withstood great struggles that Americans did not understand.

Following this experience I began to question my own ideas about God. However, through my inquiry I realized that God was big enough for my question. Following my varied experiences, I no longer could accept many of the conservative views of my Baptist upbringing. After marrying, I joined a Methodist church with my husband.

The Methodist church has strong Biblical teachings, but it also embraces more diverse ideas. Because my church is in a University town there are many different ideas represented, but among many of my friends and acquaintances I am in the minority in how I think. My Baptist culture is part of my thinking, I also embrace my new Methodist principles.

I believe in Christ as my Savior, I pray for others, but I also have come to a place where I greatly respect other religions and faiths. (Growing up, I was taught evangelical ideas to convert others to my way of thinking.) My faith is an important part of my daily

life, and it sustains me throughout my life experiences. I have a strong personal relationship with God: It is a part of my daily life.

My Christian faith gave me insight about how the participants in my study experienced their lives and how they relied on God through their struggles. My faith made it more comfortable for the women in the study to share their faith. Moreover, my faith gave them the opportunity to have someone accept and understand their faith as legitimate.

Politics are where I find myself in the minority in Georgia. I am a liberal Democrat: Currently in Georgia this is seen by many as an act of heresy. There are some liberals at the University, but their voices are not as strong as the conservative Republicans' in the community.

My parents are also Democrats, and they taught their children that the ideas of Democrats agreed with our Christian principles. One of my brothers is very liberal and is a professor of Philosophy. Another brother is a Navy pilot and is more conservative. Our parents felt that being a Democrat meant you cared for people and had the interest of the person foremost. The ethic of hard work and the value of education were taught to us throughout our lives.

To me being a liberal Democrat means being open-minded, tolerant, and supporting people in need. I have friends that have very different views. I often feel lonely in my political ideology and feel that I do not belong. I can usually find someone who has similar ideas about politics if I look hard enough. However, even though I do not always fit into the majority, I have privileges because I am a White, female Christian living in the South. I can be different and still be accepted, unlike others who are different

and excluded. This is a very important realization, as I understand who I am and how my privileges affect my life and research. I have the privilege of conducting this study and identifying racism and sexism as a problem without being criticized or attacked for "playing the race card." Each of these "identities" combines to represent who I am.

As I have studied a system that supported and rewarded different levels of inequality, I often reflected upon my first memory of an encounter with racism. As a student, and later as an educator, that experience affected my questions about racism and sexism in schools. What are the purposes of schools? Did schools meet the needs of all children? Were schools organized so that all children could be successful and learn at the highest level? What was my role as an educator in creating social justice? How did race and gender affect students' lives? There was no way all of these questions could be answered in one study; therefore, my life work as a researcher will continue to focus on these questions. The study can contribute to a more meaningful understanding of African American females school experiences.

The Research Focus and Purpose

This dissertation research examines the experiences of Black women across three generations in order to understand the effects of racism and sexism on their educational experiences. The in-depth examination of Black women's experiences provides an avenue for establishing the meanings of racism and sexism while creating a foundation for their experiences to be valued.

A unique aspect of the study was the generational component in which experiences over three generations of Black women were explored. The combined focus on multiple oppressions across three generations provided a unique opportunity to better

understand the complexities of Black women's experiences within a historical framework. The study does not attend to class because I wanted to focus on the argument that African American women confront both a woman question and a race problem. Historically there have been distinctive multiple consciousnesses that transcend the boundaries of class where women organized across class lines (Gilkes, 2001). In this study I addressed issues of race and gender to focus on issues specific to Black women.

Issues of Conducting Cross-Race Research

It is essential that as a White woman conducting research on Black women, I take into consideration the issues of conducting cross-race research. The following are questions I encountered along with the messiness of how I grappled with these issues.

From the initial planning of this study, I struggled to find an appropriate role. Do White women have the right to research the lives of Black women? Can a White female researcher studying the experiences of women of color be successful in understanding Black women? Will Black women share their stories with a White woman? I struggled with these questions as I conducted reflective, self-critical analysis of my White racial identity.

Cross-Race Research

There was a long history of exclusion and marginalization of people of color in the United States. You do not have to look far to find examples—in history books, in the representation of American heroes, in government leadership, and in stereotypes that continue to exist. Historically, White scholars have often done more damage than good; people of color have been treated as objects rather than as subjects of historical experiences (Asante, 1993).

The problem of White researchers studying Black issues has not been simply a result of race differences. White researchers may be counterproductive in Black communities not because they were White but because they were poorly trained in research methods (Brazziel, 1973). Researchers were often lacking in their ability to perceive racism and its relationship to the American scene, thus being less than successful constructing an accurate set of interpretations from their research (Brazziel, 1973).

White women tend to generalize their own experiences to all women while excluding the experiences of women of color (hooks, 1984; Lorde, 1984; Mohanty, 1991). Black participants in research often feel a sense of resentment toward White researchers conducting research (Parham, 1993). A mistrust of White women as researchers developed when Black women's unique experiences were ignored (Reid, 1984).

According to Edwards (1990), race does not simply exist as an object of study or a variable in analysis, it enters into the research process itself—into the selection of a problem, the methodology, the conduct of the research, the assumptions behind it, who was included in the study, whose perspective was highlighted—and importantly influences on the relationship with those we were researching. The problems outlined above brought to the forefront issues of a long history of research conducted "on" the "other": struggles to understand race and ethnicity and methodological practices that were not respectful of the participants. These issues had to be addressed in this study.

Some social science literature provides arguments about the legitimacy of cross-race research from various perspectives. At one extreme is the argument that race makes

no difference when engaging in social research because we live in a "colorblind" society. Frankenberg (1993) referred to this as "color and power evasiveness."

Those who argue that race is not of central importance "reduce race to a mere manifestation of other supposedly more fundamental social and political relationships such as ethnicity or class" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 2). Such theorists believe that anyone can engage in cross-race research because they think that race is not an important social category.

Moreover, those who are cognizant of the privilege afforded by race, class, or gender may feel a sense of entitlement about their privilege and employ White rationalizations of privilege (Feagin & Vera, 1995). This approach to race ignores systems of power and denied the historical legacy of racism and discrimination in the United States. Theorists at the other extreme claim that race is the primary category and therefore takes precedence over the other categories, such as class and gender (Huisman, 1997). Such theorists argued that White women have no right studying women of color (Phoenix, 1987).

Somewhere in the middle of these two extremes is the position that race, class, and gender are interlocking systems of oppression (Anderson, 1993; Collins, 1990; Glenn, 1986). Most proponents of this position agree that conducting research outside one's race, class, or gender could be valuable as long as researchers are careful not to place their own experiences at the center and view the experiences of their research subjects as peripheral. Advocates of this position also acknowledge that all of these categories of oppression are equally important components, which constitute the complex web of hierarchical societal arrangements (Huisman, 1997).

Although it is important to recognize that it may be more difficult to engage successfully in cross-race research than same-race research, it is not impossible. Anderson (1993) acknowledged, "minority scholars are less likely to experience distrust, hostility, and exclusion within minority communities" (p. 41). It is possible for White scholars to obtain epistemologically valuable information about race (Edwards, 1990).

Huisman (1997) argued that cross-race research can be epistemologically beneficial if the researcher addresses particular methodological issues. Conducting the research "with" the participants while being careful not to place the researchers experiences at the center is crucial.

Christine Sleeter (1999) wrote about her own struggles as a White woman with research interest in multicultural education. She did not want to her race to be a problem in conducting meaningful cultural studies. Early in her career she pledged to work with multiracial coalitions in order to guide her work. Through the years she has come to a place where she realizes that her most useful work was to help people like herself deal with White privilege. She struggled to move forward in her thinking about her White privilege as she guided White students into their own cultural understanding and growth.

Much of Sleeter's (1992, 1990) research focused on studies of White teachers and their involvement with multicultural education. Her 1992 study involved White teachers who participated in multicultural staff development. Following the staff development few teachers restructured their perspectives about racial inequality or classroom teaching. Sleeter's work helps me as an educator think about ways that my research could influence my own teaching and my development as a White woman in a multicultural society. I continue to address issues of Whiteness in my life and in my research.

Examining the construction of Whiteness and other racial identities is useful because it might lead away from the incorporation of "old" discursive elements into "new strategies" (Frankenberg, 1993. Analyzing the construction of Whiteness is a means of reconceptualizing our own identities in order to participate in antiracist work. This type of research involves a multiplicity of roles that are encountered during fieldwork (Deegan, 1993).

Black women have defined themselves and their lives by being at the center of Black women's thought (Collins, 2000; Lorde, 1984). However, it has been helpful for Black women to realize that it is important not to isolate others who might make important contributions to Black feminist thought, but to open up to different perspectives (Collins, 2000).

In recent years, many White feminists have been very careful not to speak of "women's experience" in a monolithic way and have begun to acknowledge that "women come only in different classes, races, and cultures: there is no 'woman' and no 'woman's experience' " (Harding, 1987, p. 7). Edwards (1990) stressed that there are differences among White and Black women just as there are differences between men and women. She stated that the methodology is crucial in the conducting of cross-race research. Black women's responses to cross-race research are key to my in understandings of how to conduct successful cross-race research.

In an interview study of Black women, Edwards (1990) questioned underlying assumptions feminists held about cross-race research. She argued that White feminists had been making generalizations about the research process based on White middle class

women's experiences; they had not taken into account the experiences of working class or Black women.

Edwards, a White woman interviewing Afro Caribbean women, found that interviews should be conducted in ways to take into account the meanings of race for Black women. She discovered that emphasizing a feminist methodology allowed for differences and provided opportunities for relationships to be established. Edwards asserted that researchers must not rely on having the same sex to provide rapport in the study. She documented that race had entered into her research to influence her relationship with participants.

Edwards (1990) found that being a White woman brought resistance from Black women participating in the study. Many of the Black women in the study were angry that a White woman contacted them and chose not to participate in the study. Of those who did participate, not all were willing to discuss with Edwards's private matters, their families, or relationships.

However, Edwards found that all the Black women talked easily after acknowledging the differences between them rather than focusing on their similarities. Edwards contended that using feminist methodology and epistemology allowed her to "acknowledge difference rather than similarity," and this gave her the flexibility to relate to the women in her study (p. 489).

White researchers have been criticized for conducting critical research that focused on racism or marginalized populations (Reinharz, 1992). However, for me not engaging in critical research would have been even more problematic. I felt compelled to conduct this research to expand my experiences and challenge my thinking.

There are political and ethical dilemmas that can arise when conducting and interpreting life history research (Foster, 1997). One central issue is the insider/outsider debate of whether or not individuals from the same cultural community are better suited to conduct the research. Foster (1997) argues that even those who share social and cultural characteristics could be separated by other important characteristics. In relationship to the participants, I was an insider as a woman, as a Christian and through socioeconomic levels, but I was an outsider through race.

The relationships established during cross cultural research position the researcher as the "friendly cultural stranger" where the relationships are open to the self, while recognizing that such a commitment to the research includes methodological and rhetorical conventions (Deegan, 1993) The relationships in this study became more than a field one, but developed into friendships giving to each other.

I acknowledge the criticisms of cross race research but believe that my commitment to conducting cross-race research was more important to the study than my race. I was in a position to share my learning from the experiences of the research and write about my own heightened awareness of race, sexism, and schooling. My work can inform others who conduct cross-race research and open doors for cross-race dialogue. However, being White, I may have misinterpreted what the participants saw and described as racism and sexism.

I could have also missed their true thoughts toward me as a White researcher. I felt like we had positive relationships, but I can never know what they completely thought about the research or me. This is true for any researcher regardless of race or

gender, although there are likely greater potential problems in conducting cross-race research.

"In all white environments, white people articulate notions about race that we often sense are adverse to the perspectives of people of color, even as we try to make meaning of race in constructive ways" (McIntyre, 1997, p. xi). Without cross race research White people continue to struggle to understand race from the perspective of people of color. Work in cross-race research is an opportunity for exposing variance and bias-critical consciousness, hidden meanings and assumptions, along with patterns of oppression (McIntyre, 1997). McIntyre is an important researcher of whiteness that has been instrumental in promoting learning from cross-race research.

The exploration of my White identity helped me to understand the systems of which I was a part, and the privileges I enjoyed. For example, as I learned about the experiences of the Black women in my study I began to realize the different paths we had followed in education. I had always been in the majority and had been expected to succeed in education from teachers from my race. I was not expected to perform based on my race, but on my own abilities. My community also supported me because I was in the majority that the community represented. I began to see more clearly the structures of institutional racism that had been a part of my educational experiences. Following the acknowledgment of privilege it was important to begin a process of critiquing privileges. I began to look more closely at the institutional systems of racism that I am a part of.

My commitment to conducting cross-race research led me to explorations of my Whiteness that opened up new understandings of my identity. Dialogue developed between the participants outside the interviews regarding the experience of cross-race

research informed my thinking. Through daily reflections of my personal experiences in education compared to theirs we discussed how our identities were alike and different. The participants helped me to learn about who I am. I began to have a deeper awareness of being White and how that affected my school experiences. McIntyre (1997) suggested a guide for exploring racial identity that helped broaden my thinking in terms of my subjectivities and helped move my research forward. She recommended (1) investigating Whiteness, (2) educating yourself about the relationship between the racial identities and the existence of racism within U.S. society, and (3) taking constructive action in the naming of racism and the renaming of what I can do about it within the context of multicultural antiracist education.

Throughout my personal experiences and focused study on racism I more clearly understood the relationship between racial identities and the existence of racism in the United States. An in-depth look at history highlighted the inequities experienced by African Americans. I also recognized that in spite of my best efforts, racism and sexism could be a part of my own thinking. There were ways that I did not realize how my own racial identity affected my views.

Although many try to deny it, racism is still a part of daily life and evident in attitudes of individuals and institutions. For example, last year in the hiring of a school official, there were parents that opposed a Black man based solely on his race. Individuals shared their concerns with me, thinking I would feel the same way. I attended a sporting event where a young Black man was attacked verbally because of his race. I also have friends who chose not send their children to public schools based solely on the diverse population in the community that include Black and Latino students. Our

relationships have been damaged due to our opposing views on the subjects of race and racism.

My personal action against racism has included taking a stance against racism with my peers and acquaintances. I am very vocal about injustices regarding racism and work in the community to support race relations. I taught a course about multicultural classrooms, and I volunteered to serve on a multicultural task force in my community. I made multicultural antiracist education a priority in my studies and my teaching. I send my children to a diverse school so that they would have an opportunity to experience diversity. My involvement does not mean that I will ever completely understand the complexities of racism, but I am trying to make changes in my own life.

My gender has influenced my perceptions about sexism. I have experienced sexism in various ways throughout my life. My parents defined roles based on gender in our home, and choices were limited because of my gender. I also experienced sexism in my work place by a superior.

I am aware that these subjectivities about racism and sexism have likely influenced the research. My expectations going into the research were that experiences of racism and sexism would be found because I believed that they were present in our society, based on my own life experiences.

Although, I am a White woman and cannot be a Black feminist; I will constantly challenge my thoughts and identity as a White woman and seek opportunities to be challenged by others with points of view different from my own. According to hooks (2000), it is not enough to state that I am a White researcher. It is critically important to

incorporate an analysis of my own racialized identity in the research through constant questioning and reflection.

My biases are influenced by my knowledge of schools and identity as an educator. I have been a teacher, my husband is a teacher, and I have spent large amounts of time in my children's school. From these experiences I have observed inequities that have adversely affected students.

There is risk of criticism from Blacks and Whites as I engage in this research, but to me, the risk would be greater if I had not engaged in the research. Engaging in dialogue with Black women took me on a journey that changed my life forever. While it was necessary to acknowledge that we were different and had different experiences, our similarities of our experiences as women provided a common foundation.

My effort has been to invite critical feedback from experts, to use feminist values and principles, to cultivate and maintain relationships, be flexible, patient, and respectful, and to engage in constant reflection and awareness of my White identity. Cross-race research has provided opportunities for increased dialogue, for the formation of new relationships, and for new understandings of racial experiences. Cross-race research can create opportunities for growth and learning beyond one's own racial identity. Without interactions across races, members of our society will continue to segregate and perpetuate the prejudices and stereotypes that have prevailed throughout history.

I realize that some may not accept my work. This research may not be accepted by the mainstream because it is about Black women and their experiences with racism and sexism in school. However, whatever others may believe, my work made a difference

in my life and changed the way I look at issues regarding racism and sexism in school. The following are definitions of racism and sexism that were used guide the research.

Racism and Sexism Defined for the Study

There are many definitions of racism that have evolved throughout history. Banks (2003) described racism as

> a belief that human groups can be validly grouped on the basis of their biological traits and that these identifiable groups inherit certain mental, personality, and cultural characteristics that determine their behavior (p. 73).

Bennett (2003) defined racism as,

> Systematic oppression through persistent behavior that is the result of personal racial prejudice and racial discrimination within societal structures. It includes attitudes of racial superiority, institutional power that suppresses members of the supposedly inferior race, and a broadly based ideology of ethnocentrism or cultural superiority. Racism is an action or policy that harms or suppresses members of a racial group (p. 79).

Bennett (2001) extends the definition of racism by describing institutional racism, "In contrast to individual racism where perpetrators can be identified, institutional racism is embedded in policies and practices that have generally become accepted as natural or normal over time" (p. 81). Institutional racism includes laws, customs, and practices that systematically reflect and produce racial inequalities, whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have racist intentions.

Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) distinguish between individual and institutional racism. Racism is both overt and covert. It takes two, closely related forms: individual

whites acting against individual blacks, and acts by the total white community against the black community. The first consists of overt acts by individuals, which cause death, injury or the violent destruction of property. This type can be recorded by television cameras; it can frequently be observed in the process of commission. The second type is less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts. But it is not less destructive of human life. The second type originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than the first.

There is also the existence of cultural racism that includes both individual and institutional expressions of racial superiority and suppression (Bennett, 2003). "It refers to the subtle and pervasive uses of power by Whites to perpetuate their cultural heritage and impose it upon others, while at the same time destroying the culture of ethnic minorities" (p. 84). Cultural racism can be found in the formal curriculum, in tests, media, and course offerings. It can also be detected in the hidden, informal curriculum, as in low expectation for minority student achievement held by non-minority teachers, ethnic/racial myths and stereotypes held by students and teachers, and an unfamiliar, non-supportive, unfriendly, or hostile school environment. It is a belief in the inferiority of another culture compared to the White culture.

Maluso's (1995) definition of racism includes: "thoughts and feelings toward members of groups and discriminatory behavior toward those people" based on their race (p. 51). Maluso (1995) understood racism to consist of three independent but positively related constructs (p. 51): (1) prejudice (defined as hostility toward ethnic minorities); (2) stereotypical beliefs about minorities; and (3) overt discriminatory behaviors toward

minorities that achieve distance from them. There are three levels of racism acknowledged: institutional, collective, and individual.

Regarding the process of education, it is useful to define racism behaviorally because behavior is influential upon the educative process (Jones, 1996). According to Jones (1996), "Thus, from a behavioral perspective, individual racism is an action taken by one person toward another that produces negative results or effects because the other person is identified with a give racial group" (p. 227). Jones (1996) also describes institutional racism: Similarly, institutional racism involves those actions taken by an

> institution or social system that cause negative outcomes for members of certain groups and ensures the continuation of privilege for members of another group.

With this view, racism is frequently perpetrated unintentionally or even unknowingly.

For the purposes of this study I take into account the definitions provided above of personal, institutional, and cultural racism to inform the study. The definitions relate to the historical development of racism, individual experiences, and institutional experiences to provide a backdrop for the women's experiences.

There are many definitions of sexism that have evolved throughout history. According to Lott (1995) sexism reflects, but also results in, the greater status and power of men relative to women (p. 13). Paralleled to Maluso's definition of racism Lott's definition of sexism was conceptualized in terms of three independent but related components: prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. These components were distinguished by Lott (1995) as follows: (1) prejudice was defined as negative attitudes toward women (i.e., feelings of hostility or dislike); (2) stereotypes were defined as well-learned, widely shared, socially validated general beliefs or cognitions about women,

which reinforce, complement, or justify the prejudices and often involve an assumption of inferiority; and (3) discrimination denoted overt behaviors that achieve separation from women through exclusion, avoidance, or distancing.

Bennett (2003) defined sexism as negative attitudes and behaviors based on gender bias and misconceptions about the inferiority of cultures different from one's own. Ammott and Matthaei (1991) described sexism in terms of gender differences as,

> beliefs that the sexes are naturally distinct and opposed social beings. These beliefs are turned into self-fulfilling prophecies through sex-role socialization; the biological sexes are assigned distinct and often unequal work and political positions and turned into distinct genders (p. 13).

For the purposes of this study, sexism includes prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination and is defined as "the oppression or inhibition of women through a vast network of everyday practices, attitudes, assumptions, behaviors, and institutional rules" (Young, 1992, p. 180).

Definitions of racism and sexism helped to guide understandings of the women's experiences related to schooling. Throughout the study it was beneficial to reflect upon the complexities of how these were understood and described by the participants in the context of the research. Personal, institutional, and cultural examples of racism and sexism were addressed in this study.

Personal, institutional and cultural examples are closely connected. There are examples where institutional racism is present, but the participants reflect upon the personal aspects and how it affected them. There are shifts through history of how these are presented, but all are problematic and present. The women related personal examples

of racism and sexism. The subtleties of institutional racism were sometimes overlooked, even though it was often at the root of the problem.

The connection of institutional, personal and cultural examples presents a struggle of how to identify and address the complexities of racism and sexism. The lived experiences of these women provide examples of how they have dealt with racism and sexism throughout their lives.

Theoretical Framework: Black Feminist Epistemology

In choosing a theoretical framework (Appendix A) for my study I felt strongly that it should be one established by Black women and should support the lived experiences of Black women. Using this as a criterion, I felt that Black Feminist Epistemology would be the most appropriate theoretical stance to guide the research. Black women created Black Feminist Epistemology, valued Black women's lived experiences, and established the idea that legitimate knowledge is gained through the lived experiences of Black women.

Black women have life experiences that are different from the dominant group and therefore a separate epistemology was important to represent their unique experiences. Collins' (2000) framework of Black Feminist Epistemology guided this research and provided a framework for data collection and analysis.

Black women have a unique claim to knowledge from their lived experiences. "This implies that Black women's personal meaning, spirituality, and moral order within the community are centered in women's wisdom" (Walker, 1983). Deborah King introduced the terms "multiple jeopardy" and "multiple consciousness" to depict Black women's reality. King wrote that Black feminist ideology declares the visibility of Black

women, asserts self-determination as essential, and that Black feminist ideology challenges the interstructure of the oppressions of racism, sexism and classism both in the dominant society and within movements for liberation (King, 1995).

According to Guba & Lincoln (1994), understandings of the nature of knowledge evolve over time. The experiences that were presented across three generations helped with the understanding of the nature of knowledge for these Black women. "Knowledge consists of a series of structural/historical insights that will be transformed as time passes." (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 113). According to Black Feminist Epistemology (Collins, 2000), experience is key to one's knowledge claims, and for these women experiences throughout life were important.

Black Feminist Epistemology (Collins, 2000) identifies race, class, and gender as multiple intersecting oppressions that directly affect the lives of Black women and how they formulate knowledge about their world. A key premise is that the daily experiences of Black women involve racism and sexism, and classism, however, for this study I focused only on race and gender and did not give attention to class.

A foundation of Black Feminist Epistemology is that Black women can and should validate their lived experiences and establish "self defined" Black women's knowledge. Important features of Black Feminist Epistemology outlined by Collins (2000) include: (1) "Lived experiences as a criterion of meaning", (p. 257), (2) "The use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims" (p. 260), (3) "The ethics of caring" (p. 262), (4) "The ethic of personal accountability" (p. 265), (5) "Black women as agents of knowledge" (p. 266), and (6) "Action toward truth" (p. 269).

Lived experiences were highly valued and present an understanding of how to assess knowledge claims. It is not simply enough to have knowledge about something, but the actual experience validates knowledge that Black women have developed throughout their lives. Collins (2000) asserted that Black women establish a distinction between knowledge and wisdom. Lived experiences were necessary in establishing meaning. "Lived life as Black women requires wisdom because knowledge about the dynamics of intersecting oppressions has been essential to U. S. Black women's survival" (Collins, 2000, p. 257).

Collins (2000) stated, "Knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate" (p. 257). Those who have only "lived" through experiences carry more respect than those who have read or thought about those experiences (Collins, 2000).

The second criterion for Black Feminist Epistemology (Collins, 2000) is the use of *dialogue*. For Black women, new knowledge claims are rarely worked out alone, but are usually developed through dialogue with other members of their community (Collins, 2000). Communication is considered an important way to share experiences while validating knowledge that has been learned through lived experiences.

Call-and-response discourse among African Americans is an example of the use of dialogue highlighted in Black Feminist Epistemology. This is described as spontaneous verbal and non-verbal interaction between speaker and listener in which all of the speaker's statements, or "calls," are punctuated by expressions or "responses" from the listener (Collins, 2000). Often everyone in the group participates as ideas are validated.

A third criterion of Black Feminist Epistemology is the *ethics of caring*. This involves the giving of one's self through sacrifices out of the responsibility of being a woman. Collins (2000) described the ethic of caring as "talking with the heart." Noddings (2001) described the "ethic of care" as a continuous search for competence where all can be helped to learn to care for others. She credited women for the burden of care giving throughout history. Gilligan (1982) also documented the ethic of care and responsibility that is unique to women's lived experiences through women's voices.

This criterion has played out throughout history by Black women making sacrifices for the uplift of the race and the connectedness that Black women share with each other. Black women have been instrumental in "caring for" the needs of family, education, spiritual development, and the community as a whole.

The fourth criterion of Black Feminist Epistemology is the *ethic of personal accountability.* It is essential, according to this criterion, that ideas are valued and people are held to high levels of accountability for knowledge claims (Collins, 2000). It is expected that one's core beliefs be connected to personal life experiences and actions.

Collins (2000) described an example of this in which her students looked deeply into an author's personal life to examine whether he/she really cared about his/her topic. This criterion establishes the principle that it is not simply enough to write or research a topic. One must have a personal connection and commitment to the topic. There is an expectation from this epistemological framework that there must be action connected to one's beliefs.

The fifth component of Black Feminist Epistemology addresses *Black women as agents of knowledge*. Black women scholars have been instrumental in conceptualizing

Black feminist thought while working to create a climate in which Black women's experiences are valued and substantiated. Many Black scholars have felt a responsibility to carry out the components of Black feminist thought in their work. Throughout the past 40 years, a significant change has occurred in which Black women have become "legitimate agents of knowledge" (Collins, 2000, p. 266). Black women have the opportunity to speak out for the legitimacy of Black women's knowledge. However, it is often challenging and lonely for Black women in academia. They must find a way to belong in the university community and to the world of ordinary Black women who live daily with multiple oppressions.

"Black feminist intellectuals must be personal advocates for their material, be accountable for the consequences of their work, have lived or experienced their material in some fashion, and be willing to engage in dialogues about their findings with ordinary, everyday people" (Collins, 2000, p. 266). Making contributions as agents of knowledge can involve substantial personal cost within the Black community.

The sixth and final component of Black Feminist Epistemology suggests *action toward truth*, "another path to the universal truths" (Collins, 2000, p. 269). A Black woman's standpoint "calls into question the content of what currently passes as truth and simultaneously challenges the process of arriving at that truth" (p. 271). Black Feminist Epistemology provides an understanding of how subordinate groups create knowledge (Collins, 2000). This research used the definition of subordinate groups as anyone who was not White, heterosexual, middle/upper class, or male. Some Black women have a lived experience different from the dominant culture because their own experiences of multiple oppressions have affected their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Black feminist thought did not regard these viewpoints as "absolute truth." Patricia Collins (1990) argued that a Black women's standpoint was only one angle of the story; thus, Black feminist thought represented a partial perspective. "Each group becomes better able to consider other groups' standpoints without relinquishing the uniqueness of its own standpoint or suppressing other groups' partial perspectives" (p. 270).

Black feminism is not a new phenomenon, but one that has long historical roots. Maria Miller Stewart, Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper, Mary Church Terrell, and Ida Wells-Barnett are just a few who established the foundation upon which to build the Black women's movement (Guy-Sheftall, 1995, Collins, 2000, hooks, 1984). The civil rights activism of women in the 1950s that included Baker, Clark, Robinson, Bates, and others generated a climate of discontentment, which anticipated the full blown and transformative Black liberation struggle of the 1960s, out of which emerged the "second wave" women's movement (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). This movement has continued to the present with Black feminist Patricia Hill Collins, Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, bell hooks, and many others who continue the practice of intellectualism and activism. They have been instrumental in defining Black feminist thought, which continues to guide the movement work.

There is diversity among African American feminist, but according to Guy-Sheftall (1995) certain premises are constant:

> 1) Black women experience a special kind of oppression and suffering in this country which is racist, sexist, and classist because of their dual racial and gender identity and their limited access to economic resources; 2) This "triple jeopardy"

has meant that the problems, concerns, and needs of Black women are different in many ways from those of both White women and Black men; 3) Black women must struggle for Black liberation and gender equality simultaneously; 4) There is no inherent contradiction in the struggle to eradicate sexism and racism as well as the other "isms" which plague the human community, such as classism and heterosexism; 5) Black women's commitment to the liberation of Blacks and women is profoundly rooted in their lived experience.

Using Black Feminist Epistemology established a base for the experiences of the women to be valued and understood through a theoretical lens. The experiences shared were understood and supported by the theoretical framework (Appendix A) established by Black women.

Research Question

The central question of this research is, *"How do Black women across three generations view racism and sexism in the context of their educational experiences?*" This question is supported by the following questions:

1. What were Black women's memories of their school experiences?
2. What were their successes/struggles in school?
3. What historical events (large or small) affected their educational experiences?
4. What were their relationships with teachers, administrators, and peers?
5. What were their experiences with racism and sexism?

These questions are a guide for the direction of the study in relation to Black women and their school experiences.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The pursuit of an education had been an ongoing focus in the lives of African Americans in the United States. African Americans educational experiences have persisted as one of the most consistent themes in the life, thought, struggle and protest of Black Americans (Collier-Thomas, 1982).

The history of Black women has often been incorporated into American history without highlighting the specific contributions and experiences of Black women. "The omission reflects the lack of importance that blacks in general and black females, in particular, have been given in American history" (Perkins, 1987, p. 1). Black women's issues and experiences have been different from the majority and other minorities (Green, 1996). Black women have made contributions throughout society but with little written record of their activism (Gilkes, 2001). According to Smith, (1999) leaving out the history of indigenous people has been critical in asserting colonial ideology and maintaining the power of the oppressor.

The knowledge of historical experiences of Black women was a necessary background for my study. "Coming to know the past"(p. 34) of Black women provided an opportunity for alternative histories and alternative knowledge to be gained that incorporates a broader and more critical scope.

Recovering the stories of the past allowed for an opportunity to reconcile and reprioritize what was important about the past with what was important about the present (Gilkes, 2001; Smith, 1999). Because this study included participants across three generations of women whose lives spanned approximately 75 years it was crucial to have an awareness of Black women's experiences and their contributions to history.

This research focuses on Black women and their educational experiences from segregation, desegregation, and during integration. My study, through these stories of three families across three generations, presents the historical hope of education, the ironies of the impact of integration, and the current challenges after integration in schools today.

This chapter sets the backdrop to describe the history of the development of education for African Americans in the south following slavery to current research focusing on experiences of Black women in school. The review of literature includes educational history and contributions of African American pioneers, historical perspectives from scholars, life experiences and recent research on African American education. The literature provides an overview of education for African Americans, but highlights the limited focus of African American women and their experiences in education, specifically in regard to cross generational experiences.

Historical Perspectives

Educational History and Contributions of African American Pioneers

> Now I claim that it is the prevalence of the Higher Education among women, the making it a common everyday affair for women to reason and think and express their thought, the training and stimulus which enable and encourage women to

> administer to the world the bread it needs as well as the sugar it cries for; in short it is the transmitting the potential forces of her soul into dynamic factors that has given symmetry and completeness to the world's agencies. (Cooper, 1988, p. 57).

A central theme in the history of the education of Black Americans is the persistent struggle to fashion a system of formal education that would allow them to obtain a quality education (Anderson, 1988). With support from politicians, ex-slaves laid the first foundation for universal public education in the South (Anderson, 1988). There have been many ways in which their dreams for an equal education were undermined, but many African Americans continued to work for its realization. African Americans have built institutions, fought for their civil and human rights, and maintained a strong commitment to education (Banks, 1997). At the forefront of contributions to education are many Black women who go unnoticed.

Mary Louise Baldwin, Caroline F. Putman, and Mary McLeod Bethune are just a few who worked to establish schools for African Americans (Banks, 1997; Gilkes, 2001). "Although African American women have 'specialized in the wholly impossible' (Hine, King, & Reed, 1995) and contributed greatly to the survival of the race, they often have been vilified in White history and have been invisible in Black history" (Banks, 1997). The experiences of Black women have been important in the development of education; however, their voices have been nearly as silent in Black history as they have been in White history (Banks, 1997).

For decades after the Civil War Northern women, many of whom were Black, went to the South to teach the freed people (Sterling, 1984). Through support from many philanthropic societies, schools were opened in church basements, slave pens, and army

barracks. “Teaching children by day and adults at night, organizing Sabbath schools and visiting the homes of their pupils, these women sought to “uplift” the former slaves and to indoctrinate them with the moral values of the North” (Sterling, 1984). The American Missionary Association alone supported more than five thousand teachers in the South between 1861 and 1876 (Sterling, 1984). There has been limited reference to the contributions of African American women in the field of education (Collier-Thomas, 1982). However, there were many remarkable women who opened the door for education in the South. Edmonia Highgate, Blanche Harris, Charlotte Forten, and Laura Towne were some of the first who worked for the American Missionary Association to help bring education to the South.

Many others committed their lives to education and wrote about the influence it had on the lives of African Americans. For example, Mary Church Terrell, Mary McLeod Bethune, Nannie Burroughs, Mary Murray Washington, Septima Clark, and countless other women were instrumental in teaching, establishing schools for Black children, and living their lives with the hope to improve the social atmosphere of the Black race. Their speeches, writings, and work for the uplift of the Black race provided leadership that became an enduring legacy.

Black women activists fought against racism and sexism and committed their lives to providing education for Black children and adults (Jones, 1990). Their work forged a path that opened doors for many to follow. The words of Mary Church Terrell provided inspiration that encouraged one to lift upward in the struggle for increased opportunities.

> And so lifting as we climb, onward and upward we go, struggling and striving and hoping that the buds and blossoms of our desires will burst into glorious fruition ere long. With courage born of success achieved in the past, with a keen sense of the responsibility which we much continue to assume we look forward to the future, large with promise and hope. Seeking no favors because of our color or patronage because of our needs, we knock at the bar of justice and ask for an equal chance. (Terrell, 1995, p. 156)

Anna Julia Cooper

One of the most influential Black educators was Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964), an important African American who was ahead of her time. She was the first to address issues of racism, imperialism, colonialism, education of Black women. She also critiqued Black male sexism and the racism of White women (Guy-Sheftall, 1995).

