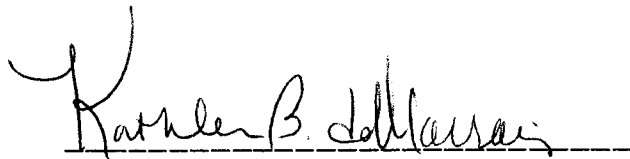


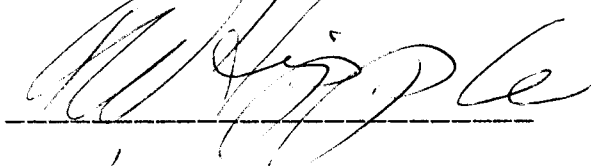
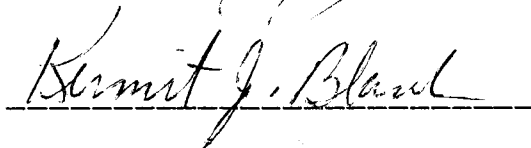
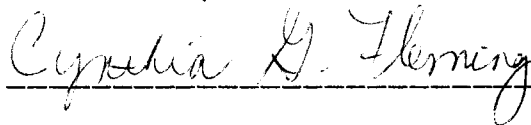
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Faye L. Hicks-Townes entitled "Sustaining the Hope: African American Women's Perceptions of High School Experiences." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Curriculum and Instruction.

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and recommend its acceptance:

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Dean of the Graduate School

SUSTAINING THE HOPE:
AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH
SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Education
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Faye L. Hicks-Townes

December 1996

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my foremothers

Great Great Grandmother Sarah Edwards

Great Grandmother Nathaniel Caston

Grandmother Sarah Lynn

and

Mother Mary Lee Hicks

who have shown me the strength and beauty of Black womanhood.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to many people who have helped to guide me through this process. I am especially grateful to my Dissertation Committee members, Kathleen B. deMarrais, Kermit Blank, Cynthia Fleming, and Ted Hipple for their support and encouragement. My chairperson, Kathleen B. deMarrais has worked diligently with me on a number of revisions with skill, patience and encouragement. As a teacher and mentor, she shared her expertise and knowledge in qualitative research and feminism.

I would also like to thank Deans Richard Wisniewski and Glennon Rowell for the opportunities I was afforded as a graduate student in the College of Education.

My love and thanks to the community of graduate students, Liz Harrison, Ruby Jewel, Ruth Smith, and Sharon Etheridge, who have shared my joys and sorrows.

Additionally, I am grateful to my husband, my family and my friends for the unwavering support they have given me.

Finally and most importantly, to the One who makes all things possible:

ALL GLORY AND HONOR TO GOD.

ABSTRACT

In 1972 the United States passed into law Title IX as part of the Educational Amendment Act. Implicit in that action was the acknowledgment that gender inequities did indeed exist in public education as well as other institutions in American society. Schools are influential institutions in American society. They reflect the values and traditions of our society. They also reflect injustices inherent in a social system stratified by class, ethnicity, and gender. Despite the enactment of Title IX over twenty years ago, there is still evidence of gender inequity in the educational system. Although progress has been made in some areas, the 1992 AAUW Report *How Girls are Shortchanged in Education* affirms the fact that [t]here is clear evidence that the educational system is not meeting girls' needs." Gender differences in the areas of academics, occupational choices, standardized tests, and teen pregnancy illustrate deficiencies and inconsistencies in treatments and outcomes.

Research on adolescent females has dealt with issues of difference in secondary education. Why adolescent females do not perform as well as adolescent males has been explored from the perspectives of socialization, cognition, and self-concept. There is a gap, however, when we examine the participants in the research, the perspectives from which data is collected, and the method of data collection. For example, the impact of social class and/or ethnicity on the learning styles of females is not sufficiently

considered. There is little in the literature that explores the overall experience of females in high schools from their perspectives. Additionally, the method of data collection for the majority of literature has been survey research and other techniques allowing for little flexibility in responses.

This study examined the experiences of Black females from their perspectives in majority White high schools. Qualitative research methods were used in the form of in-depth-interviews with twelve high school students. Three major themes emerged from the data: (1) marginalization, (2) harassment, and (3) determination. Marginalization, social and academic, limited Black females' full participation in the school community. The extent and types of harassment experienced was related to the social class of the participant. Finally, the determination demonstrated by participants as they sought to succeed demonstrated the value they placed on education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	6
Purpose	7
Significance	8
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	9
Gender Differences in Societal Expectations	10
Gender Differences in Academic Achievement	13
Differences in Learning Styles	13
Approaches to Mathematics	14
Gender Differences in Self Perception	18
Self Efficacy	18
Self-Esteem	21
Summary	29
III. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES	33
Black Feminism	33
Self Definition	34
Socialization	36
Sexual Politics and Relationships	37
Everyday Racism	38
IV. METHODS	42
Research Question	43
Participants	45
Data Collection	46

Data Analysis	50
V. DATA PRESENTATION	54
Introduction	54
Sociocultural Context	54
Student Demographics	59
Participant Profiles	61
Findings of Participant Interviews	73
Marginalization	73
Academic Marginalization	74
Social Marginalization	78
Numbers	79
Loud Black Girls	81
Harassment	84
White Students	84
Harassment from Black Males	88
Teacher and Staff Harassment	94
Determination	100
VI. CONCLUSION	105
Implications for Research	110
Implications for Practice	114
REFERENCES	117
APPENDICES	125
VITA	131

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

In 1972 the United States passed into law Title IX as part of the Educational Amendment Act. Implicit in that action was the acknowledgment that gender inequities did indeed exist in public education as well as other institutions in American society. Schools are influential institutions in American society. They reflect the values and traditions of our society. They also reflect the injustices inherent in a social system stratified by class, ethnicity, and gender. Despite the enactment of Title IX over twenty years ago, there is still evidence of gender inequity in the educational system.

Although progress has been made in some areas, the 1992 AAUW Report *How Girls are Shortchanged in Education* affirms the fact that "[t]here is clear evidence that the educational system is not meeting girls' needs." Gender differences in the areas of academics, occupational choices, standardized tests, and teen pregnancy illustrate deficiencies inconsistencies in treatments and outcomes.

Before Title IX, female students were steered away from courses in math and science and toward more domestic curricula to

include language arts, secretarial skills, and domestic training such as sewing and cooking. Science and mathematics, historically, had been the domain of the male population. A system of tracking in secondary schools helped to reinforce this practice. Adolescents were steered toward a particular curriculum track such as business, college preparatory, industrial arts, or domestics. The separatist implications of this type of system are obvious. The separatist implications of this type of system are obvious. Streitmatter (1994) explains:

“... [S]ubstantial over-representation of one gender in a curricular area was pronounced. Boys dominated tracks that trained them for a wide variety of work options. Girls were prepared within the 'domestic' or clerical tracks for the fields of teaching or nursing. (p. 48)

With the passage of Title IX it became illegal to prevent students access to any academic program based on their sex. The door was opened on paper, but enrollment trends still exist that indicate a persistent bias. In subject areas that have traditionally been considered male, such as math and science, participation at the higher levels is the issue. A similar pattern exists in the sciences. Females take more courses in advanced biology while males are more prevalent in physics and advanced chemistry (AAUW, 1992). In math, male students are enrolled in higher level math courses (calculus) than females (AAUW, 1992). This math trend also affects female enrollment in computer courses. In addition to socialization

for traditionally female courses, machine avoidance and math blockage is a factor in accounting for low participation in computer courses(Keating, 1990). Hyde, Fennema and Lamon (1990) found that there are socialization, attitudinal, and affective factors that adversely influence female participation in math and science. Continued low female participation in math and science is an indication that societal norms concerning gender roles are not yet in synchronization with existing laws.

Vocations or occupations have for many years been traditionally male or female. Only in recent decades have the gender barriers been broken, legally and socially, to make once gender specific roles accessible to all. Before getting to the point of job seeking, however, there is the preparation. High school, as a microcosm of our larger society, is usually the initial training ground for a career. Due to the passage of Title IX, females may pursue a course of study that is traditionally male (math and science) and be successful academically. When it comes to choosing a career, however, there is some disparity between males and females. AAUW (1992) reports that in comparison with their male counterparts, high school females choose careers in math and science much less often. This is the case even when they (females) had extraordinary preparation. In careers that are traditionally considered male, women are in the minority (deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995). Socialization, attitudinal, and affective factors that adversely affect participation in higher level math and science courses also limit future career plans of females.

Standardized tests are another way in which females are educationally shortchanged. Scores on standardized tests are very important when it comes to higher education. Many schools determine admittance based on how well a student performs on these tests as well as the distribution of scholarships. The traditional perception was that females scored higher in writing and reading and lower in math and science. This has been attributed to external forces such as test design and societal expectations, and internal conditions such as biological differences and low self-esteem (AAUW, 1992; Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995). While it is commonly believed that there is a large gap between the performance of males and females in the science and math portions of standardized tests, research clearly points to a narrowing of the distance between scores. Despite this move toward closing the gap, there are still some disturbing statistics that point to a real concern in secondary education. For instance, females are more likely than males to earn higher grades in high school and college, but males are more likely to score higher on standardized tests. As a result, males are twice as likely to receive scholarships based on test scores (AAUW, 1992). By using standardized tests that are biased in favor of males by their construction, predictions for success of women are lower than they should be. Consequently, avenues for success, such as scholarships and admission to academic programs, are restricted for females National Commission on Testing and Public Policy's study (as cited in AAUW, 1992).

Another issue that works against the future success of young

women is teen pregnancy. In 1988 the U.S. Department of Health and Services reported that 66% of all births to women under age twenty were to unmarried women. The majority of children of these unmarried mothers live in poverty. The effect to the public in 1989 was over 21 billion dollars spent in Aid to families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Medicaid, and food stamps (AAUW, 1992). Becoming a teen parent affects the lives of high school students in many ways. The extent and nature, however, of that effect is determined by gender, as well as social and economic class. Although both participants, male and female, in the sexual act that resulted in the pregnancy are or should be held accountable, females bear the brunt of the negative consequences.

In the late 1960s, and through the 1980s, pregnant teens hid their condition so that they could remain in school. Pregnant students were not tolerated in regular high school. They were generally given the option of enrolling in adult classes at night or dropping out. Female teens with children were not allowed to represent the school or participate in extracurricular activities such as band, sports, and drama; or serve in elected positions. There were no such restrictions on male teen parents. Most teen mothers got around these restrictions by transferring to different high schools. Unless someone reported their parental status to the new school, these students could have a somewhat fresh start on their high school careers. Things have improved over the decades since my high school days. Pregnant students can now have homebound teachers so that they can continue classwork when their physical

condition does not allow them to attend school. Classes in parenting are now available in many high schools as well as child care centers for student parents.

Many of the stigmas attached to being an unwed mother, however, still exist in opinion and practice. Attempts to bar pregnant students and teen mothers from school organizations and treatment of them as inferior students still occur. To compound matters, the majority of the teen mothers are already victims of poverty, low social status, low self-esteem, and physical and sexual abuse. Unless these teen mothers receive the needed support and encouragement from schools, the cycle of failure is repeated (Orland, 1990; Ogbu, 1990, Fine, 1991) .

Statement Of The Problem

Unequal outcomes and treatment in academics, occupational choices, and standardized tests and differential treatment in teen pregnancy persist in limiting opportunities for women in this country. This is especially true for students from impoverished communities, many of whom are minorities. According to Orland:

Students experiencing long-term poverty are more likely to be Black, to come from single-parent households or ones with a disabled family head, . . . and (among Black children) to reside in the south than are students who are poor for shorter periods. They are also significantly more likely to experience academic difficulty Even after controlling for other student demographic characteristics, each year of student

poverty was statistically associated with a 2 percent increase in the likelihood of falling behind expected grade level. (p. 54)

According to André Béteille (1981), it doesn't matter how carefully we work to guarantee equal opportunity, equality can only exist before the competition. The inception and enforcement of laws to address gender bias in schools can help overcome inequality only to a certain point. Equality of opportunity must be addressed by examining the socially constructed scales of merit in place in schools today. Not only will this help to equalize the opportunities for females in American society, it will also help disclose and remedy the harmful effects of gender, class and ethnic bias to the economic, social, political structure of this country.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand the academic and social high school experiences of working class or low -income African American females who attend schools with majority White student populations and to contribute to the knowledge base about minority women in majority school settings. As public schools move towards more multicultural populations, students encounter a variety of social and academic experiences. These experiences, whether positive or negative, affect the overall learning environment. A survey of the literature in the area of high school experiences reveals a lack of research that gives the student perspective, especially if those students are female, minority, and working class or poor. Also lacking in the literature is the impact of

the sociocultural context of learning as related to ethnicity, gender, and social class. A clearer understanding from women students' perspectives on how the three variables of ethnicity, gender and social class/status together impact individual students can help enhance the educational attainment across gender, ethnic, and socio-economic lines.

Significance

Few research studies have focused on both race and gender, moreover, researchers have frequently confounded socioeconomic status with minority-group membership (Scott-Jones, D. & Clark, M., 1986).

It is hoped that this study will contribute to the scholarly conversation about the effects of ethnicity, gender, and social class/status in educational opportunity at the secondary level. By using data that give the perspectives of the participants in their own words, the administrators, school boards, and faculty who develop educational policies will have an opportunity to understand how these policies and practices are perceived by students. With a better understanding of the student perspective, perhaps educators can move toward programs that foster feelings of self-worth and provide for maximum development of students' abilities and talents. Additionally, an awareness of how ascribed characteristics of gender, ethnicity, and class impact learning opportunities may help school officials to plan for or assess learning situations so as to minimize or eliminate negative effects.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature on the effects of gender in secondary education indicate an awareness of gender inequality in secondary education and an attempt to locate the source this disparity in opportunity/gender discrimination. Feminist movements to combat sexism in this country have impacted educational policy and been the impetus for research to level the field for males and females.

Literature about school experiences, particularly high school experiences of women, is limited to three primary areas. A review of this literature reveals (1) gender differences in societal expectations of men and women, (2) gender differences in academic achievement and, (3) gender differences in self perception. The first section of this review examines the impact of parental expectations on females. The second section addresses how differences in learning styles and approaches affect academic success. The third section is a review of research on the personal expectations of students as related to self-esteem and self-efficacy. Finally, a summary analysis illustrates gaps in the literature related to the experiences of poor minority women in public high schools.

Gender Differences In Societal Expectations

One body of literature that contributes to the understanding of gender issues in high school is socialization. Socialization, as defined by the *Dictionary of Sociology*, may be described as "... the process whereby people learn to conform to social norms ... as they guide their own actions to accord with the expectations of others"(1984). In America we are socialized to conform to the expectations of society that are reflected in our educational, occupational, and social roles. This socialization occurs in three stages: family socialization, school socialization, and adult socialization. By the time they reach high school, females have been socialized by the expectations of family and school. Who they are tends to be a product of those combined expectations. This realization is reflected in and reinforced by research. An awareness of the power of socialization on the lives of adolescent females and the sometimes subtle and unintentional occurrences of it can help in reversing trends that limit educational opportunities. Attempts to understand gender differences in science and math career participation as well as other adolescent issues have led researchers to the area of socialization for answers (Campbell and Connolly, 1987; Chen, 1986; Dunnell and Bakken, 1991; Shashaani, 1994).