Cooper graduated from Oberlin College in 1884 and 1887 with an undergraduate and Master's degree and completed a Ph.D. from the Universite de Paris at the age of sixty-five (Alridge, 1999). In 1892 she published the first book on Black feminism, *A Voice from the South*. Cooper was articulating educational viewpoints similar to Du Bois's classical education and Washington's vocational education prior to their famous debates (Alridge, 1999).

Her collection of essays is a progressive discussion of the oppressed status of Black women. She did not only describe their plight, but she argued that Black women needed to speak out for themselves and stop allowing others, including Black men, to speak for them (Guy-Sheftall, 1995).

Cooper brought attention to education as a means of racial uplift with a focus on education for the poor and masses of Blacks that were uneducated. In *A Voice from the South* she wrote about the responsibility that women have to reform the human race. She encouraged women to expand their horizons and to develop their intellects so they could become self-reliant and economically independent (Cooper, 1988).

Through her own life experiences she understood the struggle Black women experienced as they worked for an education. "Passionately committed to women's independence, Cooper espoused higher education as the essential key to ending women's physical, emotional, and economic dependence on men" (Washington, 1987, p. xlviii).

She was dedicated to providing education for ignored people and was known for her criticisms of Black men for securing higher education for themselves and erecting roadblocks to deny women access to those same opportunities (Cooper, 1988). As an intellectual, principal, teacher she made lasting contributions in education.

Anna Julia Cooper was an organizer of the Colored Women's League (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). Cooper believed that Black women would prevail in the race problem and lead African Americans forward (Cooper, 1995). Cooper stressed the importance for women to have the same opportunities as men to develop intellectually as they would be the center of the family and the guiding force that would "save the race"(Gray White, 1999). Cooper was a leader in the feminist movement and worked all of her life for increased educational opportunities and the advancement of her race.

W. E. B. Du Bois

W. E. B. Du Bois was one of the most significant educational philosophers whose writings advocated classical and vocational education for the uplift of his race (Alridge,

1999). He was an advocate for the right to vote, civic equality, and supported the education of youth (Du Bois, 1965).

Early in his writing he focused on the "talented tenth" (men and women) that represented the best educated of the Black population that would be responsible for leading Black masses to a better life (Lewis, 1993). However, later in his writing he expanded his thinking to value education for all (Alridge, 1999).

"Du Bois also acknowledged Negro women's contributions to the struggle for Negro racial uplift" (Alridge, 1999, p. 363). He wrote about the contributions of the Negro women and credited the survival of the race to their sacrifice and endurance as they survived the multiple oppressions of race and gender (Alridge, 1999).

In *The Souls of Black Folk* Du Bois describes the history of education for the Negro beginning with the first educational efforts to aid the Negro through training of teachers, organizing a public-school system, the training of workers for industry, the organizing of Universities and stressed the value of higher education (Du Bois, 1965). He wrote about education from his own experiences as a student and also from his experiences as a teacher.

Du Bois documented the greatest success of the Freedmen's Bureau in its contribution of establishing schools. The Freedmen's Bureau helped establish the idea of free elementary education for all in the South (Du Bois, 1965). However, the idea of education for all brought with it many obstacles.

> "The opposition to Negro education in the South was at first bitter, and showed itself in ashes, insult, and blood; for the South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro. And the South was not wholly wrong; for education among all

> kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of danger and revolution, of dissatisfaction and discontent. Nevertheless, men strive to know" (Du Bois, 1965, p. 234).

Du Bois' work laid a foundation for the importance of higher education and the importance it played in the role of the uplift of the Negro (Du Bois, 1965). Both Cooper and Du Bois wrote about education as an opportunity to provide racial uplift.

Different from Cooper and Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson is known for his writing about observations and studies of educational systems. In his classic work, *The Miseducation of the Negro* (Woodson 1933), he described failures in education and provided suggestions for correcting methods that had not been successful. He highlighted the mistakes made in education at the careless or misguided hands of white men and took responsibility for his own mistakes as an educator for the Black race (Woodson, 1933). "He considers the educational system as it has developed both in Europe and America an antiquated process which does not hit the mark even in the case of the needs of the white man himself" (Woodson, 1933, p. xii).

Woodson detailed how schools and colleges have influenced the thinking of the Negro so that he regards himself as inferior (Woodson, 1933). He stressed the need for the system of education to be changed to help the Negro in the process of improvement (Woodson, 1933). Woodson provided a critical look at the harm that education has played in the lives of the Black community.

These three famous African Americans scholars worked tirelessly to bring attention to education for African Americans. They had their own ways of writing about education, but all three had the hope of racial uplift at the forefront. Throughout their

lives their work progressed and provided support as the needs evolved for African Americans. Their lives and work presented a foundation for future development of African American education.

Review of Recent Historiography of African American Education

African Americans have an extensive history of educational experiences; moreover, the documentation of these experiences has been central for the understanding of African Americans. The following are descriptions of African Americans' educational experiences in the United States. The compilation of work gave an overview of the varying educational experiences, which ranged from segregated experiences that were both negative and positive, to integrated experiences, to fictional experiences that helped formulate an understanding of the real experiences of the past.

One of the most significant works about the education of African Americans was by James Anderson (1988). Anderson's (1988) scholarly work comprehensively traced the history of Black education in America from 1865–1935. His writing focused on the Black population in general, but it also addressed Black women and education.

As education began to flourish in the United States for free people, education for enslaved Americans was forbidden (Anderson, 1988). In the United States as early as 1787, the first types of schools available to White Americans were the common schools (Anderson, 1988). Blacks were forbidden to obtain an education, and in most Southern states it was illegal.

In the history of the education of Black Americans, Anderson (1988) described a central theme: the persistent struggle to create a system of formal education. Initially, ex-slaves attempted to create an educational system that would support and extend their

emancipation, but their children were pushed into a system of industrial education, which presupposed Black political and economic subordination (Spring, 1997). This conception of education and social order, supported by Northern industrial philanthropists, some Black educators, and most Southern school officials, conflicted with the aspirations of ex-slaves and their descendents, resulting in a bitter national debate over the purposes of Black education at the turn of the century (Anderson, 1988).

Because Blacks lacked economic and political power, White elites were able to control the structure and content of Black elementary, secondary, normal, and college education during the first third of the twentieth century (Anderson, 1988). Nonetheless, Blacks persisted in their struggle to develop an educational system that fit their own needs and desires. The focus for education was primarily on Black men with Black women continuing to have limited access to education (Anderson, 1988). Black women's inequities, brought on by multiple oppressions, have contributed to years of educational restrictions that continue to affect their lives (Joseph, 1995).

Anderson (1988) described the development of education, the politics of schooling, missionary movements from the North to the South, and schools. He elaborated on how school was important in shaping the future direction of Southern society, and it gave an extensive picture of the lives of Black Americans.

Anderson (1988) outlined the experiences of normal school industrial education, issues related to racial problems in the South, teacher training, common schools, high schools, and the pursuit of higher education. It was through his work that we saw many of the struggles and events that shaped the future educational experiences of African Americans.

Brooks (1990) provided a historical account of Black schools from slavery to the present. Black education has been characterized by desegregation in the colonial and early national periods, a push for segregation in the early 1800s, a movement toward desegregation during the 1950s and 1960s, and another swing toward segregation today.

Banks (1995) described how separate schools for African Americans were not always positive. In the South they were separate and unequal. Often separate Black public schools in the South had African American teachers and administrators, but their school boards, curricula, and textbooks were White controlled.

Perkins (1987) wrote about the omissions of Blacks, and specifically Black females in American History. She stated that the lack of information concerning nineteenth-century Black women was one of the greatest voids in African American and women's scholarship. In many arenas there was a void of African American women stories, but in education there was an absence of stories of great women. "The hardships and struggles these women encountered, to obtain an education and later transmit their learning to others, remains an untold story" (Perkins, 1987, p. 3).

Perkins' (1987) study shed light on the contributions of one Black woman, Fanny Jackson Coppin. Ms. Coppin was born a slave and then had freedom bought by an aunt as a young girl. Coppin worked to receive an education, attended Oberlin College, and then later became a well-known teacher of her race establishing a school where she remained for 37 years (Perkins, 1987). "Although black women have been prominent in most facets of American life, their role in education of the race has been their most salient contribution" (Perkins, 1987, p. 2).

Collier-Thomas (1982) provided an overview of the impact of Black women in education. She highlighted how the historical experiences of Black women have been different from those of Black males and White females. She described how the antebellum slaves were willing to risk their lives to learn how to read and write. Some Black communities established schools or families hired private tutors while a large number of free Blacks were taught reading, writing and arithmetic as apprentices (Collier-Thomas, 1982).

Traditional views for women of any color were that they should be taught to read and write and that their major role was to be a wife and mother. Black women did not have an opportunity to teach until the late nineteenth century (Collier-Thomas, 1982).

There were some Black women who obtained high-level educations prior to 1900, educations provided by parents who could afford it. After 1900 more Black women were educated and more jobs became available for them in schools. Collier-Thomas (1982) provided an outline of Black women and their role in education as students, teachers, and advocates for education.

Gilkes (2001) wrote about the roles of Black women who have contributed to all areas of their communities to move their race forward. She described how education was "viewed as something akin to a religious mission" (p. 25) and that teachers insisted that there students learn classical subjects along with trades and business classes. The teachers were committed to their students and believed in and supported them with high expectations.

Gilkes (2001) details how "if it wasn't for the women…" that much of the work in the communities would not have been accomplished. In education the Black women

were encouraged to become educated and then educators of their race. Through the women activism social action was dynamic and interactive.

Spring (1997) wrote about the history of education for dominated cultures in the United States. He described education before the Civil War and how African Americans led a crusade for literacy. “Despite school segregation and harassment from the white population, the African-American population of the United States made one of the greatest educational advancements in the history of education” (Spring, 1997, p. 60).

Spring (1997) explained the African American resistance to segregation and the activism involved through the 1930s. He also detailed the expansion of segregated schools for African American children paid for and organized by Black citizens.

Spring (1997) critiqued the idea of superiority that was present in many European Americans. He presented a connection between segregated schools and economic exploitation that was based on the premise that

> segregated schools provided an inferior education . . ., segregated students were taught to believe they were inferior, and , therefore, many accepted an inferior economic status . . ., and that segregated education tended to emphasize the inculcation of habits and values required for menial employment . . ., segregated education tended to reinforce among many European Americans a belief in their own superiority (p. 52).

Spring (1997) believed that there was a direct connection between educational opportunities and economics. He saw that segregated public schools in the United States were directly related to maintaining an inexpensive source of labor. Blacks were kept in situations where they would learn menial tasks so that they could perform them for the

economically advantaged. Spring's connection between education and economics provided a better understanding of how Blacks were exploited.

Hunter (1997) wrote about southern Black women's lives and labors after the Civil War. Throughout her writing she wove stories about education with a focus on the activism of Black women. She described economic exploitation, Black women's fewer choices for employment regardless of their education or skills, and she outlined how Black women were confined primarily to domestic labor in private homes as cooks, maids, and child nurses (Hunter, 1997).

Hunter described the suffering of Black women at the hands of others, but emphasized that it was not without resistance. There was a long legacy of resistance and activism that provided a means not only to cope with the abuses encountered but to provide a sense of pride and success that carried Black women through many devastating experiences during their lives (Hunter, 1997).

Black women labored to build economic freedoms and worked industriously as reformers. Black women diligently built clinics, kindergartens, orphanages, and reformatories in hopes of making a difference in the lives of all Blacks (Hunter, 1997). They were committed to attacking social and economic problems from every angle, and they joined together to build organizations that could support and strengthen their cause. Education was at the forefront of providing a means for racial uplift.

Gray White (1999) provided an extensive overview about the Black women's movement from 1894–1994 with specific information about Black women's ideas on education. She described the value that Black women placed upon education. "Education

and intellectual development were necessary for all women but they were essential for black women" (Gray White, 1999, p. 49).

Race and gender issues were repeatedly addressed throughout the Black women's movement, but the complexities of the two made it very difficult to make progress. By focusing on race and gender, Black women's energies were divided and neither received the attention needed to make substantial progress (Gray White, 1997). Black women were pulled by Black men to focus on race issues while being pulled by White women to work on gender issues (Gray White, 1997; Guy-Sheftall, 1995). This created a situation in which Black women were put in a position to sacrifice one to work for the other.

"Both conservatives and activists believed that Black women were beset with both a race problem and a woman problem. In their view, this made Black women so unique among Americans that only they could voice their concerns and needs" (Gray White, 1997, p. 52). This double oppression of race and gender played itself out in education where women had limited educational opportunities as well as limited educational opportunities as a Black person.

A different perspective on education for African Americans came from Venessa Siddle-Walker's (1996) important work, *Their Highest Potential* where she documented an African American school community in the segregated South. She wrote about the positive aspects of an all Black school, the leadership of a charismatic male principal, and her experiences in the school. She compared the negative examples often given of Black schools with her positive experiences in an all Black school. This community told a story of segregation in which they experienced a positive and successful academic experience (Siddle-Walker, 1996).

She wrote about the lack of equality in education, but the focus was not on how Black education compared to White education but how it is important to understand more fully a historical moment in Black education when an all Black school was the best choice for the students.

One main point that Walker stressed was that the school was successful because Black people had total control of their education. During integration control was taken away, and ownership no longer resided with the Black population. Even though it was hard to run their school with limited resources, it was their school and served their community. The needs of the Black students were at the forefront, and the students benefited from the Black leadership.

Walker's school was successful because of the support from the Black community, Black teachers, and positive attitudes toward the Black students. Academic success was encouraged and expected; thus, the school provided an environment in which students realized their academic potential. Ownership of the school and support of the Black community for the Black students were paramount to their success.

In his work about Martin Luther King, Jr., Garrow (1986) brought attention to the role of women and their involvement in the Civil Rights movement. There were connections to civil rights and education that paralleled throughout the movement. For example, Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) represented a critical move in the black freedom struggle (Martin, 1998). Education was central to advancement of African Americans. The slow pace of school integration and the continuation of other forms of discrimination contributed to the growth of a massive civil rights movement in the late 1950's and early 1960's.

Many Black women struggled to have a leadership role and were a driving force behind Black community efforts during the Civil Rights movement, but the existence of male chauvinism during this time restricted many opportunities for Black women (Garrow, 1986). This was a time when their voices were limited and their efforts were not valued.

Women were limited to working behind the scenes, and they were given roles that were subservient to Black men. Women were permitted to work as secretaries, assistants, or teachers in the freedom schools, but restricted from prominent roles in the movement. Black men dominated leadership as they shaped the early Black liberation movement: so it reflected a patriarchal bias. Many of the women were frustrated and discouraged by the limitations placed upon them (Garrow, 1986).

Throughout the Civil Rights movement, there was a constant struggle to balance the rights for Blacks in general while also giving rights to Black women. The early work of Black women provided a foundation to the Civil Rights movement, but it was taken over by Black men. Women with limited educational backgrounds along with women of intellectual privileges were active during this time. It was an era for activism in all realms of Black women's lives that shaped education and society.

Melba Pattillo Beals' (1994), *Warriors Don't Cry* is a profoundly uplifting memoir about the events surrounding the battle to integrate Little Rock's Central High following the Supreme Courts ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which determined that separate public schools for Whites and Blacks was unconstitutional. She described the experiences encountered by students who simply wanted a chance for a better education. She painfully recalled the events of the past to document the

experiences that so greatly affected so many lives. Beals and fellow African American students faced angry mobs of people that were so violent that federal troops had to be sent to protect them from potential harm. Each day was filled with threats and dangers. Beals described going to school everyday as going off to war. “It was like being a soldier on a battlefield” (Beals, 1994, p. xxi). Gunmen shot at her home, daily calls and threats were constant, and criticisms came from Blacks and Whites both.

For a teenager it was a nightmare to be rejected by your classmates and teachers (Beals, 1994). On occasion there would be a kind word from a White student or teacher, but there was great stress not knowing what would happen each day they walked in to the building. Beals and the other eight students who integrated Arkansas’s Central High carried the weight of integration on their shoulders during what should have been fun and carefree years of their lives. They were children who led the way for integration while forfeiting their youth for the benefit of the rest of the country. The scars and pain of those years have stayed with those students throughout their lives (Beals, 1994). Only one of the original nine students continues to live in Arkansas.

Beals’ (1994) story allowed us to see the great sacrifice and risks that were involved in the pursuit for a better education, but more importantly she inspired society to continue the quest for a better education. Her work gives us a vision of the struggles, along with the enduring successes of the people involved.

Foster (1997) provided a look at Black teachers and how they have been committed to Black children and their communities. Many Black teachers are known for believing in Black students’ unlimited potential, working hard to provide a quality

education, struggling against all forms of racial oppression, and building a sense of connection between students and their communities.

Black teachers have been important throughout the history of African American education but have often gone overlooked (Foster, 1997). They have had an understanding of both the power and danger associated with literacy and have described teaching Black children as a "revolutionary act" (p. xxv).

In the forward to Foster's (1997) work Delpit made a point about desegregation that is often unnoticed. She asserted that the reason for school desegregation was to gain the economic benefits and resources for Black children that were commonly provided for White children. This is in contrast to the myth that Black people fought for desegregation because without access to White culture, White teachers, White schools, and White leadership, Black people could never adequately educate their children.

In their popular book *Having Our Say,* the Delaney sisters provided first hand accounts of their life experiences and the value placed upon education. They recounted their experiences at St. Augustine's College and reported their struggles and successes.

Bessie Delaney was a teacher and later went to Columbia University to become a dentist in New York City. She described her experiences of going to dental school and becoming the first Black woman dentist in Harlem. She told an incredible story of experiencing prejudice at her graduation from dental school.

> There I was, getting my Doctor of Dental Surgery Degree, and I was on top of the world. But you know what? The class selected me as the marshal, and I thought it was an honor. And then I found out-I heard them talking-it was because no one wanted to march beside me in front of their parents. It was a way to get rid of me.

> The class marshal carried the flag and marched out front alone. (Delaney & Delaney, 1993, p. 114-115)

Sadie Delaney was a teacher throughout her life in New York City. She attended Pratt Institute in 1916 and then later Columbia University to receive a four-year degree. After graduation she stayed in New York to teach.

> Even though my original intention was to graduate from college in New York and return to North Carolina and help my people, I knew I had to return to New York to live. I figured I'd just have to help my people there. I couldn't stand being treated as bad as I was in North Carolina. New York was not piece of cake for a colored person, but it was an improvement over the South, child. (Delaney & Delaney, 1993, p. 107)

Education was a constant focus in their lives. "The Delaney creed centered on self-improvement through education, civic-mindedness, and ethical living, along with a strong belief in God" (Hill, 1993, p. 4). Their parents were educators at St. Augustine College and were friends with Anna Julia Cooper who made an important influence on their lives. Their parents stressed that the only way to improve oneself was through education.

Mildred Taylor's (1976) famous children's literature *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry,* provided for all audiences one of the most powerful stories of a family and their experiences. Taylor's story described experiences of segregation and schooling in the lives of the Logan family. This fictional but powerful account of a family and their love and independence revealed a picture for children and adults about the human side of this time period. Students and educators have developed a greater understanding and

appreciation of the struggles that occurred for Black children across the United States because of her writing. She made the events of history come to life through the Logan family.

One scene that often made a lasting impression on the reader was when Little Man, the youngest Logan child, refuses to accept a handed down textbook from the White school. It was worn and second rate, and he wanted a new book for school. This experience made an impression on the lives of the Logan family.

Another powerful scene was when Mrs. Logan is fired from her teaching job for teaching Black history to the children. She was told by the school board to stop, but she continued to teach Black history anyway. Her children learned about the unfairness of the times while gaining a deep respect for the stance that their mother took against the authorities.

Readers developed a deeper appreciation for the struggles and the enduring legacy of those who were instrumental in opening the doors to equality in education. Taylor's (1976) novel has left a lasting impression about the inequities of education throughout the South.

There were additional works that also looked at Black women's lives and their experiences with education (Giddings, 1984; Jones, 1990; Sterling, 1984); however, there was no published general history of Black women in the United States that provided a context for understanding the overall experiences of Black women in education (Collier-Thomas, 1992). Documentation of their school experiences was created through the synthesis of the previous works cited.

The above historical descriptions of Black women's experiences informed my perception of Black women and opened a link to understanding the past experiences of the women in this study. Connections of the past to the present were strengthened by looking at historical experiences and by having sensitivity for the ones who had gone before. These studies helped to frame the focus of the research.

Recent studies have focused on issues in higher education, and the challenges that remain persistent for Black women in education. The following are examples of current research about Black women and their educational experiences.

Research About Black Women's Recent School Experiences

Much of the recent research about Black women in school focuses the experiences of Black women in higher education. There are limited studies that examine experiences in elementary and high school. Most studies focus on the risks and problems of Black girls in school (Fordham, 1993; Grant, 1994; O'Connor, 2002). While building upon the previous works cited, the following writings described the recent status of Black women's experiences in education. .

In her work *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom,* bell hooks reflected from her personal experience as a student, a writer, a teacher, and an intellectual. She described how she had been "transformed."

> hooks (1994) called for the rethinking of education, and advocated that teachers and students raise critical questions about teaching and learning. She encouraged critical "thinkers and social critics" to act as if teaching is worthy of high regard. More than ever before in the recent history of this nation, educators are compelled

> to confront the biases that have shaped teaching practices in our society and to create new ways of knowing, different strategies for the sharing of knowledge. (p. 12)

hooks (1994) connected pedagogy, theory, and multicultural ideas with the hope that all in the academy would renew their minds for the transforming of educational institutions and society. She critiqued the system of education while she encouraged a new way of thinking that provided the opportunity to look at life differently. Her work challenges us all to take on a more critical stance toward education and the society in which we live.

hooks (1994) asserted that education was limiting, and that it did not allow students to expand their minds and challenge their thinking. Too often education has been what Freire (1970) described as the *banking system* in which information is deposited and students do not learn to think critically. hooks (1994) challenged educators to critique learning, critique their teaching, and develop an atmosphere of learning where students extend their thinking beyond the current boundaries of education.

Based in a framework of Black feminist thought, Johnson-Bailey & Cevero (1996) conducted a study of the educational narratives of reentry college women. Narrative analysis was applied to a study of three graduate and five undergraduate Black women reentering education. Findings indicated that the Black women in the study regularly faced issues involving power relations based on race, gender, class, and color. Participants in the study used strategies of silence, negotiation, and resistance to respond to racism, sexism, classism, and colorism.

Jackson (1998) conducted an interview study to examine how 20 African American women defined who they were in their college contexts, focusing on the roles of gender, race, and type of institution they attended. Results indicated that the participants believed that being an African American woman meant struggle, was problematic, and meant being conscious of one's identity.

Outlaw's (1997) case study examined factors that enabled a Black female to achieve a higher educational status than her parents. The attitude of her parents toward schooling and education played a significant role in her motivation to achieve. Her parents had elementary school education but wanted their children to have more opportunities than they had. Outlaw found that the mother was a role model who worked, was actively involved in church, school, and community. Outlaw's study made visible how family played a part in an individual's success.

Bower & Schwartz (1997) traced the experiences of Black women in graduate programs in education. The study examined the personal and professional experiences of Black women before, during, and after earning a graduate degree in education. Surveys and focus groups were used to collect data. The data revealed that, "some students feel a gap between the academy and the Black community."

Bower and Schwartz (1997) also researched race and sexism in education and work experiences, and how this was more prevalent in the South. The investigation revealed that these women pursuing higher degrees were independent and determined. Many of the women in the study spoke about the importance of self-reliance but often in combination with some level of spiritual or religious commitment.

Grant (1994) argued that school is experienced differently by Black girls than by White girls. She looked at the school experience of Black and White females in elementary schools. Two groups occupied different places in the classroom, which could lead them to different adult social roles. Teachers emphasized academic achievement for White girls but for Black girls they emphasized social, caring, and nurturing qualities, and encouraged Black girls to pursue social contacts rather than working toward high achievement. Grant concluded that Black girls' school experiences directed them into more stereotypical roles of Black women.

Fordham (1993) conducted an ethnographic study of African American girls in high school focusing on the impact of gender diversity on school achievement. She identified how the existence of a subversive, diverse womanhood among African American women influenced, and often adversely affected, academic achievement. She contended that African Americans' continuous, ongoing lack of dominance and power in the Euro-American patriarchal structure had, and continued to have, severe implications for African American women (and men).

Fordham found that the academically successful females used strategies of silence and invisibility to gain entry into the "dominating patriarchy." Her findings showed how the more successful students were also the least visible, that they were "passing" for someone they were not: the White American female, and ultimately, the White American male.

Davis (2000) studied the language arts experiences of African American middle school girls. She found that the girls made positive connections to life as they read novels in which their life experiences were reflected. They were interested in literature that they

could relate to. The students felt it was important to select texts in which there were characters with problems similar to their own (Davis, 2000). The girls received affirmations, support, solutions, and decision-making skills from their experiences with the literature (Davis, 2000).

Davis's (2000) ideas about multicultural literature were extended by the participants' responses and involvement with the books. The girls in her study made connections to the characters in the stories because of the similarities in their personal experiences. The findings illustrate universal experiences that children related to regardless of their race.

Weiler (2000) examined ways in which young working class women of African American, Dominican, South American, U. S. Puerto Rican, and White European backgrounds in an alternative high school viewed their future lives and the role of the school's gender codes in shaping that future. The findings suggest that we cannot assume that the identities of all young women of a particular social class or racial/ethnic group are the same. There were many factors that played a part in their future lives and identities.

O'Connor's (2002) research was a generational study on how structural constraints shifted from one generation to another to differentially place the women at risk for limited educational attainment. She found that the women's strategies for negotiating the constraints changed from one generation to the other in the production of educational resilience.

O'Connor reviewed previous research that considered how the structure of social relationships, schools, and communities buffer youths against risk and facilitate education

resilience (Wang, Haertel, & Walber, 1994). The findings indicated that educational resilience came from parents and supportive adults who held high academic expectations (Taylor, 1994), who promoted self-motivation (Scheinfeld, 1983) who encouraged participation in the life of the family (Wang, Haertel, & Walber, 1994). Such nurturing adults firmly controlled and monitored the student's social interactions and academic behavior. Research also found that higher academic performance occurred when students had teachers who were engaging and developed personal relationships with their students (Wang, Haertel, & Walber, 1994).

The schools that were most successful had high academic standards (Sizemore, 1988), actively involved parents (Epstein, 1995), and that had social services that were integrated into the school (Comer, 1999). The studies did not look at how these factors were represented across time or how the experiences were different across generations.

O'Connor defined educational resilience as a process by which individuals successfully adapt to constraint so that academic success is realized. She presented the idea that the process of resilience, resource use, and adaptations are specific to place and time. Therefore, African Americans growing up in a segregated school system before the passage of Brown vs. Board of Education had a qualitatively distinct experience with educational risk as compared with poor African Americans growing up in an integrated or even resegregated school system 20 years after the passage of Brown.

The findings convey that the changing dynamics of social life must be accounted for in the efforts to improve the educational resilience as a socio-historical and institutionally responsive process instead of as an individually determined phenomenon.

This review indicates that more comprehensive research addressing Black women's school experiences is needed. Black women are an underrepresented population of participants and the research studies are scant (Johnson-Bailey & Cevero, 1996; O'Connor, 2001). Hopefully, the future will provide in-depth studies detailing educational experiences of African American women, thus providing a means by which African American women can better achieve equality in the realm of education. The following section will describe themes observed in the review of the literature.

Themes Present in the Literature Reviewed

The review of the previous literature provides a historical overview along with current information regarding Black women's educational experiences. From these works we are able to extrapolate important themes that are present throughout the history of Black women's experiences.

Cooper (1988) and Du Bois (1965) established a foundation of how education was a priority for African Americans. Their work stressed the commitment and value for education as a means of racial uplift. They provided an introduction to the historical journey for African Americans educational opportunities.

Additional works also describe a picture of the struggles and activism that was present in the lives of African Americans (Anderson, 1988; Banks, 1995). Embedded within these works are examples of racism that was a factor in the limited opportunities for African Americans and also present as a catalyst that sparked activism. The underlying structures that prohibited educational opportunities were examples of institutional racism.

These individuals wrote about the struggles related to educational opportunities and also presented the spirit of activism that helped African Americans overcome the struggles they faced. Struggles included the lack of educational equality, limited resources, and restricted opportunities; however, African Americans continued to work and stressed the value of education for racial uplift (Anderson, 1988). There is a connection between education and activism throughout the history of African Americans. Where education was limited, Black Americans challenged the system for opportunities to develop it further (Anderson, 1988; Banks, 1995; Du Bois, 1965).

One important aspect presented in the literature is the omissions of Black women's experiences in education (Perkins, 1987). Black women were important in establishing schools (Collier-Thomas,1982), played key roles as activist (Cooper,1988), and took responsibility for racial uplift upon themselves and believed that education was instrumental in the success of their race (Gilkes, 2001; Guy-Sheftall, 1995). However, their stories along with descriptions of their experiences in school are limited.

My work fills a gap and provides an examination of the daily stories of African American women. This research provides an illustration of Black women's school experiences during segregation, integration and following integration.

Race and gender issues are present throughout the literature describing how Black women have dealt with multiple oppressions throughout history (Collins, 2001; hooks, 1994; Gray White, 1999; Guy-Sheftall, 1995).). My study extends the research by focusing on Black women and their specific experiences with racism and sexism in schools.

Research reviewed often focused on the failures of African Americans in education (Fordham, 1993; Grant, 1994). This research adds insights into the reasons for achievement of African American women in school.

Walker (1996) presents the positive experiences of all Black schools during segregation. This research builds upon her work and provides additional examples of positive school experiences during segregation. It also builds upon the work of Foster (1997) to show the importance of high teacher expectations regarding academic achievement.

This study also builds upon the work of Outlaw (2002) and shows the importance of family support to educational success. This research also established the idea of strong Black women and identified spirituality as an important aspect to overcoming struggles in their lives and extended the work of Bower and Schwartz (1997) where they describe the idea of strong Black women and their commitment to spirituality.

O'Connor (2002) is the only study found that has a generational component. My work builds upon this and further presents the value of looking at experiences across generations. This is an important component that sets this work apart from others.

There is not a comprehensive study that presents a historical look across family generations regarding racism and sexism. My research fills this gap and provides a generational view of how these Black women have experienced racism and sexism throughout their lives.

This research traces the decline of activism in the younger generations. It is made apparent by using the design of a generational study how the older generation was very active with the shifting trend of decreased activism throughout the years.

Through the presentation of these studies an overview of Black women's educational experiences is presented. These studies lay the foundation for research on Black women's experiences. My study builds upon these works by offering a generational aspect to make an important contribution to the literature. My research also is designed to extend the literature in regard to educational experiences with a focus on racism and sexism.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The methods and design of this research were qualitative. “Methods are viewed as tools to be used in the struggle to answer the questions that are put forth” (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 258). In many qualitative research studies, a small number of people are studied intensively, with possibilities for triangulation, naturalistic methods, and with the researcher often as a major part of the research (Priessle, personal communication, 1999). These goals matched the purposes of my proposed research. Included in the following section are methodological and conceptual perspectives, guidelines for participant selection, roles for participants and researcher, discussion of ways for establishing rapport, summaries of data sources and collection, interview structure, and data analysis.

Methods

My study focused on the lives of Black women through multiple interviews across time. I chose a qualitative interview method to support the components of Black feminist epistemology (Collins, 2000) that included lived experiences as a criterion of meaning the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims. A unique aspect of the study was the generational component, which allowed for an overview of the educational history of African American women. The use of oral history provided a rich means to access the data I was seeking.

Oral History

Oral histories provide records of people whose lives otherwise do not typically enter archives (Reinharz, 1993). I employed oral history methods to capture the histories of Black women and their school experiences. “Oral history may be defined as a process of collecting, usually by means of a tape recorded interview, reminiscences, accounts, and interpretations of events from the recent past which are of historical significance” (Hoffman, 1996, p. 88).

Those who criticize the process of oral history have usually focused on the fallibility of human memory and questioned both the reliability and the validity of data collected in this manner (Hoffman, 1996). However, all history could be critiqued because it has been collected and filtered through the person reconstructing history. As time passes events are seen in a different light, therefore affecting the “accuracy” of the actual experience. Oral history does not claim to offer a comprehensive perspective on historical events, but a perspective of the person who experiences the event. It provides one view of an event.

Oral history contains freshness and candor, more typical of direct conversation. Its most important advantage is that it makes possible the preservation of the life experiences of persons who do not have the literary talent or leisure to write their memoirs (Hoffman, 1996).

An important aspect of oral history is the opportunity to create a document that does not currently exist and therefore discover a hidden history; another is the ability to better understand the viewpoint of the people studied (Grele, 1996). Oral history interviewing provides a direct contact with the participant that is beneficial in

understanding their experiences. Participants were asked if they would be willing to share the stories of their lives, their "herstories" (Dove, 1998) relating to educational experiences. This method fit with the criterion of the *use of dialogue* from Black Feminist Epistemology (Collins, 2000), which stressed the importance of developing knowledge claims through dialogue.

There is an ongoing tension between historical and qualitative research of whether or not to use real names and places. For this study the historical approach was used as a means for historical accuracy. The participants requested to use their real names and to report their stories as they presented them. Selection of participants included the criterion of the completion of a high school education. The following describes the participant selection process.

Participant Selection

Participant selection was based on purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990), seeking information-rich cases. The potential participants included Black women from various backgrounds (rich, poor, educated, married, single, widowed, divorced, working, nonworking, etc.). Priority was given to women who are behind the scenes in their respective communities that are making contributions to society. Often their stories are overlooked or undocumented, but they are significant in defining society.

The study included three sets of women from three generations in the same families. There were different ages, different educational backgrounds, and various socioeconomic levels. The different ages provided various perspectives on Black women's school experiences throughout history. A specific criterion for the study was to focus on women over 18 years of age who had attended school through the fifth grade. In

this study all of the women graduated from high school. The women were selected through personal contacts, through recommendations from friends, and from assistance from my dissertation committee. A list of possible participants was constructed, and I began calling the families to ask if they would be willing to participate. The first three families called agreed to be a part of the study.

Presenting the Study to Potential Participants

The study was initially presented to potential participants by calling them on the phone and asking if they would be willing to participate in the study. I presented the purpose of the dissertation, outlined the time involved for the interviews, explained my personal interest in the topic, and invited them to take part in the research.

It was helpful to have access to the participants through "insiders." I was introduced to the first family through my mother-in-law. The second family was enlisted in the study by my own personal relationship with one of the members. A mutual friend contacted the third family. She outlined my research interest and assured the family of my sincerity and trustworthiness. Her contact opened the door for me to call and set up the interviews. It was important in developing rapport with the families that we have a mutual contact who gave credibility to my research.

Each of the families agreed to participate during the initial phone calls. We set up the interview schedule and arranged our meeting place over the phone. I asked if they had any photographs or artifacts from their school experiences that they would be willing to share during our interviews. I traveled to all of the interviews except for two, which were conducted in my home. The interviews were conducted in churches, schools, and homes.

During the initial conversations I introduced myself by opening up and letting the participants get to know me in a comfortable way. In feminist methods, according to Oakley (1981), the interviewer and interviewee must develop a non-hierarchical relationship in which the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship. Reinharz (1992) stated that if the participants can see that you care about them and their lives, a relationship can develop that encourages each to share their stories.

I took a gift (frames, photo albums, home made food, or bath products) to each of the interviews for the participants. It was an important aspect of showing my appreciation for their time and helped to set a positive tone for our meeting. They were very appreciative of this gesture.

When introducing the study, it was important for me to avoid appearing to be the all-knowing researcher. Sharing my understanding of my own racial identity and my knowledge of and questioning about Black women's historical experiences were helpful to me in presenting the study. Some of the participants tested me to see how I would react to their comments. For example, Sarah challenged me in the first interview and questioned why I was taking time away from my family to go to school. In the beginning Mrs. Neely spoke very directly about racism and the injustices Black people experience to observe my reactions.

As I presented the study to the participants I emphasized my interest in schools and described the practical experiences that I had as a teacher instead of focusing on myself as a doctoral student at the University of Georgia. The fact that I have children, work, and have struggles within my family, as well as various other life experiences,

provided a common ground from which to build our relationships. When they discovered that I was a wife and mother they seemed more relaxed and more open with their comments.

Edwards (1990) asserted that acknowledging our similarities and our differences can open up opportunities for meaningful relationships. The most obvious difference was our race. It was helpful to talk about our similarities along with our differences and acknowledge that we had not shared the same experiences of racism and sexism. However, it was more important for me listen. When the interviews began they wanted to talk, and my role was that of a good listener. I discovered that when you sit and talk to someone long enough to really listen to them you find out many special things about their life.

Participants/Researcher Roles

My goal was to develop a sense of connectedness (Reinharz, 1992) with the participants. There were specific roles and expectations necessary to ensure a successful study. The first was the requirement of participation in the interviews that involved a minimum of three 60–90 minute taped interviews. There were a total of 27 formal interviews and additional conversations that totaled approximately 90 hours. I also took field notes to record events surrounding the interviews, my own reactions and the participants' reactions, and to document theoretical ideas, methodological issues, and personal responses.

Reinharz (1992), stated that multiple interviews would provide a potential for developing trust, but that an additional asset of this method "is the opportunity to share

interview transcripts or notes with the interviewee and then invite the interviewee's analysis" (p. 36). The analysis included reflections and thoughts from the participants.

I was responsible for writing the dissertation. However, I was committed to highlighting the words of the participants in the presentation of the data. This required extensive reflection and sensitivity on my part. Below I have outlined the roles that I took along with the participants' involvement in the study.

Researcher:

- Contacted participants
- Provided appropriate information/forms for informed consent
- Conducted interviews
- Took field notes
- Transcribed/Analyzed interviews
- Shared transcripts
- Wrote (Analyzed, synthesized, and interpreted)

Participants:

- Provided informed consent to participate (Appendix B)
- Participated during interviews
- Shared photographs/artifacts
- Read/Analyzed transcripts and notes
- Reviewed my syntheses and interpretations

Developing Rapport

Rapport can be described as making a connection, developing a link, bonding, and/or forming a relationship with others. As I began to establish rapport with the

participants, my life, along with my commitment to this research, was under evaluation by the participants. They exemplified the criterion of the *ethic of personal accountability* from Black feminist Epistemology (Collins, 2000). The participant's asked me questions about my personal life to examine whether I cared about my topic or if I was only conducting a research project to graduate.

Dialogue with the participants was necessary to ensure I was not there to define and exploit their experiences but to provide a place for them to tell their own stories in their own words. I took great responsibility in being accountable for my actions in this research and used frequent member checks along with evaluations of my involvement from outside experts (dissertation committee, University faculty) to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

Researcher self-disclosure during interviews is good feminist practice (Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992. In all of the interviews it was helpful to share something of my life with the participants. It seemed beneficial for our relationship when we found some commonality in our friends or acquaintances. It was important to do more than simply ask questions; I needed to work toward establishing a relationship in which the participants felt free and were encouraged to reveal their experiences (Polkinghorne, 1983). These methods continued to support and connect to Black Feminist Epistemology (Collins, 2000).

My appearance, timeliness, attitude toward participants, and professionalism were all factors in establishing rapport. I felt that the participants were watching my every move to see how I would react to their home and comments. Mrs. Neely acknowledged

that I "did not flinch" when she said things about race. This told her about me as a person, and it was an indication to me that she could share ideas openly.

Another example of developing rapport occurred through presenting gifts to the participants. At the first interview I took a gift of fresh apples to Mrs. Rucker and this helped to open up a positive rapport. She appreciated that I had thought about her enough to bring a gift. As a result of this positive interaction I took a small gift to all of the participants at each interview. The relationships developed had a positive effect on the wealth of data that was collected.

Data Sources/Data Collection

In addition to interviews, data included field notes, recorded throughout the data collection period, photographs that participants were willing to share (Appendix C), archival historical accounts, and additional artifacts relevant to the stories. In some cases these served as starting points for the interviews and in other cases they were used to triangulate with the interview data.

Interview Questions in Terms of Form and Style

The research interview, also described as a professional conversation, was based on the conversations of daily life (Kvale, 1996). The interviews were in the form of a dialogue in which the interviewer actively took part in the conversation (Edwards, 1990; Johnson-Bailey& Cevero, 1996; Oakley, 1982). My main role was that of an "active listener" who responded when appropriate and supported the conversation without dominating it.

At the onset of each interview, I made an opening statement to preface the structure. I used an interview guide (Appendix D), that helped keep the questions

consistent as I conducted the interview (see Appendix A). Most of the questions were open-ended (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982), which allowed responses in the form of stories.

It was necessary to take care to ask questions that were not leading and to organize questions that gave the women freedom to share stories they felt were important. Open-ended questions elicited stories centered on cultural concerns, which allowed freedom for the participants to discuss racism and sexism (Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

Because there were different generations in the study it was important for me to be sensitive about the wording of questions—to use language appropriate for the different ages of the participants. My understanding of historical accounts of Black women's history was helpful background knowledge for generating questions. An understanding of Black Feminist Epistemology (Collins, 200) also provided a framework that informed the study. The participants appreciated that I was familiar with the history of Black experience. This was crucial in giving me credibility with the participants. Feminist approaches to interviewing were used to help establish strong relationships with the women. The following describes the fundamentals of feminist interviewing.

Feminist Approaches for Interviewing

My methodology was informed by research studies employing feminist interview practices involving women as co-researchers (Edwards, 1990; Johnson-Bailey & Cevero, 1996; Oakley, 1981). These studies were based on non-hierarchical collaboration with the participants. The researchers were involved in designing their studies, conducting the interviews, analyzing the data, and writing up the findings. However, through feminist interview practices the women participants, as experts on their own lives, made significant contributions in determining the directions and emphases of the research.

Interviews in this study were consistent with elements of feminist interviewing. According to de Marrais (personal communication, 2001) this includes becoming a good listener and creating a conversational discourse. This form of interviewing is often described as "a conversation with a purpose" (Kahn & Cannell, 1957).

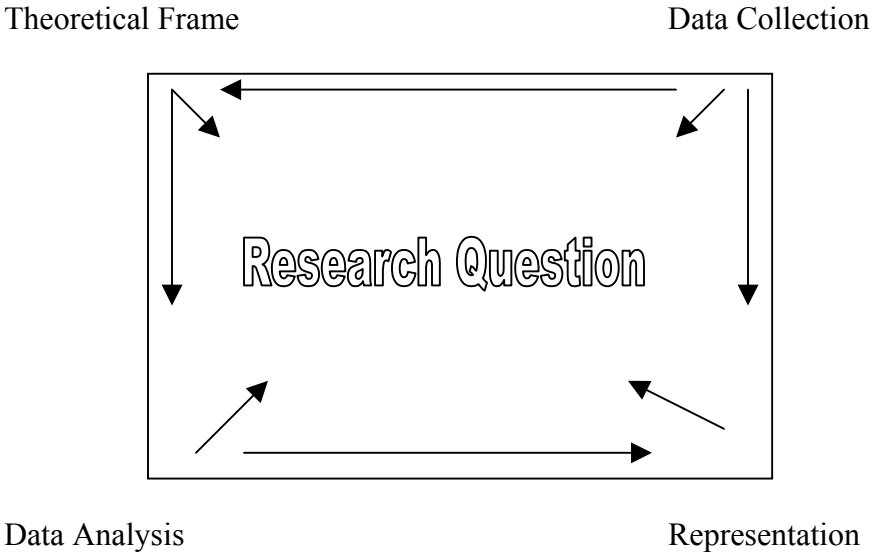
The space and place are significant to the atmosphere of a feminist approach; therefore, I tried to ensure a comfortable physical environment. We met in homes, schools, churches, and other relaxed settings that were comfortable for the participants. I traveled to Spelman College to conduct one of the interviews. The timing of the interviews was arranged for the participants' convenience and availability.

Reflective practices are also a part of feminist interviewing. I was involved in constant reflection and provided the participants with encouragement to reflect between the interviews in preparation for subsequent interviews.

Data Analysis

The following diagram designed by de Marrais (personal communication, 2001) provides a visual representation of how the theoretical framework, data collection, data analysis and representation are all connected and link back to the research question in a qualitative research design.

The core of qualitative analysis lies in the process of describing the phenomena, classifying, and seeing how concepts interconnect (Dey, 1993). Description is the basis for analysis, and then analysis lays the basis for further description. This opens the way for qualitative research to be more inductive and grounded. According to de Marrais (personal communication, 2001) data analysis begins with the research question



supported by the theoretical framework that guides the collection and analysis of the data as it develops. Appendix A helped to guide the direction of the study.

My data analysis included a process based on from work of Polkinghorne (1983), de Marrais (personal communication, 2001), Dey (1993) and Glaser (1969). It involved identifying themes that allowed for reconstruction and representation of the story. This involved a process of reading and annotating, categorizing, linking and connecting, corroborating, and producing an account (Dey, 1993).

Constant comparison was an ongoing part of the analysis (Glaser, 1969). I began with the analysis of the first interview and continued with each subsequent interview. I compared the data of each interview and also compared data across participants. My findings helped to shape the methodological decisions throughout the research.

Constant comparison informed decisions about the methods of the research by allowing me to look at the data collected throughout the process. I made decisions about how I needed to adjust future interviews based on the analysis. One example from the

study involved one of the questions that I added as a result of a comment from Mrs. Rucker. She had said that her mother had been instrumental as an encourager of education in her life: I added a question to ask all of the participants who had influenced their attitude toward education.

The most helpful aspect of constant comparison resulted in the quality of my field notes and reflection journal. After each interview I wrote about the experience of the interview, my thoughts and anything I felt was relevant. As I began to write and refer to those notes I realized how important they were to the study, and this motivated me to keep more detailed notes throughout the study.

The analysis helped me to ground the research in data. This grounding involved a comparison of codings with codings and classifications that had already been made. I looked for possible themes throughout the period of data collection and beyond. Data that had already been coded was not set aside, but was continually integrated into the further process of the comparison (Flick, 1998). Constant comparison allowed me to make historical connections from the beginning and throughout the process.

I first worked to identify patterns in the interview data. Polkinghorne (1983) described pattern identification as a review of the various examples, followed by a hypothesis about the pattern that ran through the examples. I then reexamined the examples to see if the pattern held true for all of examples in order to provide an organizational structure, then I tested the tentative pattern.

After patterns were identified, I searched for a more basic "pattern in the patterns." "If an overall pattern or unity is not discovered, then the analysis has to be

reviewed for the possibility that there is more than one structure which underlies the descriptive data (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 272).

I made a categories chart (Appendix E) that helped to organize the data. I then looked for themes in order to show a relationship with how different categories fit together (de Marrais, personal communication 2001). From this point, I made a list of assertions about the data. It was important to analyze data from the very beginning, but also to be careful to keep the analysis tentative until I drew final interpretations at the end of the analysis.

After an extensive period of time looking for patterns and themes, I wrote the final description of the analysis. I then spent an extensive amount of time reading and reviewing the draft. Editing and writing continued throughout the process.

Quotations from the interview data were used as a means of conveying to the reader the stories and points of view of the participants (Erickson, 1986). The meaning of everyday life was contained in the particulars, and to convey this meaning to the reader I grounded the more abstract analytic concepts of the study in concrete particulars through rich description and narratives (Erickson, 1986).

Data management included several practical considerations (de Marrais, personal communication 2001). First, it is important to organize the data carefully. The tapes of the interviews were copied for extra back up, the transcriptions were copied and placed upon different disks and kept at different locations. Multiple hard copies were made.

A color-coding system (different colored folders) was used to separate each generation's transcriptions and field notes. This made organization easier. Also, I inventoried all of the data using charts, which helped with the organization.

Ethical Concerns

Ethical concerns were taken into account throughout the study. Participants were informed of the purpose and activities of the research (i.e., burdens, work, risk), and attention was given to protect the participants from risk (Erickson, 1986). In most cases I traveled to the participants in order to provide the most comfortable and non-threatening environment. I also was very conscious of their time and conducted the interviews in a timely, but appropriate manner. The participants were asked if they wanted to use their real names or if they wanted their names to be kept confidential. All of the participants chose to use their real names. All of the data was kept in a secure filing cabinet at my home. The chair of my dissertation committee and the members of the committee had access to the data. The participants were made aware of this access. Each participant was given a copy of their transcriptions.

Validity Issues

Although qualitative researchers use different language to describe concerns about validity, they make every effort to ensure that the study is valid and trustworthy (Kvale, 1996). We try to "get it right." Wolcott (1990) stated that he goes to "considerable pains not to get it all wrong" (p. 127). He issued a precaution of becoming "obsessed with finding the right or ultimate answer, the correct version, the Truth" (p. 146). Furthermore, he also stressed the importance of understanding. "Understanding: the power to make experience intelligible by applying concepts and categories" (p. 146). I have tried to "understand" my study by using strategies from Wolcott (1990) to strengthen the validity.

1. “Talk Little, Listen a Lot” (p. 127). I gave close attention to the stories of the participants. I did not assume that I knew what they meant, but I asked for details and clarification of their stories. I included feminist interview practices and conduct multiple interviews.
2. “Record Accurately” (p. 128). I recorded as accurately as possible during and after the interviews. All information was transcribed accurately. Every word was included from the participants.
3. “Begin Writing Early” (p. 128). I made a careful record of what I knew and searched to identify gaps of what I did not know so that I could begin to see how the research was progressing.
4. “Let Readers ‘see’ for Themselves” (p. 129). I included primary data in the final description to give access to the data in order to support my claims.
5. “Report Fully” (p. 130). I reported the data completely and carefully; however, this does not mean that I reported every detail, but enough information to provide sufficient documentation of my findings. Geertz (1991) states

> It certainly is true that just the assembly of facts is not going to make a text persuasive; if it were, there would be a lot of very dull books that would be a lot more famous than they are. Somehow the sense of circumstantiality and of power in reserve (if an anecdote or an example doesn’t sound strained but sounds like you’ve got fifty others and this is the best one you chose) are factors that are rhetorically important. (p. 191)

I made the decisions of what to report based on the research questions, historical connections, and other significant stories from the participants.

6. "Be candid" (p. 131). I put myself into the research and shared my feelings when appropriate and relevant. I am aware that my biases came through about racism, sexism, and schools.
7. "Seek Feedback" (p. 132). I shared my writing with informed readers (dissertation committee, colleagues, peers, etc.) in order to receive multiple types of feedback. Members of the dissertation committee that have expertise in content or historical connections read the data for specific input in these areas. Also, I shared my writing throughout the process in order to receive direction for the study. I emailed updates to my committee members or met with members during the process so that they were aware of the status of the research.
8. "Try to Achieve Balance" (p. 133). I would go back to the interviews and reread, searching for "balance, fair[ness], completeness, sensitivity" to the words of the participants (p. 133).
9. "Write Accurately" (p. 134). I tried to write coherently and consistently.

I used triangulation of multiple sources. Wolcott (1990) stated that data sources can be limited and that informants do not always "get it right." I included multiple participants, multiple interviews of the participants, photographs, and artifacts. I also shared the findings with the participants and asked for clarification, elaboration, and verification of my interpretations. These strategies assisted me in ensuring the validity of my study.

Conclusion

In his writing of *Interpretive Biography,* Denzin (1989) reminds us of our obligations to the people whose lives we are researching.

> As we learn to do this, we must remember that our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline. Each story that we hear and life that we study are given to us under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared with us. And, in return, this sharing will allow us to write life documents that speak to the human dignity, the suffering, the hopes, the dreams, the lives gained, and the lives lost by the people we study. These documents will become testimonies to the ability of the human being to endure, to prevail, and to triumph over the structural forces that threaten at any moment to annihilate all of us. If we foster the illusion that we understand when we do not or that we have found meaningful, coherent lives where none exist, then we engage in a cultural practice that is just as repressive as the most repressive of political regimes. (p. 83)

I concur with Denzin that my effort will be to respectfully present the lives of my research participants as real people. This is a challenge to take seriously, and it is one that I have made every effort to meet.

Structure of Remaining Chapters

Chapter 4 introduces the participants and describes the relationships between the three generations of women. The participants are described in part by the road on which their family lives. Participants provided their own written description of the “roads” and

these are included as part of the information about each family. A chart is included to help identify the participant and which family they represent.

Chapter 5 describes how racism has been a part of the participants' lives. Historical elements of racism are described through experiences during segregation, desegregation, and then integration. Personal elements of racism are identified as experiences in the workplace, experiences as the "only Black," experiences in their communities, and experiences in developing coping skills. Institutional racism is described through the experiences the women had in schools along with examples of cultural racism that continues to affect the participants. The chapter concludes with the impact racism has had on schooling.

Chapter 6 presents the idea of "strong women". Historical elements of women's experiences are described by experiences of sexism along with insecurities these women experienced. Personal elements related to this concept of strong women are identified as confidence, sisterhood, valuing struggles, and God and faith. The chapter concludes with the descriptions of how these "strong women" had an impact on schooling across their families.

Chapter 7 presents a summary of the findings, conclusions from the research, recommendations for further research, significance of the study, limitations, and my own personal statement.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS

"I want to be just like my grandmother." (Tarla)

This chapter presents the families represented in the research. Each family is identified by the road of their family origin, and each participant is described. Below is a chart provided for easy access to the relationships of each member represented. The names in the chart were presented in the ways the participants first introduced themselves. All of the participants chose to use their real names in the study. A picture was taken of each participant (See Appendix C).

Old Woodsbridge Road	***Ricefield Road***	***Baker Street***
Mrs. Sammie Rucker Mother/Grandmother	Sarah Mayfield Mother/Aunt	Mrs. Evelyn Neely Mother/Grandmother
Saverne Varnum Daughter/Mother	Sonia Cobb Daughter/Cousin	Sheila Neely-Norman Daughter/Aunt
Tarla Varnum Daughter/Granddaughter	Charlene Harper Niece/Cousin	Kisha Bailey Granddaughter/Niece

Figure 1. *Family Relationships Among Participants Across Three Generations*

Throughout the study I was a concerned that the writing would not appropriately represent each woman; for that reason my effort has been to provide an overview of the participants that would paint a picture of their unique identities.

The struggles of their lives held important lessons that informed the understanding of their experiences. Saverne reflected, “But I thank God for those experiences, I thank God for the days of old, I thank God for all the things that I have been through because it has made me a better person, it has built character, you know.” The participants had different experiences, but each woman valued her experiences for what she had gained.

The introductions of the participants follow the order of the interviews beginning with the women from Old Woodsbridge Road, followed by the family from Ricefield Road, and then end with the Baker Street women. (Each of the roads was identified as a “Black road” that ran through the Black community.) Following a brief overview of each family the individual participants are introduced from youngest to oldest.

The Women From Old Woodsbridge Road

> The house I grew up in is located off the Jefferson, Commerce road known as the Old Woodsbridge road. The road was dirt which caused many problems in the winter and summer months. The house was a Jim Walter house finished by my maternal grandfather and uncles. The house had three bedrooms, kitchen, small living room, one bathroom and a huge back porch. We always had appliances, which made our living easier. The house was located across the street from a huge cotton field. We, my family, would pick cotton every summer to earn money to buy new appliances. The front yard was large and the back yard was a field. My parents and grandparents would plant gardens every spring and summer. We also had livestock. (Saverne)

The study began with the women from Old Woodsbridge Road in Jefferson, Georgia. My mother-in-law introduced me to this first set of women participants. The interviews were arranged by phone and began on September 3, 2002. Mrs. Rucker's interviews were conducted at her church, her daughter, Saverne's first interview was held at her school and the following interviews were at my home. Tarla (the granddaughter of Mrs. Rucker and the daughter of Saverne) came to my home for two interviews, and our final interview was conducted at Spelman College. I begin by introducing the grandmother first.

Mrs. Sammie Rucker: You know I took struggles for strengthening.

Mrs. Rucker was the grandmother of Tarla and the mother of Saverne. She recently celebrated her 50th wedding anniversary. Mrs. Rucker was a retired teacher and nurse. She had two children, as well as four grandchildren who ranged from ages 13–24, all of whom she was very proud. She was a substitute teacher, volunteered for several organizations in her community, and was very active in her church. She worked hard and had a tireless attitude. All of the interviews with Mrs. Rucker were held at her church.

I left our first interview feeling like I needed to know more about Mrs. Rucker's life. She was formal and reserved, yet she appeared to be nervous. It seemed difficult for Mrs. Rucker to talk about racism to a White woman whom she had just met. It did not seem "proper" to share her thoughts completely. She did not delve deeply into the issues of race or gender. She seemed to protect herself and was cautious with her words. She talked about "the other race" when she talked about White people.

It was clear that she had overcome obstacles, but she chose not to talk about them in relation to racial issues. She described a more positive reflection of life and did not

focus on the negatives. I sensed that she was checking me out to see if I was credible. I walked away from the first interview wondering if Mrs. Rucker would ever open up. Education had always been a priority and she had worked hard to provide one for her children:

> I have done some of every kind of work trying to get them through school. Saverne was at Georgia College down at Milledgeville and Tony was at the university at the same time and my little school check would not pay their tuition. What happened is I didn't, after I didn't have enough finances to pay, I went to Athens Tech and took up nursing. And I worked at BJC [Banks-Jackson County Hospital] part-time at night. I have had some of all kinds of jobs. While I was teaching in the day, and weekends I took Friday night, Saturday night, and sometimes Sunday night, if school wasn't going to be on Monday. I worked as a nursing assistant at BJC for about twenty years.

Our time during the second interview was more relaxed. Mrs. Rucker appeared more comfortable, and trust was established. She was very connected to her church and presented many pictures and stories related to her experiences. She volunteered endless hours at her church on the local and state level. She contributed to her community through different organizations. She talked about how she had learned from all of her experiences:

> You know I took struggles for strengthening. I didn't see them as a struggle back then. I didn't know I was struggling. Excuse me, I don't know whether I am making sense. Things that I did back in those days, I thought that is what you had to do, you know. They didn't seem like struggles to me. And you know what, I

appreciate going through that because I would never know what it was all about had I not had some struggles along the way. I really appreciate it.

Mrs. Rucker did not present negative ideas about race or sexism. She believed that you do not use excuses about race or look for things to blame. You do your job, and you work hard regardless of race or gender. It was a gift to get to know her.

Saverne: Scared, we were scared.

Saverne was the daughter of Mrs. Rucker and the mother of Tarla. Saverne was a single mother of two children, and a teacher. She was involved in many activities that kept her busy. She played the piano for church and was active in her sorority. She conveyed that she enjoyed life, and one could tell that she was the life of any party. She was the only participant affected by desegregation as a student.

I first met with Saverne at Fourth Street School where she taught fourth grade. We met in the conference room for the first interview. She immediately described her school experiences with a focus on integration. She was not shy and was eager to talk. She retold the events of her life involving racism that made a lasting impression on her. Fear and being scared to go to the White school was a part of her memories regarding integration. Being "called colored" still bothered her. She remembered the "colored only" signs and had negative feelings about them.

Saverne began elementary school in an all Black school in Jefferson, Georgia. She was moved to a White school during the middle of her elementary years. She vividly described her memory of this experience, "They came over, they didn't tell us what was going to happen. They came over and they put us on the bus and they took us to the White school." It was a difficult transition for the students, but Saverne felt that the

students embraced the challenge and made the best of the situation. She had some very fond memories of school in spite of the difficulties she experienced in the heart of integration. The following is a description of her daughter Tarla.

Tarla: I know that, I know my friends there [at Spelman], they have my back, they have my back for everything.

Tarla attended public school from kindergarten through high school, was attending Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and planned to attend law school after graduation. She came to my home with her mother on a Saturday morning. They walked in the front door as acquaintances, and when they left, they walked out the kitchen door as my friends. This was a symbolic occurrence that represented the development of our friendship. The front door was formal and reserved while the kitchen door was comfortable and relaxing.

Tarla and her family had a special relationship that was evident in the way she talked about her mother and grandmother that is presented in the following chapters. Tarla's activist spirit followed her mother and grandmother: strong women who had worked hard to attain their goals. Tarla liked school and provided details of her active involvement. Throughout high school she participated in band and chorus, was elected class President, held a part-time job in a law office, and was active in all aspects of school life. Tarla developed many lasting adult relationships while attending school. She had a close relationship with her principal, the superintendent of schools, the band and chorus teachers, and many other school employees.

She had contrasting racial experiences throughout public school and college. There were almost no Black students in her public school, and she was attending

Spelman College, an all Black women's school. Tarla reported that being around all Blacks and all women was a major adjustment. "The only other thing was seeing Black people all time, women all the time. I was just not used to that."

She valued the "sisterhood" at Spelman College. The "sisterhood" at Spelman College had been a unique opportunity for Tarla to develop strong relationships with majority Black women. It was an important experience that helped Tarla to grow as a woman following the example of many other Black women before her. Spelman was described by Marion Wright Edelman (1999) as:

> a college that gave me the latitude and safe space-one not defined by male or White folks' expectations, habits or competition, or by the need to preen and the prove myself to anyone beyond myself and God-to dream my dreams and to find and forge my own path.

Tarla reported that previously she had good relationships with White women and she appeared comfortable with me.

The Women From Ricefield Road

> In early 1975, Printece & I purchased two lots of land off a newly cut City of Hartwell street preparing to build our first home. One of the first things to be done was the naming of the street. I made a trip to the City of Hartwell council meeting and was given permission to name the street whatever we wanted. It was decided we would call it Ricefield Road. Rice for the name of the contractor building the house, who just happened to be her father, Olin Rice and Field to pick up part of the Mayfield last name. We called it Road because at the time there was no pavement, and it looked like your typical dirt road. This is the same road that

> prompted me to get involved in politics some years later, after being unable to get it paved. Our home was built in October 1977. I was elected to City Council in 1980, and the street was paved in 1983. It remains Ricefield Road today. (Sarah)

All three interviews with the women from Ricefield Road were held at Sarah Mayfield's home. The interviews began with Sarah Mayfield (mother of Sonia, aunt of Charlene) followed by Charlene, and ended with Sonia. Each listened to the others interview. Initially it was more difficult to conduct an interview with an audience, but ultimately the audience made the interviews easier. The participants would ask questions for clarification and also remind each other of stories. This removed me from the focus and allowed me to become an active observer. The audience was a positive addition to the interviews.

The women gave an entire Saturday for the interviews. They seemed to enjoy talking and having someone listen to their stories. Talking and listening was what they had previously done with their grandmother when she was alive. There was no rush, and Sarah got to share everything that was in her heart. The time we spent together began a friendship that I will treasure for a lifetime. The following were introductions into their lives, beginning with the oldest.

Sarah: See it is nice to just have somebody to sit and listen to me talk. Printece doesn't really like listening that much, so he will say, 'Sarah come in here and tell me; but could you hurry up with it and make it short.'

Sarah was the aunt of Charlene and the mother of Sonia. She was immediately welcoming, but she also tested me to see what kind of person I was. She made a statement directed to me about schoolwork not being the most important thing in life. She

felt that I would know in years to come what was more important, school or family. She advised that the most important times are those with my children and that these times were more lasting than a degree. I assured her that I agreed with her, and then she seemed to be relaxed with me. After talking about my children she saw how important they were to me and she began to open up. She had such a beautiful "southern lady" voice as well as a precise and perfect way of using language. She had a gift for telling stories that provided an excellent source of data.

She knew the segregated south and still felt it was a part of Hartwell. She talked about the high expectations that were part of her school experiences. She loved school and lit up when she talked about it. Mrs. Mayfield was a part of many "firsts" for Black women in her community.

Sarah had been elected as a city council woman over twenty years ago and is still the only Black woman on the council. She had an excitement for life that was inspirational. Her faith was a part of everything. She helped to create a warm family atmosphere by her genuine openness and love. The following description is of Sonia, Sarah's daughter.

Sonia: I saw all these Black people and thought they can do this?

Sonia was a wife, the mother of three children (two in middle and one in high school), the daughter of Sarah, an active church member, and a full-time student. She was busy and was trying to complete her degree in Early Childhood Education. Sonia appeared nervous and a little shy, but when it was her time to share she seemed to enjoy it. She also enjoyed listening to the other interviews.

She talked about how she felt about her dad, about being pregnant before marriage, and her strong ideas about racial issues. She did not hesitate to say what she thought. She went to integrated schools throughout her educational experiences except for one year at an all Black college.

One of the most interesting comments that she made concerning race was about being in gifted classes with all White people. She had a hard time going to Ft. Valley College and being with all Black people. She had definite ideas about who could perform based on her experiences of being with very few Black people in high achieving classes.

Sonia's son had a White girlfriend. She did not have a problem with her son dating a White girl, but she insisted that they not hide it or pretend that something was wrong with it.

> I don't want it to be this secret thing and that is only problem that I have. If you are going to go with somebody of the opposite race, just go with them. We can't break the barrier if you are going to keep it hidden. And for me it is hard because I am like I failed in this way, because I thought I built his self-esteem up a little bit more than that to know that even if he is going with her and everyone is looking, I want him to have enough sense to say, you know, if we are going to date, they are going to know. If it is not good enough for everybody to know, the parents and everybody, then no we can't do it.

Sonia felt strongly and was reflective about issues of race and gender. She reported several experiences with racial issues. She worked hard in school, and made clear that family and God were the most important things in her life.

Sonia's educational story began with her doing very well in school. She was the "only little Black girl" in her classes. Her school was integrated, but her gifted classes were not. She was therefore often isolated from the other Black children. This had a lasting impression on the way Sonia looked at the world. She continued to experience this form of "segregation" through the lives of her children that are described in the following chapters.

Charlene: No teacher really stands out to me during those years [my k-12 schooling].

Charlene was the youngest of the women and was a niece to Sarah. Charlene was a single mother with a six-month-old baby and worked two jobs. She seemed unconcerned about school, wished to get out of Hartwell, and wanted to be with her son's father. I went away from our first interview stereotyping her as a single mother with little direction for her life. She answered my questions, but she did not elaborate or give detailed information. It was disappointing to hear Charlene talk about her school experiences. She had neither gotten involved in school nor developed meaningful relationships during her high school years. She felt that her teachers did not seem to be interested in taking the time to get to know her.

> I never had a real close relationship with my teachers. I think I have a closer relationship with my teachers at college than I did in high school or elementary school or middle school.

This had a direct bearing on why Charlene was not involved in school to a greater extent.

It was during our second interview that my thoughts about Charlene changed. She reported doing well in school and seemed very bright. During her school years she described herself as being more interested in her boyfriends, though, and she looked for

them to give value to her life. She realized that this was wrong and regretted the choices she had made.

She spoke with a lot of maturity that she had developed through her life experience of becoming a mother. She felt strongly about her son and how she placed him first in her life. She worked two jobs and planned to go back to school in January to become a teacher. It took time to get to know Charlene, and after the final interview I was convinced she was a special young woman.

Charlene did not focus on race or gender issues as they pertained to her life. She described incidents that she observed, but not acts that happened to her personally. She attended integrated schools throughout all of her school years. She planned to continue her education and to provide for her son.

The Women from Baker Street

> My street consisted of older people who all attended the same church as my family. There were a few families which still had children my age but for the most part, most of these people were in the empty nest stage. Most of them had grandchildren or nieces and nephews who lived up north and they would come down to visit in the summer. My house was usually where they hung out everyday. All of the people along my street were homeowners and all had worked at some particular time. The ladies on the street would always stop us as we walked to our grandparents everyday. My grandparents lived on a short street not too far from our home. Our yard was also the hangout for the neighborhood children during the summer evenings because we had the large yard and the street light was on the corner. When we were younger and walked to Granny's each

> day, the people along the street would call my mama and let her know that we had just passed their house. I guess we had neighborhood watch back then. Everybody took care of each others' children. The disciplined us when necessary and then they called our parents and told them. We were then punished again for the inappropriate behavior. (Mrs. Neely Norman)

The Neely's live in Athens, Georgia. It took several calls to contact the Neely family and arrange for interviews. Mrs. Neely Norman agreed to participate and to ask her family to participate. We met at her mother's home in East Athens where we conducted all three interviews with Mrs. Neely and Kisha. Mrs. Neely Norman was unable to attend so we arranged an alternate date to begin our interviews. The interviews were conducted in my office to accommodate her schedule.

Mrs. Neely welcomed me into her home to visit. During our time together her friends and family came and went. Her home was the center of their family. My new friendship with the Neely's is a treasure I will appreciate for a lifetime. I begin by introducing Mrs. Neely, followed by Mrs. Neely Norman and then Kisha.

Mrs. Evelyn Neely: I finally felt like a citizen.

Several people had advised that Mrs. Neely would be an excellent participant for my research. Because of her activism and involvement in her community many considered her the "mayor" of East Athens. She had been active in politics for many years.

When I called to set up the interviews I offered to come to their home. Mrs. Neely Norman asked me if I would come to East Athens and if I minded coming to the "Black section" of town. I met Mrs. Neely at 255 Baker Street, Athens, Georgia. I was not afraid

to drive into this part of town. Ms. Neely welcomed me into her home, and we went to the dining room table. She had worked with and talked to many White people. She tested me by making critical comments about White people to ascertain my reactions to her comments about race.

Mrs. Neely introduced me to new historical information about Athens, Georgia. She provided information about the Model Cities Program that was a program that was helpful in facilitating integration in Athens. It provided funds for housing, education, job training, childcare, health care, and additional needs that were a part of the community. "That [Model Cities Program] did more for integration for Athens-Clarke County than anything, because it brought people together." Mrs. Neely was partnered with The University of Georgia, Black and White citizens, and the Federal Government to create a program that would meet the needs of Athens, Georgia. The program was instrumental in furthering the development of the community. "It was a dream come true."

One comment that stood out from all of the interviews I conducted was from Ms. Neely. "I finally felt like a citizen, the mayor listened, people heard us, instead of telling us what we needed we told them what we wanted." This was a powerful achievement.

Mrs. Neely shared newspaper clippings and pictures of her life. She was a walking encyclopedia about the history of Athens over the past 70 years. She was retiring in the summer and seemed worn out with the "fight." "It is time for me to come out." She was concerned that someone would take over the work she had been committed to in her community.

Mrs. Sheila Neely Norman: I had to prove myself to White parents.

Mrs. Neely Norman was a wife, daughter of Mrs. Neely, a teacher and very involved in many interests. She was active in her church, sorority, choir, and many other organizations. She came to my office for the interviews. We were able to connect because we were both teachers, and we began a friendship for which I am thankful.

She attended all Black schools and all Black college, but was part of integration as a teacher. She "missed" integration as a student. The process began as she was completing school. She was a part of the work to make it happen, but she felt that she did not benefit personally from the changes that came from integration.