A somewhat subtle form of expressing expectations is exposed by John Peter's (1991) research on the financial contribution of parents to children. Peters found that adolescent males were more likely to pay for their own purchases than female adolescents. Female adolescents were also more likely to expect financial

assistance from parents for post secondary schooling expenses. The suggestion is that " . . . adolescent females and/or parents encourage a longer period of dependence for females"(p. 656). The expectation is that females will be less able to successfully practice financial independence.

Campbell and Connolly (1987), in their study of sex differences between Asian and White high school students, found that there was a difference in the family and school expectations for Asian and white females. An analysis of the data revealed gender and ethnic differences in technical literacy and family and peer expectations. Asian females were found to read more technical books and know more computer languages than any other group; contrasting with white females who read more fiction and knew less about computer languages than any other group. Asian females spent much of their time acquiring technical literacy while white females focused their time on socializing activities. Parental support varied based on ethnicity of the female students. While white parents held different expectations for their sons and daughters, Asian parents did not. White parents did not stress technical careers or encourage females to take advantage of opportunities. Asian parents, on the other hand, strongly encouraged their daughters to excel in learning technology.

Antagonistic or negative attitudes of males toward gifted females in the class was also distinct along ethnic lines. White males had many negative perceptions of gifted females

whereas Asian males had few. White females had to deal with negative and antagonistic attitudes of their ethnic peers that was not experienced by Asian females. Overall it would appear that family and school expectations work against white females entering technical-scientific fields (Streitmatter, 1994; AAUW, 1992).

Milton Chen (1986), in addition to finding gender differences in computer use favoring males, saw in the social environments of male and female adolescents significant factors that affected their attitudes toward computers. Overall Chen found gender differences in computer use that favored males. The males in the study, helped in their participation by the support and assistance of friends, peers, and parents, were ". . . more likely to believe that skill with computers was a source of respect from peers and parents" (p. 279). Again the expectations of family and school worked for males and against females.

Further evidence of the importance of parental expectations comes in a study by Dunnell and Bakken (1991) where they investigated the attitudes of gifted high school students towards careers and sex roles. They found that ". . . female gifted students are more contemporary in their attitudes toward sex roles and career plans than are male gifted high school students" (p. 201). The importance of family influence is expressed in a statement by one of the female participants. 'We're the first generation to be raised by feminists' (p. 201). Expectations for females can either restrict their aspirations or, as in the case of these gifted females, expand the boundaries for success.

Families and schools exert a great deal of influence on the academic experience of children. The institutions of family and school are the first two places where children experience expectations. Expectations expressed by family and schools shape individual preparation for adult roles in society. If families and schools have low and limiting expectations for females, all of society suffers.

Gender Differences In Academic Achievement

Academic success in our society is measured by grades and test scores. These mostly numerical evaluations reflect student performance on teacher made or standardized tests. According to Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte (p. 276, 1995) "female students achieve higher grades throughout public school and do better on language-related courses . . . while males do better in math and science." The research in this literature review suggests that attention to differences in how learning is accomplished can help close the academic gap.

Differences In Learning Styles

Differences in learning styles and approaches seem innocent enough on the surface. The danger in differences comes in to play when a dominant group, consciously or unconsciously, attaches a hierarchical arrangement to those differences. When one learning style is seen as The style from which everything is approached and to which all must conform for success, inequality is the natural outcome.

Research has shown that there are differences in the way males and females engage in learning and these differences work for males and against females. These differences work against females because the methods of teaching and testing cater to a academic approaches used by males (Gallagher and DeLisi, 1994; Breland, 1994; Gallagher, 1989; Becker, 1990). Evidence of these different learning styles and how they impact the success and failure of students support the need for adjustments in the way secondary students are taught and tested. As suggested by the following research, these adjustments in instructional and testing techniques would positively impact the academic success of all students.

Approaches To Mathematics

Michael T. Battista (1990) investigated the role of spatial thinking in problem solving and gender differences in high school geometry. Findings under gender differences point to basic distinctions in the relative roles that spatial visualization and logical reasoning played in males' and females' geometry achievement. Female geometry students tend to benefit or be more successful in geometry when visualization is minimized. Male geometry students, on the other hand, benefit from an emphasis on visualization. Success in geometry for males or females may be dependent on whether or not visualization is emphasized by the instructor or material to which they are exposed.

Similarly, Low & Over (1993) investigated gender differences in math. In two experiments they evaluated the way male and

female students solved algebraic word problems. Low and Over infer from the data that females may have been more likely to use a bottom-up approach or strategy and sought to use all of the information identified in a problem in a way that would produce a solution. This would impair their ability to detect irrelevant information in problems. A solution to this, according to Low and Over, would be to remove from the traditional math instructional approach, extended practice on solving problems, which has been shown to be relatively ineffective in increasing performance. They recommend using instructional methods that develop schematic knowledge such as training students to hypothesize solutions, exposing students to worked examples, clustering problems on the basis of similarity, and constructing problems. As shown in the research by Battista, the answer/solution to gender differences in math performance is to use instructional techniques to address different learning styles.

Shelagh A. Gallagher (1989) investigated the predictors of SAT mathematics scores of gifted female and gifted male adolescents. The variables included were: visual-spatial ability, cognitive reasoning ability, learning style, and SAT-Verbal (SAT-V) scores. Results of the study cast light on two assumptions. The first assumption addressed is that there is a gender difference in visual-spatial skill. Gallagher suggests that this difference, rather than innate, is more attributable to speed of response. Speed of response may be affected by factors not necessarily associated with intelligence. The second assumption has to do with the importance

of visual-spatial ability in the solving of SAT-M problem solving. Results of this indicate that visual-spatial ability is minor rather than a dominant factor here. Overall, males and females with the same cognitive ability level had the same potential for success on the SAT-M. The gender differences, suggests Gallagher, may be in improvement of process skills or finding the most effective problem solving strategy. These are differences that can be addressed by instructional practices. They do not indicate that there is a lack of ability; just a need to meet the needs of different styles of learning.

Different learning styles should not continue to be barriers to educational success. The gap in math achievement attributed to gender differences can be rectified if different learning styles are addressed with varied instructional methods. Evidence exists that the method of instruction and test construction influence the performance of students, negatively or positively (Catsambis, 1994; Gallagher and DeLisi, 1994; Low and Over, 1993; Munger and Loyd, 1989; Tobin and Garnett, 1987). Low and Over (1993) point to the importance of instructional style in discussing the results of their research.

Therefore, there is need not only for appropriate diagnostic testing and remediation but also for modification of educational practices so that neither group is disadvantaged in acquiring skills that are basic to competent performance in mathematics. The present results point to the need for instruction designed to ensure that all students (both boys and girls) acquire

the schematic knowledge pertinent to the solution of algebraic word problems and that students adopt a schema - oriented approach to the solution of algebraic word problems. (p. 337)

Battista (1990) similarly concluded that his findings "... suggest factors that may relate to gender differences in geometry learning and indicate that certain instructional practices may create or exacerbate these differences" (p. 59). The use of varied teaching styles to address different learning styles remains a concern in the public school system. *Resegregation of Public Schools: The Third Generation*, the third in a series of reports on the condition of school desegregation, lists the need for instructional methods that address different cultural and learning styles (1989). In *Unbanking the Fire*, Hale (1995) speaks of the need for schools to respond to different cultural needs:

It is critical that the schools become more sensitive to ethnic and cultural groups that do not conform to the white middle-income model that the schools are prepared to serve. Only when members of the helping professions demystify African American culture will solutions be found to the dilemma of achieving equal educational outcomes for African American children. (p. 168)

Implementation of techniques that address the learning potential of all students in our schools is essential to rectifying inequality of educational opportunity.

Gender Differences In Self Perception

Self-concept involves the individual's view of herself in a general sense as well as how she sees herself performing in specific situations (Cedeno and Johnson, 1993). The part of self-concept that deals with a person's overall sense of worth as related to behavior, physical appearance, intelligence, and social and emotional self is self-esteem (Richman, 1985; Clark and Brown, 1985). Self-efficacy, on the other hand, is that part of self-concept that concerns the expectations a person has for success in a specific situation. Research shows that how a student sees herself in general and in specific situations are important factors in determining success or failure in school. If personal expectations are low, performance will accordingly be low (Bryne and Shavelson, 1987; Marsh, 1987). In this portion of the literature review I will first discuss studies of self efficacy and then studies of self-esteem.

Self Efficacy

Self-efficacy involves the way students perceive their chances of success on a particular task or endeavor. These expectations (which may be emotionally or socially based) for success or failure have an important relationship to the academic outcomes of secondary students.

Junge and Dretzke (1995) also researched self - confidence/efficacy in gifted/talented adolescents. To examine gender differences in the mathematical self-efficacy of gifted /talented adolescents, they used the Mathematics Self-Efficacy Scale

(MSES) questionnaire. Results of the study were that talented/gifted adolescent males had significantly stronger self-efficacy expectations than females on 18 out of 70 items. Female talented/gifted adolescents had significantly stronger self-efficacy expectations than males on five of the 70 items. These five items involved stereotypical female activities. Overall it would appear that gifted/talented adolescent females are less confident concerning their mathematical abilities than males.

Janice Williams (1994) extended the examination of gender differences in self-efficacy across four subject matter domains: English, mathematics, reading, and science. Participants in the study were 131 (88 female, 43 male) predominately white, middle-class junior or senior high public school students attending a university-sponsored American College Testing (ACT) preparation workshop. Data for analysis came from ACT practice exams and self-efficacy questionnaires given prior to each practice exam. Results from the data positively related performance to student efficacy expectations in both gender groups and across all four subject domains. Highest in efficacy/performance relationships was the domain of mathematics. This was true for males and females. Researchers found that the higher the students' efficacy expectations, the higher their performance scores. This has special implications for female adolescents whose self-esteem spirals downward as they advance educationally (Kline & Short, 1991).

Whereas Williams (1994) extended the concept of gender differences in self-efficacy across subject domains, Post-Kammer

and Smith (1986) explored the phenomena in disadvantaged students. The purpose of their research was to analyze the relationship of gender and math/science career self-efficacy, interests, and consideration of students in a precollege program. Results of this study showed a significant gender difference in participants' consideration of and interest in math and non-math careers. Gender differences in self-efficacy appeared in three out of the twenty-four occupations listed on the questionnaire. All three of the occupations were math-oriented and traditionally male. Females' lack of consideration of these math-oriented occupations was related to confidence factors. Specifically, their confidence in meeting the educational requirements for the careers. Post-Krammer and Smith further suggest that the process of career consideration may be more complex for females than males. The social and emotional changes experienced by gifted adolescent females suggested by Kline and Short (1991) would lend support to this idea of complexity in career consideration.

Self-efficacy, according to these researchers, is affected by gender. Females are less confident of their ability to perform in traditionally male subjects such as math. This lack of confidence adversely affects the ability of females to perform in areas that are not stereotypical female activities. It is important to note that the ability of the females is not at issue here. What is at issue is the importance of self-expectation on success in any area.

Self-Esteem

The following literature moves us from the specific situations of self-efficacy to the more general part of self-concept, self-esteem. Research in self-esteem indicates gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences in its effect on school success.

Kline and Short (1991) investigated the changes in social and emotional balance of gifted females during three stages of school (grade school, junior high, senior high). Eighty-nine gifted females (as determined by their respective school districts) participated in the study. Fifty-eight were in the 9th through 12th grades, fifteen in the 5th through 8th grades, and 16 were in the 1st through 4th grades. All 89 of the participants were enrolled in gifted programs in public or private schools in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Connecticut. Self-confidence, perfectionism, relationship with parents, relationship with peers, discouragement, and hopelessness were measured based on a 138-item questionnaire. Results of the questionnaire revealed significant differences in age level groupings for self-confidence, perfectionism, parental relationships, and discouragement. Self-confidence and parental relationships suffer a steady decline from elementary to high school. Perfectionism and discouragement, instead of declining, increase over the school stages. Kline and Short propose three reasons for this downward trend in the social and emotional changes in gifted females. First is the pressure to conform to societal constructs traditionally associated with males, such as individualism, competitiveness. Second is the priority of

relationships over other goals. A third factor is the expectations adults have for females. Females are expected to accept/adopt the societal norms for femininity: selflessness, passivity, dependency, and subjugation. According to these researchers, expectations for the gifted female, especially in adolescence, are conflicting. She is expected to be: assertive and passive, selfless and competitive, giving and individual.

Steitz and Owen (1992) used a broader population to investigate the relationship between participation and involvement in school activities, degree of part-time work, and self-esteem in adolescents. The participants were 212 sophomore (102 boys, 110 girls) and 230 junior (107 boys, 123 girls) high school students from a large urban school in the mid-South. The student body was predominately White and middle-class. Overall, results indicated working is associated with lower self-esteem, especially so for females. In fact, the more hours a female worked, the lower her self-esteem. This trend was evident across grade levels. Gender differences were also evident in participation in school activities and self-esteem. For males, athletics was associated with high self-esteem. However, the self-esteem of males who did not participate in school activities as well as those who participated in athletics was higher than males who participated in music activities. This was attributed to the stereotype of music as a feminine activity. Female high self-esteem was associated with athletics and music.

Lian-Hwang Chiu (1990) investigated the relationship of career goal and self-esteem among adolescents. Tenth and eleventh

grade high school students (101 female, 120 male) in a small midwestern city were given the Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) Scale to do a self report of their self-esteem. Analysis of the data supported the prediction that adolescents with career goals would score higher on the RSE than adolescents without career goals. The difference, however, was only significant for adolescent males. Adolescent males with career goals scored significantly higher in self-esteem than adolescent males without career goals. The difference in self-esteem for female adolescents with career goals and female adolescents without career goals was insignificant. A second prediction was also confirmed. It was predicted that student participants with career goals would be rated higher in self-esteem than those without career goals. Although this prediction proved true for adolescent males and adolescent females, "... the magnitude of difference was greater for the males" (p. 596).

While Chiu (1990) examined the relationship between career goals and self-esteem, Mullis, Mullis, and Normandin (1992) studied the effects of gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and grade level on self-esteem. For three years the researchers measured the self-esteem of 270 (130 female, 140 male) students from their ninth grade through their eleventh grade years. According to the data, gender was not a main effect in determining self-esteem. SES was measured using five factors: father's occupation, mother's occupation, father's education, mother's education, and family income. Over the three years only family income showed a significant relationship to self-esteem. Overall, results of this study

suggest an increase in self-esteem by male and female adolescents over the high school years. A critical period seems to be the move from junior high to senior high school. This change brings about negative effects on self-esteem. It would seem that the findings in this study contradict reports of self-efficacy studies (Junge and Dretzke, 1995; Kline and Short, 1991; Post-Krammer and Smith, 1986; Williams, 1994), but self-efficacy studies focused on a distinct population. The participants in the self-efficacy studies were generally talented/gifted, advanced, or recognized as having potential. Mullis, Mullis, and Normandin do not take into account the academic status of their participants.