Mrs. Neely Norman explained that throughout her 28 years of teaching kindergarten she had "to prove herself to White parents." There was not a problem with the students. I saw her "light up" when she talked about her students and her teaching.

She told stories about her life as well as her teaching. Mrs. Neely Norman was a family person and wanted to be near home. She felt very deeply about her community and worked diligently to make it a better place for all.

Kisha: I was the only Black girl in the entire school that was in the gifted program.

Kisha was Mrs. Neely's granddaughter and Mrs. Neely Norman's niece. She was married and expecting her first child. She teaches elementary school. She did not appear comfortable at our first interview. She answered all of my questions but did not elaborate, and consequently, we completed the interview quickly. The literature states that Black participants in research may mistrust and feel a sense of resentment toward White researchers (Parham, 1993; Reid, 1984). Kisha was the most challenging participant with whom to form a relationship**.**

Things were better during the second interview. She opened up and began to share more details of her life. As she was leaving the interview she confessed, “I can’t believe I told you everything about myself today.” She spoke more openly during the second interview, but by the third interview she seemed to close up again. She brought in pictures but did not talk about them very much. She was Miss CSHS and Homecoming Queen, but all she said was that it was a good year. Kisha’s experiences with racial issues were unique:

> I was the only Black girl in the entire school that was in the gifted program, but there was another Black boy that was in the program. So it was kind of awkward at times because I was alienated from my friends, you know.

She spoke of being the only Black in the gifted program throughout her elementary years during each interview. She attended an all Black college after high school and had a wonderful experience developing relationships with other Black women.

Summary of Participant Families

All of the families had close relationships. There was a strong connection between each generation and each member. They all lived in the same community, and all of the generations had attended public school there. All of the women received education or vocational training after graduating from high school.

The homes of the oldest generations were the central locations for gathering. The oldest members were the grandmothers of their families. They came together for meals and for fellowship. There were high expectations for every aspect of life passed on from each generation to the next. They provided a strong support system for each other.

"Black mothers and grandmothers never stopped dreaming and working towards a world where in Langston Hughes's great poem, 'What ever race you be, will share the bounties of the earth and every man is free'" (Edelman, 1999, p. 122).

The differences in their experiences were influenced by the historical events that occurred throughout their lives. The oldest generations all attended segregated schools. The middle generation was mixed: Mrs. Neely Norman attended a segregated school, Saverne experienced part of desegregation, and Sonia attended integrated schools throughout. Their ages were only five years apart, but they had different school experiences in their respective communities. The process of integration occurred differently and on a different timeline throughout the towns where each family lived. The youngest generation attended integrated schools throughout.

Each participant played an important role in her family. Their lives had been different from each other's, but many similar qualities existed in all of the women: they were strong and committed to their families. However, the one major difference across generations was the decrease in activism among members of the youngest generation.

The members of the oldest generation had been active in their communities and were a part of working for racial uplift for their race. The members of the middle generation continued with activism that was crucial in the actualization of the integration. Only one from the youngest generation was involved in her community through politics or activism. The other two had not become involved and did not feel that it was important. When asked about politics Kisha had little to say,

> I mean I have voted since I was 18, but I have never gotten involved with it. Never had really an interest. I guess nothing has really personally affected me. You know, sometimes something has to just hit home for you.

The older generation was tired from the "fight" and were concerned that the younger generation would not continue the work for their race. Mrs. Neely explained that the younger generation had a false sense of equality. "They have just been fooled into thinking that things are equal." Others, such as Harry Belafonte (West, 1997) have also identified this decline of activism in today's youth:

> . . . the libratory impulse among young people has seriously decreased because it has been replaced by something else that was never meant to be. When we talked about integration, we were talking about the ending of segregation and the right to opportunity. We wanted to integrate so that we could have the right to opportunity. What in fact happened in that quest and in the immediate success of it was that we integrated and lost our cultural base.

Belafonte felt that the Black race had lost a great deal in the name of integration (West, 1997).

Tarla was an exception to the youngest generation of these participants. She was very interested in politics and hopes to run for office someday. She has a strong interest in the work of politics in her community. The other younger women's focus was on their needs personally and not on the race as a whole.

The opportunity to look at three generations of women provides an interesting overview of history along with a deeper understanding of changes over time in schools.

The life experiences of these nine women form the basis for this study of racism and sexism in schools. The following is a detailed account of their experiences with racism.

CHAPTER 5

EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

"The problem in the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" (Du Bois, 1953).

In this chapter I present the experiences of racism described by the participants. Their experiences are portrayed in a historical context. Finally, implications of racism on schooling are described.

It is a fact that America is a racist nation, whether we like it or not, whether we agree with it or not, it is a part of our lives (King, 1997). Historically, racism has been understood as prejudiced attitudes, stereotypical beliefs, and discrimination (Maluso, 1995). Racism has also been understood as a system of power in which the majority exploits the minority because of racial attributes. According to Giroux (1993), racism is an ideological poison that is learned; it is a historical and social construction that is a part of social practices, needs, the unconscious, and rationality itself.

The examples of racism in this study were based on the idea that racism involves systematic oppression through persistent behavior that is the result of personal racial prejudice and racial discrimination within societal structures (Maluso, 1995). Racism is a complex concept that includes attitudes of racial superiority, institutional power that suppresses members of the supposedly inferior race, and a broadly based ideology of ethnocentrism or cultural superiority (Bennett, 2003). The participants provided examples describing how different aspects of racism had been a part of their lives.

The women variously identified racism as exclusion, denial of equal access, oppression, discrimination, prejudiced attitudes, attitudes of racial superiority, and institutional power. Their stories provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of each participant and how the saw experiences of racism as present in their lives. Their experiences are first described in a historical context that illustrates the correlation between events and attitudes in history.

Historical Connections to Racism

Experiences during Segregation

"We had a superior school experience." (Sarah)

Racism was part of the lived experience of segregation through exclusion and denial of equal access to education. However, these participants did not describe segregation solely as a negative experience. The women in the study described positive school experiences, strong community support, high academic expectations, and overall positive academic experiences during segregation.

The unequal access and limited educational opportunities were where racist attitudes were evident. "Separate but equal" was not a reality. However, in these examples the participants described their education as favorable. The theme of positive school experiences was present throughout all of the examples from the women that attended segregated schools. The following are examples of experiences in segregated schools and how the women were affected by the experience.

Mrs. Rucker. Mrs. Rucker attended segregated schools throughout her school life and made this reflection:

> We had to memorize and stand up and recite the tables and Mrs. Lula Lay was that kind of teacher. If she had something for you to learn, she didn't want you to look in the book or anything, you had to stand up and recite whatever she wanted you to learn. Your multiplication tables, your division tables. Back then, if she was teaching English, you had say what was pronouns and verbs and that sort of thing. She was a good teacher.

High expectations were present for the students. They had to learn and were expected to perform perfectly. This high standard was present from all of the women who attended all Black schools and had Black teachers. Access to education was limited during this time period. When asked about where she attended school Mrs. Rucker gave a detailed description of the educational opportunities that were available.

> No school for Blacks. In fact, Martin Institute was the only school here and it was just a high school, in the county, for the other race. And we went to Commerce to middle school, I call it. Back then it was called junior high, it was Johntown Junior High School. We went there in the 8th and 9th grade and after the 9th grade we had to go out of the county in order to get to high school.

Mrs. Rucker described White people as "the other race". Black students were not allowed to attend the White school. Black people lacked economic and political power, White elites were able to control the structure and content of Black elementary, secondary, normal, and college education during the first third of the twentieth century (Anderson, 1988). Black students had few educational opportunities and were systematically cut off from opportunities to advance academically (Fultz, 1995). Institutional racism was present in school and systems throughout society.

Mrs. Rucker described going to high school,

> We had to live there, there wasn't any busses on the road at that time. That was in the early 40s, you had to ride. They had what they called the railroad bus and it would go from Athens to Gainesville. I think it went twice a day and you either caught it in the morning or late in the afternoon, but we didn't ride that. We had to live with a relative. My cousin and I, when I say we, I had a cousin who was the same age I was and we went together and we lived with an aunt. We lived on Morton Street and we went to high school there. It was called Fair Street High School. It is now called elementary, but it was high school at this time, so we went there to high school and we graduated, we played sports. And we lived with my aunt, called Aunt Rena Harvey and she lived on Morton Street and we walked from Morton Street up the hill to Fair Street every day.

Mrs. Rucker made sacrifices of living in another town and away from her parents in order to attend high school. She graduated and then moved to Alabama to attend an all Black college. Due to segregation, opportunities to attend school in Georgia were limited.

> When we finished that school, we went out of the state to college. I went to Stillman, which is a school that is run by the Presbyterian Church, it still is. It was a two-year college at that particular time, but now it is four years and then you can go and get some graduate studies there. I went and stayed two years because you couldn't go any further unless you went to Alabama State, which was across the road from Stillman.

Education for Black women was often limited (Cooper, 1988; Terrell, 1995). Mrs. Rucker did not have access to all colleges, consequently limiting her career options.

Black women's inequities brought on by multiple oppressions of racism and sexism contributed to years of educational restrictions (Joseph, 1995).

Mrs. Rucker attended an all Black college that was run by the Presbyterian Board of Missions. Black higher education in the South existed through a system of private liberal arts colleges that were often supported by churches (Banks, 2003). Mrs. Rucker originally went to college to become a nurse, but the school closed the nursing program due to monetary limitations.

> . . . they had nursing going on at that particular time and had a little hospital there on the campus and you could be an RN as well as an LPN. But they could not afford that so they closed that down and now it is a big science lab right near Winsbury Hall. That is where I lived.

Black women had limited employment opportunities (Hunter, 1997). Mrs. Rucker had few options for college choices so she stayed at Stillman and became a teacher. Mrs. Rucker helped to meet the need for quality Black teachers. Black teachers were instrumental in helping to wipe out the illiteracy rate of a majority of Black people (Banks, 2003).

It was a significant accomplishment for Mrs. Rucker to go away to college. She worked and made her way in school. Education was highly valued in her family, and they sacrificed to provide educational opportunities.

> My people didn't have any money, we were poor farmers to send me, so I worked. Back then they called it a scholarship, it was a work scholarship. What you had to do was to do work around the campus, clean the dormitory or the

> classrooms, or baby-sit with the children of teachers who had children on campus. So I worked my way through Stillman.

Following graduation Mrs. Rucker began teaching in a one-room segregated school and later taught at Bryan High School. She continued her education at Ft. Valley and then at the University of Georgia. She worked hard to provide an education for her children.

The Bryan school was built with money raised by the Black community and with funds from White donors. During this time period much of the funding came from rural Black citizens (Banks, 2003).

> We were just packed because it was too little to start with but they were so proud of it because they had never had a brick school. Mr. Bryan donated in Jackson County. He donated the most money. And then the Black folks raised quite a bit of money. We used to have, we had plays and charged people to come in at night. We had PTA events, where we would have programs and raise quite a bit of money. We didn't have a lunchroom at this time and we had concession here where kids could get a drink, candy or cookies or something like that and each class, if they were high school, they were given the chance to raise some money for their classes. It was always something to raise money for.

There were inequities between the Black and White schools regarding the money that was spent on Black children compared to the White children (Lee, 1999).

> This is how conditions were back then, but we were so proud of it, you know, because we went from there to here. When we had this [Bryan school], we still had to have the house because we didn't have enough room. There was an old

> church on this side where the park is, and we had school in that too and they were just piled up.

Mrs. Rucker shared pictures of the old school and new school (Appendix F). The overcrowded conditions were a dominant characteristic of Black schooling (Caliver, 1933). It was separate but not equal to the White school. Mrs. Rucker provided an overview of the history of public education for Blacks in Jackson County (Appendix G).

Mrs. Rucker did not think that attending and then teaching at an all Black school was a negative experience. She had a good education and felt that the Black school where she taught provided a high-quality education. Historically, many segregated schools were connected to the community and were viewed as being "good" (Morris, 1999).

The racism that Mrs. Rucker experienced manifested itself in the reality of "separate but not equal." The Black school in Jackson County did not have equal facilities and did not go through to the 12th grade. When the new Bryan school was built it was not big enough to accommodate the Black students. It was part of the county school system, but the Black community had to help raise money to provide for the students. These characteristics were consistent with segregated schools across the South (Fultz, 1995).

Mrs. Rucker's early life was lived in a completely segregated society, but she did not talk about segregation in an adverse way. She talked about her experiences positively and about how her experiences made her who she is today. Mrs. Rucker was asked to tell about her success and struggles throughout her life:

> You know I took struggles for strengthening. I didn't see them as a struggle back then. I didn't know I was struggling. Excuse me, I don't know whether I am

> making sense. Things that I did back in those days, I thought that is what you had to do, you know.

Mrs. Rucker had positive reflections of her segregated school experience. Segregated Black schools were often compared to a family where teachers and principals were instrumental in shaping student learning (Siddle-Walker, 1996). For Mrs. Rucker this family atmosphere was paramount to her success throughout life.

Sarah. Sarah also had an all Black school experience in a county training school. In Georgia, training schools were seen as an opportunity to spread industrial education in Black common schools and to make the Black students more understanding of economics, industrious, and profitable citizens (Banks, 2003).

> Hart County Training School. And I was not insulted by that name, but when I grew older, people said well we should have been insulted by the name of our school because training schools indicated that you were going to a school for maybe for a behavioral disorder or a prison camp like school, but we never thought of it that way. Of course, we have to recognize that it was segregated and it was all Black. And I guess it was how they distinguished the Black schools from the White schools, ours was called Hart County Training School and the other one was called Hart County High School. But see, it didn't really matter a lot because we were happy about our school and enjoyed it.

The all Black schools had many community activities and involved everyone in plays and sporting events. These activities were an important part of the culture of the school and taught the students many different things. Schools during segregation were

known for providing an opportunity for African Americans to come together and bond as a community (Morris, 1999).

Mrs. Mayfield felt that her education was superior to education today. Historically there was criticism of segregated schools and the quality of teaching that was available. However, many teachers were among the best educated African Americans (Fultz, 1995). Teachers helped to ground Black students in their history and culture (Edelman, 1999).

> When I think back now, I want to say what stands out is how committed our teachers were to our learning. I mean they were committed. I am going to put this on the tape because this is how I feel. I told my girls, I said, the education that we received back then is equivalent of what people are coming out of college with now. And I feel very strongly about that. They were, I mean you really had to learn, you had to learn the material that you were exposed to. And at the time I didn't realize how important that was going to be, but that has carried me through so many phases of my life. And when I look back on it, I am just so proud that I went to school where I was and that it was, the quality of learning and education. Ooh, it so far surpasses what I see now.

Often, educational experiences of African Americans have been documented with a focus on Black people as victims, while emphasizing their deficiencies and their differences from Whites (Collier-Thomas, 1982), but for Sarah segregated school was not a negative place. She described working hard at her studies, but also described school as a place she enjoyed. She loved school and had many fond memories. Sarah did not see herself as a victim and did not have a sense of others defining her by her deficiencies and differences

from Whites. When she grew up, her community was segregated, and she felt that her current community was still segregated in many areas.

Well everything was segregated. And what is so strange about it in 2002, we still have probably more things segregated in Hartwell than you do in a lot of places.

As a result of living in a segregated environment, Sarah felt that she looked at life differently from her children (who grew up in an integrated society). Her children gave her a chance to live in an integrated world through their experiences. This allowed her to see the world from different perspectives.

> That is kind of just, but I don't know how you explain that to people, when I really think about it. When you grow up in that atmosphere, somehow it doesn't impact how you see things as much as it does, say my children because they have grown up in a totally different atmosphere. It is interesting to me. When they went to school they never had a Black teacher. All I ever had was Black teachers, but it is just such a difference and I have enjoyed the change, the difference. I was only exposed to segregated life and they were able to come along in that and be a part of the integrated world and so have I been. I am glad to have still been alive. But everything was segregated.

Sarah was the valedictorian of her class. She graduated from high school at 16 and went to college.

> And you know I told you the first time, I said while I don't have a lot of things, I just feel that I have a superior school experience. I do, I don't have anything but good memories mostly about school. And I realize that is a jewel now.

The participation in the research gave Mrs. Mayfield a chance to reflect and see how the past and present worked together in her life. In recovering the stories of the past she had an opportunity to reconcile and reprioritize what was important about the past with what was important about the present (Smith, 1999).

In Sarah's school experiences, she felt that the high expectations from teachers were instrumental in the advancement of the students. The students were supported and encouraged by the entire community. Being in a segregated school with excellent teachers was a positive experience, which gave Sarah the confidence and support to become the strong woman that she felt she had been throughout her life:

> I am happy though. I am happy though. I am trying to think of something else. But see the world that I knew back then was very segregated. This is for the White and this is for the Black, everything was like that.

Sarah had strong memories of the segregated world that was outside the Black Community, which left lasting impressions.

> You know how when they finally brought fast food places and the first place that I could remember going to McDonald's, they had McDonald's in Anderson and that was way before we had a Hardee's. And the first time we were going to get a hamburger from a place like that and my middle sister, (her name is Dorothy), and my mother sent her up to the window to get them. And she went up to [the window] and they said we don't serve niggers here and she said, 'We don't serve niggers here?' And she came back and told my mother that, 'they said they don't serve niggers here' and my mother said, 'get in the car, get in the car,' because back then your parents were very protective of you. So whenever we would go for

> a trip or anything, you couldn't stop at the filling station or anything, you always had to have something in the car to use. I remember my mother didn't like to take long trips because the children and there was nowhere for them to go and of course our parents were very protective of us. They didn't allow us to get in a lot of situations where we could have our feelings hurt and stuff. But she did that day, she said, 'get in the car, get in the car,' and we didn't get it [the hamburger]. Yeah, she said, [my sister] 'I don't want a nigger, I just want to get one of those hamburgers.' I mean it was funny. It wasn't too long after that they had a sit in or something over there and after that we went back over and tried it again and got them [hamburgers]. And then I think about how many we bought there, even after that, we didn't, I guess you could have just boycotted it or something. We went back and bought hamburgers and enjoyed them.

Sarah found humor in this story after all of these years, but the actual experience was not pleasant. She felt that society had come a long way, "There is a process to change anyway." Change was not easy and change came slowly. Sarah's parents taught her how to live in a segregated world. She had to learn the "system" of segregation at a young age. Yet, her parents tried to protect her from the harshness of racism, and she felt support from the Black community.

> My mother talked to us so much about race, when we were growing up. She would say you all can, that is how we stayed out of situations where our feelings would get hurt, because this is how our mother talked to us. She would say we are going to town, and when we get to town and we got into the stores, don't touch anything, don't talk to anybody, just stay right with me, don't touch anything. She

> was very emphatic about it because she didn't want anybody in the store to say get your hands off of that and she would say, 'I don't want anybody to say anything to you, I don't want anybody to say anything to you, and so that she protected us in a way.' My dad said, 'I am not ever going to let you all work outside of the houses until you get grown and I will not let you get outside, because I don't want anybody saying anything to you and I don't want you to have to think that you have to do some of the things people have to do.' So I think they protected us as best they could.

Racism affected how Sarah and her sisters could act in public, where they could go, and what they could do. They were taught how they were to act in a White environment.

> My mother would say, now, you are colored, she didn't call it Black, you are colored girls and colored people can't have the same things that White people have, is what she would say and she would say, now a lot of times we are going to go to town and we are going to look in the windows, just look in the windows, you can look at these things and you think they are pretty, but you can't want everything. She was always teaching us don't want everything you see, don't touch anything, and ooh, just lots of little things.

This was a very important lesson for Sarah and her sisters. It affected their lives when they were young. Sarah continued to help her own daughters learn to live in a White world. It was a strategy passed down through the generations. She was also taught how to act around White men. Fear was present in every aspect of their relationships with

White people. Her parents had learned the prejudices and racial discriminations within society and were constantly teaching them.

> She would tell us how, because she had three girls, when we would start getting older, she would say, now sometimes men will say things to you, she said White men too, they will say things to you and take you off and you have to be careful with men, don't talk to men, don't do this for men, don't be this, don't do, all kinds of things about race. And then she would tell us the story about how they hung this man and dropped his body down in a well and how that impacted her life and ooh, she said that White people don't love you.

Sarah had a special way about her at an early age. Her mother tried to influence her thinking and teach her about White people, but Sarah had her own thoughts, which were unique and different from her family and the times.

> I said Momma some of them might love us, maybe all of them are not like that, and she said, 'Oh yes they are, they are all like that'. And I said, 'No Momma they are not all like that, if they were we wouldn't never be where we are now'. No, see we had to have help, we couldn't do that by ourselves. We would still be in slavery if somebody had not helped us and I remember talking to her, talking to her. And over the years I watched how what I had in me moved on and helped her change how she felt. Because that is what I say about racism, people think that racism is only from White to Black, but it also from Black to White. And some people don't recognize it but it is, but with God, there is no race and gender and all of that.

This statement revealed Sarah's past experiences of racism and sexism, how her family worked through this, and how she responded. Daily, she confronted issues of race and gender; her mother had one way of coping and Sarah chose another. Sarah used her attitude to change many lives, her mother's life included. She was still working to change attitudes and race relations in her community. She believed she had a "calling from God" to help improve race relations. It had been a slow process, but changes had come. Sarah embraced the teachings of civil rights leaders who worked throughout her lifetime.

> Then of course Martin Luther King came along in our day and age and he was preaching equal rights and peace through non-violence, but social change, but in a peaceful way. And some times I have listened to a lot of speeches and like a lot of what he said. Because he basically did not believe in fighting and everything. He just thought you should stand up for what was right, but I came up through that age and of course, along in there is when my mom and dad started to change. Because they watched integration take place and there were places that we could go where we had not been able to go. And my father, he was a lot slower to catch on to the fact that he could go here, or go there. And I noticed that, even in my self, sometimes now I will still say, where is that somewhere that we can go and my children will say, what do you mean is it somewhere we can go. I mean, and so I, the generations are just so different and it is just has been an interesting life.

Sarah's children had not experienced restrictions due to race and did not understand her questioning where they could go or not go. She had a unique way of looking at racial issues.

> I was always telling people, but you can't go by that, you can't not like somebody just because. And I think maybe that is the thing that is in me that I have passed on to my children and they have passed on to their children. You can't just say because somebody is White or somebody is Black or because they are whatever. It has to be the heart of the person, that is what you got to learn, you have to be able to see that and work with that and love them, because God says we have to love everybody.

Sarah touched many people's lives and continues to be an important leader in her community. She was the first Black city council person in Hartwell and 20 years later she was still the only Black councilperson. She has been a instrumental in promoting race relations in her community.

Mrs. Neely Norman. Ms. Neely Norman described her school experiences during segregation.

> And then I went to Lyons Middle for 8th grade and… everybody on the east side attended Lyons and everybody on the west side went to Burney Harris. And then I went there in 9th grade, and so from 9th through 12th I was at Burney Harris and I graduated from there in '66. And we had the choice of going to Athens High during '64 I believe, but I wanted to stay and finish at Burney Harris. And I went to college at the age of 16.

Mrs. Neely Norman began school young and attended all Black schools throughout her education. She was at the end of her high school years when integration occurred. She had the "choice" of where to go to school and she chose to stay at the all Black school she attended. Race relations were turbulent during her college years. She

saw her world pay great attention to overcoming racism and the injustices that racism brought.

> When I went to college, that was a predominantly Black college but our president was White. He retired the year that I graduated and it was a big thing. That was when they had the riot in Augusta and everything and we never had a problem, never thought about having a White president, that was a student from New York, and they said he was part of the Black Panthers. One night he had put up all these sheets. We got up the next morning and we want a Black president [was everywhere] and none of us knew anything about what was going on. I remember we were called to the student center, to the chapel, trying to find out what was going on and none of us knew. Because we didn't know where [the signs] came from. He just came out of the clear blue sky, not at the student body meetings or anything. It was after that year he [the president] retired and then from then on the president has been Black. That was in 70s and all of my, I guess I had about half and half and the faculty half and half, were Black and White.

Mrs. Neely Norman lived through a time (1960's) when she saw activism that sparked changes for integration. This time period was important in the racial uplift of African Americans (Alridge, 1999).

> I was always in the part of the generation that fought for changes and stuff, but then you didn't reap the benefit of it, it was those coming behind you. Like when I went to college, you know, women were not, at least at my school, they were not into engineering and that, because of course I felt that if the opportunity had been there, I probably would have gone into that and been an engineer.

She saw the changes, but they were a little late to make a difference in her educational life. She felt that she was part of the generation that made changes for the benefit of others.

> Yeah and then in ‘70, when I graduated, I didn’t even get a chance to march because that is when the rioting broke out in Augusta and my daddy had to come down and pick me up by 12:00 that next day and they mailed us our diploma, that is something that you waited four years for.

As a result of changes, violence and action were everywhere; the event described above did not allow Mrs. Neely Norman to graduate in a formal ceremony. She lived through much unrest and very anxious times; however, Mrs. Neely Norman believed that she got a good education.

Mrs. Neely. Mrs. Neely, the oldest of the Baker Street women, reflected upon her school experiences.

> I grew up in Athens-Clarke County. I am 77 years old. I am the oldest of 11 children. Now I have living, … three sisters and two brothers. I went to East Athens Elementary School and of course, the whole time that I went to school, it was segregated. Enjoyed elementary school. Now they have kindergarten, but we had what you called morning class and evening class, so that took the place of the kindergarten. I had a third grade teacher that I really, I was just crazy about her. She was very kind and sometimes she would, on Fridays, she would come home with me to visit.

Direct separation and segregation played out the racism in Mrs. Neely's life. She was separated from White children and adults in formal settings. However, there were informal opportunities to play with White children in the neighborhood.

Mrs. Neely was an influential participant in Athens for changes that occurred to offer Blacks more opportunities. She saw that racism limited opportunities, and she worked for changes to occur. She had strong memories of segregation and remembered the negative attitudes that went with segregation.

> We walked from over on this side of town to, all the way up on Reese Street, there. I think it is a building called the Reese Street Building, Masonic Lodge is in charge of that building, Right, yeah and we walked when we just little for elementary school. That was junior high and then high school was right down the street. Athens High Industrial School, that was. But yeah, the county owned both, but they were separate. We had Athens High Industrial, which was the Black school and had Athens High, that was the White school, high school, and of course, we had East Athens and one for Oconee County.

She mentioned during each interview the difficulties she experienced while walking to school. These difficulties resulted from direct racist actions that profoundly affected her life.

> That is a long walk. That was really a struggle. And see we had to go through an area where people really weren't that nice, you know. We had to pass the knit mill, as they called it that because they made socks. There the people were just so mean, they would be upstairs working and they would see a group of us coming, and most everybody used snuff or chewed tobacco and they would spat out of the

> window. And so we would have to run to keep it from and you know you just dreaded and we had to walk and we had to across the river and it had a bridge, but the bridge had, you know how the planks are laid in, and you could just look down and see the water. I used to cry everyday because I was dreading to go across there. And my aunt used to catch a hold to my hand and help me across, but you know, you had to look forward to that everyday. Right, it was just like a never-ending thing, you know. The whole time that I went to school we walked and the other kids [White kids] rode busses. They would throw things out of the bus windows, you know, and like I never had it happen to me, but I was told. Like on some of the streets where like when it would rain, the bus driver would drive through the hole with the water and just splatter water on the kids that were walking, you know. That was so degrading and I haven't thought in a long time, you know, but it is amazing how you put things out of your mind, those things that are not pleasant. That was a struggle for us just to get to school, you know, the ones that lived on this side of town.

The hardships and struggles the women encountered to obtain an education and later to pass on their learning to others was a story that often went untold (Perkins, 1987). The reflections these women provided brought attention to the importance of learning about the past. There were many unpleasant memories, but the experiences did not keep the students from learning.

> Well the thing too, is that with our books, we had to have books that was, that the White people had already used. They would write in them and tear pages out and we were supposed to use those books and they were always behind the times, you

> know, but even at that, we learned. Because you had teachers who really cared and they could talk about you when you grow up and what you can be and all that you can be and it is just amazing, it seems like another world, you know, for you, and I always admired teachers. I always thought they dressed so well and you know they looked so pretty and they made you feel like that, they made you feel like you know you really wanted to learn. Now you know you got everybody telling the kids that they can't learn and they have them on all these drugs, the Ritalin and the whatever else that they give them.

The teachers were dedicated to doing extra to show the students that they were special. Giving the Black children poor quality materials for school was a racist act that resulted in positive action from the teachers. Mrs. Neely expressed concern about the state of teaching today. She felt that educators placed limitations upon the students according to race.

> Well, the integration of school to what extent it is integrated, but at least we have an opportunity to get books and you know, to me, it never, I really didn't have a problem with segregated schools, had they been equal. But they were never equal, they were separate, but they weren't equal and when you think about all of the things that we have had to go up against, like with Charlene and Hamilton at the University of Georgia, you know, how they were treated, you know, how can people be.

Mrs. Neely felt the main problem of education was the inequality of the schools and not segregation. Legalized racism, social neglect, and economic disparity were among the struggles of unfair and unequal school opportunities (Morris, 1999). She saw

on a personal level how people were treated as a result of their race. She did not blame these problems on segregation, but she felt these problems came from people's racial attitudes and actions.

Summary of Experiences During Segregation

Racism was part of segregationist policies. It was present in the experiences of institutional racism where laws, customs and practices systematically restricted opportunities. It affected each of these women by excluding them from equal opportunities of education. However, the women did not let racism keep them from learning.

Each woman experienced segregation differently. Their experiences included some positive school experiences, high expectations from teachers, and positive attitudes toward life experiences. Academically, they felt their schooling was high quality; socially, they had good friends and the community was supportive; and overall school was a good experience. Sarah felt that her education was better than today's education. "Good" all Black schools have been documented by other accounts of all Black schools (Siddle-Walker, 1996).

There was inequality in the distribution of resources, a lack of facilities, and inadequate funding compared to the White schools (Siddle-Walker, 1996). However, the "communal bonds" between the school and the community created a positive learning environment (Morris, 1999). Researchers argue that the implementation of desegregation policies fractured these bonds (Morris, 1999).

The women described their teachers' high expectations. They believed they were in classrooms that required them to learn and excel. They felt that their teachers

supported and encouraged them. The fate of the race was dependent on a high quality education; high quality teachers were necessary to make this happen (Fultz, 1995). The women described working hard to accomplish their goals. Support from the Black community and Black teachers, and positive attitudes toward Black students encouraged academic success and created an environment in which students realized their academic potential (Siddle-Walker, 1996).

The experience of segregation and racism were part of the women's educational and personal development; however, rather than focus on the negative aspects, they often used these experiences to create positive lives for themselves and their families. Black women endured multiple oppressions as they made contributions toward the survival of their race (Alridge, 1999). Living during segregation brought many negative experiences, but the women's lives during segregation also had positive aspects. They did not say they wanted to return to segregation, but the experiences during this time of their lives were not all negative. "Despite school segregation and harassment from the White population, the African-American population of the United States made one of the greatest educational advancements in the history of education" (Spring, 1997, p. 60). It was evident from the women's lives that they had made great contributions to their families and communities.

Experiences during Desegregation/Integration

"It was like being a soldier on a battlefield" (Beals, 1994, p. xxi).

Throughout the process of integration changes occurred that affected the women in this study. Many of the scars and pains of those years stayed with students who directly experienced integration (Beals, 1994). Racism was not alleviated through

integration (Bennett, 2003). Many life stories allowed us to see the great sacrifices and risks that were involved in the pursuit of a better education (Beals, 1994). Saverne was the only participant in school during the process of integration. Her story gave images of the struggles and the enduring successes of those involved.

Saverne. Saverne began school during segregation; during her elementary years integration commenced. It was a hard transition, but the students pulled together and made the best of the situation. She had some very fond memories of school in spite of the difficulties she experienced. Her story began with her most memorable time.

> I grew up in Jefferson. I went to school at Jefferson High School. I started off, well I graduated from Jefferson High School but my earlier years were at Bryan Elementary School, one through six and it was a memorable time, it was. My mother was my third grade teacher. So, that was my most memorable years in school was my elementary years and then we moved to, the most, I don't know, it was the hardest time, was in the early school grades when we had to be shipped to Jefferson Elementary School. They came over, they didn't tell us what was going to happen. They came over and they put us on the bus and they took us to the White school.

The young children were put on a bus and "shipped" to the White school. The fear and uncertainty was great. These were young children, and society forced something upon them that even adults were unable to accomplish. In actuality, the children worked to change the world. Many other accounts have highlighted the hardships endured by children (Beals, 1994).

> Just one day. They probably told our parents, but we didn't really understand what was going on at the time. So, they put us on the bus and they took us to the White elementary school and we were crying and it was a very hard time for us. You know, we eventually, you know, we adjusted and we got along well and things turned out well. Then on at the high school we made a lot of great friends over there. They accepted us and some, you know, were mean to us, but you know, going from a Black school to an all White school, the integration thing was very hard.

This was a very important and life changing event in Saverne's life. She was the only participant in the study who changed schools during desegregation. She reflected on how it had affected her and what the experience was like.

> Scared. We were scared, we were petrified, we just didn't know what to expect. We were going to meet new teachers, White kids, you know, not, we were not used to being in the, because some of us were in the time where we had the colored only waiting rooms, the colored only bathrooms, the colored only water fountains; so we were in that era, okay, so going to play and be in school with White kids was, we were terrified. You know, we didn't know what to expect, but it all boiled down to, you know, things worked out, and we were fine. Of course, you know, we, there was some arguing and some fights, but it all worked out. Because not having gone to school with White kids, you know you are going to have that racial mix there, that racial problem. But I don't think, being so young, it wasn't as, as big as it probably would be in high school or somewhere else, but it was all, it was all smoothed over, you know. We just got in there and got along

> and made friends. Scared. We were scared, we were scared, we just sort of stuck together. Yeah. We were together, we just sort of made sure that we were all, everybody was okay and they were beside someone that was feeling the same way, you know what I mean. We just stuck together and we were scared. That is the thought I can remember.

Saverne painted a vivid picture of integration. She had lived a "colored only" life, and now she was going to be with White kids. The students were placed in a difficult situation, but it worked out okay. They "stuck together" and made it work. This was a great responsibility for children.

> But you know, my high school days, I was in the band, I was the vice-president of the class, I was on the homecoming court, I was a drum major, so you know after we got in there and got to work, started to work, things just started happening and you know and you know the kids didn't really make up racial issues, when we got up, well because, as we got older, you know, it wasn't a racial issue, but you know when kids, when White kids hear their older parents talk about the Blacks and they need to be back in Africa and you don't eat with them, you don't know, good, they realize that hey you are no different than we are, we are all the same, you know. So we just got that closeness and now when I go to, we have our class reunions, you know, I walk in and it is "Saverne's here," you know. I made such great friends, you know, I did. People that I see now in Jefferson, you know, it came together, you know, good, you know the saying good things, there is some good that comes out of bad situations. And at the time we thought it was a bad

> situation, but in reality, it really wasn't. It was a learning thing, you know, but something good came out, friendships, lots of friendships, you know.

There was a realization of color, of what it meant to be in school together, and Saverne described how they "worked" and positive things happened. Perhaps one of the main reasons that integration was successful in this community was because of the friendships the children developed and the relationships they established. Both races were unfamiliar with integration, but many of the students gave the effort to make it happen.