Dukes and Martinez (1994) used the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSE) and an index of three Likert-type items to investigate the impact of race and gender (ethgender) on adolescent self-esteem. The researchers used the term public domain to describe self-esteem that takes them out of the protective group setting. Their efficacy and self-confidence come not from group membership, but from performance in an institutional context. Dukes and Martinez found in this study that in the institutional context, ethnicity is more important than gender because schools ". . . are more even-handed in fostering efficacy and self-confidence in both males and females than they are for members of racial groups" (p. 108). They also found that in core self-esteem, which comes from intimate interactions such as family, gender has more of an impact than ethnicity. This core self-esteem comes from being a part of a group. This group membership ". . . support[s] the

notion of an 'intact and worthwhile self'" (p. 108). It's a kind of protective wall from the damaging effects of institutional racism. According to the findings, the ethnicity of students has more of an impact on public domain self-esteem or how they see themselves in an institutional situation, like school. The implication is that institutions, such as schools, are more racist than they are sexist and families are more sexist than institutions.

Ethgender (ethnicity and gender) were also two of the variables used by Richman, Clark, and Brown (1985) in their study of self-esteem. The third variable was socioeconomic status (SES). Participants in the study were 195 (48% female, 52% male) eleventh grade students from three high schools in North Carolina. The ethnic make up of the participants was 75% Black and 25% White with varying SES levels. Test instruments used were the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), a ten item Likert-type scale, the Brookover Self-Concept of Ability and School Achievement Scale (BSASAS), and the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (PSCS).

In the area of general self-esteem, measured by the RSE and the PSCS, White students were found to have lower self-esteem scores than Black students. White female scores were significantly lower than White males, Black males and Black females. Low SES students had lower scores than middle and high SES students. In specific self-esteem, measured by the PSCS and the BSASAS, Black students scored higher in happiness, popularity, attractiveness, behavior, intellectual competence, and peace of mind than White students; male students were less anxious and had more positive

attitudes about popularity than females. White females were found to be less happy than White males, Black males and Black females. There were also less confident of school abilities than White males and Black females. High SES White students scored lower in happiness and behavior than Black students and middle SES White students. Overall results indicate a higher level of self-esteem among Black adolescents.

Suggested explanations for the overall higher self-esteem level of Black adolescents include using self-esteem as a defense mechanism and schools being an insignificant factor in Black adolescent development of self-esteem. The low self-esteem scores of White females, especially high SES White females, may be explained by the findings of Kline & Short (1991) on the downward spiral of gifted female adolescents.

Although the studies discussed above included variables of ethnicity, social class, and gender, none considered the implications of these multiple characteristics on the lives of high school women, particularly Black women. In Fordham's (1993) study of the effects of gender diversity on school achievement, she found that Black females were " . . . socialized to silence and invisibility" (p. 23). In a predominately Black urban high school, the successful Black female students were the ones who were " . . . 'passing' for someone they are not: the White American female and, ultimately, the White American male" (p. 23). On the other end of the spectrum of conformity are " . . . those 'loud Black girls' . . . [who] refuse to 'conform to the standards of 'good behavior'" (p. 16). The Black

female does this by " . . . liv[ing] on the edge, self-consciously stretching legitimate school rules to help her retrieve a safe cultural space" (16). Being Black and female in this urban school brought about specific constructions of Black womanhood that impacted academic success. The convergence of ethnicity and gender is particularly salient in the growth and development of African American women. According to Fordham (1993):

The distinctive history of people of African ancestry and their current social conditions, I argue, are implicated in the structure and configuration of their gender roles. African-American's continuous, ongoing lack of dominance and power in the Euro-American patriarchic structure has had, and continues to have, severe implications for African-American women (and men).
(pp. 22 - 23)

These examples of Black females' construction of womanhood, silent and loud, are also exemplary of the ways in which Black females negotiate their way through American society in a predominately Black setting. How would that construction be impacted if the sociocultural context were different? In their study of female development in a predominately White private school for girls, Brown and Gilligan's (1992), found that the:

. . . girls in our study who, because of color or class, live in the margins, who are so clearly at odds with the dominant models of female beauty and perfection as to reveal the cultural hand behind the standards. (p. 226)

Being different in this environment is not without consequences. As a representative of a minority culture, there is increased pressure to assimilate or become a part of the mainstream. On the other hand, assimilation into one culture entails rejection on some levels of another culture. Brown and Gilligan (1992) report that:

The African -American girls, in particular, feel enormous responsibility to prove themselves in this microcosm of white society and, as Jenice says, 'to wipe away some stereotypes that people have of Blacks.' And yet because getting ahead is associated in this culture with being white, and since, as Jenice knows, 'everyone's trying to get ahead,' she resents that 'as a Black person I have been forced to assimilate.' But 'going to Laurel [private predominately White school] and going back to the Black community' is also 'really hard' for Jenice, because 'Blacks perceive me as someone who is trying to be white.' Jenice feels the tensions and ambivalence and social pressure Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu describe of other Black adolescents-their struggle between loyalty and identification with the Black community and the 'burden of acting White' if they act on their desire to excel in school. (p. 227)

Clearly, according to Brown and Gilligan (1992) the impact of ethnicity and gender for Black females on academic achievement and the construction of self is compounded by the sociocultural context in which it occurs.

Summary

Research on adolescent females has dealt with issues of difference in secondary education. Why adolescent females don't perform as well as adolescent males has been explored from the social, cognitive, and self-concept angles. Studies in socialization have revealed the influence of differential expectations on the academic experiences and choices of adolescent men and women. We know that women respond to these societal expectations in the academic choices that they make. We also know from the research in learning styles or cognition that men and women approach learning differently. Those differences, however, need not be barriers for women. Adjusting the teaching styles to accommodate all learners can alleviate perceived differences in potential. Finally, the literature explains that the self-concept is an important variable in the academic experiences of adolescents. Self-concept, in the literature, negatively affects adolescent females.

There is a gap, however, when we look at the participants in the research, the perspectives from which data are collected, and the method of data collection. Much of the research related to high school girls is concerned with the performance of females in math and science. A majority of the science and math research uses gifted students as participants. Differences in learning styles are related again and again to gender. We don't know from the literature if there were any ethnic or social class differences in the populations. We don't know if the social class and/or ethnicity of girls would have any impact on her learning style. Do these

learning styles occur only in the performance of gifted students? Would instructional changes to address different learning styles along gender lines have to take into account the ethnicity and social class of students? Would the sociocultural context of the school affect differences in learning styles between boys and girls? These are some of the questions that need to be explored in research on the effects of gender in secondary education.

There is very little in the literature that explores other subject areas or the overall experience of females in high school from their perspective. Although a few studies have included factors of ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, most have concentrated on middle class, gifted, White Americans. We know little about the impact of socioeconomic status on ethnicity. Do all socioeconomic females of one ethnicity experience high school the same way? How does being middle class, Black and female in high school differ from being working or lower class, Black and female? The experiences of working class and low-income adolescents in high schools is rarely treated with respect to ethnicity and/or gender, but generally collapsed into one category.

Additionally, the method of data collection for the vast majority of the literature is survey through techniques allowing for little flexibility in responses. Participants answer what is asked of them but have little opportunity to expand or introduce new topics or avenues for discussion. Therefore we know little about how female adolescents interpret their high school experiences. What is important to them?

The impact of the sociocultural context is also missing from the literature. How does the majority or minority status of the female adolescent in the school come to bear on her high school experiences? According to Scott-Jones and Clark (1986), the variable of sociocultural context is important:

Academic achievement is dependent on more than individual abilities and aspirations. The social environment in which learning takes place can enhance or diminish the behaviors that lead to achievement.

The school is a microcosm of the society. Therefore, the racial and sex-role stereotypes and biases prevalent in the society find their way into the school. The school environment reflects the fact that society values male over females and whites over nonwhites. Thus students who are members of minority groups must adjust to teachers and peers as well as to schoolwork; in other words, they must live a bicultural existence. (p. 523)

It is a forgone conclusion that the institution of school mirrors ethnic, gender, and class biases (Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995). We know that being female significantly affects the adolescent development and academic success of high school students. If simply being female imposes additional burdens on the high school experience, being a minority from a working class or low-income family must be considered in the lives of Black women. In what other sociocultural context than a predominately White

high school are these variables more obvious? It makes sense then to explore the experiences of working class and low-income Black adolescent females in the place where ". . . [t]he daily reality of difference gives these girls sharp eyes for shallowness, for false commitments, 'phony' relationships, and abuses of power, and gives their voice a strength and a clarity. . ." (Brown and Gilligan, 1992, p. 225). This study contributes to the literature by exploring the lives of young, working class and low-income Black women in predominately White high schools.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This chapter explains the theoretical perspectives that informed this study. The experiences of working class and low-income Black female students in a mostly White high school setting can be viewed and analyzed through many theoretical lenses. I have chosen to use the theoretical lenses of everyday racism and Black feminism. These seem to offer the most viable approaches to understanding the impact of race, gender, socioeconomic status on the lives of these participants. I begin this discussion with an explanation of Black Feminism and how it applies to the participants in this study. Following that is an explanation of the concept of everyday racism and its place relevant to the sociocultural setting of this study.

Black Feminism

Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte describe Black Feminism as the feminist theory that "... defines African -American women's struggles around the issues of race, social class, and gender"(p. 285). The experiences of Black females in American society are reflective of a common history of racism and sexism that stems from enslavement and denigration of Black inextricably linked to a system of patriarchy. According to Hine (1995):

During slavery, Black women were sold as concubines or mistresses, and their offspring enriched the pockets of owners and lovers, for the child inherited the status of

the mother. Obviously there was economic incentive to possess a Black woman. But there was also the psychological or psychic profit gained from degrading and dehumanizing in one person the two characteristics most threatening to European American males:

Blackness and femaleness. (p. 174)

Racial and gender domination of Black women in America is . . . "a central force in the historical and contemporary lives of most Black women, especially working-class or welfare-poor Black women. . ." (p. 176). From commonality of experience that transcends within group differences come a unifying element for Black women.

According to Patricia Hill Collins (1991):

All African-American women share the common experience of being Black women in a society that denigrate women of African descent. This commonality of experience suggests that certain characteristic themes will be prominent in a Black women's standpoint. (p. 22)

Themes in Black feminism that are important in understanding the experiences of working class and low-income Black high school women are: (a) self definition, (b) socialization, and (c) sexual politics in relationships.

Self Definition

Collins (1991) suggests that a history of resistance indicates that Black women do not accept what others tell them they are. In what she terms as Black women's consciousness, lies ". . . 'inside' ideas that allow Black women to cope with and, in most cases,

transcend the confines of race, class, and gender oppression" (p. 93). Rejecting oppression via images and circumstances and the conformity that it commands can be seen in the relationships, music and writing of Black women (Collins, 1991). Maya Angelou writes of this in her poem *Our Grandmothers*:

*She heard then names,
swirling ribbons in the wind of history:
nigger, nigger bitch, heifer,
mammy, property, creature, ape, baboon,
whore, hot tail, thing, it.
She said, But my description cannot
fit your tongue, for
I have a certain way of being in this world,
and I shall not, I shall not be moved.*

Youth is not a shield from the negative images and circumstances faced by Black women. Young Black women of high school age are also bombarded with negative images of Black womanhood. One negative image is the "welfare queen." According to Chideya (1995):

Just as Black men are stereotyped as criminals, Black women in the American media are typecast as welfare mothers. America's newspapers are filled with images of slovenly, ne'er-do-well women and their multitudes of children-families who are almost always African-American. Yet this image is startlingly at odds with the

majority of families receiving Aid to families with
Dependent Children (AFDC), or welfare. (p. 35)

Other stereotypes include the mammy, Jezebel, and matriarch. Ladner points out that " . . . Black consciousness . . . have allowed for the development of an internal set of standards by which many Black women have begun to judge themselves" (p. 30).

Socialization

The relationship between Black mothers and their daughters, as discussed by Collins, is one where Black daughters are socialized not to aspire to White middle class norms of femininity. Collins explains:

African American mothers place a strong emphasis on protection, either by trying to shield their daughters as long as possible from the penalties attached to their race, class, and gender status or by teaching them skills of independence and self-reliance so that they will be able to protect themselves. . . . Unlike white women, symbolized by 'good looks' and 'waist long hair,' Black women have been denied protection. Under such conditions it becomes essential that Black mothers teach their daughters skills that will take them anywhere.
(p.126)

Being socialized to operate within a system that does not offer minority women and girls the protection it affords other women impacts the way they see themselves. Understanding the importance of self reliance eliminates the fantasy of the knight in

shining armor. For most women from lower and working class families there is no one to come and whisk them away to a life of leisure. Instead, they work as provider for themselves and others. For example, Black women may be taught to be more independent because the likelihood of being a housewife is remote. Skills that may be used to bring in supplemental as well as primary income are necessary and valued as assets. Many Black women, for example, talk of having a secondary skill to fall back on. Black women are socialized for a life of practicality and physical, emotional, and economic survival.

Sexual Politics And Relationships

Collins (1991) contends that Black women's relationships with Black men, White women, and White men are impacted by a gender-hierarchy " . . . in which inequalities of race and social class have been sexualized" (p. 165). This gender-hierarchy combined with ". . . the sexual politics that Black women encounter within it represent a powerful system of repression because they intrude on people's daily lives at the point of consciousness" (p. 182). Our interactions with other people are based on how this world has been constructed by those in power, specifically sex role. The patriarchal structure of many societies, including the United States of America, assigns certain roles and characteristics based on sex. What you do and how you do it, according to society, is determined by your gender. Stepping out of the confines of what is acceptable for a male or a female, incurs the wrath of society. "Definitions of appropriate gender behavior for Black women, Black men, White

women, and White men not only affect social institutions such as schools and labor markets, they also simultaneously shape daily interactions among and within each group" (Collins, 1991, p. 184). On the high school level, Black women interact daily with White males, White females, and Black males. These interactions bring together the interplay of socially ascribed roles and self definition for Black women. The treatment of Black women reflects the ideology of gender and ethnic hierarchy. The reactions of Black women reflect the acceptance or rejection of gender and/or ethnic inequality.

Black feminism is shaped by a common thread in the experiences of Black females. This common thread, however, has turn and twists dictated by differences in areas such as social class, sexual orientation, and age. Using a Black feminist lens to work toward an understanding of the experiences of working class and low-income Black high school women removes the construct of a White middle class ideology. The Black feminist perspective allows an understanding of the interplay of race, gender, and class from the experiences of Black women.

Everyday Racism

In a study of the experiences of Black middle class women in the United States and the Dutch Netherlands, Philomena Essed (1991), explored the concept of racism "[a]s a process . . . routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices"(p. 2). Using data from interviews of middle class Black women from both locations (United States and Dutch Netherlands), Essed ". . . examines

how processes of **marginalization, problematization, and containment** are made operative in their everyday lives" (p. 185).

Marginalization occurs when Black people are tolerated but not allowed to really be a part of a situation. Feelings and perspectives are ignored and power to make or influence decisions is withheld. If there are attempts from those who are marginalized to move to the core of the institution or group, the hierarchy of difference comes in to play. Threats to the status quo from people who are different are seen as problems. Difference, according to Essed (1991) is organized hierarchically in European custom. Therefore differences associated with Black people are seen as inferior. Differences between Black people and White people become problems when Black people try to move from the margins or exclusion, toward inclusion.

Problematization, as a process in everyday racism, stems from what Essed (1991) defines as "cognitive detachment or ideological marginalization of Blacks" that "is the failure to understand the world from the point of view of Blacks." This "indifference to oppression" exists when there is denial that racism exists and tolerance for its existence. Indifference to racism is made legitimate by problematizing the people who oppose racism. When the existence of racism is denied or tolerated, people who express antiracist views become problems. They may be characterized as too sensitive and their competence as questionable. As long as the dominant group refuses to see racism from the perspective of the

oppressed, denial and tolerance of racism can be legitimized by problematizing the antiracist.

Containment, according to Essed (1991), is a form of suppression. In everyday racism, the dominant group uses containment to maintain the status quo. Attempts by those oppressed to attain equality, justice and power are contained in many ways. Essed found in her study that verbal aggression and violence are used as methods of suppression. She explains:

U.S. women are explicit about Whites' use of verbal aggression and violence to contain Blacks. The first form has largely to do with the common phenomenon in the United States of calling Blacks 'nigger'. . . . The second form has largely to do with police aggression against the Black community, which is legitimized by criminalizing Blacks. (p. 114)

Containment flows naturally from marginalization, "in which a sense of 'otherness' is perpetuated," and problematization which depoliticizes racism (Essed, 1991, p.114).

These processes of marginalization, problematization, and containment are interrelated processes within the concept of everyday racism. Essed (1991) defines everyday racism as:

. . . a process in which (a) socialized racist notions are integrated into meanings that make practices immediately defineable and manageable, (b) practices with racist implications become in themselves familiar and repetitive, and (c) underlying racial and ethnic

relations are actualized and reinforced through these routine or familiar practices in everyday situations. (p. 52)

This means that racism is much more than an isolated event(s) in the lives of Black people. One racist event is experienced in relation to an overall system of racism that perpetuates and reinforces itself.

The types of racism as well as reactions to it are related also to the gender and socioeconomic status of members those who experience racism (Essed, 1991). This theory of everyday racism has strong implications for this study. The twelve working class and low-income Black women are students in a majority White high school. They interact on a daily basis with White males and White females as peers and authority figures. The school itself is a microcosm of a society that fosters and perpetuates the norms and values of White middle class America. The school structure and the interactions of the students, faculty and staff offer the opportunity to apply Essed's concept of everyday racism:

. . . racism is more than structure and ideology. As a process it is routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices. . . . [Everyday racism] connects structural forces of racism with routine situations in everyday life. It links ideological dimensions of racism in terms of the experience of it in everyday life. (p.114)

CHAPTER IV

METHODS

Exploration of the topic, the experiences of working class and low-income African American female students in predominately European American high schools, can be approached from many different angles. Understanding those experiences from the perspective of those Black females, however, led me to the use of qualitative research. Qualitative research uses a phenomenological lens for its worldview. The use of open-ended qualitative interviews enabled me to talk with Black high school women about their lived experiences in high school. This perspective impacts the way research is understood and conducted. Bennett deMarrais (in press) points out:

This phenomenological worldview leads qualitative researchers to explore and understand the meaning people place on their daily experiences. Qualitative researchers are interested in trying to understand the meanings, constructs, and categories that people use to make sense of their world from their perspectives. In other words, we seek to discover the meaning people make of their experiences rather than impose researcher constructs on them. (p. 7)

Research Question

My research interest comes from my own life experiences as a Black woman in a segregated community. According to Bennett deMarrais (1996):

. . . our autobiographies are what we bring to the research process: social class background, gender, race/ethnicity, age, abilities, physical attributes, family influences, beliefs, education, employment, political views, and a host of multiple, varied, and interrelated experiences. Since we cannot stop at the door to our offices or research sites and drop off everything we are or have been, what we are becomes intertwined with those we engage in our research process. (p. 23)

My life as an African American female and my experiences in segregated and desegregated school settings certainly influence my research interests. Although the great majority of my pre-college education was in a segregated system, I did have one school semester of school desegregation. In the segregated system I had all Black teachers and peers. My one semester of "desegregated" schooling occurred in my senior year of high school. Less than five White students enrolled at my high school. Consequently, I was still in the majority group as far as student population was concerned. The teaching population, however, went from 100 percent Black to 90 percent White. The difference, although short in duration, was significant. I did not view this attempt at desegregation as a positive factor in my life, or the lives of Black children. My school

community was dispersed without regard for the impact on the lives of Black students. The nurturing teachers who had become so much a part of my life were taken from me in the name, and name only, of desegregation. It felt as if we were being punished for being the victims of an unjust society.

When I first experienced being a minority student, I was an adult. Although I had achieved a level of maturity and stability in my personal life and career, the impact of difference was something I had difficulty understanding and adapting to. I often wondered if I would have been able to achieve academic success as an adolescent had I not been in a very nurturing all Black school environment. Was my gender an issue in that sociocultural context? In that all-Black school I also had the advantage of having coming from a stable, two parent home with enough material resources for the basics and a few of the frills in life. How would my school experiences been different had I come from a low-income home? As a teacher I have witnessed how living in an low-income community affects how educators perceive you as a student. As Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte (1995) point out:

Hence, rich people, of whatever race, religion, or gender, are far more similar to one another than they are to poor people of their own race, religion, or gender. These differences are created, supported, and enhanced by participation in educational institutions. (p. 186)

These life experiences have led to me the research question: What are the experiences of working class and low-income Black females in majority White high schools?

Participants

The names of all the participants, schools, informants, and geographic locations have been changed to insure the confidentiality of the participants. All personal and proper names used are pseudonyms. Written, informed consent was obtained from the participants for this study.

The participants for this investigation were working class and low income African-American female students in the tenth and eleventh grade enrolled in a predominately European American high school. The high school they attended was urban with a mostly working class student body. The Black females in this school were chosen as participants because they have first hand experience in being working class/poor, female, and Black in a sociocultural context that probably devalues all three variables. Having lived this experience of difference for at least one full school year, these women were able to comment reflectively on how they have made sense of their world. The participants have and are living the experience I wanted to learn about.

The participants for this study attended Singer High School (a pseudonym). This school was targeted because it seemed to offer the largest concentration of adolescents who fit the participant profile based on information from the local school system.

After receiving the necessary approvals from the local school system and human subjects, I met with the principal of Singer High School. I explained my study to him and he gave me final approval to do the study at Singer. He introduced me to the head guidance counselor and she immediately began to work with me. The counselors identified two seniors, ten juniors, and seven sophomores that they thought met the criteria. Grade level meetings were arranged by the counselors where I explained my study, gave them an opportunity to ask questions, and handed out information sheets (appendix A) and consent forms (appendix B) to those who were interested. I spent the next few days in the guidance office so that I would be available to schedule interviews. A total of twelve students agreed to be participants in this study. These twelve students were chosen as participants because they returned signed consent forms and scheduled interview times. They were told that they would receive \$10.00 each after their interviews in appreciation for their time and participation.

Data Collection

Data collection focused on indepth interviews. Interview data is appropriate for this study because it provided the kind of information needed to address my research question. Through interviews, participants gave information that is not accessible through just observation. More importantly, through interviews I was able to get the perspective of the participants. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) point out:

Interviewing puts you on the trail of understandings that you may infer from what you observe, but not as the actors themselves construe their actions. You cannot, that is, except through interviewing, get the actor's explanation. Nor, moreover, without interviews, can you learn about their probable future behavior-what they will do, or their probable conjectural behavior-what, if such and such were the case, they might do. . . . The opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see is the special strength of interviewing in qualitative research. (p. 65)

The protocol or interview schedule I used is what Denzin (1978) calls the nonstandardized interview. Some researchers, according to LeCompte and Preissle (1993) describe:

. . . Denzin's nonstandard interview as an interview guide, in which general questions to be addressed and specific information desired by the researcher are anticipated but may be addressed during the interview informally in whatever order or context they happen to arise. (p. 169)

The following open ended questions were used to elicit responses on the participants' descriptions, interpretations, opinions, and feelings about their situation.

1. Tell me about a typical school day for you.

2. Tell me about how you happened to come to (name of school) high school.
3. Tell me about your impression of (name of school) high before coming here. Have those impressions changed over time? If so how? Why?
4. Tell me about your impression of (name of school) now.
5. Tell me about how your parents feel about you going to (name of school) high.
6. Tell me about the students at (name of school) high?
7. Tell me about the teachers here. Think of a teacher you feel comfortable talking to and tell me about her.
8. Are you involved in any school sponsored activities here? If so, tell me about them? If not, talk to me about why you're not.
9. Tell me about the classes you are taking. What are the different academic tracks or levels here?
10. Tell me how you see yourself as a student here. How comfortable do you feel being a student here?
11. You're one of a few Black female students here. What's that like for you?
12. You live in (name of housing project). How do you see your neighborhood? Tell me how you think those who don't live there would describe your neighborhood.
13. Tell me about any experiences you've had related to race or being Black in this school. Is there a difference between being a Black boy rather than a Black girl here? Is there a difference between being a White girl rather than a Black girl here?

14. Tell me about any particular event(s) that stands out in your mind since you've been a student here.
15. Think of a time when you were disciplined by a teacher or staff person here. Tell me about it.
16. Is there anything you'd like to tell me about that I haven't asked? Any final comments you'd like to make?

Each participant was interviewed once and the conversation taped. All of the interviews were conducted during a four week period and lasted between 40 and 115 minutes. The time and location of the interviews were chosen by the participants to cause as little disruption as possible to their schedules. All interviews were audio-taped with the consent of the participants and according to the guidelines of the Human Subjects Committee. Eleven of the participants were interviewed at Singer High School. The first eight interviews were done individually. Three students were interviewed in a group setting. These students were close friends and twin sisters. They told me that they had no secrets and preferred to be interviewed together. The last participant was interviewed by phone because she was unable to come to the school on the day the counselor scheduled. She (the participant) called the counselor after school had ended for the year and asked if she could still be interviewed. She left her phone number for me to contact her. She was unable to leave her home because she was on punishment.

All of the participants were paid \$10.00 after their individual interviews. I chose to pay them for their time because I realized that many high school students work after school and incur many extra expenses related to school.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began during the interview process. As I interviewed the participants, I listened for patterns in their responses to my inquiries as well as the issues they introduced. After the interviews, the tapes were transcribed and read through several times to search for emerging patterns and themes.

As qualitative research generates a massive amount of data that " . . . can be daunting, if not overwhelming" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 430). A method of reducing this data to a manageable size for analysis is important. I used the coding method of sorting and reducing data from my transcripts (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992).

Coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data (i.e., observation notes, interview transcripts, memos, documents, and notes from relevant literature) that are applicable to our research purpose. By putting like-minded pieces together into data clumps, we create an organizational framework. . . . Eventually, we can place the various data clumps in a meaningful sequence that contributes to the chapters or sections of our manuscript. (p. 133)

After sorting and reducing the data, I used a second step of analysis recommended by Huberman and Miles (1994), data display. Here the researcher can look at " . . . a reduced set of data as a basis for thinking about its meanings" (p. 429). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) concur on the importance of data display.

Matrices, graphs, flowcharts, and other sorts of visual representations assist in making meaning of data, as well as exposing the gaps or areas where more data are needed. Data display is, therefore, another ongoing feature of qualitative inquiry. It can be a part of developing the problem statement, data collection, analysis, and final presentation of the study. (p. 137)

After the data was reduced and organized by coding and displayed, the interpretive process begins. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) write of the importance of this process.

If encountering mountains of data is a daunting enterprise, interpreting results from data may make researchers feel as though they have committed hubris. But if they give up on interpretation and simply describe what they saw, they fail to do justice to their data. By leaving readers to draw their own conclusions, researchers risk misinterpretation. Their results may also be trivialized by readers who are unable to make connections implied, but not made explicit, by the researcher. (p. 267)

In the interpretive phase the data display and the patterns and categories that emerged from the transcripts were used as a base to reveal linkages. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) maintain that "[l]inkages then may be established by simple comparing and contrasting, by identifying underlying associations, by inference, or by statistical manipulation" (p. 246). These linkages/taxonomies revealed the placement of patterns under specific themes. Once completed, the experiences of the participants were articulated.

I tested the validity of my interpretation by triangulating the results with other data sources (personal observation, artifacts, informants) as well as input from colleagues.

After interpreting my data and triangulating those findings, it is important that I relate my findings to existing knowledge. According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993) this is important because:

Research reports must indicate what the results mean and how they advance a particular line of investigation, add significant portions to a body of knowledge, or modify existing theories or hypotheses. (p. 278)

Integration of my results to a wider body of knowledge may be accomplished by the use of (a) theory, (b) metaphors and analogies, and (c) synthesis. These tools can help the researcher tell how the data relates to the original research question and why it is important (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993). My integration of analysis with existing theory and research adds to the body of

knowledge on the experiences of working class and low-income Black females in predominately White high schools.

CHAPTER V

DATA PRESENTATION

Introduction

To achieve a better understanding of student perspective, transcripts of the interviews of twelve Black working class and low-income female students attending a predominately White high school were used as the data for this study. This discussion presents the findings from the analysis of that data.

The first section is a description of the setting for the study. Next there is a general layout and discussion of the demographic characteristics of the participants. This is followed by individual portraits of each of the twelve students who participated in the study. Finally, the findings of the student participant interviews are presented. The findings are organized under three major themes representing the concerns conveyed through their interviews: (a) marginalization, (b) intimidation, and (c) strength and determination.

Sociocultural Context

Singer High School was chosen for this investigation because of its student population. According to information provided by the local school system, among predominantly White high schools in the area, Singer has the highest population of Black students and the highest percentage of students on free and reduced lunch. Included in the area assigned to Singer is a low income housing complex, Elliston (a pseudonym), that is predominantly Black. Singer

High School is a 45 year old institution currently experiencing its first building renovation. One of the first comprehensive high schools in the state, it was and still is the only school in the city with a radio and television station. During its first three decades the student population was averaged about 1400 tenth through twelfth graders with about 28% of its graduates going on to college. The student population now averages 850 ninth through twelfth graders with 20% of the graduates going on to college.

Over the past three decades the neighborhood surrounding Singer has experienced change. Formerly solid middle class in its economic construct, it is now lower middle to lower lower. Areas that were once residential have become business areas. As the community aged, the children grew up and left. Many of the older homes have become rental property. Interstate construction also had a negative impact on residential property values.