> We had to make friends, we had to be friendly ourselves so that they could see that hey we are not poison, we are not people from outer space because I am sure those White kids were just as scared as we were. And they didn't know how to react or how they, how we were going to react to them, so you know, I think it just took us, just sitting down talking and doing things together and of course being in class together and stuff to sort of break that ice, to break that barrier because we really got in there had, did a lot of things together. And you know, Black people had to pull together back then, it goes back to slavery you had to, they had to work in each other's fields. High school was memorable, after we made the transition and everything started settling down and we were become one and you know things started happening. I remember playing my first two years I played basketball and hated PE, I don't know why I played basketball as much as I disgusted PE and then I was on several organizations, on several staff, like the newspaper staff, the annual staff, and then I became vice-president of the junior class and then vice-president of the senior class and I was on the homecoming court, I was a drum major, so I was into stuff in school, you know, sort of well

> liked, you know, I got along with everybody, maybe not so well liked, but I got along with everybody, you know. I had a lot of friends that I could, and I never have been a really outgoing person, I don't go a lot, I am sort of a homebody I was then.

Saverne gave a detailed account of her life and involvement in high school. She described how important it was for the students to sit down and talk, "to break the ice," "to break that barrier." The students had to work through the racial stereotypes that were present. According to Saverne it was worth the effort.

> You know, I have just, I have come a long way. You know, and I am so glad that I went through the things that I did because it hasn't given me, it has made me what I am today, it has given me character and stamina and that is why I know, you know things are hard, I am on the go a lot, yeah, but I know where I have been and I know that I have the strength to handle anything. I am tired, yeah, but the Lord will not put any more on me than I can bear and I know that He is going to give me that push. And it is really hard, it is really hard, it really is. But I thank God for those experiences, I thank God for the days of old, I thank God for all the things that I have been through because it has made me a better person, it has built character, you know.

Saverne provided a deeper understanding of what integration was like. Saverne lived in segregation and integration, and she knew what it was like in both worlds. Desegregation was a "way of life" that she had experienced.

> At the time, we didn't realize that we were being ostracized, we didn't realize that, we just thought that was the way of life. We, I remember going to Dr. Adams

> office. Dr. Adams office is located at the top of the hill, facing the community bank. It is between the community bank and the Jefferson stadium and we had a little room where we sat and then in the front of the office was this big room with nice soft cushy chairs and magazines and that is where the White people sat and at the time, being as young, being younger, segregation, you know segregation was just not, we just didn't understand, you know what was going on, it wasn't, we thought that was the way of life, our generation thought that was the way of life, you know. Not that we thought, well I guess yes, we thought that White people were superior, okay, because White people work in the office, the president, and so we thought we were not, we were just a lower class, we were, okay, and that was really hard going to a White only, I mean a colored only bathroom and going to colored only water fountains and to this day I have a real problem with that word, colored. I really have a real problem with that, it just touches my nerve, because having gone through that, colored only, colored only, colored only, it just a left a real sour tarnish on my soul. You go around from now, the colored lady, I will jump and I will say what color. I have a real problem with that and maybe I could work on that. It was a way of life at the time and being as young I was I didn't really understand that we, this is not how it is supposed to be.

She did not like the word "colored," it left a "sour tarnish on [her] soul." Times changed and Saverne was in the midst of the changes.

> And then after the Martin Luther King era, okay, after we start understanding and we start listening to his preaching and teaching, you know, we started, a light bulb went on and we said no, this is not how it is supposed to be. We are equal and

> then, yes, after that era, then we started going into, we started that little room was no longer, if you wanted to sit in there you could, but you can go in the big room. You know, I didn't see any more, any more colored only signs or colored only in this type of restaurant, I didn't see any more of that. People started gradually going together and of course, that was some differences, you know, we were still being called the "n" word – the "nigger" word, but you know, that just, eventually it just started smoothing out. I mean, you know, not to say that there, it is better today, but not like it was. We have come a long way.

Change took time, and they realized that this was not the way things were supposed to be. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others helped Black people see how their lives could and should be better. King's work was an integral part of developing an environment in which changes could occur (Garrow, 1986).

> But we learned from it. We built our character; we learned stamina, we learned how to cope, if you will. We learned how to cope, we learned that we had to stick together and that is one thing that Black people have a hard time doing and that is sticking together, but during that time, we had to stick together in order to accomplish whatever we needed to do. The Black schools were separated, so we had to make do. We had some good times, you know, we had great basketball games, football games, our bands, our music, we had that and all of that, the music goes back to the slavery times, that is what they had.

The memories of the past continued to be part of Saverne's life.

> So the colored only situation that stuck out with me, stuck with me are things that I remember. Those are things that stuck with me. Okay, the waiting rooms, the

> water fountains, the bathrooms; now that was something that was personal. And that stuck with me. At the time, you know, at the time, like I said, like I told you I thought it was the way of life. But as I grew older and I look back on it, I remember those days, I remember, because the media. You still see the media goes and takes you back to those days. You know, and your mind goes back and says okay I remember that, yeah. So that sticks with you, you know, that is embedded in your mind and in your soul, you know. You may push it back. But when you hear about it, it comes out, but then it goes back in. You can't think about it. You can't. You can't. I am not a person to dwell on things, you know, in my older years, I say older years, okay, I can say, you can't keep stuff in and expect to move on. You have to let it go and that is what I am dealing with. That is the mentality that I have to keep, you know, especially going through a divorce, you know, that was real traumatic for me. I have to keep telling myself, look you have been there, don't that, it is time. And it is really hard, it is really hard, it really is.

Racism and the related experiences were hard, but Saverne worked to turn these experiences into an opportunity to build character and make herself a better person. She felt that she had to let it go and move forward.

The following words were, to me, some of the most inspiring quotations found in the study. Saverne saw the positive aspects of integration and how integration brought Blacks and Whites together. According to Saverne, the experience would have been better had integration gone both ways.

> I appreciate the integration. I appreciate us going over to the White school. I appreciate it because you know, had that not happened, we wouldn't be sitting here right now. You know, we wouldn't be able to do the things that we are doing, that has happened to us. We have come a long way. I don't know, if I could change it, I wouldn't really close the Black school, I think we would just have had some of the White kids come over to our school, I think I would reverse, you know, the situation, with us having to leave our school. Although their school was maybe, maybe it was newer and larger, but it was just a few of us, and I think that somehow they could have put some grades over there and made that a middle school so we could have stayed in our school. I would, I am not contradicting myself as far as saying that we had not integrated. No, I wanted, I appreciate the integration and I am glad it happened, but I wished the White kids could have come over to our school. Mixing them both ways because seems like we have been like, Black people up until then had been targeted as the ones who had to make the change. All these years, we have had to make the change and how it needs to be, it couldn't, it would have been wonderful had it been reversed.

Historically there was not an option of integration going both ways, but looking back, Saverne felt sharing the burden of integration would have been a good thing.

She was a child when it began, but she felt as a child, integration was easier for her. The Black students pulled together and made integration work. She became very active in high school and had friends that were Black and White. Racism was a part of her life before integration, during integration, and following integration.

Mrs. Neely. Mrs. Neely was active in her community during integration. Institutionalized racism persisted through discrimination within societal structures. Mrs. Neely was involved in the Model Cities Program, which was instrumental in opening the way for integration in Clarke County. The Model Cities Program was vital to the establishment of opportunities through which Black people could succeed. Struggles of Blacks included lack of educational equality, limited resources, and restricted opportunities; however, African Americans continued to work and stressed the value of education (Anderson, 1988).

> But when the Model Cities Program came by, it was like a dream that came true and I remember telling Mayor Bishop, was the mayor at that time, and I told him, I said you know, he told us, he called his three citizens, because we were his citizens, the professional group, because we would go back and forth talking to him, telling him stuff that needed to be done and he said I don't see how the government can afford to do all of this, and I told him well I said this is a dream that came true for me. All of the things that I had wanted so much, we got them, we got the daycare center.

The Model Cities Program provided opportunities for Black people during integration, but it also provided access to numerous opportunities. Racism closed doors, but action that came from the citizens as a result of racism opened doors. People had a chance for improved education, health care, and housing. Du Bois stressed that it was important for African Americans to be involved in building strong institutions for services and economic stability (Alridge, 1999).

> I wasn't as involved as I wanted to be, but I was involved because of having, being the type of person that I am, but my husband was a very easy-going person and he didn't, he didn't care about politics. But I did, so I was involved at the very beginning as much as I could, because he didn't want me to be as involved, because he said that he couldn't stand people, you know, throwing water on you, and siccing dogs on you and that kind of thing. He said that he would have to be violent, he couldn't be non-violent. Well anyway, we didn't get to that stage.

Mrs. Neely's involvement in the Model Cities Program helped her to make positive changes in her community.

> That did more for integration for Athens-Clarke County than anything, because it brought people together. That's right. People, you know, there was money involved, there was a lot of training involved, it was the first time that we had had a citizen participation component and they had to have that because of the federal government said that you had to have a the participation of the citizens. They had to say what it was that they needed or what they wanted. At first, the university wrote a proposal and sent it in, but it didn't have the input from the citizens.

For the first time in that community Black people had a voice. The limitations brought action, and action brought opportunities for all. The Model Cities Program was crucial to the development of Athens.

> It [Model Cities Program] helped folks to get jobs and training so that if you get more education, so that they could have better jobs and you know buy homes and it helped a lot of people to secure homes. It was really the best thing that had ever happened to Clarke County. During that time, we had the Model Cities Program,

because you modeled after other cities and we had a very strong citizen participation group and what ever was done it had to be, have to have involvement of the people, and that was what made it so special because you had an opportunity to decide what you want, rather than somebody else deciding for you.

So as a result, we started off the first application that was made, it was a federal program, came the university, people at the University of Georgia, wrote it up, well they wrote it up without getting the input from the citizens, the grass root people, so it didn't pass and it came back. And a girlfriend of mine, Miriam Moore, she is in a nursing home now, she has Alzheimer and but any, Miriam was, she wasn't afraid of anything or anybody, and she said, we can do it, you know, that we could do it. So that night, no, the morning that we went to a hearing they had gotten their application back and we have a friend named Jessie Barnett, so Jessie, Miriam, and myself were friends, so we went to the hearing and when they started reading, Miriam stood up and threw the book down on the desk, and she said there is nothing in there for poor people, nothing but janitor jobs, and that is right, right.

So the people from Washington said well you know we have to take a look at this and they looked at it and they said oh, you have 90 days, I believe it was 90 days, to work it over and they said can you do it, and of course I wanted to say no, that wasn't enough time, and Miriam said yes we can do it. So, some of the things that we wanted, we wanted education, we wanted training, we wanted prayer services, we wanted childcare, we wanted housing, we wanted to do training to go

> into business and just the whole gamete, you know, and we got it completed. We had some people from the university that worked with us, you know they always, some good folks, I don't care what, so we had some people that worked with us and Dr. George Berger and Edith, what is her last name, I can't think of Edith's last name, she, but she was a social worker and she was the one that helped us to do the health part of it, because health was, you know, as Black people it was so long that we didn't have good health services, so you really didn't see that as a priority, because you were so accustomed to being in pain or just making things.

Mrs. Neely described the Model Cities Program and how it developed. It was crucial that all the participants—especially the Black participants—had a voice in the program. It directly affected them and they needed to be part of the decision making process. Poor White people also benefited from the program, but as Mrs. Neely reported, White people refused to participate with Black people.

> They needed to be where they could be given a full meal and health services and all of that. They don't realize that you can't hold my child back, unless they hold your child back, you know, and the saddest part is the fact that we came into it with a lot of White poor people, but they were afraid to participate. They would rather do without than to say that they were, coming, with minority people and see that is so sad, because everybody have a right to decent health care and a decent place to live.

Poor White people did not want to associate with Black people; therefore, they did not get the advantages from the Model Cities Program. This interesting phenomenon resulted in poor Whites missing out on opportunities that could have made their lives

better. The Model Cities Program brought many things that benefited the entire community.

> It was, for the simple reason, we had a citizen participation component in there, that you had to have the participation of the citizen and that is what helped to integrate. Because business folks wanted some of the money and if they got the money, then they were going to have to do some things for us, so that taught us how to sit down at the table and discuss what it is instead of you telling me what I need, you let me tell you what I need and what I want and it was through that.

Mrs. Neely described how the Model Cities Program was instrumental in providing value to Black people as citizens of their community.

> That was the only time that I felt that I was really a citizen, is when I had the opportunity to sit down and talk to the mayor and talk to the commissioners and at that time, they were city councilmen, and just express what it is that you want. And a lot of time, we learned how to negotiate, to trade off, you give me this and I will give you that. Electricity, the water, they build the bridges; all the way, we didn't have a decent bridge to come over. That's right, they benefited. You know, they wanted to say, well they are just giving those folks, we were borrowing cars, we were paying rent, we were doing everything, and that money was going, so everybody benefited from it.

"I felt that I was really a citizen." This statement illustrates how important it is to include everyone in the decision making process. Giving people a voice and listening to that voice gave them a chance to be a person just like everyone else. Not having a voice

had a great impact on how she viewed herself as a citizen. Mrs. Neely reflected upon the people that had a part of making things change.

> So you know, we got to know, like I said, there are always some nice folks, and we got to know quite a few people, and they were very helpful. Yeah, at university, his name was Jim Shempers, and he was a social worker, and he was, the students see, one of the things, the students are going to have to go, they are the ones that are going to be going out working with the public and so they need all of the help and information that they can get because they are the ones that is going to make the difference.

Mrs. Neely believed communication was important between races.

> And a lot of times our children are misunderstood because people don't understand them. And when I say children need teachers who look like them, some people think I am being prejudice, but what I am saying is that there is a bond that is strong with a good teacher and a child, and sometimes, some Whites are really good teachers for minority children, but sometimes they either give into them or they treat them at a distance because they don't understand.

There were problems that affected Black children during integration. Mrs. Neely's youngest daughter, who attended school during integration, had a difficult experience with some of her teachers.

> And she went at junior high, so it was 7th grade, she went to Hilsman, I think she was at Hilsman, and she said that she hated it, everyday, because they had teachers who, even then, felt that they couldn't do and she was a smart kid, but she never told me that she was having problem, she just kept it to herself, and we

> were a citizen, the citizens were involved in getting Black folks admitted into the university. They didn't have any and I remember Dr. Flanagan, used to meet with us, and he was a fine person, he was with the school of social work, I believe, I am not sure, he helped with the, the reason why we got as many folks involved, was because of the money.

There were limitations after integration that the schools did not realize. Her daughter felt the limitations in the attitudes of her teachers in the White schools. Mrs. Neely made the following comment:

> But it is amazing how we treat each other. And it is amazing to know that we came out as well we did, we really should hate every White person that we see, you know, with the way you were treated.

Mrs. Neely had strong feelings about the issues related to racism during integration. Issues of racism affected her entire family through their daily encounters with others and still remain a part of their lives.

The overall affects of racism during integration were painful; however, as Saverne described some good things came from the resulting experiences. She felt that Black and White students pulled together to make integration work. In Athens, Georgia, the Model Cities Program described by Mrs. Neely brought many opportunities for improvements in education, health care, childcare, and job training. The women described the hardships that came from this time, but they also acknowledged the benefits that occurred for all of society.

Summary of Desegregation/Integration

Saverne described many changes resulting from integration that affected both Blacks and Whites. According to Saverne, most lives of Black and White are different today than they were 50 years ago. However, some scholars argue that integration was not completely positive. Du Bois cautioned that integration would not improve education unless cultural needs for the African American student were met (Alridge, 1999). He warned of the potential mistreatment of Black children in integrated schools and of the devaluation of a distinctive Black culture. This has played out in cultural racism where the dominant culture has imposed their cultural heritage, while destroying the culture of ethnic minorities (Bennett, 2003).

Scholars have documented the low expectations of some teachers and the breaking up of the community that has had an adverse effect on Black children and their communities (Morris, 1999). A number of women in my study confirmed these findings.

Integration was difficult for the students who directly experienced it daily. Activists opened doors for Black people to have access to additional educational opportunities, but those opportunities came with a struggle. Evidence shows that African Americans who attended desegregated schools achieved at higher rates and were more likely to attend college (Wells & Crain, 1997). However, there is also research that suggests integration was a loss to African Americans' schooling (Siddle-Walker, 1996).

This was an important period in history because for the first time we decided to try to overcome the racial divide (West, 1994). Many of the participants described how they "pulled together" to "make it work". Saverne provided stories of how the Black

students that were directly effected by integration worked together to overcome stereotypes and prejudices that they experienced.

Throughout the study there are stories of individual struggles, which were part of a movement that forever altered our country (Curry, 1995). Legal barriers were reduced, civil and voting rights were accomplished, and poverty declined. This can be seen in the opportunities that were extended for the individuals and communities in the study. "But it did not last long" (West, 1994, p.157). The results of the work of courageous individuals who sacrificed during this time period have diminished and many of our schools are more segregated today than they were 30 years ago (Davidman & Davidman, 2001). Sarah described her town as still very segregated today.

The historical events that effected institutional racism were important, but even after these important times racism continues to exist (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003). It is evident in the stories the women present about their lives. The following are descriptions of personal effects of racism.

Personal Effects of Racism

Experiences in the Workplace

> "You do learn how to endure it and you recognize it and you don't address every instance of it, you just know what it is and once you have the mind set to deal with it, it just doesn't bother you so much." (Sarah)

The older participants in the study were not in school during integration; however, they were working during integration. Their experiences provided a different perspective than is often documented.

Mrs. Rucker. Mrs. Rucker did not experience integration as a student but as a teacher. She went to Ft. Valley College to complete her teaching degree and consequently was a certified teacher.

> When the schools integrated, I was one of the first Black teachers to be sent out. I was sent to North Jackson [School] and I went there to work. I had social studies the first two years and after then I was a certified reading teacher. I had gone and finished my college, I had gone to Fort Valley and got a B.S., but I had some reading courses around. You know, back then you could take so many hours and be a certified reading teacher, so I was promoted from social studies to reading and back then we had grades 1 through 8th grade at North Jackson. After they finished 8th grade, they had to come to Jefferson to high school. I worked there for 14 years and I taught social studies the first two years and then I taught reading and then I had grades 5–8. That was the hardest teaching that I had ever tried to do because you had to plan for children who were could not read, up to children up to children who read on the 8th grade level. And it was just a hard job to prepare lesson plans for that variety, that many grades. We had a teacher there who was expecting a baby. Mr. Holloman was the superintendent at the time, and I asked him could I have special education, and he said no, you can't have special ed. because you have to be certified. I went to University of Georgia and got my certification for special education and I ended up teaching special ed. for a few years. And before it was over with I was teaching remedial reading again and math, remedial math. When I retired, I retired in '82 from North Jackson, but I have been subbing, I guess, every since.

Mrs. Rucker had many different teaching positions during her career. Her experiences were very diverse and rewarding. She felt she was fortunate to work with very good teachers and high quality principals. Many teachers had limited educational experiences and were not qualified to teach (Fultz, 1995). Mrs. Rucker, unlike some others, had attended college and received her teaching certification.

> I had so many principals. But anyway, they just treated me just like I had been there all the while, they are and I had no trouble with integration. When I went to North Jackson, a Mr. Newton was the principal and he was so nice. He had a wife and two boys in school there and he was just great. She was teaching and he was the principal and had the children to respect me. I had no problem in the first place, I respected them. You know, you have to respect people in order to gain respect. I had no problems, whatsoever.

Respect was one key element identified as important during integration. Mrs. Rucker respected the people she worked with and they respected her. She also respected the children and felt this respect was essential to gain theirs in return. She repeatedly shared that she experienced few, if any, problems. Integration was a positive experience for Mrs. Rucker, and those experiences were a result of her attitude and the attitude of the people she was working with. Integration was required, and the teachers made the best of the situation. There were both Black and White people who worked for integration. Mrs. Rucker worked with the White teachers to make integration positive for their school.

> Well, you know, the state said the schools must be integrated. In fact, it came from the President of the United States, all schools had to be integrated.

> So what happened, this school down here, we had a Black principal, his name was Reverend Lewis Jake, at the time when I was there. He had already taken some White teachers, they were referred, we had White teachers and the school for about two years before Black teachers went to be integrated and before the children were integrated.

Mrs. Rucker felt that it was unfortunate that the Bryan school had to be closed, but the only way to integrate was for the Black school to close and for the Black students to go to the White school.

> We got along well and had no problems whatsoever. The children, this school closed as a high school because the schools had to be integrated and that was the only way to get it integrated, was to close it. So they closed the high school for Blacks, and we had a few White students here.

From Saverne's perspective integration was hard, but Mrs. Rucker felt that there were no problems. Mother and daughter experienced integration from different roles; thus, both viewed at integration in a different way. It was not evident at the time what problems would arise, but after years of observation and reflection Mrs. Rucker thought it was unfortunate to see how the Black schools lost their community and the Black students lost their support system. As Mrs. Rucker described in the following example, the Black principal, Black teachers, and Black students were all dispersed in different directions. This problem fractured the bonds of Black community schools (Fultz, 1995; Morris, 1999).

> The schools, they were integrated because the state and the government said that they had to be integrated, but we had no problem. Reverend Jake went on to

another school. He left Bryan, left Jefferson, and was principal of a school out in Atlanta, or near Atlanta, somewhere like that and the teachers were all. After I went out about two years later, they put some at South Jackson, I went to North Jackson, some went to Jefferson, James Brown and those.

Mrs. Rucker's initial experiences dealt with students who did not have respect for Black teachers, but she worked to overcome this by the way she responded to the students. She felt she made a difference by her attitude toward the children.

Well you did have children who, I would say had no respect for Blacks. But I looked over that because kids are, they live what they are taught. I am sure that there was negative talking at home about the incident. But I would try to get on the kids side and talk positive, you know, that I am here to help you and if you need help just let me know and that sort of thing, you have to talk to kids and let them know that you are their friend instead of their enemy.

She made a negative experience a positive experience. Mrs. Rucker has continued to work for children and has remained an active member of her community.

Mrs. Neely Norman. Mrs. Neely Norman began her work experience at the beginning of integration. She took a job with Head Start. They needed a Black person in a position to work in the State of Georgia.

When I finished school, a friend of my mother's, Dot Edwards, had, was operating a training office for Head Start, the University of Georgia Home Economics Department had the grant, but it was from the HED Title II, and she needed an intern. They were needing to hire a Black and they had been working on Model Cities together and so she offered me a position and I started there in

> July and going into the different centers all over the State of Georgia, all of the Head Start Centers. I enjoyed going there and getting to work with the people and show them how they were supposed to work with children, because I was going in there as a teacher's aide. Then I decided that I wanted to go back to school and under Dot's persuasion, I started getting certified in early childhood and then you had to do 60 hours to change over just to early childhood.

This was a turning point in Mrs. Neely Norman's life. She was not happy as a social worker and needed a job. She became interested in teaching and has taught kindergarten for 28 years. Mrs. Neely Norman completed her Masters and recently completed her Specialist Degree. The opportunity of working with Head Start as one of the first Blacks changed her life. Following her student teaching she began teaching in Clarke County.

> I was at Barrow Elementary for two years and then I was, my principal was moved to Barnett Shoals and so I was picked to go with him and I was real upset when I got this call from Burney Steele, I believe, and I just couldn't understand why I was being moved and this was the first year that they were opening the kindergarten there and they just felt that I needed to, that I could fit into the population of there, that was still during the early part of integration and that's where I have been.

Mrs. Neely Norman helped make changes in schools during the early years of integration. She was moved to a new school to be with the "population" that was coming to the school. The administration felt that she would be a good person to help with the process of integration. She found herself in the role of integrator on many different occasions.

She was one of the first Black women to pave the way during integration of the Clarke County Schools.

> And that is the same way when I worked with the state training office for Head Start and the team was a White girl and myself and when we went to south Georgia, our immediate supervisor would have us to stay in the same room because she was afraid for us to stay in different room. We would go in the hotel, although they had integrated, they still would treat her so nasty for being with me.
>
> Now they would just be super nice to me and but then they would treat her like dirt. And of course when we would go through a town, you know the staring and then it got to be a joke with us. We went to Sparta once, no first we had gone to Blairsville and I was the only Black in this whole place and this was in a school. I mean no Blacks were in the lunchroom, janitor, nothing. And so all the kids just looked at me, and when I spoke, it was like oh she spoke and so Malinda and I had a joke going on about that, and I said I really know what it is like to be in the minority. So we got back up to, we had to go to Sparta, and you know Sparta is like 80 or 90% percent Black, and this is when they were having the riot between the police department and the sheriff's department, one was like predominantly Black and the other was predominantly White. And so we drove in to town, I mean it was a big thing because they thought we were part of the Civil Rights Movement. And there was a policeman at the beginning of the county line and he followed us all the way to the school and he sat in the parking lot the whole time we were in the building and when we got in there Malinda said, she looked around there was one White teacher and she said I know what it is like

now to be in the minority. There is a 99% chance that one of us will get out of here alive. But it was something else then.

And there was a murder attempt of H. T. W., and we had gone to Dodge County, Eatonton, and the team consisted of about three Whites and three Blacks and we went to this restaurant and we are sitting and we sat there for about 30 minutes and nobody would come and serve us and we finally, they had a cook to come out to the table and she said Mr. Charlie said he ain't serving colored people yet and her job was on the line because she had to come out there and tell us, but they wouldn't serve us, and that was in the 70s.

Mrs. Neely Norman had many different experiences with racism. Some people were in the midst of changing their attitudes, but some were not ready for change. When she began teaching it was important to develop relationships with parents so that there would be a community in their school.

When I first, when I started at Barnett Shoals, and they started the busing trying to equalize the schools, Nellie B was added to our and so were the university children, so several of the faculty members had problems with that sort of too, but then we got out, we went over to Nellie B and we had what we called morning coffee, and worked with those parents and we get them out and they would come out and make stuff and it started, and we established a relationship there, those parents were proud of the school and felt like they were a part of it, we made them feel like a partner, so generation after generation then, we had established that relationship with them, but see now we haven't and the parents have moved on and they are coming in from out of town, that the is main ones that we get now, so

> I mean there is no, there is a loss, and they are starting from scratch and as long as you get a relationship going, so it is a vicious cycle.

Mrs. Neely Norman was instrumental in setting the tone for Barnett Shoals Elementary School when it opened. She realized that community was important. She was chosen to go to Barnett Shoals.

> It was practically all White, because when I was being sent there, that is, I felt that I couldn't understand why if I was being in a class by a Black at Barrow, why couldn't I stay there, but they felt that I guess, with the background that I had or whatever, that I would be able to better fit into it. That is the way they chose Blacks when they were putting them in the different, when they were integrating the schools, it was who they felt could identify or work with parents, and being the first Black. My first class I only had three or four Black students there and then it was only half-day.

School administrators had "chosen" specific Black people to integrate the schools—to make things work. There were struggles for both Black and White parents.

> There were no problems with the children, I had the most problems with the parents. And I always felt that I had to prove to my White parents that I knew my job and I felt like I had to, I always felt like I was being watched, I had to cross every t, dot every i and that I couldn't make mistakes, they were looking for that, so I thought that I had to always be better.

The above statement summed up what Mrs. Neely Norman experienced through integration. She was being watched; her life was setting the stage for how others would respond to racial changes; she was on display, and others would be affected by her

actions. Racial relations were changing, and Mrs. Neely Norman, whether she wanted to be or not, was affected by it.

"I felt like I was always having to prove myself." This was a difficult position in which to be placed; however, personal sacrifice was a prevalent theme for those working during this time period. They were all being "watched." Their actions influenced how integration was accepted and if it would work. This placed great responsibility on two of the women in this study: Mrs. Rucker and Mrs. Neely Norman had to make a conscious effort to present the right "attitude" toward integration. There were many emotions that were part of integration.

> I used to fear, I literally used to fear for my mom when she would go to meetings and stuff and she was always believing in speaking her mind and I was always afraid that someone was going to hurt her on the way home from a meeting.

Mrs. Neely Norman lived in fear as a result of racial events. Her mother was outspoken, and she was afraid that something would happen to her as a result of her outspokenness. These were rough times and these times affected the way she lived. She became a person who followed the rules and did what she was told. She did not want to get into trouble: Trouble could have been very serious.

These women assumed the responsibility for integration and made integration work; however, they experienced sacrifices in their own lives. The women talked about integration bringing positive results, but they also sacrificed much to make it work. Mrs. Neely Norman said she was part of making integration happen, but she did not always benefit from it. She was completing school when real changes were being made and therefore did not have more educational opportunities available. Personal sacrifices,

adapting to new situations, and overcoming struggles in their work place were a part of this time period for many of the women in the study.

Mrs. Rucker was the first to teach at the integrated school in her community. She was the only Black teacher and was the first Black person that many of her White students had known. This experience required Mrs. Rucker to adapt to a new school, a new culture, and a new way of thinking. She turned the experience into a positive one, and she worked hard to overcome negative stereotypes. Mrs. Neely Norman felt that she constantly had to prove she was capable of teaching in an integrated school. Changes in society often required these Black women to make sacrifices that found them in positions as the first or only Blacks.

Experiences as the "Only Black"

"I was the only little Black girl." (Sonia)

Many of the participants found themselves being the "only Black" present. This experience occurred throughout all three generations. Each person was affected differently, and the experience brought different results. Being the only Black was not a direct experience of racism; however, the events that accompanied being the "only Black" were often directly tied to racial attitudes.

Tarla. Tarla began her story of school experiences by sharing that she was one of the few African Americans at her school. She was aware of her race and that she was different.

> I really enjoyed myself at Maysville, even though I was one of the few African Americans there. I really enjoyed myself there and I was very active. I was very active in sports, up until about 9th or 10th grade of high school and just playing

> basketball and running track, because you know my dad was pushing me forward to that.

Racism affected how she talked and what she said.

> And another thing, like as far as in classes at Jackson County. We would have to, I don't know what is the word, we would have to rearrange our sentences so we wouldn't offend anybody, like as far as when we were talking about race. At Spelman, we tell it like it is. I mean you know, especially when it comes to something about our race, we tell it like it is; but if I was at Jackson County, I had to sugar coat that to make it, Spelman is not like that. Even though not everybody is from the African descent, there is some Ethiopia, there is a wide variety of people who are of color, but not actually African descent, we, there is no sugar coating, we just tell it like it is in class and that is a big difference that I did notice at Jackson County, I couldn't say some of the things that I wanted to say but now, at Spelman, I can.

She was cautious with racial comments and had to "sugar coat" her remarks in high school. In her all Black College she could "tell it like it is." This changed the way she could speak about race: She no longer felt silenced. However, being at an all Black and all female College was not an easy adjustment for Tarla.

> The only other thing we seeing Black people all the time, women all the time. I was just not used to that. I was not used to that, I mean everywhere I turned, it was, you can't tell during the school day that it is an all girl school because guys cross register, but at night when it is just us and the dorm and visitation is over, I

had to adjust to just being around all females, all the time. I mean, I like females but I don't know.

This was a completely new experience for Tarla,. The "sisterhood" of Black women was very important to her. The Black community she was part of gave her support she had not previously experienced.

Tarla's grandmother received her education in an all Black school; her mother began in an all Black school and then was part of integration. Tarla had been in all White schools and felt an experience in a predominantly Black school would be important for her to have in college. Tarla was aware that much of her life had been in a White environment, and she believed that this would continue upon entering law school.

And then me. And I was like, Mom, you are the only one. She was like, No I am not. It is different. Not to knock it because when I go to law school, more than likely it will be majority White, so I am getting both sides. The only disadvantage I would say, it [all Black school] is not reality. As far as if I was at UGA, that is more reality, you will see a mix, mixture of people.

The population at the University of Georgia was majority White, and Tarla felt this was more of a "reality" for her to live in. The fact that she had attended majority White schools made her understand the environment as "reality." Most of her academic experiences were as the "only Black girl," and this seemed "normal" to her.

Sonia. Sonia's story began with her doing well in school but realizing that she was the "only little Black girl." Her School was integrated but not her life as a gifted student. She was isolated from other Black children.

> I didn't go to kindergarten. When I started I started school in first grade. I think kindergarten was around, but it was basically based on income. And I wouldn't have gotten to go, because my mom would come home from work and she would actually sit down and read with me and I had to write. And so when I went to first grade, I remember being grouped, they had us group off in levels, and I remember being in the top level and being the only little Black girl. So my first grade teacher was absolutely wonderful. Her name was Ms. Black and she was wonderful. I enjoyed first grade.

Sonia spent much of her school life with White children, and when she entered college she had a "culture shock." She went from an all White environment to an all Black environment.

> It was an adjustment going to school in northeast Georgia and I go to Fort Valley and it is majority Black. It actually was a culture shock and I know that is my race, but it was a culture shock to actually be around my people that much**.** Yeah, but then I am used to it because I was always top level. In my classes, there were only two Black girls, myself and my other friend, Rita, and we didn't always have them together, so I was always just the one. It would probably be Derrick [her husband], and he was top level and I had a couple, there were more guys Black on top level. So it would be like two or three Blacks out of a whole class so that was what I was used to, and I went down here and it was like, you all can do like that in here and I would be like [surprised].

In the research literature there are detailed descriptions of how schools and colleges influenced the thinking of the Blacks to regard themselves as inferior (Woodson,

1933). Being around smart Black children had not been a part of Sonia's experiences and this had an adverse affect on the way she looked at her race at an all Black school.

> A whole bunch of Black people. It was because we are different and I understand about the cultures being different. I mean we all have something different to give to each other. I remember my first day on campus at Fort Valley and I walked across the campus. With my race, they, you know they stare and I think probably all races stare, but everybody is just like looking and I had, and there were like two or three whistled and I was like oh Lord, please why, why are we like this, that is how I was and I was like can't a person just walk across and nobody do anything, no stares or anything. And I wasn't used to the professor coming in the classroom and she had her sandwich and she was like hollering at the class and just all kinds of things. It was different.

Sonia had personal experiences with racial issues, and now is presently experiencing racial issues through her children. She was the only Black girl when she was in school, and now her children are also the only Black students in their advanced classes.

> And my son is complaining now, his freshman year in high school last year. We went over here and his teacher's and the classes and he was like, get me out of here, I am the only Black. And I said son, get used to it. I mean, and my daughter Chanelle, every since we have moved back in third grade, and out of the whole county, she is the only Black girl.

Sonia's children excelled in academics and were still the "only" Blacks in the gifted classes. It was difficult for them; however, Sonia felt that this was a good lesson because it would help them learn to live in a White world.

> Chanelle, she really wanted to drop it [class] and no, I want you to stay in some exposure to other things. But the gifted teacher at that time, she needs to be a college professor because the stuff she requires of them is really quite a bit for elementary level. But she is fine, right now, she came home the other day, she is the only Black in her math class and I am just like, 'get used to it'. For where she wants to go in life, just get used to it. If you can adjust right now, then it will help you in the long run. I hate that it is that way, but it is.
>
> My son, the oldest one, he is like, get me out, but yet it is still, all of his teachers, they say the potential that is right there in that young man, right there is just overwhelming. His English teacher, I was talking to her the other day and she said, I have seen in my class, I have seen the others will rag on him because he is so intelligent and he will actually. He will just pull in and try to stop, just to come down, and she said but you don't, he doesn't need that. I said I know that, we are trying to get him to be that leader and I know it is hard, peer pressure, I know it is hard. It was a difficult to be the "only Black."