According to one of the counselors, Black students began attending Singer in the mid 1960s. In the late 1970s, Singer began to recruit Black students from the city for a special math and science program that encouraged minority students to enter the field of engineering. The program involved school faculty, local university personnel, and corporate sponsors. The program continued into the late 1980s until, as one guidance counselor says, outside support began to dry up. The Black students attending Singer during this time were mostly transfer students who chose to come.

The Black students we've always had in the past, you know they came because they and their parents felt like maybe here there was something that was better, whether that was true or not, I don't know. We had a lot of students that used to come from _____ (predominately Black high school), and the parents would say I want my child to go here because they felt like they were going to get a better education for whatever reason. And in that case you had, because the parent in the home wanted education, the kid tended to also. So I think that may have soured us in a way, cause we had better kids, you know.

In the past three years, the number and diversity of Black students who attend Singer have changed. These changes were brought about by the closing of some schools and the rezoning of school districts. According to one counselor the Black student population has increased by 5% over the last two years. Many of the Black students that attend Singer now live in the school zone and according to one counselor:

But now the students that we are getting are truly project students for the first time where they've lived in public housing as opposed to the family maybe either renting or even owning a small house, you know something on your own. So that's been a little bit of a difference over the last few years.

The changing Black student population at Singer required some adjustments. According to one counselor, there were adjustments that teachers had to make to this change in Black student population:

At first there were an awful lot of people on the staff who were highly upset about it. . . . We'd never had buses as such, until that point. All of our students basically walked or had somebody bring them. So that was our first experience with school buses. . . . So it wasn't new to have Black students. It was just new to have students who brought with them turf, I mean outside things on to this campus. And you had to deal with things as opposed to dealing with just school kind of things. . . . Because of the Black students we had had in the past, they basically hadn't had any gang affiliations, any gang kinds of things.

Gang activity is a big issue at Singer High School. Geographically Singer is located on the border of two rival gangs territories. The gangs are located in opposite ends of the city and each uses colors to symbolize territory and affiliation. The area that Singer picked up in the rezoning is the Westside whose colors are blue and white. At the opposite end of town is the Eastside whose colors are red and white. The gangs are primarily associated with the low-income housing projects located in their respective territories. With a change in school zoning two years ago, Singer picked up the area claimed by the Westside, which includes Ellistown, a low-income

housing complex. Because of Singer's location and transfer student population, students from the Eastside and the Westside attend. As a result, Singer experienced a lot of student fights associated with gangs. Faculty response to the gang activity at Singer and the influx of "true project kids" could be seen in student -teacher relationships. The Black counselor at Singer commented on the way faculty reacted to Black students from the low-income housing complex:

A lot of the kids are written off, just because of where they live and where they come from. . . . The ones that come from Ellistown, the bad name precedes them. The reputation of Ellistown precedes these kids.

Currently, with a student body of approximately 850, Singer's ethnic mix is 20% Black and 80% White. Of the 59 faculty members on staff, less than 2% are Black. The three guidance counselors include one Black female, one White female, and one White male. The administration at Singer includes two principals and one assistant principal, all White males. The office staff, three women, is also all White.

Singer no longer recruits Black students.

Student Demographics

To identify potential participants for this study, guidance counselors at this mostly working class high school were asked to establish a list of the students in grades 10 through 12 who fit the profile of being Black, female, and working class or low-income (Table 4.1). Academically, the participants spanned the range of the curriculum. One student was in the lower (fundamental) level, five were in the average (basic) curriculum, four were in college preparatory (standard), and two were in advanced placement. This placement fell along economic lines with all of the low income participants in average or below average tracks and the working class students in college preparatory or above.

Of the twelve participants eight were in the eleventh grade and four were in the tenth grade. The economic status of the participants was evenly divided between working class and low income. This identification as low-income was based on the participant's living in housing designated by the federal government for low income families and/or eligibility for the free or reduced lunch and breakfast programs. Low income housing includes public housing, assisted rent complexes, and rental assistance.

Identification as working class was based on the employment of the parents of the participants. These working class participants did not live in government assisted housing but their parent(s) held non professional positions in the workplace. These areas of employment included clerical, maintenance, and factory work.

Table 4.1. Participant Description

Name	Grade	Level ^a	SES ^b	# Child. ^c	Sch. Activities ^d	Future Plans
Dolly	10	F	L-I	0	None	Nurse, Daycare worker, Helping elderly people, & work with animals
Janet	10	B	L-I	0	None	Nurse or Cosmetology
ET	10	B/S	L-I	0	None	DHS caseworker
Whitney	10	B	L-I	0	None	Elementary school teacher or Lawyer
Debra	11	B/S	L-I	0	Flag Girl	Business career, college like ITT Technical
LJ	11	B	L-I	0	None	Hair school & Airline school
Elizabeth	11	S	W C	0	Honor Society	College scholarship
Kiara	11	AP	W C	0	Basketball, volleyball & softball	College
Kim	11	S	W C	1	Track	College scholarship in track or nursing
Adrian	11	S	W C	1	None	College
Michelle	11	AP	W C	0	None	College, engineering
Shay	11	S	W C	0	None	College

^aLevel is the academic track of the participant. F = Fundamental, B = Basic, S = College Preparatory, AP = Advanced Placement.

^bSES is the economic status of the participant. L-I = Low-Income, WC = Working Class

^c# Child. is the number of children each participant has.

^dSchool activities is any school sponsored activity a participant is involved in.

Participant Profiles

The participant profiles that follow are presented in order of their socioeconomic status. The first four portraits are of Janet Jackson, Dolly Parton, Whitney Houston, and ET, are low-income students and live in Ellistown, the low in-come housing complex assigned to Singer. The next two portraits are of Debra and LJ. Both are low-income but live in alternative housing [housing designated for low-income families but not located in a low in-come area]. The last six portraits are of the the working class Black women who attend Singer: Elizabeth, Kiara, Kim, Adrian, Michelle, and Shay.

Janet Jackson

Janet is a sophomore and had rocky start at Singer High. She was kicked out for one semester her freshman year because "... this girl, she had called me a name and I didn't appreciate that 'N' word that she had called me and so we got into it." She has also had to deal with physical abuse from Black and White male students as well as sexual harassment from a white male teacher. She tries to work within the system to solve her problems with peers and faculty. However, if that does not work, she will try other ways to deal with the problem.

And these boys around here, they're a lot stronger than you. And I'm not gone try to fight 'em. I'm just gone pick up something and knock them out.

Janet lives in the low income housing complex near Singer. Her twin sister is Dolly Parton. Academically, Janet is taking basic

classes and is determined to graduate on time from high school. She went to summer school last year and plans to go again this summer. She says she only earned two credits her freshman year. I talked with the counselor after the school year and she mentioned that Janet may not be able to attend summer school. Her grandmother has cancer and must go to Nashville for treatment. Janet would have to go with her mother and grandmother to Nashville.

Janet works every week day from 4:00PM until 11:00PM. and is proud of the progress she has made this year. She believes that she will be successful one day.

Dolly Parton

Dolly is in the tenth grade at Singer. She, along with two other participants, wanted to use the pseudonym of someone rich and famous. Dolly lives in the low income housing complex that is zoned for Singer High School. She describes herself as the teacher's pet, except for one teacher who makes comments about her weight. Dolly has a twin sister who attends Singer. Her sister, Janet Jackson, is very protective of her. Dolly has had many of problems at Singer with boys physically abusing her. She cites frequent cases where she went to teachers and staff for help and was ignored. Now she has a plan if a boy hits her again.

If he lays his hands on me I'll kick him in his private parts. Then he'll fall down on the ground. Then I can start kicking him. So I know how to hurt him now so he'll leave me alone.

Whitney Houston

Whitney is a sophomore at Singer and lives in a low income housing complex with her aunt and cousins. She moved here from a southern coastal state three years ago. Her educational experiences before coming to Singer were at all Black schools. Her first semester at Singer was difficult, but she is very proud of the progress she has made this semester.

I'm proud of myself too because I used to get suspended a lot, and now I don't hardly get suspended no more. I really straightened up a little bit. And I believe, I'm looking forward to not getting suspended none next year. I ain't gone worry about nobody but me. Do all my work.

Whitney, like Janet, is also ready to defend herself when it comes to physical abuse.

Cause boys theses days, they think they hard. They think they can rule girls just because they boys and they think they big and bad. I'll fight them straight up. I don't care. I might get my tail beat, but I did get some licks in. I don't care. I was raised up in a family of boys and I don't care.

ET

ET is a sophomore at Singer. She has been living in the low income housing complex in Singer's zone since the death of her mother. ET readily admits that she "... stayed in a lot of trouble ..." her freshman year. Although she spent a lot of time in ISS that year, she says it "... was a pretty good year." She describes herself as the type that "... got to be seen or heard. Or I just don't feel nobody's paying attention." This year for ET has been even better. She is pleased that she has only been in ISS twice this year. Academically she has improved as well. She mentioned how proud she was that she made the highest grade when her English class did research reports. She is especially proud because she was moved from basic English in the ninth grade to standard English in the tenth grade.

Debra

When Debra arrived for her interview, she had not chosen a pseudonym. I suggested one for her and she agreed. Debra is a junior at Singer. She moved with her mother from a low income housing complex to a fourplex covered by rental assistance. Before that move, she had attended predominately Black schools. Her first year in a predominately White middle school was difficult. She didn't like it and barely passed because "... I hadn't never really been around no White folks. . ."

At Singer she has been in the basic/average academic track but is being moved to standard/college prep English next year. She was on the track team but dropped it because she started late and ".

. . they try too work me to fast . . . everybody else was in shape and I had to get in shape." She's now a flag girl [group that performs dance routines with the marching band while twirling flagpoles] and likes it because "I always wanted to be in a band, but I didn't never know how to play an instrument."

Her only experience with discipline at Singer was being in In School Suspension (ISS) for being late to class.

LJ

LJ lives outside of Singer's zone but tranferred here because it was closer. She lives with her mother and brother in a house approved for Section 8 rental assistance [alternative housing for low-income families]. Of her neighborhood she says "I wouldn't mind living somewhere else, but it's not that bad."

LJ attended a predominately White middle school and found it very uncomfortable.

It was like six Blacks out of the whole school. And so it was very like, uncomfortable. . . . Three was in special education classes. And three, including me, like were in regular classes. They were like younger than me. So. It was hard.

A junior, LJ does not plan to go to college. She wants to go to ". . . hair school after I graduate. And then I'm going to airline school after I get out of hair school." She associates with people who are mature. She explains being mature in this setting as ". . . people who're going to stay out of trouble, that want to make something

out of themselves, instead of just getting into fights and looking for trouble."

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a very polite and sincere young woman. She is also quite a talker. Her interview was the longest of all the participants.

Elizabeth is in the Honor Society and follows a college preparatory curriculum. She is working hard to finish in the top ten academically in her class. A junior, Elizabeth is concerned about the changes at Singer High since the sophomore class entered. She does not believe that they [sophomores] are serious about education and fears that their behavior may affect her educational opportunities. She says the sophomores have been the cause of changes at Singer.

I mean, like here we had a lot of freedom here my freshman year. And it's like when they came, we couldn't do this and we couldn't do that. They just started naming off things that we couldn't no longer do. So we got our privileges took because of this class that came.

Elizabeth sees her class, the juniors, as more mature than the sophomores. She is very concerned about the "loud" Black females in the sophomore class.

Most of them [Black sophomore women] stay in ISS more than their house. . . . I mean I don't try to be mean to them or anything, but I do not like some of the girls

that's in the class. And it's because of the way they act and the way they carry themselves. They act more like dudes than females. The way they walk and talk.

Elizabeth thinks that older Black students should set a positive example for younger students. She says the sophomores should be "... representing to the freshman class how you are supposed to act as you get older."

Kiara

Kiara does not live in the Singer school zone but was given a transfer to attend. She is in the eleventh grade and follows the college prep/standard curriculum. Kiara was very softspoken but responsive. She was dressed in warmups and seemed a little nervous when she arrived.

Kiara enjoys sports and is on the track, volleyball, basketball, and softball teams. She enjoys learning new things and hates it when "... people get in the way of me learning stuff." Kiara avoids the "loud freshmen and sophomores" and sticks to "our little group." That way "we won't break any rules. Cross any barriers."

Kiara seems to be very good at not breaking rules. She has never had a discipline problem at Singer. The closest she has come to being disciplined is receiving a warning for being tardy. As she says "I don't really get into trouble."

Kiara has always attended predominately White schools. She mentioned that in her sixth grade year there were "... a lot of Black people ... and I was kind of uncomfortable. And then they all left like my seventh grade year and it was back to normal." Having

been at Singer for three years, Kiara doesn't think she'd "want to be anywhere else now." What she likes best about Singer is "not having to be in no certain group. You can kinda be with all of them at the same time."

Kim

Kim is junior at Singer with a seven month old son. Her mother was taking care of him during the day until he started daycare. The day of our interview was his first day in daycare.

Kim is on the track team. In her freshman year she placed in the state. In the tenth grade Kim was pregnant and could not run. she says "I was disappointed. Very Disappointed." Being a homebound student also brought her grades down. She went from a high B in chemistry to a D.

She is working to improve in track because she wants to get a track scholarship for college. Kim wants to attend a local university. She explains why:

That's where I want to go because I don't want to go to far away from home right now. I guess because I'm scared. I don't really know anywhere else to go. I just really want some family to be around me. I don't know.

I'm scared really. I don't want to go nowhere right now. She is also interested in becoming a nurse. She has enrolled in a clinical internship class for next year that involves working in a hospital. She is taking extra math and science courses in preparation for a career in nursing. Although she is struggling in math, she plans to stay with it.

Adrian

Adrian is in the eleventh grade at Singer and loves to sing. She was a member of the Honor Society but her grades have fallen because of some medical problems that keep her out of school at times. She has a ten month old son and loves to talk about him. As she says "Once you have a child, you seem to forget about yourself." Adrian has been through a lot in her short life. She talks of the difficulties she suffered as a result of her pregnancy. She faced the rejection of her child's father and her church family but contends that she has become a stronger person because of her problems. Very strong in her faith, Adrian was referred to counseling by one of her teachers.

I got a problem, but I think that everyone somewhere in their life. It's like the big problems I can deal with, but the small ones, it's what takes me, you know. Because with my big problems I tend to turn to God. But the small problems I feel that, I think I can handle myself. and something shows me that I can't, you know.

One of Adrian's big problems is her brother. He has been in prison now for two years. The family is in bankruptcy from his legal bills. Adrian is very concerned about her brother and feels the effects of the financial strain her family is in. She has tried to get on the free lunch program but does not qualify because of her parents income. She also had to give custody of her son to her parents so that he could be covered by their insurance.

Adrian is very outspoken when it comes to injustice, especially stereotyping. On one occasion she approached a white male student she thought was a skinhead.

And I asked him, I said are you a skinhead? and he said I used to be. I said what do you consider a nigger? He told me he said 'I don't consider all Black people niggers.' I said oh. I wish you could talk to some of your fellow skinheads and tell them that. Because. . . it's not all. If one person has done something to you, because what they use as an excuse, this Black person beat me up or whatever, therefore all of us.

Although very outspoken, Adrian characterizes herself as a loner rather than a follower or a leader.

Michelle

Michelle is a junior and takes honors classes. When I asked her if she planned to go to college, her response was "I must go." She wants to major in engineering. She explained why she thinks it will be difficult:

"because I heard that it's really like a hard major. So you really have to know how to study, which I don't know how to study. Cause I memorize and I don't study."

Michelle transferred here to Singer from the eastside of town. The school she was zoned for was thirty minutes away from her home. She is ten minutes from Singer. Although she is not involved in any extracurricular activities at Singer, Michelle is very

busy with activities outside of school. She is involved in a group called CAMP (Career Awareness Motivation Program). She was introduced to CAMP when she attended a Black elementary school. A Black woman who was a former teacher started the group. She came to the Michelle's elementary school "and she picked up students she thought would be good, you know, in their careers." As a part of this group, Michelle has "been learning about girls and traveling, and doing a lot of stuff." This summer she will work as a mentor to students from the third through seventh grade as a mentor in a weekend academy. Michelle is also active in her church youth choir and youth group.

Although she is successful in academics, she is very unsure of herself. She explains:

Sometimes I'm kind of down on myself because I really don't think that I'm all everybody says I am, but Mr. (counselor)'s always keeping on me and Ms. (counselor) is too. He sent me an application for a scholarship that he could only pick one junior out of the school and he picked me. I haven't heard anything from them, but they're always just, like, watching out for me.

She even says about her ACT score "I took the ACT and I got a pretty good score, but I was like, maybe it was just luck."

Shay

Shay is a junior and on the standard/college prep track. She lives with her grandparents, who drive her to school everyday, so that she can attend Singer High School. Her elementary school was all Black and her middle school was predominately White. She says it was not a difficult adjustment for her because she had been around White people at the boys and Girls Club. She recalls one racial incident at her middle school.

Hmm, well when I was in the sixth grade, a boy called me a nigger. . . . That's the only time and I just ooh, I tried to kill him. . . . I didn't get suspended or nothing, but I tried, you know, I was kind of mad, but that's the only time really.

Shay, like many of the juniors, is really annoyed with those loud girls in the sophomore class, even to the point of wanting to have a separate prom for seniors only.

Although Shay has been involved in many extracurricular activities, none seem to last. She was on the track team, in ROTC, in the band, the French club, and student government. Her current interest is drawing. She takes classes in photography and art.

The participants share some commonalities as students. They are all Black high school women in a mostly White school. Their backgrounds, however, are varied along and within economic lines. In accordance with who they are economically and socially, their experiences at Singer and how they interpret them have some variations. One common thread that weaves through all of the

experience of the participants is an awareness of the racism in their school.

Findings of Participant Interviews

The next section of this chapter describes and discusses the findings of this study. When the participants responded to questions about their experiences at Singer High School, it was evident that their concerns involved their relationships and interactions with faculty, peers, and administration/staff. In each of these relationships issues of race, gender, and class were exposed. The issues of race, gender and class emerged from incidents of verbal abuse, cultural exclusion, stigmatization, physical abuse, injustice, and disrespect. A close reading of the personal and vicarious experiences of these Black females reveals the pervasiveness of these abuses in their high school years. The following section of this chapter describes and discusses the findings of this study. These findings emerged from an inductive analysis of the interview transcripts which generated three themes. Those themes, used for presentation here, are (a) marginalization, (b) harassment, and (c) determination.

Marginalization

Al these, these White students got everything.

Janet

*White principals, White teachers, White security guards,
White this, White that.*

Whitney

"To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body" (bell hooks, 1984, p. ix). Using this definition to describe her life as a Black American living in segregated town, hooks (1984) explains:

We could enter that world but we could not live there. We always had to return to the margin, to cross the tracks, to shacks and abandoned houses on the edge of town. . . . Living as we did-on the edge-we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked from both the inside and the out. We focused our attention on the center as well as the margin. We understood both. (p. ix)

In a school setting, this marginality takes on a slightly different tone. Sinclair and Ghory (1990) define being marginal as ". . . to experience a strained, difficult relationship with the school environment"(p. 128). With Black women, marginality in a predominately White setting incorporates the norms and values of culture. The following sections describe the marginalization experienced by Black women students at Singer High School. This is presented in two categories. The first category presented is marginalization in academics. The second section is marginalization in social activities.

Academic Marginalization

Academic marginalization at Singer occurs in three different ways. There is curricular marginalization in which the ethnic history of the participants is not a part of the school's program.

Then there is marginalization of students by teachers and staff ignoring their academic needs and concerns. It eventually leads to them being out of the classroom, affecting their academic success. Finally, in the classroom as well, there is marginalization of students through negative attention from faculty and staff.

Curriculum. A desire and need for celebrating Black History Month and a Black History class was expressed by four of the participants. Janet saw no recognition of Black History Month at Singer. She felt that at a Black school "they do programs and stuff." Quite different from Singer where, she explains:

Like Black History, we don't do nothing. We do not do anything. We don't even know it exists around here.

Elizabeth also commented on how little attention Black History receives as compared to White History. According to her:

We might have like one program out of that whole month. And like we sit in class and listen about White people all the time. In U.S. history it's all you heard.

LJ sees giving more attention to Black History Month as an indication that Singer cares about its Black students. She explains:

Think . . . more about the majority of African American kids. Because to me, like Black History Month came around and we didn't do anything. And they should, like, take that in to consideration. You know, hey, this is important to some of our Black youth that goes here. Instead . . . they just didn't do nothing, they just basically did nothing.

Michelle thinks that Black History is important because "you need to know where you come from . . ."

Ignored. The women described times that they felt their concerns and needs were ignored. This ignoring by faculty and administration affects the academic success of the students. Janet told of three instances when her pleas for help were ignored by teachers and administrators until she "took matters into my own hands." One complaint concerned being overlooked by her classroom teacher. Janet explains:

When I was in, I didn't understand why when I raise my hand like this, and then a white person do like that, they run over there to help them. They explain to them and everything.

ET also related an experience of not receiving help from her teacher. She describes her feelings of confusion:

I don't know. He just be like. Well I thought he was prejudiced toward me anyway, cause I had took his class the first semester of this year. And I was, I was still doing all my work, but like, I was failing, but I was failing with a high U. And he was just. I don't know. I wasn't expecting him to just give me a grade or nothing, but. I dropped out of his class because it seemed like the more extra credit work and stuff I do, the more I fail. And so I just dropped his class.

Michelle expressed concern that her talents/abilities are not recognized. She explained her response to this:

Sometimes I feel that I'm treated differently because maybe they don't think I can do as well. but I think I have proved myself pretty much in those situations, because a lot of times I'm the one that comes out and says what's right or . . . just helps another person.

LJ talked about an occasion when she and another Black student approached their English teacher and asked her to include something for Black History month in class. She explained their limited success:

We approached the teacher to say 'are we going to do something for Black History month?' She said yea. And we only did one thing. And that was little; it wasn't much. and to me it was like, oh well it's over. Might as well not do it. You know but it was that important to me. I did want to do it. At least we did something. But it ain't enough. It's not enough.

Elizabeth was concerned also that teachers at Singer ignore the attributes and needs of Black students. She thinks that Black students that can do well academically don't "and it's because here they don't give you much credit." She is concerned that the Black students who are struggling academically don't get the help they need. According to Elizabeth:

You got a lot of teachers that will give you support and everything. But I mean, to me they should be trying to help the ones that's not making it. And they're not really putting in any efforts to do anything.

Negative Attention. Several of the participants gave examples of negative attention from teachers in the classroom. These examples involved the participants challenging the teacher on a particular issue or policy. For example, Adrian voiced her opinion on the way her teacher talked to students. She explained:

I didn't like my Spanish teacher last year. I hate her. I don't mean to. I don't hate her but she just, she's real blunt. She will call you stupid in you don't know stuff. And we got into it. It was like okay, you want us to learn, but yet and still you're lowering our self-esteem by telling us we're stupid. I was making it as a joke but she got serious about it. So she didn't have a sense of humor, so I just shut up.

Another participant, Janet, challenged teachers on several issues. For instance, she asked one of her teachers who chews tobacco in the classroom "what's the difference of kids smoking and teachers chewing tobacco?" The teacher responded by telling Janet to "get out of his class."

Participants gave examples of being excluded from the curriculum and the classroom. These examples illustrate the different ways that the participants, young Black women, are excluded or pushed from the core or center of school academics.

Social Marginalization

Illustrations and examples of Black students being excluded or limited in social or extracurricular activities mostly involved numbers. They were limited in what they could accomplish

because they were always in the minority numerically. There were not enough Black students in any organization to have an impact. As Elizabeth said "... when the majority of the school is White, more than likely the Whites is gonna overrule the Blacks." There was also intraracial exclusion or marginalization of the Black women at Singer. This marginalization dealt with those "loud" Black women in the sophomore class.

Numbers. More than half of the participants mentioned low numbers of Black participants in school activities. In the area of school representation, the issue discussed most was the number of Black women on the cheerleading squad. Adrain feels that as far as Black representation on the squad "I think that if they didn't have to, that there would probably, unless she was just real good, it would probably be all White cheerleaders." Debra described the ethnic mix of the cheerleaders as one "Black cheerleader" and one who is "mixed." All of the rest of the cheerleaders are White. Elizabeth expressed concern about the "mixed cheerleaders serving as a Black representative on the squad. She explained:

Now last year we didn't have none, because this girl was mixed. They considered her to be Black even though she put White on her record. So they made her our Black cheerleader. And she don't even consider herself to be Black. If you ask her, she'll say she is White.

Janet also voiced her concerns about the "mixed" cheerleader:

I mean it was one White girl, I mean one Black girl. I mean I don't even know if you ought to consider her

Black. . . . She Black on the outside and White in the inside. . . . She got a White boyfriend and everything. . . .

She don't conversate with us.

Elizabeth was also the one participant who gave examples of trying to make changes to move from the margin of school activities. She ran for class office even though "when the majority of the school is White, more than likely the Whites is gonna overrule the Blacks." She also tried to do something about the cheerleading situation, which she says is "rigged anyway . . . because they pick thin people to be cheerleader and so you don't have no chance for Black people to do anything." Her solution was to start a dance squad. She related the results of that endeavor:

So the night we was going to perform, one of the guys had told the cheerleaders that they wasn't letting us. . . . Well, it is one teacher here. . . . And they was saying, the cheerleaders were starting to make fun of us. Like ain't going to have no fun tonight and all this little kind of stuff. So then, they was telling us that we had to pay to get in, and we was to leave. So it turned out that we didn't get to perform. They put us out basically is what you want to say. This lady threatened to call the cops on us if we didn't leave. But the teacher that I say is racist, he turned the lights out on us.

Elizabeth's attempts to move from the margins were not successful, resulting in continued exclusion.

Loud Black girls. Intraracial marginalization involved Black females at Singer who were concerned about the loudness of other Black females at Singer. Loudness was an issue that appeared again and again with Black females in the junior class. Six out of eight of the participants in the junior class discussed this issue. The 'loud' Black females are predominately members of the sophomore class and, according to many of juniors, behave in a manner that is inconsistent with being female. Elizabeth said in her comments that "they act more like dudes than females" and they talk "straight up gangsta like." Debra associates the male-like behavior of these "loud girls" with the treatment they receive. She explained:

Some of the girls get treated bad, and it be like the way they carry themselves, the way they get treated. The ones that think they bad, they get treated like - you know the ones that think they can beat everybody up, like they hard. They get treated maybe like the boys.

They put them out too.

Michelle, Elizabeth and LJ described the "loud Black girls' " behavior as immature. This immature behavior included, according to LJ, fighting "over little stupid stuff. Like fighting over boys. . . " Michelle describes the immature behavior as "he say - she say stuff, always saying stuff about my man -her man stuff and it's crazy. Many of the juniors were also concerned about the loudness of the Black sophomore girls and the attention it garnered. Shay explains that these 'loud Black girls' ". . . get all the attention. Shay doesn't want to be around them because "to much attention is

drawn to them all the time." Kim also mentioned that you could tell who the "loud Black girls" were because "you know how loud they be. They like to be heard. Like to show out."

The juniors socially marginalized the "loud Black girls" by physically distancing themselves. Elizabeth's attitude was "Like I keep my distance, you keep yours, and we'll be fine." Michelle limited her contact to verbal exchanges, saying "I mean, like I said, I can basically speak to them and say hi or maybe a quick conversation, but other than that, that's about it." Shay would go so far as to exclude the sophomore class from the prom. She said that even though "it's going to cost more money," the junior class "want to vote for a senior prom" because "we don't want them at our prom." Shay also mentioned that the Black sophomore women think the juniors are "stuck up and stuff." None of the sophomore participants, however, mentioned the Black women in the junior class as a group; they didn't mention the junior class at all.

This marginalization among Black females at Singer can be traced to social class differences. The junior class participants included working class and low-income students. The low-income students in the junior class, however, did not live in a low-income housing complex. Their housing involved rental assistance in areas that were not designed specifically for low-income families. They were somewhat removed from the everyday experiences of project life. The sophomore class, however, included students who lived in the low-income housing complexes or projects. All of the sophomore participants lived in the projects. Collins (1991) points

to low-income Black families as ". . . the economically marginalized, vulnerable segment of the Black working class"(p. 62). In this situation, the housing locations of low-income students plays a part in their vulnerability. The Black low-income females at Singer who live in low-income housing complexes were subject to marginalization from dominant groups and subordinate groups (Black working class and low-income females).

Another aspect of the marginalization of the loud Black girls deals with what Brown (1995) refers to as the struggle over respectability:

The struggle over respectability is an important and complex dimension in the development of African American communities, as many Black women and men sought to establish their own behavioral norms and still exercise basic educational and political rights. . . .

Nevertheless, it is instructive to realize the degree to which Black women's sexual and political history has been shaped by a widespread belief that while respectable behavior would not guarantee one protection from sexual assault, the absence of such was certain to reinforce racist notions of Black women's greater sexuality, availability, or immorality, as well as the racist notions of Black men's bestiality which were linked to that. (p. 108)

The Black females in the junior class had established a standard of behavior for Black female students at Singer. This standard of

behavior would to have protected all Black students by making them "... less subject to harassment" (Brown, 1995, p. 108). The loud Black females in the sophomore class broke that standard and thereby put the rest of the community of Black females at risk.

Conclusion

The marginalization experienced by Black female students at Singer High is both social and academic. Dominant cultural influences in classrooms, teacher behavior, and school activities overwhelm the school community and leave little or no space for the expression of 'other' cultures. This marginalization limits the Black female students immersion in the school community. She can be tolerated as far as presence, but is excluded from real participation.