Sonia told them to "get used to it." Where you want to go in life was a part of coping with being the "only Black." Fordham's (1993) work identifies this experience as a part of Black students experiences. The students were still segregated. Issues of racism kept smart Black children away from their friends and their support system. The isolation continues to be difficult for the Black children to understand and accept.

Kisha. Kisha was another example of being the "only Black." She summed up her experience with this comment:

> I was the only Black girl in the entire school that was in the gifted program, but there was another Black boy that was in the program, so it was kind of awkward at times because I was alienated from my friends, you know.

Kisha was a bright young girl. She knew how to read when she started kindergarten and had memories of reading to her first grade class. She attended school with a diverse population, but she was the only "Black girl" in her school in the gifted program.

> I guess because I wasn't with my friends, you know, at the, you couldn't really talk and socialize in class, and at the times when you could, I was pulled to this other class and I wouldn't have any friends. You know I had a couple of people that I would talk to, but you know, they pretty much had their cliques, you know, so I enjoyed going, but I just didn't enjoy being pulled from my friends and you know, sometimes kids tease other kids about being smart, you know, and I know in my class I jump all over them about that. That is one of pet peeves, you don't do that.

She did not have many friends in her gifted class, but a couple of people would talk to her. There was not much opportunity to talk with her friends in class. The gifted class met at recess time; this was the time when she would have been with her Black friends, but instead she was alienated from them.

Kisha was teased for being smart. While teaching, she made a point not to allow teasing to happen to bright students. "I jump all over them about that." Her life

experiences affected her teaching. She had fond memories of finally meeting a Black friend in middle school.

> In the sixth grade, finally when I got to middle grade in the sixth grade, I met a friend, another Black girl who was in the gifted program and all the gifted classes, and we bonded immediately.

She reflected on what it was like when she attended high school.

> I guess one thing, like I was saying in elementary school, it was kind of difficult, you know being in the gifted program, and a lot of time was I ridiculed for that, but then as I got to high school, those same people that had ridiculed me, really admired me and you know, respected me, I kind of earned their respect. Like I said, every year, they voted me on the homecoming court, or the most likely to succeed, and those type things, so I guess I would tell them that there is nothing wrong with being the smart one.

She was rewarded for her talents by being voted with multiple superlatives, and she developed a sense that it was "okay" to be smart. She was chosen Homecoming Queen and Miss Cedar Shoals High School during her senior year. Kisha was also the "only Black girl" in extra curricular activities.

> I was telling you about being the only, being one of the only minorities in the gifted program. Then when I got to high school, I cheered throughout, all four years, and for three of those years, I was the only Black on my cheerleading squad. So that was difficult sometimes. Just feeling like I didn't have, when we were going to games and camps and things, seems like I didn't have anybody to really relate to, you know. My friends were on the drill team, or in the stands, and

so, you know, just not feeling like, just feeling like you really sometimes, didn't belong.

Throughout school she was the only Black representative for gifted and cheerleading. The isolation from both races was difficult for Kisha. She experienced negative and positive reactions from the Black and White community.

Yeah, some people were, seemed like they were proud that I was representing on the squad and other people they made comments, you know, like they used to call me, the period at the end of the sentence, you know, like the only Black dot on the, you know. And that used to really hurt my feelings. That was from Black friends. And then, you know, when we would be on the bus, going to different games, and when we pretty much went to an all Black school, sometimes other cheerleaders would be, you know, would be so afraid, and I am thinking, my gosh, nobody is going to bother us, lock the doors, you know, and this type thing, and Kisha are you really there, I can't see anything but your teeth, you know, just things like that, people say they are jokes, but they really hurt your feelings, you know, so things like that, you have to deal with by yourself. It would have been different if there had been somebody else there with me.

The loneliness that Kisha experienced was a result of not fitting in with either race.

Yeah, some of my closer friends didn't make those comments. These were the people who maybe didn't make the squad. The Black people made those jokes, and then there were some people, some White friends that I cheered with, like you know, like I remember once, Jennifer Denero, I will never forget this. We were talking about body types and whatever, and of course my thighs were larger, just

> because I am a larger frame person, and I said something about that, and she was like that is why you can jump so well, look at the muscle tone. And that really made me feel good, you know, because everybody doesn't look alike, and you know in high school you don't want to look any different than anybody else, you know, so that were some people who didn't go there.

Being the "only" one put her in a position to take the comments that came from both sides. She was isolated and lonely. As a result of this experience she was drawn to attend an all Black college where she would not have to be the "only Black girl."

> I felt more comfortable. I felt more comfortable because I mean, everybody around you is Black, everybody is from the, I guess being in Atlanta, too, is a high percentage of Black people. The guy who came and installed the phone was Black to all the professors and the, you know everybody. In that general area where I was, so it felt like a comfort, like you know, you didn't have to try to defend something or you know, it just felt different. It was a different feeling. But then as you get there and you find your clique, you find your friends, you know, like my best friends that were in my wedding. One is from Carrollton, one is from south central LA, and one is from Stone Mountain, Georgia. So it felt like a comfort, like you know, you didn't have to try to defend something or you know, it just felt different. It was a different feeling.

Kisha had a chance to relax and did not feel the same pressure she always felt as the only "Black girl" in elementary and high school. The responsibility she felt as the only Black girl put sufficient pressure on her that in an all Black setting she could

be herself without all of the extra baggage. She had support and she could enjoy being herself.

This experience of racism was not an in-your-face violent experience but one that took a daily toll on her. She was alone, and no one was there for her to share with. She was "defending" her race by all of her actions. She was not held back for being Black, but she did not have other Black friends with her. This left her to shoulder this responsibility alone. When she got to an all Black school she could rest. The experience of being the "only Black" spanned all three generations; with at least one woman in each family having the experience of being the "only Black."

Mrs. Neely. Mrs. Neely was the first and only Black woman in her community to join the YWCO.

> They were all White men and I joined the YWCO, I was the first minority that they had, and some of the little ladies they had a hard time getting used to me, but they finally did, you know, because I would speak out for what I thought was right. And most of those little ladies, their husbands were telling them what to do, they didn't really know.

Being the "only Black" included isolation and loneliness: a frequent occurrence of being the "only Black" in gifted classes, and it was a struggle to fit in with both races. Some research has documented that Black girls' experiences have often been marginalized by society (Grant, 1994; Fordham, 1993). However, other research supports the idea of strong women who realized that education was essential for the development of the Black women (Cooper, 1995). For the women participants in my study, being the "only Black" had both positive and negative connotations. They used the experiences to

help them develop into strong women who could live successfully in all situations throughout their communities.

Experiences in Communities

"Me moving away, and coming back, my eyes were opened." (Sonia)

The participants stories were shared of racism during school and throughout their life experiences. Racism was part of the history of their lives and is also a part of their present experiences in their respective communities.

The youngest generation described acts of racism that they had observed. They felt that racism had not been a major factor in their life. They acknowledged that institutional racism existed, but they did not feel that they had experienced it personally. The older generation felt that young people's attitude about racism was a problem for their race. Mrs. Neely was concerned that the younger generation had been "fooled" into a false sense of security in relation to racism. The two older generations described racism in society and racism against them personally.

Mrs. Neely Norman. Mrs. Neely Norman experienced racism during college and made the following comment:

> When I was at Georgia and I was taking a class, we were working in groups and we had to do this project and everybody in that group received an A, and I received a B and my instructor never could tell me why and this was a group project and I could never do enough in that classroom to satisfy that instructor, what was the name of that class, and I hated him. Yeah, but that was the only time I really experienced racism.

She felt that the instructor was directly discriminating against her because she was a Black person. This continued to be a strong memory and influenced the way she thought about the University of Georgia.

Charlene. Charlene provided stories related to racism, which she had observed. She initially didn't think there was much to share about racism, but then she remembered several stories that occurred in her community. It was interesting how she clarified the examples of racism as not being "public."

> Not really publicly. I guess probably stuff that we didn't know about may have been going on, but nothing really out right that is just racial or that is just sexism. Of course, everyone has their little talk on racial issues, you know, but nothing out right publicly, like well that happened because you know, she is a certain color or because she is a certain sex. Nothing that I can remember. Not while I was in school. Yeah, lots of that [mixed dating] going on in school. I think our generation really kind of brought that out because we were, in my class, there were several interracial prom couples and they were homecoming interracial, homecoming couples and stuff like that. But nobody, it is so funny, nobody ever addressed it. I mean, like I said, people would talk, you know, kind of whisper about it, but nothing out right publicly addressed or anything.

She alluded to "public" issues of racism. These were played out in institutional examples of racism. People never said anything about race relations publicly: The conversations were "whispered." Charlene's generation was part of mixed dating while in school.

> Well one thing, when I was a senior our homecoming court was White. Now that was kind of a big thing, but the majority of my class was White, so it was possible that, you know, all the girls could have been White, you know, because the majority of our class was White. The other thing, Ms. Bulldog ended up being a Black girl, so they had a homecoming, a White girl and a Black girl, so that was like. It could have been, I guess, if a Black girl hadn't of won that, it probably would have been a big deal because our whole homecoming court was White. Yeah, that was about the only public thing, but when they did, they did go back and recount the votes and it was because the class was predominantly White, so I mean the Black votes were actually split between two or three different girls and all that White people they just carried our class. That is how it ended up being. We only had two Black senior football players.

This did not affect Charlene personally, but she saw that it affected the community in a way that could have separated the White and Black citizens.

> But one of the girls they took, won Bulldog. And I don't know, but I still think to this day, because it could have been such a big thing, I still wonder if the coach didn't say look Ms. Bullpup better be Black. I don't know which one it is going to be, but it better be one of them, you know, just to keep it, because it could have, it could have gotten out of hand. It could have, because it is enough to me, that kind of stuff, the parents make a bigger deal about it than the kids. It could have gotten out of hand. I can see where it could have, but since she ended up being Black nobody didn't say nothing, about the homecoming court.

She recently observed a racial experience, which occurred involving others in her community.

> I was about to say, our coach, when I was there, he was the assistant and then he got moved up, and he was a Black man, Coach DeVane. He got moved up to Head Coach and then he coached for two years as head coach and after that you know he wanted more money because he was doing, what is it called, the summer camps and they weren't paying him for that, so when he asked, the board just let him go, rather than just, it wasn't like he was asking for a $10,000; he just wanted to be paid for the time that he was giving. And I mean they had like a winning team, you know he had the best record of anybody that ever come through Hart County and they, he got a better offer somewhere else, and he wanted to stay in Hartwell. I really do believe that was racially motivated. I really do believe that if he had of been somebody White; if they can pay the superintendent of Hart County with just, does she even have a masters, I am pretty sure that she would have to have a masters to be superintendent. I thought that was awful, because he had been here so long. That is another thing, he had been here so long, he had been here a long time, I mean, that was just wrong to me. It was just wrong. And it really, they don't know what I am sure that the school board or whoever was in charge of making that decision, they don't know, but it really wounded the players, Black and White, because he was more than just their coach, he was their friend. So when he left, they cried and were just so hurt. And a part of them, left with him. They don't play the same, they don't give 110% like they used to give for him, but when he left, that wounded the football system, the program, it really

> did. I think they are looking at that Black man coming in here, thinking he could take over and stuff, but it really wasn't about that, it was the person that he was, not what color he was, he really impacted both Black and White. I still feel like that and when he left, it was like they moved spirits, it really broke them and it hasn't been the same.

This story brought to light an example of discriminating against someone on the basis of their skin color. The county did not support a Black man as the coach, and as a result the coach resigned. According to Charlene one of the White board members did not let his son play for Coach DeVane because he was Black. As Charlene stated, it was the adults who had more issues with race than the students. This example affected the community and the players on the team; "it impacted the black and white." As a result Charlene felt that the players' spirits were broken, and they did not play the same. Charlene's reflections about racism were influenced by her experiences.

> Yes, that is why I know without a shadow of a doubt, racism is definitely taught. Definitely because the little Black girls hold hands with the little White girls, kindergarteners are so touchy, we cannot, we can say it 10 times day keep your hands to yourself, they are going to be doing something to each other, hugging each other, holding hands walking down the hall, everything, playing with each other's hair and it really is not a Black and White thing.

Charlene made these observations while working with the children in her kindergarten class. She lived through a time of complete integration, but she also had stories to share of racial incidents. Racism seemed to be alive and well in Hartwell, Georgia.

Sonia. Sonia reported racial experiences that were currently happening to her family. She had not felt racism as a child the way she did as an adult.

> While I was going through, we, it really wasn't an issue to me. Me moving away and then coming back, my eyes were opened. I think I was just in the crowd, but I got along with both races, so I really didn't see it. It is just, when I was in high school, we, my husband and I we double-dated all the time with another couple that was White and I mean, and I know that was rare, but we did. And then I had some friends that, like Friday and Saturday, we would actually ride in my car, my little pluck and we would ride around and I mean, right now, I could call like two or three and they would tell you about it and how we would just ride around."

Sonia had White friends throughout school. She did not have any racial problems as a student. However, in later years her "eyes were opened" to racism in her community.

> The race issue, for me I think, has just started lately and I think it was because my eyes were opened because I think it was there, but I didn't know it and I think I was naive and I hate it, but I can't do anything about that part. It is sad that, like my daughter won homecoming yesterday and she went to the dance last night and she said that there were maybe like six Black people there and I said well you didn't dance with any of the boys or anything. And she said no Mom, the White boys don't think that they can, they are not going to dance with a Black girl. And I said I don't understand that, it should be just a dance and everybody dance.

There was a renewed focus on race that was part of the school and community. The "race" issues were present. The students were together, but the community was uncertain regarding how to handle mixing the races. The kids were seeing one thing and

hearing another. Confusing messages were present and the students continued to segregate by race at social events.

> Well what happened was the Black children, it was a party, technically a party somewhere else, so that is where they went and they had the party at the school where it was majority White. But there were a lot of Black kids that didn't go to that party just because we call it a street party and I was like my kids, well they know that they wouldn't be there anyway. But that is sad, to me it was because I know a lot of the guys that she is friends with and they voted for her, I know they did. I mean she couldn't have won it with just the Black vote, and that is sad and she will tell you that she sat down and talks with them all the time and they will say I would date a Black girl but my parents would just absolutely just wouldn't have it and I just think that is weird.

The students were unsure of how to resolve issues related to race. Sonia also shared problems that had come from her son dating a White girl. It was not a problem because the girl was White; the problem was how her son treated the situation.

> And right now, he is mad at me because I ask him was they going together, because she was at the game yesterday, but they weren't sitting together and I have noticed when we go in public places, it is like, you know the distance. She will call over at his house and she has been over at our house a couple of times and we treated her absolutely fine I think. I try and treat her just like anybody else, but I wanted him to have pride in himself. Right now, he is not speaking to me because I am like, I want you to have pride, if you all are dating, I want you to know you are dating. Yesterday they walked around, because I was observing

> them and I saw her and she smiled at me, but I would like for her to just be like any other. You know, just come over and say hi and I want to say hi. I don't want it to be this secret thing and that is the only problem that I have. If you are going to go with somebody of the opposite race, just go with them, it is not. We can't break the barrier if you are going to keep it hidden.

The students were confused about how to handle mixed dating situations. They were hearing one thing from their parents and doing another. It was like the "forbidden fruit" was being put in their lives and they did not know how to react. They knew that race issues existed, but they were unsure of what to do in relation to them. Sonia felt that she has a great responsibility to help her children cope with race.

> And for me it is hard because I am like I failed in this way, because I thought I built his self-esteem up a little bit more than that to know that even if he is going with her and every is looking, I want him to have enough sense to say, you know, if we are going to date, they are going to know. If it is not good enough for everybody to know, the parents and everybody, then no we can't do it.

She felt that if one was going to date a White girl then do it and don't pretend. She saw that it had been a hard thing for her son and felt she had failed because he was not more confident in himself. Sonia believed that, "Anybody that has a problem with it, they just have to just go on and do something else."

Tarla. Tarla had seen an interesting example of racism at Spelman:

> I didn't realize that a long time ago, you had to, you had to submit a picture to Spelman and if you didn't pass the paper bag test you didn't get in, if you are lighter than a paper bag, the brown paper bag, then you are okay. I was looking at

> some old pictures, and I kept seeing, you know every one at Spelman is really light complexion. Like Manley is really light and some other women who graduated fifty years ago are really light and they had to pass the paper bag test. To be considered. Lighter or the same color as the paper bag, they could get in, they would be considered. If you were darker, they threw you out. But then they were like Rockefeller wanted to educate Black women, so I didn't understand why.

She also experienced something similar when she was a freshman at Spelman College where there was still a focus on the "light skin girl."

> And that is another thing here, like, well it is not really a big deal anymore. But I know freshman year, I was like the light skin girl, I am like we are all the same ya'll, I mean, don't, long hair, light skin, what is the deal.

This practice caused Tarla to question racial attitudes in an all Black school. It was something she had not directly experienced until going to Spelman. She felt that "we are all the same" regardless of skin color.

These experiences were all shared from younger generations. Racism was not something left in the past; it was still part of these Black women's lives. Issues surrounding racism were complicated and involved many different emotions. These women were continuing to learn how to "cope" with racism throughout their lives.

Experiences in Developing Coping Skills

"You just have to pray for them." (Mrs. Rucker)

It was important for each generation to develop coping skills to help overcome racism. Some dealt with racism in a direct and open way while others experienced

more subtle and hidden forms. The existence of racism required learning how to cope with it and how to develop strategies to negotiate through societal contexts. The following are examples of how these women learned to "cope" in their world.

Tarla. The following comments illustrate Tarla's feeling that she did not have problems with racism in school.

> I know I really didn't have problems when I was in school. I mean there would be some kids that were like, I hate Black people and everything, but that was minor. But I know like sometimes, I would be like, "Nanny why do they say that?,' and she would be like, They just don't know any better, that is it. They just don't know any better Tarla, you just have to pray for them and you know, if you don't want to talk to them, don't talk to them, but they don't know any better, so don't, you don't lash back at them. She would always say, Don't lash back at them, you just, just let it go.'

Her grandmother helped her to understand racism and provided strategies for dealing with it. She acknowledged that there were people who had racist attitudes, but you just prayed for them and let it go.

Mrs. Rucker. Mrs. Rucker coped with racist attitudes by seeing the good in people and not by focusing on the bad. Mrs. Rucker tried to avoid trouble by understanding people.

> I did what I was asked to do and if I wanted to do something else, well I said nothing about it, you know, I would just always do it. You know, I think sometimes that is what is the trouble with integration and people, you have ideas and you don't want to stretch enough to see what things are going on and why it is

> going on and that sort of thing. I had no problems, just ask some of the teachers, I had no problem with children or teachers, because I knew I had a job and I knew that I had to do it and I tried to do my job. I didn't come over there to try and do your job because I didn't know what your job entailed. So I think that is what is wrong with people, they don't try to understand each other and don't know what is going on half the time. They just assume that they do and it is a bad thing and it is still going on.

It was important to focus on what she had to do, and she tried to see both sides to every situation. She also felt it was important to enjoy her life and not focus on the negative.

> And even if I differ with a person, I try to see their side of it, you know, there are always two sides to everything. I didn't always get along with every child because you had to discipline them sometimes. It is and I tried to do, to enjoy whatever I am doing, I try to do it, you know, and have some pleasure in it and enjoy it. It is not worth doing if you don't enjoy it.

Sonia. Sonia coped with racism by focusing on the White people she had met who were good. Seeing the good that was present helped her to cope with the negative.

> I have met some wonderful people in all my locations, Black and White, that is what keeps hope, keeps faith in mankind because I have met some and they have been absolutely wonderful. Right, Derrick and I were talking this week, we were just talking about as far as race relations. The couple that stayed in front of us in the subdivision we stayed in were White, but they came from, I can't remember where they were from, but they moved to Louisiana afterwards, they were

> absolutely wonderful. They were like our parents because I started school there and the lady would have supper cooked when I come home from work, she would come out the door like she was your mom, and she would say Sonia I have the supper ready, so when Derrick comes in, just tell him and the kids to come over because I know you have class tonight.

There were genuine examples of good White people, and this gave her hope for future race relations.

Sarah. Sarah coped with racism and the challenges it brought by having "staying power." She decided in her mind, long ago, that no matter how hard something was she would "have to stay" and make it. God gave her the strength to make it. She also felt that she had been given a "calling" by God to cope with racism and to help others deal with racism. She provides guidance and support to her daughters to help them learn how to "cope" with racism in society.

> Once I commit to something, then I am, see I have to see it through, no matter how hard it gets, no matter what you put me through, no matter what you say, no matter the expressions, no matter, no matter anything, you just have to stay. And for me, I was always, I felt that, how people looked at our race. I thought when they looked at me they were going to think our whole race, I took responsibility for my whole race. Just in the last four or five years, have I started to realize Sarah you can't answer for your whole race, because there are so many people in the Black race who are not like me.

It was difficult to be in that situation, but knowing God helped her to survive. "It is lonely. And you know what I don't know, I don't know how people do it who don't

know God." Knowing God was her greatest coping skill. She felt that she could do anything if she depended on Him for strength.

The Black women in my study endured many struggles. However, not by choice did they endure, but by the determination and the strength that emerged from difficult situations. The opening quotation of my dissertation suggests, "If anyone should ask a Negro woman in America what has been her greatest achievement, her honest answer would be, 'I survived!' " (Murray, 1995, p. 186). Coping strategies were included throughout each aspect of these findings. One of the most common coping strategies was to encourage racial uplift by getting an education (Collins, 2000). The following section describes the implications for schooling.

Impact on Schooling

Quality Education and Expectations of Academic Success Have Declined. "I had to play catch up." (Tarla)

One of the conclusions drawn from most participants in the study felt that they had quality school experiences during segregation with high expectations for success from family, teachers, and communities. In contrasts, participants felt that educational quality had declined since integration. The participants focused on teacher expectations as a direct influence on educational expectations. The participants felt that the teacher expectations had declined over time and that predominantly White teachers in the schools today, however well intentioned, bring their personal prejudices and biases into the classrooms, adversely affecting students of color (Moore, 1996). The denial of school based support is a significant constraint in the success of education (O'Connor, 2002).

Siddle-Walker (1996) found that schools were successful during segregation because Black people had total control of their education. During integration control was taken away, and ownership no longer resided with the Black community. The needs of the Black students were at the forefront, and the students benefited from the Black leadership and their expectations (Siddle-Walker, 1996).

Morris's (1999) research found that many Black schools during desegregation were a strong aspect of the community and were considered "good" on the strength of the schools' "communal bonds" with the Black family. Similar to Morris's (1999) findings, the women in this study felt their schools were "good" based on the reputation of strong community and family ties rather than on a basis of performance on standardized tests. Morris (1999) defined "good" as "maintaining strong communal bonds with African American families from the neighborhood that surrounds the school" (p. 586).

Other research has presented segregated schools as problematic and deficient (Kozol, 1991; Wells & Crain, 1997). Spring (1997) wrote that segregated schools provided an inferior education. His work stated that segregated Black students were taught to believe they were inferior; therefore, many accepted an inferior economic status. He also stated that segregated education tended to emphasize for Blacks the acceptance of habits and values required for menial employment. Segregated education also tended to reinforce among many White Americans a belief in their own superiority.

Historically, the most popular explanations of academic underachievement for African Americans have focused on home, motivation, and socioeconomic status—too often ignoring the role of the school (Jones, 1996). Issues related to background do influence achievement, but there is research that indicates that factors such as teacher

expectations, assessment and instruction, and the structure and organization of schools, must also be considered (Jones, 1996).

The women in this study had varied experiences in school. The older women reported having positive experiences, while a trend in the views of the quality of education decreased, as the participants got younger. Charlene, from the youngest generation, who attended a completely integrated school, provided her thoughts on the quality of her school experience.

> I had a good elementary school experience and a pretty good middle school experience. Yeah, I got a good start. Nancy Hart [Elementary School], well at that time, I think they are on the critical list aren't they? But when I was going there, we had a good academic program. They prepared me a lot, probably a lot more than they do now for high school and stuff. My teachers in high school didn't really prepare me for college. They were kind of easy on us and when I got to college, it was like wow, you are supposed to get prepared.

An important aspect of Charlene's school experiences was the lack of personal connection she did not have with her teachers.

> They [teachers] weren't very personal with their students. They kind of put it out there and that was it, you know. In general, they weren't personal. I don't think they got real personal with me because my mom was in the system, you know, and I kind of, sometimes I felt like you know they kind of pushed me off to the side, like you know your momma is a teacher, so still whatever she don't get, she can get it at home.

The conversation we had about teachers was very disturbing. Charlene had gone through four years of high school and never had a teacher who developed a close relationship with her. Her teachers did not have any expectations of her to achieve or succeed. They had not connected with her life in any way. Tarla had positive relationships with teachers, but she had not been prepared academically for college.

> I had to kind of play catch up. And I was talking to another classmate of mine and we were talking about how we don't know if Jackson County actually prepared us for college. I mean we took college prep classes, but did they really prepare us for college? We are doing well there, but it is something that we had to do on our own to get there.

Kisha did very well in school and was a high achiever. She had very fond memories and support from her elementary teachers, but her main support came from her family. They were always there to encourage her and to give her every opportunity for success.

> I started kindergarten when I was six and during that year my mother worked with me so much I was reading when I got to kindergarten. I remember one of my first memories of kindergarten, sometimes my teacher would sit me in front of the class and I would read stories to the other kids.

In contrast to the younger generations, Sarah had wonderful school experiences and teachers who were committed to her learning. She described them as caring, but strict, with high expectations for success. Black women teachers were historically known for their role as advocates for education (Collier-Thomas, 1982).

> I want to say what stands out is how committed our teachers were to our learning. I mean they were committed. They were, I mean you really had to learn, you had

> to learn the material that you were exposed to. When I look back on it, I am just so proud that I went to school where I was and that it was, the quality of learning and education, ooh, it so far surpasses what I see now. You didn't have a lot of people not doing well when I came through school. They might have all not been A students, but everybody tried. They were able to instill in us some kind of desire to succeed. In fact they talked to you a lot about that. That you have to be successful.

The oldest generation in the study also focused on how changes had occurred and felt that learning was not as apparent today. Sarah compared the past with the present.

> I liked school but it was so different from school now, but you had to learn. You couldn't. It wasn't, they don't really have to learn now. They just kind of get passed along.

Sarah also felt that the elimination of corporal punishment and prayer from schools were important factors in the decline of education.

> The big thing that made you really somebody was that you got a whipping at school. They took out capital punishment and while I know everybody thought that was just wonderful and great, that is the worst thing that ever happened. That and taking out prayer. Those two things they turned the whole system around, because if you did anything you got something right then, that day, you went up in front of the class and you held out your hands and took the strap.

Mrs. Neely had fond memories of her teachers.

> And she was very special. And then I had, to tell you the truth, all of the teachers that I had, I loved them, you know, it is just you only had, from first through the

> fifth grade, at that time I think, fifth or sixth, you didn't change classes, you just stayed with the one teacher. So you really looked up to your teachers, you wanted to be like them, and they only thing you think about being was a teacher, or a preacher.

Participants responded that strong support from teachers was instrumental in their success in school. Mrs. Neely felt that a support system was currently missing. There were high expectations and support from teachers in the older generation, but high expectations and support were not evident with the younger generations.

The older women were in classrooms in which they were required to learn and excel. They were supported and encouraged by their teachers. The agreed with Fultz (1995) that the fate of the race was dependent on a high quality education and that high quality teachers were necessary to make this happen. Support from the Black community, Black teachers, and positive attitudes toward Black students, of whom academic success was encouraged and expected, created an environment in which students realized their academic potentials (Siddle-Walker, 1996).

Much has been written about the power of teacher expectations, and research has also supported the basic assumption that teacher attitudes influence student achievement (Bennett, 2003). There is research evidence of quality educators who provide support for all students (Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Paley, 2000). The findings from this study are not applicable to all schools and teachers. However, there is evidence that many White teachers have lower expectations for their non-White students (Bennett & Harris, 1982; Bennett, 1981; Gay, 1973). Lower teacher expectations for particular racial or ethnic groups are based on negative racial or ethnic prejudice (Bennett, 2003). Teachers

are often unaware of their own prejudices and, therefore, may not be conscious of their own lowered expectations. Unfortunately, the participants perceive the lowered expectations affected the lives of the younger women in this study. The most disturbing example came from Charlene where she felt that the teachers did not prepare her adequately for college.

Mrs. Neely's words highlight the importance that a teacher has in the life of students.

> No, you have to have somebody, a support system, and I think that is what we are missing today: that support system.

The women in this study felt that lowered expectations from teachers had translated into the decline of positive educational experiences for young people in the schools today.

Summary of Participants' Experiences of Racism in Education

Racism was experienced by every participant in the study. Each participant described racism in different ways, but all had been affected during school and throughout their lives with racism. Racism came in direct forms, subtle forms, and institutional forms; nonetheless, it was present. Racism had an effect on each participant, but they all argued that it had not kept them from living their lives to the fullest. They coped with it and learned to work through it. They were forced to overcome racism, and as a result, they felt they developed into very strong women. The women in the study identified belief in God as instrumental to their coping skills.

The analysis of the data confirmed principles of Black Feminist Epistemology (Collins, 2000). The women focused on their "lived experiences as a criterion of

meaning." For example, experiences of racism established wisdom that they used throughout their lives to overcome struggles. Other Black women who had similar experiences throughout their lives supported them, and they used their experiences to continue the support of other Black women. Because they had "lived" with racism they had established a criterion of meaning for their lives.

Racism has not gone away. In his early work Du Bois believed that the view of Blacks as inferior was the primary cause of racism and discrimination, but he discovered that racism and the negative images of African Americans were deeply ingrained in the minds of Whites and Blacks alike (Alridge, 1999). Thus, integration did not consistently improve education for African Americans (Alridge, 1999). We can only hope that we will no longer find his words so relevant.

The prophetic words of W. E. B. Du Bois (1953), which communicated that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line" continues to be applicable as we enter the twenty-first century. Some have described racism as a permanent aspect of American life (Bell, 1992). Racism continues to be a part of our society, through individual, institutional, and societal levels. As a result of personal and institutional racism, African Americans historically have been deemed intellectually inferior to Whites and systematically denied equal access to full participation in the U. S. educational system (Moore, 1996).

The women's lives provided examples of how racism was present both in the past and today; however, they also provided examples of how their strong personalities overcame many struggles. The following chapter presents the idea of strong women and their personal responses to their lived experiences.

CHAPTER 6

STRONG WOMEN

"Women are a lot more bold that way." (Sarah)

This chapter focuses on the portrayal of strong women that is the core category of the study. The term, "strong women," denotes independent, determined, supportive, and successful women. The women described confidence, sisterhood, learning through struggles, and their faith in God as important to their survival as Black women. The attributes of "strong women" were important in creating positive school experiences.

Also included is a description of sexism and the participants experiences of sexism. Sexism was a part of the women's lives and served as a catalyst to promote the characteristics of "strong women." Historically it was documented that race and gender issues were double oppressions that beset Black women (Gray White, 1997). Surprisingly to me, the constructs of intersecting oppressions found in Black Feminist Epistemology (Collins, 2000) did not fit completely with the perspectives of the Black women who participated in this research. Instead of equally represented themes, the main oppression identified by the participants was racism; sexism was secondary and was not described in the same way as racism. It was a part of their lives, but they did not experience the overt acts of sexism like the did with racism. Their experiences of sexism were more subtle—less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts—but they were nevertheless embedded in society.

For purposes of this study, I have defined sexism as attitudes and behaviors based on traditional stereotypes of sexual roles, discrimination, institutional structures, and/or devaluation based on a person's sex. Although in this study sexism was not a major focus, participants experienced sexism and described insecurities related to sexism. However, the participants mostly focused on their strengths as women along with describing the encouragement that came from women in their lives.

The women participants described strong female role models throughout each generation that taught them how to deal with sexism. The following is a description of experiences of sexism that were described by only a few women.

Experiences of Sexism

"That glass ceiling they talk about is very real there, very real." (Sarah)

Sarah grew up with sisters. Her father had wanted a boy and made known his wishes to the girls. It directly affected their thinking and actions.

> He [her father] really did. He had three daughters and no sons, and he was always reminding us, oh I should have had a boy, I should have a boy. And I think somewhere in us, that made us want to try harder so we would always meet his approval. And I remember my mom saying you shouldn't say that to the girls because they work so hard and they don't ever bring you shame, and they try hard and if you had sons they might be in jail and you might have to go to jail over them, don't do them like that. But he would forget and he said, 'I wish I had a boy.' And it would have been nice to have a brother, but we didn't. But they instilled very strong values in us.

They worked hard to try to please their father so that he would be happy with his girls. Ms. Neely's husband was "old fashioned" in that he did not want her to work. She felt that not working made her different from the other women in her community. She followed her husband's wishes and did not officially work, but she worked for her community through her activism. She eventually went to work when her children were older so that she could help pay for them to go to college.

> I went to work when my youngest was eight and my mother kept her everyday, but she cried sometimes. I almost didn't go to work, but see I knew that with four children, there was no way that my husband was going to be able to send them to school. So that is why I went to work, so I could help subsidize, but he didn't want me to go. But I went, because, both of us wanted them to have an education, because we knew that was the only way that they were going to be able to survive. And so, you know, I stayed home with them.

She made many sacrifices, and her husband also worked several jobs to provide opportunities for his family. She felt he was very important in their successes. They did not see it directly with him there, but he was working to provide for their family.

Sarah was the only participant who described explicitly the double oppression of being a woman and Black. She experienced the "glass ceiling" in the work place where her opportunities for advancement were limited. She felt she had been discriminated against on two levels: one for being Black and another for being a woman.

In each of these examples sexism was present in the home attitudes of the men. They had expectations about a woman's role and their responsibility for their families.

These attitudes did not keep the women from succeeding, but they reported that these attitudes gave them a drive for achievement.

Women of color experience discrimination based on race and sex, but, for the most part, race and sex have been explored as independent processes (Banks, C., 1995). This tendency ignores Black women and limits the possibilities for understanding race and sex collectively (Banks, C., 1995). This study provided the opportunity to explore them together, but in the end, it was difficult for the women in the study to address both racism and sexism with the same attention.

Experiencing Insecurities

"Black women's bodies have been sites of contestation since Europeans first set foot on African soil…" (Guy-Sheftall, 1995, p. 359)

Sexism has been a subtle aspect of our society, which has affected what women think about themselves. Black women struggled historically for self worth and a strong identity (Collins, 2000). Charlene shared the coming of age experiences of her school years that were turning points in her life. The low self-esteem she had as a female affected how she felt about school. Thinking she was fat, liking boys, and beginning her menstrual cycle made her unsure of herself as a young woman.

> But when we got into middle school, I think middle school was my hardest time, those three years because you are adjusting and you are in the school not with just the kids you are used to, but the town, all the other county schools they all combine at the middle school, so you really, I was still fat then in the middle school and I was kind of liking boys and I knew nobody would probably would like me because I was fat. So I think my middle school was my worst time.

> Middle school is the hardest. Your menstrual cycle and you know all kind of stuff. Well I started my cycle in eighth grade. Well see, nowadays, they start in the elementary. I was fifteen. Well, I knew it was coming and actually I felt bad because I didn't have it and everybody else did, but that eighth-grade year, I was like, that was a hard year, you know, getting ready.