Harassment

Harassment experienced at Singer High School came from three areas or groups. According to many of the participants, harassment from White students, Black male students, and White faculty and administration is part of being a Black female student at Singer.

White Students

When I asked the participants about racial issues at Singer, instances of verbal abuse punctuated their stories. Seven of the participants related incidents of harassment from White students at Singer. The majority of the harassment came in the form of verbal abuse. Janet talked of being "kicked out cause this girl, she had called me a name and I didn't appreciate than N word that she had

called me and so we got into it." Debra told of a fight that happened when "this one White boy" called "a Black boy an empty-headed nigger and so they started fighting." Use of the word nigger occurred in print as well as speech. Michelle related an experience that caused her to feel anger:

Like um, confederate stuff. They'll wear that and they'll wear KKK. I've seen someone with a shirt on that had the word *nigger* on it. And I didn't, I mean, it didn't really bother me at first. I mean, I looked at it, and the rest of the day, it's like, you know, you see people all day. I was just tripping, I mean, cause, maybe that's not a good word but, you know, I don't know, because nobody said anything to him. I'm sure people saw it, because it was real easy to see, but nobody said anything to him. It's just, they just do stuff like that.

Adrian told of being punished because someone else used the term on her report card. She explained:

Well I got suspended in my 9th grade year. Not for discipline. Somebody messed up my report card. . . . I dropped my report card in the bathroom. When I got it back it had *nigger* all over it. Evidently this person knew who I was, you know. And I got suspended for that. I got suspended three days because of my report card. . . . It's your responsibility to keep up with it.

Essed (1991) placed verbal abuse in the category of racism by intimidation, being (verbal abuse) exemplary of the ". . . less

refined ways of denying dignity to Black women" (p. 250). Reaction at Singer High was usually emotional and physical. These incidents of verbal abuse accounted for the majority of racial encounters between students. Referring to this type of verbal abuse as name calling, Essed (1991) explains why a White person calling a Black person nigger draws a strong reaction from Black men and Black women:

U.S. women see racist slurs in a structural context. From that point of view *nigger* is not a word but a concept representing the history of oppression of Blacks. Name calling then is intimidation because Whites use, as a symbolic weapon, the body of cultural and structural oppression. (p. 256)

When the participants related incidents of name calling (*nigger*) that led to fighting, there was no explanation as to why being called a *nigger* was sufficient cause for physical retaliation. It seemed to be understood and accepted as such.

Physical harassment from White students was mentioned by three of the participants. Janet told of being physically attacked by a White male student in the cafeteria. Janet reported to the office staff that while waiting in the lunch line she had been thrown against the cafeteria wall by a White male student. She was told to let them know if it happened again. The next time it happened, Janet took matters into her own hands.

And he did it again. So I got me a tray and I hit him as hard as I can in his thang [groin area]. And then he took

me to the office, I mean cause he had tears in his eyes. I tried my best to stop him up. And he took me to the office and I got suspended for three days. And I showed them my bruises and they were like well where did you get that from? When did you get it? Why didn't you come? I said I did come running and you didn't do nothing about it. . . . They suspended me for three days and gave him one day ISS.

In this instance, Janet's pleas for help fell on deaf ears. Her plight was only acknowledged when her attacker reported her actions to the office. As a result she was more severely punished.

Whitney and Dolly talked about being "bumped" by White students.

Whitney explained why she has to control her reactions:

Them White people, they just, gosh. . . . Cause like, if you like walk by, and they just bump into you just to bumping into you. I'm like excuse you. And they just look at you, roll they eyes and keep going. You be wanting to hit 'em but you know, you don't want to get in trouble cause you done missed too many days already.

Dolly was also upset about being bumped into. She explained:

Some White people, some of them get me upset because when they bump into me. I'm kinda like if I bump into you, I say excuse me. But if they bump into me and they don't tell me nothing, I get upset.

Harassment of Black students by White students occurred verbally, physically and in print. In the majority of the examples given by the participants, the end result of the harassment was punishment for the Black students. Punishment was avoided when the Black students did not exhibit a response.

Harassment from Black Males

Harassment from Black males was mentioned by several of the participants. This harassment occurred in three categories: gang activity, interracial dating, and "messing." Some of the verbal and physical harassment from Black males stem from gang activity. Gang activity came to Singer two years ago with the change in school zoning. The gangs are located in opposite ends of the city and each uses colors to symbolize territory and affiliation. The area that Singer picked up in the rezoning is claimed by the westside whose colors are blue and white. At the other end of town is the eastside. Their colors are red and white. Although there are very few students from the eastside at Singer, there is much talk about the two sides. Perhaps because the eastside and the westside gangs are primarily, but not exclusively, located in low income housing complexes, the Black female students who lived in Elliston bore the brunt of gang related abuse. ET explained her position:

You see Singer is westside. So I just wear blue all the time. So they don't be calling me no slob. If you wear red, they be like you slob, you got to take that off or whatever. But they really don't make nobody take

their clothes off, but they just holler and stuff at you all day. So I don't wear it so it don't be no problem.

Janet has been physically harassed for wearing the wrong colors. She said that when "I have on a red shirt or something and they come up and hit me." Janet is concerned that these incidents will lead to her being kicked out of school and "I really, I got to stay in school in order for me to graduate." She explained:

They hit you hard. I get a bruise off of it. And then like see. I'm the type if a boy gone hit me, I'm gonna hurt him. I mean I'll slice you up or something like that cause I don't like for boys to hit me. And I had went home and told my momma and she said well go to the office and see what they do. And so the next day I came on to the office and they [principals] made a big joke out of it. They say well I'll hold your stuff while you beat them up or something like that.

For the working class Black females and the Black females who were low income but lived in alternative housing, the issue of gangs seemed to be more of an annoyance than a threat. Kim saw it as a gender issue. She said "since I'm a girl I guess it really don't matter. But if it's a boy, it'd be a big issue." Shay didn't see it as a big issue at all. According to her "nobody gets mad. Nobody cares." She explained:

It's stupid. Like people are going to stop wearing red clothes or blue clothes or whatever. . . I mean, what are

they going to do? I mean it's funny like if they could say that stuff here and think it would mean anything.

It should be noted that the physical harassment and verbal harassment, as far as gang activity, occurred along economic lines. The low-income Black females reported physical as well as verbal harassment from Black males. Working class Black females presented only verbal harassment.

Interracial dating is another area where Black male students harass the young Black women at Singer. Interracial dating occurs at Singer, and it seems to be accepted. According to Shay "that's one thing there's a lot of - interracial dating and stuff here." The level of acceptance, however, varies with participants. Although Michelle "wouldn't do it" but feels "if you just really feel that way about a person, . . . color shouldn't matter." Along the same line Elizabeth said that she doesn't "too much care about about Black guys going with White girls. But to me if that's your preference, then do what you want to." For Janet, interracial dating is "really not a problem." However Janet admits that she really doesn't "like interracial couples" because "when they get mad they start calling him nigger and like that." Dolly's attitude was "Black people want to go with White, don't matter to me." The strongest opinion on interracial dating was expressed by LJ. She said that it bothers her when "the boys that want to achieve and stuff, they go with these White girls." LJ said that it "makes me mad" because "us Black sisters, we want somebody that's like pretty kind of good, you know. But they taken by White girls." She reasons that the Black

guys "go to another race " because they think Black girls have "smart attitudes." Janet said that the Black guys date White girls because the Black girls "let you know we ain't gone take no mess off you."

Harassment in interracial dating occurred when the female was Black and the male was White. Shay described the reactions of Black males to Black women dating White males:

Basically a White - - a Black girl won't do it. They would get you out, 'What's wrong girl?' Really like what is she going with him for? Blah, blah, blah.

Elizabeth also spoke about these negative responses:

And it's like the Black males will put you down if you're a Black female going out with a White guy. And they will tell you in a minute, that don't look right.

The gender differences in interracial dating at Singer are supported by Stein's (1989) explanation of the perpetuation of sexual harassment. It protects male turf. In this instance, Black male turf. The Black females are kept in their place on intraracial dating by intimidation and humiliation.

One participant talked about verbal assaults from Black males that stem from rejection of romantic or sexual overtures. LJ related her feelings on this:

But it's like mainly, they try, you know, if they try to talk to us and we don't want to talk to them or nothing. . . . They want more than . . . to be on that friendship basis. Cause if you don't know somebody, you gone try

to be at least friends with them. To get to know them more. And if they don't wanna, you know, it just ain't even right. . . .

Here, as in interracial dating, there is harassment to conform to the desires of the Black males. This attempt to control Black females through harassment was an important issue. According to Hine (1995):

Even so, the most fundamental tensions exist not among Black women, but between Black women and the rest of society-especially European American men and women and, to a lesser extent, African American men. All are involved in a multifaceted struggle for control of Black women's productive and reproductive capacities and sexuality. (p. 176)

The following accounts of harassment came under the heading of "messing." Four participants gave accounts of incidents where a Black male was "messing" with them. Whitney ended up being suspended because she "flipped a boy a bird" because he was "messing with me." LJ and Shay were given their only suspensions when they reacted to being "messed" with. Shay was in a classroom and she said:

This freshman boy, he was mad at the whole class and I was laughing. And he called me a, you know, 'B' word. . . . And he got mad cause we were laughing at him, and he singled me out and called me that. . . . So then I cussed him out and we had, I got suspended for that.

LJ was in the hall when she was "messed" with. She explained what happened:

Okay, we ain't supposed to cuss. But see, I don't cuss, like all the time. I don't cuss. But when I really get mad, it just slips out. I just can't help it. And this boy, he was like messing with me. He was messing with my hair and I told him to stop. and that's when I cussed at him. So this teacher came out in the hall and said 'okay, I'm gone take you to the office.'

LJ and the boy were suspended for "two little days" which she "thought wasn't fair. She said it wasn't fair because "it wasn't like it was a bad cuss word" and she "ain't about to take no mess from no little boy."

Dolly was the only participant out of the four who was "messed" with on a continuing basis. Dolly was repeatedly harassed by a Black male student. Her harassment included a "boy pouring pop on me, this other big boy. . . hitting me," and having her hair pulled. According to Dolly, these attacks were not preceded by any action on her part. She explained:

I walk past him and I don't say nothing to him. And he just hit me. He come up and hit me. Pull my hair. One time he poured pop on my hair, my clothes, and everything.

Dolly was finally able to get help and the student who "poured pop" over her was "suspended for three days."

Teacher and Staff Harassment

Examples of harassment by teachers included sexual harassment and harassment through use of stereotypes. Several of the participants mentioned other Black students being harassed. Debra talked about "the thugs from the westside, I know they get treated- they get treated bad. Like I said, they always trying to throw them out of school anyway." Except for Elizabeth, all of the participants that personally experienced harassment from teachers and staff lived in Ellistown, the low-income housing complex. Elizabeth's harassment came when she and her friends were walking down the hallway.

There's racism that's shown here. Certain teachers are showing it real well. Just like in the hall when they, me and my friends was walking. And there was White people in the hall too. It was two White people, a boy and a girl, sitting there kissing in the hall. And you ain't even supposed to do that. He told us, 'where are you all supposed to be? Excuse me, like you all need to get to class.' Didn't say nothing to them two. Not at all. But he was telling us where we need to go.

Whitney, an Ellistown resident, described an incident where she was harassed by the school security officer. She was eating lunch when the security officer approached her. She said:

And the officer came over there and he said what is your name? I said why? You just can't come up here and ask me what is my name for no reason. He said 'oh

yea, I got a reason.' I said what? He just said what is your name? I said you tell me why first and I'll tell you. He said if you don't give me your name you can get suspended for insubordination. I said well you gotta give me a reason and I'll tell you my name.

Whitney was taken to the office and suspended for three days. She was never given a reason for being questioned by the security officer. Other staff members mentioned were the office personnel. According to Janet "the secretaries, oh they get real smart. They'll hang up in your face and everything." Elizabeth also remarked on the office staff:

Those people there are very smart. They're real smart. And if you hear them, they do get on the Black people a lot. They'll ask you what do you want, or why are you in here. It's stuff like that.

Negative cultural stereotypes accounted for incidents of harassment experienced by Janet. The first incident involved stereotypes of Black students who have beepers. According to Janet:

And a teacher asked me the other day, what do you do? You sell drugs? she say what do you do in your spare time? I said I work. She said work where? She said do you do . . . illegal stuff? I was like, what do you mean? If you trying to say I sell drugs then you stupid. She said well you don't have to get upset. . . . She said why you got a beeper? I said so my momma can get in touch

with me. She said where you be all the time? I said where you be all the time? And she got a beeper, so I said what you doing with a beeper? She said well I work, don't you see? I said what you do in your spare time? And she got upset.

Janet understood the racism implicit in the questions asked by her teacher. As she states "... they think every Black person gotta beeper sell drugs." Her strong reaction to this questioning is characterized as an overreaction by the White teacher when she says "... well you don't have to get upset." It is as if there is no connection to Janet being Black and the White teacher's questions about the beeper. When Janet turns the tables and questions the White teacher about her beeper and related activities, she "... gets upset." Janet was also very upset about a teacher who stereotyped low-income students. Although Janet did not remember who the teacher was, she did remember what the teacher said. According to Janet, the teacher said that low-income students "won't go to college and they won't graduate." Janet was "real pissed with that." Whitney also expressed concern with the negative cultural stereotypes about Black students. She explained:

Some White teachers are racist. Cause you're Black they think that you're, you know like all the other ones that want to kill people and do all this kind of bad stuff. That's what they think you are.

There were two instances of sexual harassment, both involved White male teachers. Sadker and Sadker (1994) examined sexual harassment in high schools. They contend:

But schoolgirls are doubly endangered by harassment. They are at an age of confusion when they are struggling to define thier sexual identity. Sexual harassment can stunt and twist their normal development. Without the range of knowledge or experience that comes with maturity, female children are even more powerless and more defenseless than adults. (p. 115)

According to Brown (1995), "Race is a factor in all cases of of sexual abuse-inter or intraracial-although it is usually only explored in the former"(p. 104). In one instance a participant, Dolly, talks about her teacher who ". . . always saying something about my weight." Another participant, Janet, reported that her White male teacher blews kisses at her and told her that he loved her. Janet explained her efforts to remedy the situation:

He kept blowing kisses at me and he kept saying I love you, I love you. I was like "uh uh. Now I'm gone take you to the office. And you got to get fired because you won't quit telling me that." And then I went to the office on that. He said, they said he might do love you. And I was like well he don't got to be blowing kisses at me cause I don't like that. I don't think no grown man

should be blowing kisses at no 16 year old. And then I kept telling them and they didn't do nothing.

Janet's complaint was not taken seriously but treated humorously. When Janet could not get help from the school administrators, she went to her mother for help.

My momma came up here and they called the security guard and stuff on her. Cause my momma don't like that. I mean I don't like it either. I mean it made me feel uncomfortable to be around him. And he kept blowing kisses at me and stuff. And I told him I couldn't be in his class no more. And to this day he still do it. . . . And he try to hug on me and stuff, in the hall.