The changes in Charlene's body had a great effect on how she looked at the world. She did not feel that boys would like her because she was "fat." In actuality, she was not fat, but she perceived that she was. This was an example of the pressure that society placed upon young women to be a certain size for acceptance. Charlene struggled with accepting herself, and this affected her entire school experience. The acceptance of changes in her body directly affected how she viewed school.

> Well mine was in the eighth grade. I think that was ooh, and that is when I really started hating school. Having to go in that bathroom and have to oooh I hated that. I hated that with a passion, I really did. I hated that with a passion. That is one thing that stands out in my mind too, when I started my cycle I hated school because my momma used to carry, I didn't carry a pocketbook until then, I just carried my book bag, and she made me start carry a purse because I had to have those pads. And I was like, ooh I just don't, I did not want to carry a purse. But she made me start carrying a purse then. And then she was teaching there and she used to come to my room, did you change? And I could not believe, because what I would do was I wouldn't do it and she would make me carry those pads in that pocketbook. But I would go all day from morning til I got home I would change

when I got home and she found out that I was doing that and she used to come to that room, 'have you changed'?

Coming of age as a woman was a major experience for Charlene. It was very difficult for her and had a lasting impression on her life; she stopped liking school; she worried about what people would think of her.

Charlene did not describe specific examples of sexism. However, experiences in school played a part in her self worth. The educational system often does not meet girls' needs (Campbell, 2000). Fortunately, Charlene came from a family of strong women who did not see limitations due to gender: They have helped her to gain more confidence. Charlene also gained confidence and independence after having a baby. She had someone else that was depending upon her and she took the responsibility very seriously.

There were important personal characteristics that were taught by other women to help these women become strong and independent. The following describes aspects that made the women feel strong.

Personal Characteristics of Strong Women

The women in the study focused on the strong attributes that they possessed as independent women. These included confidence and determination, strength from sisterhood, and strength from religious faith.

The participants expressed confidence and determination to not allow sexist attitudes to interfere with their lives. Sexism existed, but they learned skills to overcome sexism and succeed. They felt that they were confidant in their abilities as a woman to meet any challenge life might bring.

Strength was gained from sisterhood that helped these women overcome struggles. Close relationships across family generations and with additional women provided a support system that was instrumental in helping these women throughout their lives.

All of the women in the study gained strength from their religious faith to overcome struggles. Their faith was instrumental in how they described their lives. Each woman believed that God had helped them throughout their life.

Mayou Angelou (1993) describes what it is like to be a strong woman.

> Being a woman is hard work. Not without joy and even ecstasy, but still relentless, unending work…must be at once tender and tough. She must have convinced herself, or be in the unending process of convincing herself, that she, her values, and her choices are important. She must resist considering herself a lesser version of her male counterpart. She will need to prize her tenderness and be able to display it at appropriate times in order to prevent toughness from gaining total authority and to avoid becoming a mirror image of those men who value power above life, and control over love. It is imperative that a woman keep her sense of humor intact and at the ready. Women should be tough, tender, laugh as much as possible, and live long lives. The struggle for equality continues unabated, and the woman warrior who is armed with wit and courage will be among the first to celebrate victory (pp. 6-7).

Examples of strong women were very evident in the study represented here. Important lessons about life were described as being passed on from mother to daughter. The mother/daughter relationship is one fundamental relationship among Black women.

Countless Black mothers have empowered their daughters by passing on the everyday knowledge essential to survival as African American women (Collins, 2000). As mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends to one another, many African American women have affirmed one another (Myers, 1980). The following describes characteristics of "strong women" from the perspective of the participants.

Confidence

"I just walked in and said, I am looking for a job." (Saverne)

Throughout the interviews, the women exuded confidence in themselves and their race. It was a value passed down from generations of women. It was necessary for the women to survive the struggles that they faced on a daily basis. Hunter –Gault (1997) described the confidence that was passed down to her as "armor building."(p. 71). This involved women preparing other women for whatever might come. According to Hunter-Gault in West (1997),

> If you think of yourself as a victim, you go on down the street looking like a victim, with your head down instead of up. And that's what we've got to do. Have our young people walking around with their heads up and their eyes on the future. (p. 83).

Sonia. Sonia exhibited confidence in her actions and saw the confidence in her daughter. However, Sonia struggled with raising her son, but she had different experiences with her daughter. Her son did not speak up, but her daughter was more outspoken. "Women are a lot more bold that way." She also suggested that women are more open with their comments. Black mothers must ensure their daughters' physical survival; Black mothers must also teach their daughters to fit into systems of oppression.

Black daughters learn to expect to work, to strive for an education so that can support themselves, and to anticipate carrying heavy responsibilities in their families and communities, because these skills are essential to their own survival and those for whom they will eventually be responsible (Collins, 1990). Sonia's daughter had developed strong feelings about racial issues. Sonia:

> That is just her [Chanelle] and even if that should be the case, if he is White, Hispanic or whatever, whoever, I think whoever she dates, it definitely will be like that [outspoken]. Well I am Chanelle's boyfriend and it won't be that way. Black men are more timid about the issue. They are more, I don't know what the word is, versus a female, we are just more outgoing about it and we will say whatever it is right then. The Black male still just withdraws, they still like a secret or something. They have a slave mentality for some reason or another.

Several women felt that some deep problems from the past continued to surface in the thinking of Black men. The felt Black women were stronger with racial issues, and the idea that Black men were pushed down was still present. Strong issues of gender and power were playing out in the difference of how Sonia's children responded to racial relations.

Saverne. Saverne provided an example of independence and the role of a strong woman. It took confidence in herself to establish herself as a successful businesswoman.

> I just walked in and said, 'I am looking for a job and do you have anything?' And she said, 'I do'. So I went in and she taught me everything that she knew and I just sort of had a knack for it and I picked up on it. And after she sold the shop, I stayed on and I ran the shop and so I know about working. I was getting my own

> job at 15 and trying how to manage a dollar. And what I said earlier that I owned my own business, it was a florist here in Athens on Broad and Billups Street and I ran that for, from ‘85 to ’90. I bought this existing business, and sort of took it over and it was rewarding, it was, you know. But it was a lot, it was hard work because you open you didn’t have a closing time, holidays you had to work. And I admit I was good at it, I really was because I liked, I am hands-on.

This was an important time in her life, a time that gave her great confidence.

> But it was rewarding and I really enjoyed it and I think that was a real lesson for me, a valuable lesson for me. I learned how to be responsible and I learned the do’s and the don’ts. And I learned how to get along with people and how to work with people. So that really, that little stint of working at my own business taught me a lot of valuable lessons.

Saverne reported that some of her most important learning was a result of owning her own business. Her shop closed, and she decided to try a second career as a teacher.

> I closed my shop because my building was sold. I decided that I didn’t want to relocate and because the handwriting was on the wall, so I started subbing at Jefferson High School in special ed and after a while I was offered a job at the elementary school working in the BD classroom. I went here, but this is where He put me and I think this is where the Lord wants me to be.

Saverne had a positive role model in her mother. Mrs. Rucker had done several different types of jobs throughout her life.

Mrs. Rucker. Mrs. Rucker had held many jobs and was confident in her ability to perform them successfully.

> I worked at BJC part-time at night. I have had some of all kinds of jobs. While I was teaching in the day, and weekends I took Friday night, Saturday night, and sometimes Sunday night, if school wasn't going to be on Monday. I worked as a nursing assistant at BJC for about 20 years. I have done some of everything. I have nursed, I told you about me going to back to school to be a nursing assistant. I have cleaned houses, I have waited on tables, I had helped plan parties, I have done a little bit of everything. I once took inventory at 10-cent stores around town, when we had them down in Commerce. You name it and I have done it. I had worked in the field and picked cotton and chopped cotton.

Mrs. Rucker had many different work experiences throughout her life. She felt that sexism had not kept her from succeeding in the work place.

Sarah. Sarah provided a strong role model for overcoming sexism. She was divorced before divorce was socially acceptable. She was 20, had two young children, and went to work to provide for her family.

> I worked and I got me a job right away and my mother and dad let me move back in and I had two little old children. I worked, and yeah I paid rent, I paid rent and I gave my mother so much on the groceries and gave my dad rent and then I bought anything that we needed to eat.

Sarah gave an impression as an independent woman. She had a strong sense of what she needed to do. She felt being a woman did not seem to be an obstacle for her, however, she described how being a woman was an obstacle in her work experiences.

> I was working, my first job was in a sewing plant, I pressed shirts and I remember I made like $2.67 an hour or something, but that was a lot of money. Because

> most of the ladies were making like a $1 and something. But I worked really hard and I could really do that work and I can still think, I have love for that too, because I like production work because I could use my hands. And I worked hard and made lots of money, and one day the thing I didn't like was if you live to be older, you didn't have any benefits. They didn't have retirement or anything like that. They, the Georgia Power Company was always here and they built a new one, they were going to build a new one, they said. But anyway it got out that they were going to hire somebody at Georgia Power and so every day I would come from work, through there at lunch. And I would look over there and I would sit and wonder if I could go to work there. I wonder if I could go to work there, because there were no Blacks working there.

She was the first Black woman to work for Georgia Power in North Georgia. Researchers have documented that Black women experienced economic exploitation, fewer choices for employment regardless of their education or skills, and were confined primarily to domestic labor in private homes as cooks, maids, and child nurses (Hunter, 1997). Sarah pressed forward to gain access into additional types of employment that were difficult for Black women to acquire.

> Now I am working, where they hired me, I had a part-time job and they paid me out of what is called petty cash, so I gave up my job making $2.67 an hour full-time, to take a part-time job making $2.15, or $2.10, it was less and I thought ooh, I shouldn't have done that probably. But everybody kept saying, ooh, but that it is a good company. But I got hired in and not knowing what I know now, I didn't have all the benefits everybody else had because I was what they called a petty

cash employee, so they paid me out of the local money, every week, so I still wasn't entitled to benefits and retirement and just all kind of things. But now the Lord worked me right on through that. I prayed through that and prayed through that and I worked for two and a half years, petty cash and then they put me on full-time. Sure did, and I got a full-time job with Georgia Power and I stayed with them for 29 years.

Sarah was willing to make sacrifices for advancement. She saw how important it was to be a Black woman and help make a better future for women.

I got to work and in the job where I worked out here, I worked with the line crew, right in the building with me. And all of those were male and all the management people were male and I was the, and no there was one other lady. So it was two of us, but still they made all kind of differences in us. We had to always work while the men could sometime go off and take breaks and they would go to meetings and all kinds of things. And even if they had a safety meeting, I remember, it would be in the building where we were, but just the men would go, women never went. And they weren't real high on promoting females. Now I did watch them learn, they started to promote females a little more in the, around the 80s I would say, I guess it was after some of the female activist things happened. Yes, see there were no females outside reading meters, there were no females climbing poles, there were no females. In management, there are a few and you are right, even in the year 2002 if you were to go to a Georgia Power operating headquarters right now, I bet we wouldn't have five female line people. And then even a female who will work her way up the ladder, if she wanted to work over in

> the operating side, they, she couldn't get the job. Now I noticed the year I left in 2000, they had promoted two females into the operating department, but that is a very male dominated company.

Sarah was aware of the discrimination that women faced. "No, that glass ceiling they talk about is very real there, very real."

> But gender discrimination was very real there. I will be honest, I was so, I guess accustomed, you don't really get accustomed to being discriminated against, but you do get, you do learn how to endure it and you recognize it. And you don't address every instance of it, you just know what it is and once you have the mind set to deal with it, you just, it just doesn't bother you so much. There still again, I just thank God for that.

She was able to endure the years of discrimination because her faith in God had helped her. She tried to pass her faith on to her family.

> That is a God thing. That is something that happens in your heart. And I am working on Adrian, because she has got to get there, so that you can see things, but not have to react to everything that you see.

She saw so much discrimination that she learned how to cope with it on a daily basis.

> I trained so many people and watched them go up the corporate ladder, but there are a lot of reasons for that. I can see those now, well I could start seeing them before I left, but the piece of paper, the degree I needed. But if I had had it, it would have been something else, because I knew people that still had it, but there is a glass ceiling for females. For one thing, it was really bad when I was coming through, not just, so I was fighting my race as well as my sex and a whole lot of

> other things. And then a lot of times it wasn't because I wouldn't ask, but even when I would ask I was told that.

There were various excuses that were used to keep her down.

> Sometimes when I knew I was being discriminated against with the, when I would go for a job that I knew I could do, that I was already doing, and they would tell me something like, they would just use all these simple reason why I couldn't have it. And then lots of time they would make the job require something that I didn't have. Yeah, on purpose. You knew it because you watched the job before many, many times. And then they say well we need to fix this things so Sarah won't quite get it and then because there were some jobs where they would put BS desired, not required, but desired.

Racial discrimination and gender discrimination were very real experiences for Sarah. For 291/2 years she faced these issues. She handled them with an attitude that made a difference in the way other people reacted to women and Black people. She saw the glass ceiling and the double oppression that resulted from being a female and Black.

> And after you go to three or four jobs and they tell you things that are negative, you kind of say, 'Well maybe I just shouldn't even try.' And I quit trying at one point, and I really should have never given up. I should have tried for every job, but then I also got to looking at well I don't know if I want to move somewhere. And I did turn down one. Oh yeah, not having a college degree would have been a thing. I would just go back and get it anyway, because I learn now how important that is, well everybody says well do you have a college degree. It doesn't matter if you can do the work or not, you have to have that piece of paper.

The discrimination she dealt with began to wear her down. Gender and racism were too much to overcome in every situation, particularly at work. However, she opened the door for many people to walk through. She continued to be confident in her own abilities and worked within her community to make it better.

Sarah ran for public office 20 years ago and won as the first and only Black woman. She believed she could make a difference in her community and has made lasting contributions throughout her political career. She has been instrumental in reorganizing the city government, providing paved roads throughout the community, developing an auditing system for the finances, and for lobbying for jobs for women and minorities in the government.

She inherited a long legacy of both resistance and activism that provided a means to cope with the abuses encountered. The legacy also provided a sense of pride and success, which carried Black women through many devastating experiences during their lives (Hunter, 1997).

The participants reported that a major factor in their confidence was the support that they gained from other Black women. They often used the term "sisterhood" to explain the bonds between Black women.

Sisterhood

"The have my back for everything." (Tarla)

Sisterhood was a term the participants used to describe the support and encouragement they received from other Black women (Giddings, 1988). There was recognition across each generation that other Black women were an important part of

their lives. Sisterhood can be seen as a model for a series of relationships African American women have with one another (Gilkes, 2001; Giddings, 1988).

Tarla. The "sisterhood" at Spelman was one of the best things about her school experience.

> I would say the sisterhood. I know that, I know my friends there, they have my back, they have my back for everything. And then the people that I just meet occasionally, just walking by, they speak, most of them do, I know that I speak. Just, let me hold the door for you where you come in. It is a really strong sisterhood there, and that is what I like the most. I mean if you need help, they are, the sisterhood is there. It is there and now that we are under the direction of a new president, things are about to change and we are about to go to even greater heights.

Historically there have been strong ties among Black women. Sororities at Black schools helped to provide similar social structures that were rooted in activism and community involvement. Many of the women pledged a sorority as an undergraduate during college and were later active in their communities through graduate chapters.

For this study "sisterhood" meant various things. It included a support system, help when needed, and a network of friends. There was a strong sense of pulling together for the needs of the race and gender. Women were often brought together with little knowledge of each other and to give sisterly cooperation (Brooks-Higgonbotham, 1993). In this study women focused on the value that struggles had in their lives.

Valuing Struggles

"To survive." (Mrs. Rucker)

Collins (2000) and others have reported that the legacy of struggle is a core theme of Black women's thought. Struggles were greatly valued as learning opportunities by participants in my study. Black leaders have looked at struggles as a positive experience (West, 1994). For example, Belafonte in West (1997) advised young people, "Do not look on struggle as some harmful, negative thing. Struggle has great glory and great dignity and great power and great beauty. As a matter of fact, the more you discover through struggle, the purer you become" (p. 33).

The women reported that their character took shape in response to hardships. Each participant described struggles, with a focus on how they helped them to grow.

Mrs. Rucker. Mrs. Rucker had experienced many struggles and felt they were to her benefit.

> You know I took struggles for strengthening. I didn't see them as a struggle back then. I didn't know I was struggling. Excuse me, I don't know whether I am making sense. Things that I did back in those days, I thought that is what you had to do, you know. My work, to survive. I have done some of everything. I have nursed, I told you about me going to back to school to be a nursing assistant, I have cleaned houses, I have waited on tables, I had helped plan parties, I have done a little bit of everything. I once took inventory at 10-cent stores around town, when we had them down in Commerce. You name it and I have done it. I had worked in the field and picked cotton and chopped cotton. They didn't seem like struggles to me. And you know what, I appreciate going through that because

> I would never know what it was all about had I not had some struggles along the way. I really appreciate it.

Saverne. The idea of struggles as a value for life growth had been passed down from Mrs. Rucker to Saverne.

> And it is really hard, it is really hard, it really is. But I thank God for those experiences. I thank God for the days of old, I thank God for all the things that I have been through because it has made me a better person, it has built character, you know.

These women were also committed to courageous struggle in the tradition of leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Sojourner Truth. The participants testified that their main source of overcoming struggles came from their faith in God.

God and Faith

"…God is in charge." (Sonia)

There was a strong commitment to God present in each family and throughout each generation. All the women attended church, but more than that they had a daily relationship with God. They often spoke of prayer and their faith in His direction for their lives. Historically, Black women have been central to broadening the public arm of the church and making it the most powerful institution of racial self-help in the African American community (Brooks-Higginbotham, 1993; Edelman, 1999). The Black women in the study felt it was their duty to teach the value of religion, education, and hard work, in order to gain advancement for African Americans as a group (Brooks-Higgonbotham, 1993).

Despite the growing belief that Black churches have declined, for participants in this study God and faith were a vital part of their lives. Marion Wright Edelman has testified how many women have influenced her faith.

> Over the years I have been profoundly inspired by great women of all races who broke out of society's boxes, found and raised their powerful voices, took risks, and sacrificed all as they sought to be God's hands and feet on earth in a variety of ways (p. 132).

Sarah. Sarah felt God was at the origin of who you are. She made the following comments:

> Because that is who determines who you are. Once you know who you are in Christ, then all the other things start to take a back seat. Because that make sure, see God makes the difference. He just makes the difference in all that. And I need to say that about my mom. When we were little, young, that is something that she did too. She prayed with us when we were little, taught us how to pray. Now I lay me down to sleep, then we moved the Lord's Prayer, then she said you have to learn to say some other things. Ask the Lord to bless you and to thank Him for the things He has done. And when I was younger and I remember I was married and anything would happen, I would say, "Mom, such and such happened and I don't know what to do". She would always say, "get your Bible, get your Bible, you have to read". I was like I don't want to read, I want you to just tell me what to do. And she wouldn't, she would always pick out some scripture for me to read and I would read that. So God, I don't know how we leave Him out, how we go all through everything, then when say oh but God. Yeah. It is like, and He is right

> there all the time saying but I am right here, call Me first and if we learn to call Him first, then a lot of things would not happen that do happen. But we don't, we think we can do it, so we step off without Him sometimes and then we get out there and get in trouble and we say ooh, help and He is so faithful though, He helps us. Over and over again He forgives us. Over and over, so with Him, so because prayer, ooh a lot of days that were really, really tough at work, and people had been mean to me all day, when you work with the public, working with the public is something in itself, whether it is races involved or not, I mean just the public period. You have to learn to pray a lot. He has been my stay. Yeah, but see we have to always remember the Bible says that God's kingdom would be persecuted, that is the only consolation for that. A lot of times when you are right, it is not that everybody is going to realize it and you are not going to be loved for it, you are actually going to be hated for it. Because if they could crucify Christ, then they can do anything to us. So we have to realize it is just our share of the cross, anything that we go through.

Sarah had passed along her faith to her daughter Sonia.

Sonia. Sonia felt that her God helped through difficult times in her life. She had the following to say:

> And I have some fears that even after I graduated. Will I have a job? Will I enjoy it, even though I am in the school system? I am honestly, it's just this last year, that I have just really dedicated to school and just gone full-time at night. God and my family and everybody has just kicked in. I just feel blessed. No, but God is in charge.

She also felt that God was a part of changing the attitudes of people in their community regarding the hiring of a Black assistant principal.

> He has just put a daze over the moment that He did it because it is like, I hired her, that is how He is looking because He is having, He is bearing the pressure of some White people in the community saying, "You hired her, how could you have done that?" I mean He has that pressure.

Mrs. Rucker. Mrs. Rucker had a very strong commitment to church and God. She traveled the state for religious meetings and programs that she was a part of. She also passed her strong faith on to her daughter and granddaughter.

Saverne. Saverne reported being thankful to God for the experiences she had that helped her throughout her life. She felt that the Lord had a plan for her life as she changed careers and became a teacher.

> Because I was settled, I had a goal set. I was mature, you know, I had my priorities, you know, set up so I knew what I had to do. And I had and teaching after being in the school system and working with kids I realized yeah, this is what I think, it is my time. You know the Lord has a plan for all of us. At the time, you know, maybe when I was in school, it was not His plan. He lets, He sort of let me go through what I wanted to do, and then when I got to a point where it just sort of failed, if you will, then He said okay it is my time now. So it was real easy for me, it was easy. The only hard part was getting there.

Mrs. Neely. Mrs. Neely's grandmother passed on the faith and taught her about God.

> She wasn't afraid of anything or anybody and of course, she taught me that I could be whatever I wanted to be. She said all you have to do is to believe and trust in God. She was very religious.

She felt that God had provided and been good to her.

> By the grace of God, you know, I always said, if anybody else got any money, I was going to get some too. And it has gotten really hard, but God has been good, so somehow we have been able to maintain. I feel like I have been blessed, I really do. I have had a lot of opportunities that, you know, that I feel have just made me. It has helped me to be where I am today.

Mrs. Neely had passed on the importance of prayer to her granddaughter.

Kisha. Kisha was trying to make a decision about her future career and felt that it was necessary to pray about her future.

> You know, I prayed over that this morning. My husband said, "You know, you just need to pray over it and think about it because I really don't know".

Bower and Schwartz (1997) found that a focus on spiritual and religious commitment is often a part of independent and strong Black women. The women participants in the study see themselves as continuing to carry the responsibility of religious training in their families and continue to depend on God for strength and direction in their lives.

> "Though opposed, I went forth laboring for God, and He owned and blessed my labors, and has done so wherever I have been until this day. And while I walk obediently, I know He will, though hell may rage and vent its spite" (Foote, J. 1995, p. 53)

The women in the study felt that faith in God was key to their survival and that He would see them through life.

Impact of Strong Women on Schooling

Experiences of Encouragement for Education Came from Women

"She always wanted me to be the very best…" (Mrs. Neely)

These strong women had a direct influence on education in their families. The women of previous generations provided encouragement. Research has shown Black women had been prominent in most facets of American life; however, their role in education had been their most salient contribution (Perkins, 1987). Black women have a history of striving for education beyond what was prescribed (Giddings, 1984). Women have often been encouraged throughout history by other women to develop their intellects so they could become self-reliant and economically independent (Cooper, 1988). Their role in education was apparent throughout this study. All of the women described how their mothers were instrumental in shaping their thoughts about education and life. Charlene reflected, "My momma. I guess that by her being a teacher, she really impressed me."

Kisha. Kisha's grandmother was her main source of encouragement. She had the following to say about her grandmother:

> I think you have already spoke with her. My family, my grandmother just always told me, I could be anything that I wanted to be and pushed me. And for every award, for everything that I ever got, she was always there, just proud. My mother went to college, but she didn't graduate from college, but she always knew that I could do and she pushed me and encouraged me. She kept me in ballet, tap, jazz,

in everything. I tried everything, piano, and so and then the daycare, seeing that foundation.

Sarah. Sarah had encouragement from both of her parents. She made the following statement when I asked her who had encouraged her value of education:

> You know what, I am going to say from my mom and dad. They were strong. My mother only had a seventh-grade education but she could read and she could write. And she had gone to school in a one-room schoolhouse and where she said that they had all the grades from first grade through seventh grade and she would sit and tell us about her experiences in school. My dad had a fourth-grade education, that is all he had, a fourth-grade education, but he built houses, he wired houses, he was a contractor for our house, for my sister's house, for most of the houses you see around here. He did that, he could sit and draw blueprints for the houses, but he had a fourth-grade education. He could read and write and count and it was important to them that we learned to do those things. So when we were little, when we started to school, I guess that it how it switched on. I could do my ABCs, and my numbers, and my birthday, and my address, and common things that you should know. And then around our dinner table, my dad was always very encouraging; he was saying, "You got to always do your best." He was always teaching us that you have got to do your best and people aren't going to like you necessarily, but you don't worry about what people are saying and all this, you just work hard. And so he instilled that go-getter attitude in us. He really did.

Mrs. Neely. Mrs. Neely's grandmother was instrumental in her success. She talked about her grandmother:

> My grandmother. I don't remember what grade my grandmother went through, but she was a very smart thinker. She was a very positive thinking person, she wasn't negative at all. She always wanted for me to be the very best and prayer and school were important to her. And so as a result, you know, it never dawned on me, when I see kids not even finishing high school, and you know, that is the least. I knew the value of education. And I always kept friends that were in the field so, and that is something that she taught me too, you know. You cultivate friends that can help you, you know, because you learn from them.

Sonia. Sonia's focus on education came from both of her parents. She had the following to say about her parents:

> It came from my mom and my dad, on my biological side, my family are all college educated and so that is a big part on that side. On my mom's side, of course, we have already went over that, both of my aunts are, but my mom never did go back, but that is not because she couldn't, she just didn't go back. That has always been important, even with my granddaddy on my mom's side. He was an architect, but even then he had a fourth-grade education, but he stressed how important it was to be able to read and write and be able to see about yourself.

Tarla. Tarla's grandmother and community were a source of encouragement and made the following comments:

> My grandmother, but everybody at the church, they have always supported me in whatever I have done. I was installed as a youth elder at Sardis when I was 16, so you know outside of school they were really there for me.

She described the value that was placed upon education by Black women as a high priority and focus. “Education and intellectual development were necessary for all women but they were essential for black women” (Gray White, 1999, p. 49).

In support of these findings, Outlaw (1997) found that the attitude of Black parents toward schooling and education played a significant role in the motivation to achieve. Outlaw found that the mother as a positive role model was instrumental in the achievement of her children. The women in this study reported that a positive role model from a mother, grandmother, or family was important to their success.

Throughout history African American families have had a commitment to the education of their children in hopes that it would ensure them a life of freedom and prosperity. However, researchers claim that the desegregation process and changing communities through institutional barriers have taken away much of the influence families had on schooling (Morris, 1999). In this study family support was continued throughout each of the generations while institutional barriers had not diminished. These findings build on the generational research from O’Connor (2002) where education was valued and high expectations were expected from family.

Summary Regarding Strong Women

> …who is more deserving of admiration than the black woman, she who has borne the rigors of slavery, the deprivations consequent on a pauperized race, and the indignities heaped upon a weak and defenseless people. Yet she has suffered all

> with fortitude, and stands ever ready to help in the onward march to freedom and power. Be not discouraged black women of the world, but push forward, regardless of the lack of appreciation shown to you. A race must be saved, a country must be redeemed…(Garvey, 1995)

Historically, Black women activists fought racism and sexism and committed their lives to providing education for Black children and adults (Jones, 1990). There were many struggles, lack of access to education, and difficult circumstances; but, as Cooper (1988) wrote, there was great commitment and value placed upon education as the hope to provide racial uplift. Women in this study exemplified the value placed upon education throughout their lives and worked to instill education as a priority within their families. The women in this study exemplified a strong sense of confidence in their actions. They celebrated the support from sisterhood. They placed value on the struggles they had experienced and relied on God as a source of strength to overcome any struggle that they might face.

Connections from Findings to the Theoretical Framework

The following illustrates how the theoretical framework presented in Appendix A is liked to the findings of the study. Black Feminist Epistemology (Collins, 2000) identifies race, class, and gender as multiple intersecting oppressions that directly affect the lives of Black women and how they formulate knowledge about their world.

Important features of Black Feminist Epistemology outlined by Collins (2000) include: (1) “Lived experiences as a criterion of meaning”, (p. 257), (2) “The use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims” (p. 260), (3) “The ethics of caring” (p. 262),

(4) “The ethic of personal accountability” (p. 265), (5) “Black women as agents of knowledge” (p. 266), and (6) “Action toward truth” (p. 269).

The identification of “strong women” as a core category of the findings of this research has a direct connection to Black Feminist Epistemology. This construct encourages a collective identity and offers Black women a different view of themselves and their world than that offered by the established social order (Collins, 1995). This collective identify allows for a self-defined standpoint that builds upon experience and resistance.

Identity and strength gained through *Lived experiences* have been the key to Black women’s survival (Collins, 1995), and for the women in the study this was also true. They had lived through racism and sexism using the experiences to develop Black woman’s unique experience. For example, Sarah and Sonia believed that Black women were different from Black men in how they interacted with White people and this was due in part by their different experiences.

Dialogue was also an important component in the study. The communication between the women and with me was an important means of conveying experiences. Continued dialogue was also important. The communication that took place before and after the formal interview often provided the greatest insights into the lives of the women. Dialogue has continued even after the study to be an important aspect of our relationships.

The *ethics of caring* is an important component to Black women’s experience. It is suggested that the only people who care enough about Black women and to work for their liberation are Black women (Combahee River Collective, 1995). There was a very

evident love of self, their sisters, and their community, which allowed them to continue their struggle and work for the entire race. These women's actions portrayed their genuine caring.

Personal accountability was seen in the expectations that the women had for their lives and also for holding me accountable throughout the research. I was expected to hold the research to the highest level of personal accountability. This study represented their lives and it was very important to represent them accurately.

These women welcomed the opportunity to be *agents of knowledge*. They had lived experiences that were important to share, but they felt that they were often ignored. They frequently spoke out about their lives, but were not listened to. Sonia's belief was that that many claim that Black women are silenced, but she felt that many are actively speaking out, but that no one was hearing what they had to say. They felt that this study was an opportunity for them to be heard.

The *action toward "truth"* was possible through the opportunity that we each had to share our lives and experiences. We each grappled with the issues that were brought out from our discussions and struggled to establish a better understanding of racism and sexism. Our combined perceptions helped to formulate knowledge about the "truths" that we had lived. We all grew from the experience of this research and we created an atmosphere for respecting each other's lives.

In closing I present an overview of the study by presenting the connections of racism, sexism, strong women and schooling.

Relationship of Findings

The following is a visual diagram of how each of these findings relate to each other. Figure 2 presents an overview of *racism* and *strong women* presented in this study.

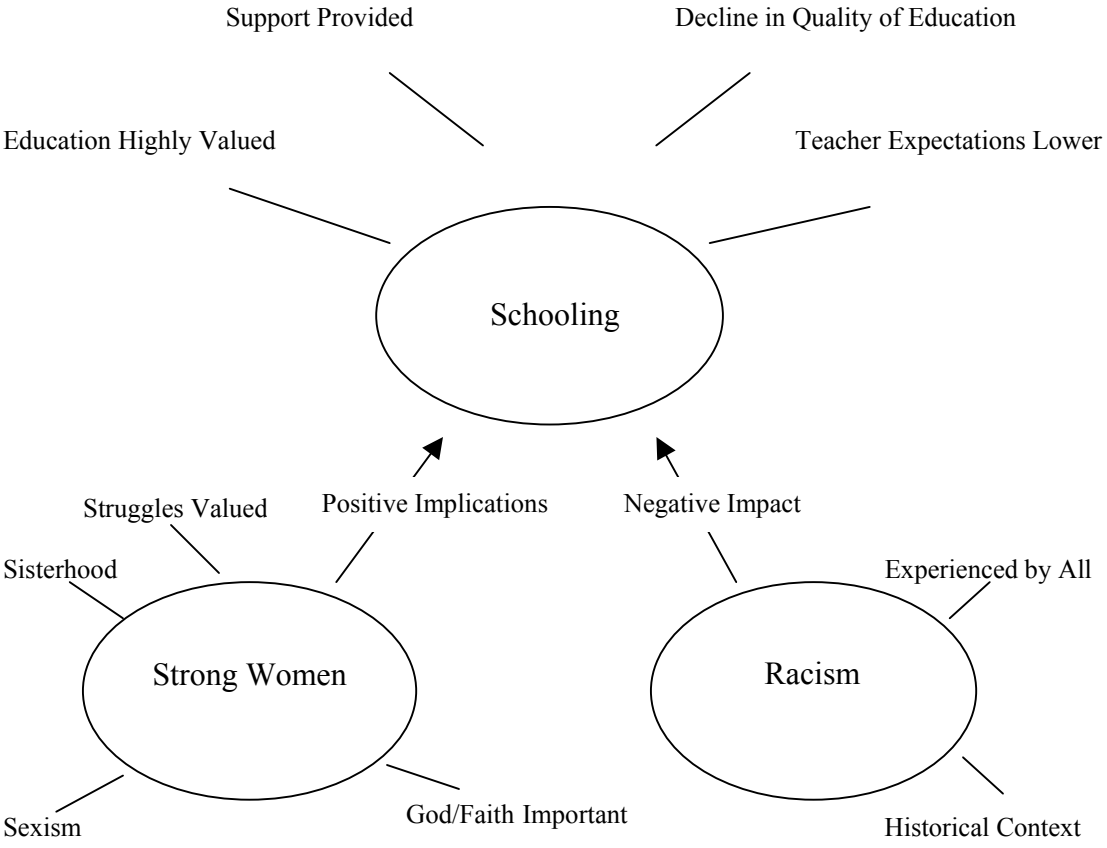


Figure 2. *Connections between Schooling, Strong Women, and Racism*

What I am suggesting through this chart is how the experiences of *racism*, the existence of *strong women,* and *schooling* are connected. *Racism* and *strong women* are connected by the valuing of their struggles and through their faith in God. These women valued their life experiences as opportunities to develop into the women they had become. Their faith in God was instrumental in providing strength to overcome the obstacles they faced throughout their lives.

Both *strong women* and *racism* are connected to *schooling. Strong women* provided positive implications for schooling where support was provided and education

highly valued. *Racism* had negative implications for schooling where there was a decline in the quality of education and lowered teacher expectations.

These connections are tied to the legacy of struggle that constitutes one of several core themes of a Black woman's standpoint in which intersecting oppressions bring diverse responses to their experiences (Collins, 2000). Racism brought negative experiences in school and the existence of strength of women facilitated more positive experiences.

The following chapter presents the summary, conclusions, recommendations, further research, significance of the study, limitations and my personal statement about the research.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY

"Ain't I a Woman?" Sojourner Truth (1995)

This qualitative feminist interview study examined Black women's experiences of racism and sexism in school. The data included multiple interviews, field notes, photographs, and additional artifacts, which were relevant to the participants' stories. The participants were African American women across three generations in three different families. The research was approached through a theoretical framework of Black Feminist Epistemology (Collins, 2000).

My main role was that of an "active listener" and my effort was to respond when appropriate and to support the conversation without dominating. Interviews in this study were consistent with elements of feminist interviewing. Quotations from the interview data were used as a means of conveying to the reader the stories and points of view of the participants (Erickson, 1986). To convey this meaning to the reader, I grounded the more abstract analytic concepts of the study in concrete particulars through rich description and narratives (Erickson, 1986).

The in-depth examination of Black women's experiences focused on the participants' experiences of racism and sexism in school while creating a foundation for their stories to be valued as important oral history. A unique aspect of the study was the cross-generational component-in which experiences of three generations of Black women were explored.

These women's life stories were accounts of "strong women" and how they responded to racism and sexism and were often able to obtain educational achievement. Strategies for success included development of self-confidence, relationships with other Black women, learning through struggles, faith in God, and experiencing high expectations from family and supportive adults. Data analysis revealed the construct of "strong women" as the core category of the findings.

The nine women shared stories of school, work, family, community, church, and everyday experiences. They described racism and how it had been a part of their lives. Racism was present for all participants, but they did not feel that racism prevented them from having successful lives. They believed that even the difficult struggles resulting from racism had been of positive value in their lives.

Participants described experiences of sexism and their insecurities as women; however, these were not their primary focus. Even though the believed that sexism was present throughout institutional structures, it was not dominant in most of the participants' personal experiences. The women focused on the self-reliance of women and described the encouragement that came from other women in their lives. In contrast to Collins' (2000) view of sexism as an equal oppressor with racism, the participants de-emphasized the role of sexism in their lives, and, instead, emphasized their development as strong women.

The data have become a part of my dreams, my thinking, and have influenced how I look at the world. My hope is that this study will contribute to the research on the experiences of Black women in school, and in particular, that that their lived experiences will be valued as contributions to research on racism and sexism in education.

Conclusions

Black Feminist Epistemology (Collins, 2000) was the theoretical framework that guided the conceptualization, methodology, and analysis of the study. Through this framework, I was able to organize a study that would be based on the authority of Black women's lived experience. The framework supported the reciprocal relationships between researcher and participants that enabled us to establish meaningful communication and find common ground, in spite of our differences.

The study provides a significant opportunity for lessons to be learned across generations and also across gender and race. We have all been raised in a society in which differences are often considered insurmountable barriers, or in which differences are denied or ignored. This results in isolation and/or false connections (Lorde, 1995). This limits our opportunity for using difference as a springboard for creative change within our lives (Lorde, 1995), and causes us to focus not on human difference, but on human deviance. This study presents a significant opportunity to see how we are all different, and to understand more fully how we can be valued for our differences.

I have presented the findings related to racism and sexism in Black women's school experiences in the preceding chapters. Those findings were based on a holistic analysis across data with the development of themes. The following section presents a summary of the cross-generational analysis. This particular analysis allows us to contextualize historically the findings of this research across the three generations of participants.

Summary of Cross-Generational Analysis

The central question of this research was, *"What are the educational experiences of Black women across three generations regarding racism and sexism?"* This question was supported by the following sub-questions:

1. What were Black women's memories of their school experiences?
2. What were their successes/struggles in school?
3. What historical events (large or small) affected their educational experiences?
4. What were their relationships with teachers, administrators, and peers?
5. What were their experiences with racism and sexism?

Here I will compare and contrast across the three generations represented in the study, beginning with the oldest, following with the middle generation, and then ending with the youngest regarding the specific sub questions.

What were the Black women's memories of their school experiences?

The oldest generation attended school during segregation, and all had positive academic experiences. They felt that their teachers were dedicated and held high expectations for student learning. They experienced strong community support and encouragement from their families to achieve. They reported connections between school, family, community, and church. This positive experience in a segregated school converges with Siddle Walker's (1996) findings in her research regarding the support Black community, Black teachers, and positive attitudes toward the Black students. Academic success was encouraged and expected; the school provided an environment in which students realized their academic potential. The only negative memory from school came from racist actions directed toward the Black population as a whole. This resulted

in limited educational opportunities, limited resources, and direct racist comments from adults. Institutional racism was practiced through these segregationist polices and was accepted as "normal."

The middle generation was in school during a transitional time, and all three participants had different experiences. Mrs. Neely Norman ended school at the beginning of integration in her community and chose to finish school in an all Black setting. Saverne was in the middle of integration as a student and experienced an all-Black school and then was integrated into a White school. Sonia attended a White school throughout. Participants' ages were only five years apart but they all had very different experiences. The move toward integration was the main focus of their memories of school. Mrs. Neely Norman described her college experience and the heightened political unrest. Saverne focused on the experience as a child while experiencing integration. Sonia focused on academics and her relationships with teachers. Their experiences in school were both positive and negative.

A central facet of this generation's historical significance were women who were leaders for both their race and gender (Gray White, 1999), however, many of the stories from this generation of Black women go unnoticed. Saverne's account of her experiences during integration builds upon Beals' (1994) story of her experiences and adds to the understanding of what it was like to be a part of this generation. The middle generation also provided stories that build upon the literature indicating that Black women had a commitment to overcoming struggles to help provide racial uplift (Cooper, 1988; Gilkes, 2002).

The youngest generation experienced school following desegregation and attended completely integrated schools. However, each of the women reflected upon being the only Black girl in particular academic settings during their school experience and upon the difficulties that resulted. The schools were integrated, but there were many occasions in which they were the only Black students in the group. As a result of being the only Black student in K-12 schooling, two of the women chose to attend Spelman College, a historically Black women's school. Two of the three felt they were not prepared for college. Two of the three did not have close relationships with their teachers, and their teachers did not have high expectations for their learning. Two of the three described extra curricular activities they participated in. They all reported that they had support from their families and church community. Within each generation there is a connection to family support and teacher expectations, which influenced the success or lack of success of these women.

What were their success/struggles from school?

Struggles have been a persistent theme in the literature of African American women's experiences (Anderson, 1988; Cooper, 1987; Perkins, 87). These women described many struggles they had experienced and highlighted the importance of learning from their struggles.

In the oldest generation each of the women did well academically. They were active in their school, extra curricular activities and in various aspects of school life. One was honored as valedictorian of her class. Successes included achievement in school, awards, job accomplishments, relationships, completing college, and personal accomplishments. Struggles were present, but the women considered them to be learning

opportunities. Struggles included overcoming racist actions, not graduating from college, raising children, divorce, overcoming automobile accidents, and personal limitations.

The middle generation succeeded in graduating from college. Success had also came with struggles. Such as divorce, family crisis, automobile accidents, and financial burdens. They also had to cope with the challenges of integration and the racist attitudes of some people.

Two of the three in the youngest generation of participants were successful in academics and extra-curricular activities. Two were key leaders in their school. They struggled with parents divorcing and the experience of family and friends dying. One was unmarried with a child.

What historical events (large or small) affected their educational experiences?

The oldest generation was directly affected by segregation. They attended only all Black schools with Black teachers. Racism in society was experienced on a personal level and as institutional racism. Jim Crow laws were in place that prohibited the women from having equal opportunities throughout their communities. “Separate but equal” was the law, but “equal” was not present.

The process of integration affected the middle generation the most. Since 1954 and the Civil Rights Movement, there have been many changes with regard to school desegregation, integration, and then efforts to equalize school funding (Davidman & Davidman, 2001). Integration caused changes in their school experiences. This generation saw themselves as having made sacrifices for equality.

The youngest generation did not seem to experience a direct personal connection to civil rights history. However, they were the most affected by civil rights legislation.

They did not seem to have an understanding of the past experiences of their race related to equality. One felt the greatest events affecting her school experience were the events of September 11, 2001.

Overall the greatest historical event that affected each of these women either directly or indirectly was the ruling on Brown v. Board of Education. Brown put attention on the inferiority of Black schools, and post-Brown events forced society in the United States to confront the problems of racism (Martin, 1988).

What were participants' relationships with teachers, administrators, and peers?

The oldest generation had great respect for their teachers and recalled positive relationships with them. All of their teachers were African American. Their teachers held high expectations for academic success and also used corporal punishment. Teachers had led prayers and were committed to the students' overall well-being. They were involved in the students' lives through personal connections and community involvement.

The middle generation had mixed relationships with their teachers. Mrs. Neely Norman had positive relationships with all Black teachers. Saverne had both negative and positive relationships with her teachers. She had two teachers with high expectations of her who helped her to excel in life. Both of these were White women. The relationships developed during integration helped with the transition to White schools. Sonia had both positive and negative relationships with teachers. They all three spoke of teachers and friends, both White and Black, who were instrumental in their success.

The youngest generation also had mixed relationships with their teachers. Only one reported meaningful relationships with her teachers; one participant felt that she had no meaningful relationships with her teachers, and one did not comment on teachers at

all. All three women reported that they had developed the greatest relationships with teachers at college. The absence of close relationships with teachers in this generation was important.

In light of the research on the critical importance of high teacher expectations and of teacher-student relationships, (Bennett, 2003; Good, 1987; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), this trend among participants in the younger generation is of particular concern.

What were their experiences with racism and sexism?

Essentially, as it was reported, all participants experienced racism. The oldest generation described discrimination, stereotyping, overt racist acts, and inequality as a result of racism. Sexism was not a primary focus of their memories but did occur for all three of the oldest generation. Sarah reported that the most direct experience of sexism occurred in her job.

For the middle generation, sexism was not a focus in their experiences and was not specifically described. They depicted themselves and their family members as strong and independent women. These women reported personal incidents of racism and were aware of the impact of institutional racism.

The youngest generation did not describe racism as being directly a part of their personal experiences as the two other generations. Their focus was primarily on how they had observed it happening to other people. Sexism was not a focus, but the qualities of strong women were. The idea of strong women had been modeled and passed down through the generations.

Over all of the generations sexism was present in the women's lives, but racism was viewed as a far greater obstacle. The focus on strong Black women who overcame

oppression to succeed was prevalent. The participants' stories make visible Black women's experiences of racism across time. Personal and institutional experiences of racism were most visible in the first two generations, but continued to impact the younger generation. This cross-generational study provided a means of analyzing historical accounts of Black women's experiences.

Implications of the Study

The study has implications concerning practice for educators and policy makers. The following can contribute to the improvement of experiences for Black women. This research study suggests the following:

Pairing Black girls with Black women from the community for mentoring could contribute to young women's motivation and success in school. Stories reported from the participants described how sisterhood had contributed to their success and was instrumental in the characteristics of "strong women." It was through their relationships of other Black women in which they learned valuable lessons for overcoming struggles during their life. Importantly, these women passed on strategies of how to cope with racism, sexism, and life challenges by exemplifying confidence, sisterhood, and faith in God.

Earlier research regarding the critical role of teacher's expectations was supported by this research. Examples from participants included both positive and negative stories of teacher expectations and how this affected the success or failure of their school experience. The oldest generation specifically focused on high teacher expectations. The middle and younger generation shared school experiences involving low teacher

expectations. Decreased academic expectations of Black students highlighted negative aspects of integration and illustrate the impact of institutional racism.

Planned opportunities for Black and White students to have open dialogue about race could improve race relations. Meaningful communication was evidenced in the middle generation where Black and White students worked across races for the initial success of integration. Examples were reported where the respective races worked together. The younger generation acknowledged the struggles with discussions related to racial issues that are often strained and challenging in school settings. The examples illustrated the importance of dialogue for race relations.

The research supports the importance of strong parental support and teacher-parent connections for supporting students' success in school. Each of the women shared how their family was important to their educational success. Instead of representing the stereotypical notion that Black families are not supportive of their children, this study provided examples of positive family support.

Schools should avoid isolating minority students from their peer group. Several participants described negative experiences they encountered as a result of being isolated in gifted classes from their racial peer group. I am not advocating that Black students not be placed in advanced groups, but that great effort should be made to identify gifted Black students and to create a diverse community of learners.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study points toward a number of areas of research that would be useful. Studies involving other cross-generational participants from different geographical regions, different socio-economic groups, different levels of academic achievement could

serve as further basis for comparison with the case present here. Studies involving cross-race dialogue would also be of value.

It could also be productive to conduct further research on White women's experiences across three generations related to racism and sexism in school. This would provide more understanding of the historical experiences of White women in school. I propose a cross-case analysis with my study to compare and contrast their experiences with those of the Black women in this study.

Future research efforts could include study groups of cross-generational and cross-race dialogue with educators. This research would document study group activities, in which participants would read, discuss, reflect and take action in their schools and communities to promote quality education for all students. This opportunity for study could open multiple research opportunities and increased theoretical and methodological implications.

Research addressing the culture and learning approaches of exemplary all-black schools, could inform the field. It would be particularly useful to study ways in which such schools may be successful in forging reciprocal relations between schools and their communities. Research indicates that the home and school connections are essential for a child's success (Epstein, 1995). The positive attributes highlighted from all Black schools provide an example of school and community connections. I am not advocating the return to segregated schools but hope that educators and policy makers can learn from the positive attributes they exhibited.

We need more understanding of ways in which to reverse the decline of political and community involvement on the part of young people. In this study there was a lack of

involvement in politics in the youngest generation that was an apparent decline from the oldest. Reasons for this trend were not specifically apparent.

Many schools have resegregated over the past thirty years (Davidman & Davidman, 2001). Further research is warranted to understand what is taking place educationally for Black students as a result of this shift and to find ways to insure that these schools maintain quality and equality. Both positive and negative aspects of segregated schools would be relevant for those working toward improvement of our schools today

Significance of the Study

The cross-generational component of this study is a significant contribution to the literature. This study builds upon the recent study by O'Connor (2002) that is the only additional study reviewed that looks across generations of Black women's school experiences. An understanding of the historical context of the participants' life stories occurring across three generations allows for new perspectives on Black women's educational experiences.

Related to this cross-generational component is the value of looking at the ways Black women have dealt with racism and sexism within their family histories. Stories of racism and sexism over time allow for an understanding of how personal and institutional racism have been experienced and grappled with.

This study also contributes to the understanding and appreciation of Black women's knowledge by providing an opportunity for women's voices and stories to be documented. It fills a void in the research literature that has not attended adequately to

what can be learned from accounts of Black women's lives. Black women's voices have often been absent in academic literature (Collins, 2000).

The scholarly knowledge contributed through this research on Black women's school experiences can help to improve education for all students. Educators who understand the evolution of racism, the current concepts of race and ethnicity, the development of racial and ethnic identity, and the issues faced by an increasingly diverse student population will be able to effectively address issues facing their students and provide an inclusive classroom in which all children can learn (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003).

There were significant examples of home-school support and implications of how this was valued throughout each generation and each family. This presents another perspective on the claim that "crumbling" African American families are the primary problem plaguing African American students (McCready, 1996). This is only a case study that represents three families, but it does provide another story to balance the negative stories that prevail.

The cross-generational study also presents the demonstration of the decline in activism across generations. When compared across generations it is made apparent how the activism of the younger generation is drastically different from the oldest generation.

There were also important lessons in this study regarding the reciprocity between races. For example, Saverne suggested, based on her experiences, that it would have been better if sacrifices made during integration had been made by both Black and White. She felt that integration would have been more successful if it had gone "both ways." She believed that all would have benefited if some of the White students had moved to the

Black school instead of only Black students making changes. She explained that it would have been more positive if both Black and White schools had been used instead of closing the Black schools. As society continues to become more diverse, her advice could provide significant lessons from history to guide our future learning.

Limitations

This is a contextualized and bounded case study; as such it provides a basis for comparison with other related studies. This study does not include urban families or families outside the South. A criterion for the study required participants to have graduated from high school; therefore, families with low educational levels are not represented.

The study is also limited by my own biases and expectations. I expected there to be stories of racism and sexism throughout these women's lives. There are potential limitations due to the cross-racial design.

I chose not to give attention to issues of class in the study and as I interpreted the data it was possible that this affected the findings particularly with regard to racism. I acknowledge that this possibly confounds the findings.

My Own Statement

While contemplating a topic for my dissertation, I was advised to select a topic for which I had a passion. As I thought about my interests and reflected upon my studies as a student, my thoughts centered on topics related to race, gender, and schools; therefore, my personal interest led the direction of the study.

I was nervous going into the study. Would these women accept me? What would they think about my study? What would they think about me? Would they feel

comfortable? Would they be willing to share the stories of their lives? As I began the study I began to pray. I prayed for the women and for the interviews. I prayed that I would say the right words and that they would feel comfortable with me. I knew that this was a special opportunity to make new friends who would become part of my life. My faith in God led me to depend upon His guidance and direction for the study. As the study began I felt a peace that helped to carry me through my work.

The opportunity to get to know each of these women and learn about their experiences has been life-changing. I have a strong knowledge of the history of the United States and the relationship of African Americans throughout; however, I did not have a deep understanding of Black women's experiences until conducting this research.

Through the relationships developed I had the opportunity to gain a glimpse into The Black women participants' struggles and to increase my understanding of their experiences. As a result of our friendships I have a heightened respect for their lives, and I place great value upon their commitment to overcoming struggles.

As a researcher I struggled with issues difficult to resolve. I had come into these women's lives for an in-depth time of sharing about intimate and special times in their lives. When the interviews were over I walked away with information for my study, and I felt guilty. I felt that they had given me a gift of their lives and worried that I had not reciprocated. However, after further reflection I realized I had given them the gift of listening and valuing their stories. I hope to give them the gift of facilitating the future sharing of the important stories they have to tell; that is, developing new audiences and listeners for their stories.

Fortunately the friendships have continued since the interviews, and hopefully they will continue for a lifetime. I would like to spend more time with each of these women; they have much to teach me about life.

One of the greatest struggles with the research was the weight of racism and how it affected my thinking. It was frustrating to continue to hear about the experiences of racism in the past and present and to feel helpless about taking action to alleviate its presence. This was a heaviness I felt throughout the study. I hope fervently for justice, but I am only one person. I have resolved that I will work to help alleviate racism and hope that my actions will spark others to action to effect change. Mrs. Neely's words encouraged me to continue trying and to work in collaboration with knowledgeable men and women from diverse backgrounds.

> Well, you have really came to me, like a fresh breathe of air, because you seem to understand what the problem is and you realize that it can't all be done with just one group of folks, everybody has to come to the table and have something to offer. And I have definitely enjoyed [our time together] because of the fact that I said some things and I didn't see you flinch. You just took it, you know. And that is the way it is, that is the only way that we are going to be able to get things to be better. But you know there are so many people that don't want to, there are some folks who would rather die and go downstairs than for things to change. And see those folks are so hard to convince, so what do you do?

I listened and learned from each of these women, and I am better for it.

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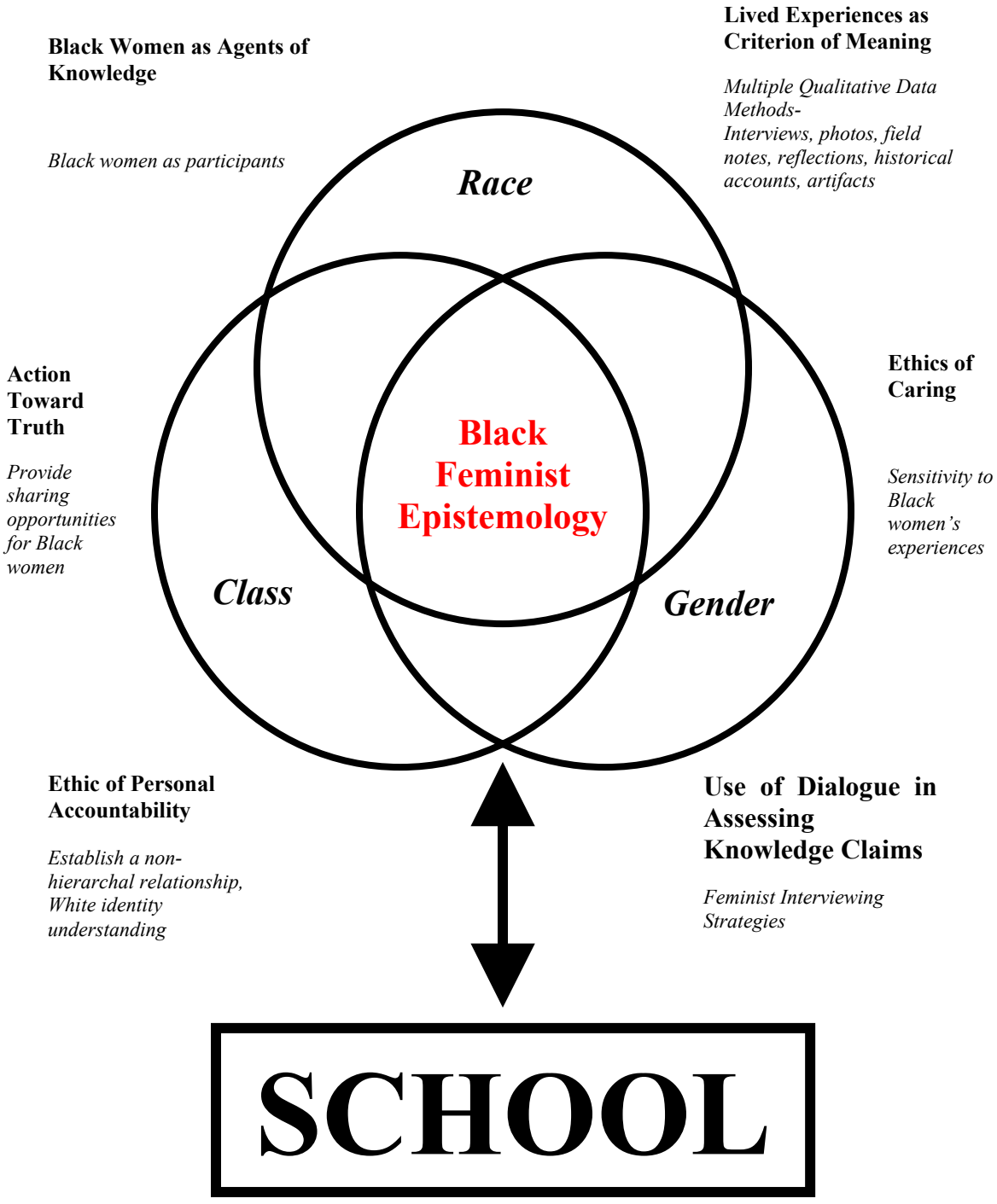
APPENDIX A

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH

Theoretical Framework for Research



APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

I, _____ agree to participate in the research that is titled "Understanding the Influence of Racism and Sexism on Black Women's Educational Experiences" which is being conducted by Mrs. Holly Ward, Graduate Student, Working under the direction of Dr. Penny Oldfather at The University of Georgia. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participant, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me and removed from the research records, or destroyed. In order to make this study a valid one, some information about my participation will be withheld until completion of the study.

The purpose of this research is to examine the experiences of Black women across three generations in order to understand the impact of racism and sexism on their educational experiences.

Your participation in the study would include the following:

- A minimum of three 60-90 minute interviews over a 6-month period about your life experiences related to racism and sexism.
- Provide artifacts (e.g., pictures, newspaper articles, documents, etc.) that might be relevant to the interview or study.
- Read/Analyze transcripts.

The above methods of data collection will require minimal interference in your life. The interviews will take place at a location that is convenient to you.

There is a slight risk that you may feel uncomfortable sharing your perceptions relating to issues of racism and sexism. However, the results of this study will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without prior consent unless otherwise required by law.

You can choose a pseudonym to protect your identity. Audiotapes and transcripts will be kept in a filing cabinet in Mrs. Ward's home office and will be kept indefinitely for future use. All participants will receive copies of their interview transcripts, but the participants will not have access to other participants interview transcripts except by written permission of the participant.

Mrs. Ward will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at (706) 369-8210. You may also contact Dr. Penny Oldfather, Department of Elementary Education, The University of Georgia, (706) 542-4244.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project. I further understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

_____
Signature of Participant/Date

_____
Signature of Researcher/Date

For questions or problems about your rights, please call or write: Chris A. Joseph, Ph. D. Human Subjects Office, The University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, GA 30602-7411, Tel. (706) 542-6514; email: irb@uga.edu.

APPENDIX C

PHOTOS OF PARTICIPANTS

Women from Old Woodsbridge Road

Mrs. Sammie Rucker

Saverne Varnum

Tarla Varnum

Women from Ricefield Road

Sarah Mayfield, Sonia Harper, Charlene Harper

Women from Baker Street

Mrs. Evelyn Neely

Sheila Neely-Norman

Kisha Bailey

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions were used to guide the interviews.

1. Tell me about where you grew up. (Your family, town, etc.)
2. Tell me about some of your memorable school experiences in K-12, and college if attended.
3. Tell me about any friends, teachers that were important to your school experience.
4. Think of a story that stands out from your school experiences and please share? Why did you chose that story?
5. Think about your successes/struggles in school. Tell me about these. What stands out for you?
6. Tell me about a specific event in school that impacted your life.
7. Tell me about any racial incidents or experiences in your school life that you remember.
8. What would you have liked to change about your school experience?
9. Could you describe what was happening historically while you were in school? What stories do you recall surrounding particular events in your school, community, or the nation?
10. Tell me about any specific experiences related to racism that you experienced during school. Sexism? Tell me about them.
11. Any additional stories you would like to share?
12. Tell me about your pictures, artifacts that you have brought to share.
13. How do you feel about this interview?

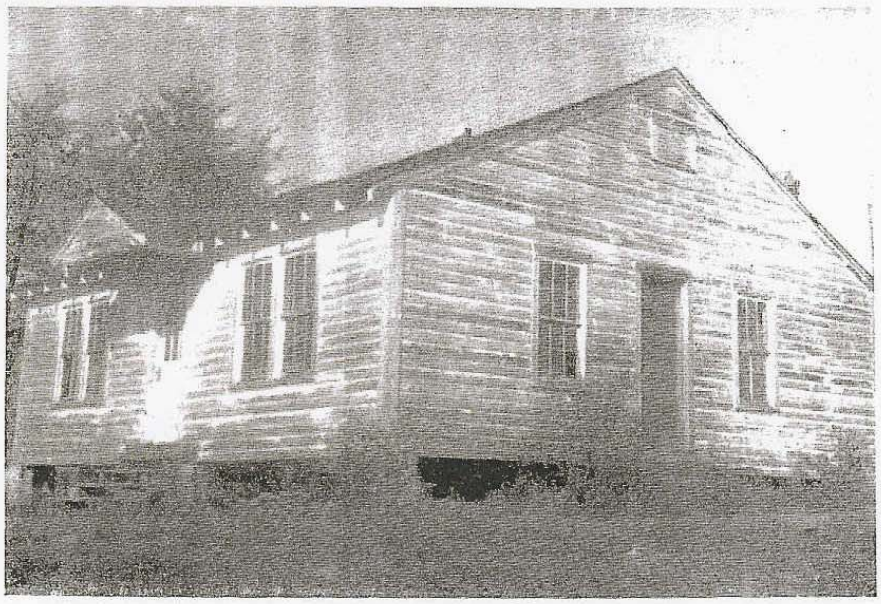
APPENDIX E

CATEGORIES CHART

	Name	Name	Name
Personal Experience			
Educational Experience			
Work Experience			
Teachers			
Family			
Racial Relations			
Success			
Struggles			
God			
Firsts			
Thoughts Interviews			
Other			

APPENDIX F

BRYAN SCHOOL – THEN AND NOW



YESTERDAY

TODAY

APPENDIX G

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN JACKSON COUNTY

"A Historical Sketch Of Public Education For Negros In Jackson County"

Prior to 1956, twenty-two schools existed in Jackson County for the purpose of educating negro boys and girls. Most of these schools were one-teacher frame buildings, poorly equipped. These schools were Community Centered rather than Child Centered and were known as indicated: Jefferson City, Johntown Junior High, Talmo, Pendergrass, Cedar Grove, Maxey Hill, Summitt Chapel, Thurmond Grove, New Grove, Nicholson, Center, Cross Road, Jones Chapel, Rosenwald, Wells Academy, Elder Academy, Maysville, Sardis, Herican Grove, Hoschton, and Wilson's Academy. Most of these schools were elementary schools, and since there was no public transportation, most of the negro boys and girls had to leave the county to secure a High School Education.

The Johntown School located in Commerce, Georgia, served the community and county well. Two members of the present faculty are graduates of the Johntown High School. Until the time of consolidation in 1957, this school was considered to be the best High School in the county for Negro Youths.

In 1902, the superintendent of Harmony Grove Public Schools became the superintendent of Johntown public school. Also, about this time, there was erected an adequate school building on the north side of Homer Street which met their needs until about 1929, when the School Board secured some additional land some distance from the street. On this lot there was erected, with money donated by the Rosenwald Fund, a two-room building at a cost of $2,500.00. In 1937 two additional rooms were added by the city on the west end of the building. Rev. J. H. Allen is considered to have been the first principal of the Johntown School. Other principals, were W. T. Swilling, P. B. Harper, Mr. Howard, Mr. Williams, Mr. Shropshire, Mr. Lee, and at present, Mr. C. W. Gannaway. The Johntown School operated as a High School until 1957 at which time a new school was built tnr named for the late J. L. Williams. Mr. C. W. Gannaway is present principal and Mr. J. R. Lang, Superintendent. This school houses grades 1-7 with a present enrollment of 259 and eight (8) teachers. The High School students of Commerce have been attending the Bryan School of Jefferson since 1957.

The Jefferson City school had its beginning in the Old Samaritan Hall and house owned by the local lodge. A Mr. Kinney and Sherman Moon served as teachers. In 1920, the late Rev. J. C. Cash, a presiding Elder of the A.M.E. Church, was elected as principal. Rev. Cash was very dissatisfied with the school; therefore, he appointed Trustees and other leaders and launched a drive to have a school built. Several negro citizens paid $25.00 toward the realization of this worthy project. Many white citizens, too numerous to name, gave their financial and moral support to this project. After suitable land had been secured from Wash Calloway, the Board was asked to build a school. A site on Lawrenceville Street was selected near the old Paradise A.M.E. Church and a three room frame building was erected on this site. This school housed grades 1-7. Commencement and Special School programs were held in the County Court House. In addition to the teachers, a Home Demonstration Agent added to the educational growth of the citizens.

In 1926, the late Rev. W. D. Cash became the principal after the passing of his father, Rev. J. C. Cash. Miss Bessie Mae Hannon, Miss Martha E. Wingfield and Mrs. M. R. Tolbert served as teachers in the Lawrenceville Street School. The three room frame structure soon became inadequate to house a growing school. Plans were made by Rev. W. D. Cash and other leaders to build a larger and better school. Negro citizens were told by the Board of Education that they would have to purchase land and aid in the matter of school construction. With Rev. and Mrs. Cash paying the first $200.00 on securing land, the negro citizens raised $500.00 and five (5) acres of land was purchased from Y.D. Maddox, Sr. With strong financial help from the late Mr. M. M. Bryan, Sr., along with other white friends, the Gordon Street School was completed in 1948 under the Direction of the County Board of Education, Mr. T. T. Benton, superintendent. Because of the outstanding contribution made by Mr. M. M. Bryan, Sr., the Gordon Street School was named the Bryan Elementary School. In 1948-1949, partial consolidation took place in the county; however, the five-room brick building was not large enough to house both Elementary and High students. The Board of Education, looking forward to a larger school, secured additional land and house from Mr. Rashe Stephens. This dwelling house was used for class rooms, housing more than 100 students, until 1963.

Moving further in the direction of consolidation and improved schools for our system, a school survey was made in 1950 to determine the location, the number and kind of school we needed for negros in Jackson County. This survey was made under the direction of both the Local and State Boards of Education, with Mr. R. L. Cousin playing a leading role for the State. As a result of the survey,

plans were made for the erection of two schools in Jackson County to house all negro children. One school was to be located in Commerce to house grades 1-7 including children from Center and the Jones Chapel Communities. A combination Elementary and High School would be located in Jefferson to house all High School students and Elementary pupils who were not being served by Commerce. Rev. W. D. Cash served the school and community in a very fine way during this transitional period. His contribution to the school and community were very outstanding. Because of ill health, he resigned in May, 1956.

In the fall of 1956, Rev. L. W. Jay, a well trained, energetic leader, was elected by the County Board as principal of the Bryan Elementary and High School. In the fall of 1957, Mrs. Miley Mae Hemphill, Jeanes Curriculum Director, who shares her services with Gwinnett-Jackson Counties and Winder City Schools, was elected as Curriculum Director of the school. Because other schools were brought into this center, the Holiness Church and house were used to accommodate the children. Full consolidation was realized in the school term of 1958-59. The curriculum was enriched to include vocational subjects: Home Economic, Vocational Agriculture, Typing, Music, Science and Mathematics, Basketball and other activities. In 1960, a band was organized by Mr. Randolph Moore of Columbus. Because of the lack of space, the Paradise A.M.E. Church was used as well as the old framed house to implement the program. The enrollment of the school has increased for the past eight years. In 1959-60, the school enrolled 327 pupils in grades 1-7 and 200 students in grades 8-12. This gives a total of 527 for the period. In 1962-63 the school enrolled 303 pupils in grades 1-7 and 259 students in grades 8-12 which equal a total of 562 for the period. Because of our growth and development, the school completed in 1958 was inadequate to house the program for our school.

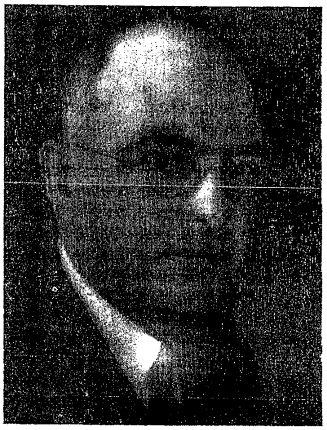
In 1960, another school survey was requested by the County Board, and as a result of an increased A.D.A., the state would allot approximately $25,000.00 for additional class rooms. This was not enough to meet our building needs; therefore, Mr. Morris Bryan, Jr., the Jefferson Mills, Inc., the County Board of Education and the City Board of Education worked very cooperatively as a team in the realization of the present facilities which includes renovating the old brick buiding, adding new class rooms, with library, rest rooms, teacher lounges, Gym-torium swimming pool with additional land and an athletic field in the making. Mr. Morris Bryan and the Jefferson Mills, Inc., are fully responsible for the swimming pool and landscaping and shrubbery in addition to aiding in the total building and Improvement Project.

Persons who have served as superintendents and contributors during our struggles include: O. C. Aderhold, H. J. W. Kizer, A. W. Ash, W. L. Colombo, Luther Elrod, T. T. Benton, Pittman Carter, Frary Elrod, John Johnson, Morris Bryan, Jr., John Henry Deadwyler, Dr. Lloyd Lott, R. H. McEver, Henry Robinson, and others too numerous to mention.

The school today includes two buildings for classroom use, a gymtorium with classroom space and a swimming pool. Additional features of the curriculum include classes in typing, Science, Mathematics, French, Vocational Homemaking, Vocational Agriculture, Music, a band, Physical Education and a High School Counselor. An enrichment program in Reading and Language Arts, a class in Special Education and an Elementary Band have been included in the Elementary level. A library to serve both levels is in the process of being equipped to adequately serve the school and the community at large.

This is the history of your school. You can help maintain it and make it grow through your constant support of all its activities or you can let it deteoriate into nothingness by the kind of support you give.

Won't you help us help boys and girls grow through "Education for Responsible Freedom?"



THE LATE MR. MORRIS MARION BRYAN, SR.

The late Mr. Morris Marion Bryan, Senior, for whom the school is named, was born in Union Point, Georgia, October 22, 1889. He graduated from Georgia School of Technology in 1913. He came to Jefferson in 1916 as Secretary-Treasurer of Jefferson Mills. He later became president of the said enterprise. He was married to Miss Mildred Southworth of Watertown, Connecticut on September 12, 1916.

He departed this life May 23, 1948.