Janet's victimization by her White male teacher was not taken seriously and she dropped the class, a common response to sexual harassment (Sadker and Sadker, 1994). Complaints from Janet and her mother ended with the abuser being the only person unscathed. Not surprisingly, the sexual harassment continued. According to Bogart and Stein (1989):

Sexual harassment has proven to be highly resistant to change, the existence of both legal and other strategies notwithstanding. In the past, at least, this may be because sexual harassment works. Socially, politically, and economically, sexual harassment protects male turf, intimidating and humiliating those who would be threaten it, putting them in their place and keeping them there. (p. 155)

On another level, the fact that the harassment was not taken seriously may be a result of what Brown (1995) referred to as:

. . . the consequences of the sexual history and sexual stereotypes of African Americans, especially African American women. . . . One consequence is that an African American woman is most likely not to be believed if she speaks of unwarranted sexual advances, or will be believed to have been either the initiator or a willing participant. (p. 107)

Instances of physical harassment were mentioned by two participants, Janet and Elizabeth. Janet told of the ISS teacher who had her sit "under a window . . . and it was open" during the winter. Janet said that when this happened "I was sick and had a head cold." The teacher refused to close the window or move Janet's seat. In Elizabeth's account, no specific gender was mentioned. Elizabeth related her observations:

There are some racist teachers here. And students are not going to respect them. Like if you're telling them, and putting your finger in their face, I have seen a lot of them do it. . . . Some of them get away with that kind of stuff. Some of them can slam you up against the locker. And there's been cases like this before here. And teachers get away with anything.

Harassment of Black women at Singer High School came from faculty, staff, and students. The extent and type of harassment is related to social class. The low-income participants who lived in

Ellistown experienced more kinds of harassment than other low-income and working class participants. Ellistown residents also experienced gang related harassment at a higher level than other participants. Harassment from faculty and staff was also more prevalent among Ellistown participants.

Determination

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

Maya Angelou

*The thing that's important to me is being at school.
That's basically it*

Kim

A common thread in the voices of these Black women was determination. They were all determined to succeed when it came to their education. In spite of the marginalization and harassment they experience as students at Singer High, these Black women are resolved to make it and plan to continue their education beyond high school. Determination to succeed is evident in Kim's remarks concerning her math class:

*He's a very good teacher. I like him and everything.
But he's just hard and I be struggling. I come to
tutoring sometime. I even come in to take extra tests,
but it seems like it's not doing. I don't know what's
wrong with it. But I'll get done with it.*

Kim's determination was evident in her choices as well. She decided not to go on a school trip with her classmates because "I'm already struggling in geometry. I'll just stay here." Debra avoided getting into classes with her friends "cause I know they'll distract me." Elizabeth was another participant who persevered in math. She expressed surprise with her current success:

Actually, I am kind of surprised. I am doing good in it. Because I had a hard time my freshman year taking Algebra I. It seems like I am doing better in Algebra II than I did in Geometry. But I have passed every one of them. So I am doing pretty good in this class.

All of the participants expressed a desire to successfully complete high school. Participants in the junior class were especially aware of their academic standing. The goal was not just to graduate, but to do well. As Elizabeth said:

But the only thing is me being on the honor roll, and my friends. What we're going for is to get our education and try to get scholarships. Which don't come easy to us anyway. So we have to work harder than them. And we're just basically, at least trying to graduate in the top ten.

Even those who missed much of the school year due to suspensions changed in respect to their attitude about school. Janet Jackson's attitude was symbolic of that change:

I worked hard to get where I am now. I mean last year I really didn't care. Cause the way they was treating me

I didn't care about staying in school. I wanted to drop out. I mean I ran away from home and everything. But this year, I mean, I'm supposed to graduate in '98' and that's when I'm gone graduate.

ET's attitude towards school changed because "my sister kept nagging me." She reflected:

And then, I don't know. It seemed like I was more dedicated to my work this year. Last year I really didn't care. I just be like, well, I'mma do it, I'mma do it.

But this year I was doing it. This year was a lot better.

Whitney also voiced optimism concerning school success. She explained:

Just because you have low-income don't mean nothing. Cause you could easily graduate if you do your work and . . . if you believe in yourself. And your parents and you and your teachers put forward for you, you can graduate. Don't mean nothing. I know I will.

Although there may be variations in the degrees of success desired by the participants, they all value education and want to complete high school. This desire persists in spite of the barriers of racism, sexism, and elitism they face on a daily basis at school.

These Black females' desire to achieve success through the educational system was consistent with Ladner's (1971) findings in her study of the meaning of womanhood to poor Black girls in the city. "Education was viewed by the majority of the girls as the most viable way to improve their lives" (p. 85). Their persistence in

spite of the circumstances can be related to being socialized for economic survival and self-sufficiency. According to Collins (1991) "the linking of economic self-sufficiency as one crucial dimension of self-reliance with the demand for respect permeates Black feminist thought (p. 110). Economical self-sufficiency for Black women is important because of the remoteness of becoming a housewife or relying on a male to provide needs. Melear (1995) contends:

Culturally, African Americans do not expect males and females to fulfill different societal roles to the same extent as white Americans do. Economic factors play a role in this. Research indicates that African American females cannot rely on males to the extent and in the same ways that White females can. (p. 69)

Black women socialized for economic independence does not fit the gender roles established by the White middle class family model. In traditional White middle class families, the role of the male is to provide economic resources as head of the family. The role of the female is to take care of the children and the household duties. This scenario is not possible unless the male is able to provide enough material resources to provide for the family. Otherwise, both male and female spouses must work to provide for the needs of the family. This has been the tradition in Black families. Therefore it is reasonable and expected that young Black women be determined to succeed in their educational endeavors.

Summary

In summary, the participants experienced marginalization and harassment in the sociocultural context of a majority White working class student population. Marginalization was academic and social. Social marginalization among Black females at Singer was traced to social class differences. Harassment of Black females at Singer came from White students, Black male students, and White faculty and staff. On a positive note, all the participants were determined to succeed as students. They expressed positive attitudes about finishing high school and having careers. All of the participants planned to complete high school and continue with some form of postsecondary education.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study looked at the experiences of Black females in majority White high schools. The purpose of this research was to understand their academic and social high school experiences. To achieve a clearer understanding of the impact of ethnicity, gender, and social class, low-income and working class Black women were interviewed about their experiences in high school. In-depth interviews using open ended questions were used to elicit responses from the participants. The data from the interviews was then sorted and coded for emerging themes.

Being Black, female, and from working class or low-income families at a predominately White high school has its problems. The Black female students at Singer High School feel the impact of race, gender, and economics from peers, teachers, and staff. Although how they experienced racism may have differed, the impact of race was a common experience for all of the participants. Marginalization and harassment was experienced by the participants. They believed they were marginalized academically in the school curriculum and in the classroom. Socially they were marginalized in school activities, such as cheerleading, where the Black women felt excluded from participation. The structure of Singer High School effectively marginalizes the Black women by excluding their history from the curriculum and limiting their participation in school activities by using quotas and majority rule.

There was also intraracial marginalization of the sophomore "loud Black girls"(students who lived in low-income housing complexes) by the Black women in the junior class. This marginalization fits in with Essed's (1991) discussion of the use of tilted groups in everyday racism. She explains:

Tilted groups have moved toward less extreme numerical differences. The 'minority' group has formed subgroups according to roles and abilities, so that they can affect the dominant culture to a certain degree.

Balbo's study (as cited in Essed 1991, p. 204)

There are enough Black women at Singer so that they are not tokens. As tokens, they would be treated as " . . . symbols of difference rather than as individuals"(Essed, 1991, p. 204). An example of token treatment would be the one Black cheerleader. Although the Black women at Singer are few, comparatively speaking, the increase in their numbers since the "loud Black girls" arrived has brought about some change. No longer are there just the Black women at Singer. There are different groups of Black women with different " . . . roles and abilities. . ." (Essed, 1991, p. 204) that impact the school.

Harassment was also an area that impacted the experiences of all the young Black women. They were harassed verbally and physically by the White students at Singer High school. There was also verbal, physical, and sexual harassment from faculty and staff. Intraracial harassment from Black males involved gang activity, interracial dating, and "messaging"(relatively harmless things done to

irritate Black females). Gender and ethnicity impacted interracial dating as well. Here the participants were intimidated through verbal abuse by Black males to date only Black males yet were expected to accept Black males dating White females. The experiences of harassment were part of the norm for these participants. They exemplify what Essed (1991) terms "... routine situations in everyday life" (p. 2).

Being a young Black woman at Singer High School meant experiencing marginalization and harassment based on ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic class. This experience of racism as structure and "... familiar practices in everyday situations" (Essed, 1991, p. 52) by working class and low-income Black women in a majority White school fits Essed's (1991) description of everyday racism. While all of the participants experienced everyday racism in marginalization and harassment, they did not all experience it to the same degree. Economic status (working class) as well as alternative housing for low income participants served as buffers for some of the Black women from some levels of racism and sexism. The variables of being from low-income families and being residents of a low-income housing complex opened up the experiences of participants to physical and verbal threats from gang members, physical abuse from White males and Black males, and marginalization by other Black females.

Sexual politics and relationships was also a theme in the experiences of these Black women. In interracial dating, appropriate gender behavior for Black women was decided by Black

males. It was unacceptable for Black females to date White males. On the other hand, it was acceptable for Black males to date White females. This patriarchal structure placed Black women in the position of being on the bottom of a gender hierarchy. If they stepped from the confines of this gender hierarchy, they risked incurring verbal harassment. The ethnic hierarchy existed as well for the participants. Socially ascribed roles for Black and White students were illustrated by school structure and policies. The prevalence of the dominant culture in the academic and social life of Singer High School placed the culture of White students in the center and the culture of Black students in the margins.

There was one common theme not affected by socioeconomic class or residency. All of the participants were determined to succeed in their education. They all believed that they could and would complete their high school education. Additionally, they all had plans for the future that included some avenue of postsecondary education. This optimistic outlook in spite of the circumstances, according to hooks (1984), is not unusual. She explains:

Women who are exploited and oppressed daily cannot afford to relinquish the belief that they exercise some measure of control, however relative, over their lives. They cannot afford to see themselves solely as "victims" because their survival depends on continued exercise of whatever personal powers they possess. (p. 45)

These Black women believed that they controlled their educational futures. They believed that no matter what the odds, they could overcome them and be successful. This belief in success also illustrated one component of Black feminism, self definition. Being marginalized academically and socially as well as harassed by various segments of the school population at Singer could have been devastating. These Black women, however, refused to define themselves by their situations. They defined themselves as capable of success regardless of the circumstances. They believed that being Black, low-income or working class did not necessarily translate into failure. Family support was a factor. The participants received support and encouragement from their families to succeed in their educational goals.

Socialization for a life of practicality as well as physical, emotional, and economic survival was another theme of Black feminism evident in the experiences of the participants. Physical survival was especially evident in the responses of the participants who lived in the low-income housing complex. They were all prepared to take care of themselves. They mentioned again and again that they would stand and fight any attacker -- male, female, Black or White. They refused to be abused, verbally or physically, without retaliation. They understood that they must take care of themselves.

It is heartening to me as a Black woman to see the determination of these young Black women. It is also maddening. I am heartened because the participants refused to give in, to

surrender to adverse situations. They persevered in a setting that promoted their failure. Witnessing the survival of hope in the worst of circumstances sets the stage for more triumphs in better situations. The possibilities seem unlimited.

I am maddened because these young Black women had to endure the brutality of a society that demeans their ethnicity, social class, and gender. As a veteran of the Civil Rights movement and the Women's movement, I must concede that little has changed since my high school experience. The hope for new opportunities and fewer closed doors in education loomed on the horizon. That horizon seems much further away now. It must be brought closer.

Implications for Research

Research on females in high school has focused on societal expectations, academics, and self perceptions. As stated earlier, the females included in the literature have been mostly White and mostly middle-class. In academic research issues of class and ethnicity have been given little attention. This study has contributed to the literature on the effects of gender in secondary education by giving voice to the experiences of Black females in a majority White high school. These experiences, from the perspective of the participants, revealed the effects of ethnicity, gender, social class and housing in their lives as students. As indicated in this study, race, gender, housing, and class impact the everyday experiences of high school females.

As it mirrors the macro society of this country, the micro society of high school mirrors the impact of race, gender,

socioeconomic level on Black women. Significant also are the variables of ethnicity and socioeconomic status in researching gender issues in education. Additionally noteworthy is that Black women, or any women of color, should not be collapsed into one group without concern for variations within groups. We need to account for the differences within ethnic groups. As was evidenced in this study, the extremities of racism and sexism may be mediated by socioeconomic class.

Another area that needs to be addressed in gender research is how the neighborhood of low-income Black women affect their acceptance or non acceptance by White and Black peers and White administration and faculty. The fact that some of the participants in this study lived in a low-income housing project was significant. As a result of where they lived, they faced more gang related harassment. They faced more violence overall in this school. Future studies to extend our undeestanding might include:

- a longitudinal study of Black women(or other stigmatized group) who live in low-income housing complexes and attend majority White high schools.
- a longitudinal study of Black women who live in low-income housing complexes and attend majority Black schools.
- an in-depth case study of a woman from a stigmatized group, such as Native American, attending a majority White high school.
- a survey study comparing the incidents of violence experienced by women who live in low-income housing complexes and those who do not.

- a study comparing the classroom experiences of Black women from low-income housing complexes who have Black teachers with those who have White teachers.
- A survey study that examines the amount of gang activity experienced by high school women from stigmatized groups.

More studies that focus on women from stigmatized minority groups need be done to understand the unique problems they face.

Another area that needs to be considered is in the sociocultural context of the school. Singer High School student body was predominantly working class and White. According to Bennett deMarrais and LeCompte (1995), this ethnic and class construct affects the quality of school personnel as well the interaction between students and staff. Would the Black women in this study have different experiences of sexism in a majority Black school? Would it matter if that majority Black school's student population were predominantly middle class, working class, or low income? What about intragroup biases within Black females? Insight might be gained from studies such as the following:

- a class based and/or ethnic based survey study of the schools that have published manuals for students that address sexual harassment.
- a longitudinal study of the incidents of reported sexual harassment complaints by students and their outcomes.
- a social class-based study of school personnel's awareness of school harassment policy.

- a study of relationships among Black women in a majority Black high school.

As mentioned in the literature review, studies in socialization have shown that expectations from family and school influence the academic experiences and choices of adolescent men and women. We know little about the socialization of Black adolescent women and how it affects their choices. The women in this study all believed that education was important. Was this commitment to education something that transcended economic levels? Studies to examine socialization could include:

- a longitudinal case study of Black females from elementary school through junior high school.
- in-depth interviews of Black women attending majority White high schools about their feelings on education.
- in-depth interviews of Black women attending majority White high schools about their goals for the future.
- a social class-based survey study of the expectations Black parents have for their daughters.

As mentioned in the review of literature, much of the research related to high school girls has focused on middle class White females and gender differences in learning styles. More research must be done to understand educational experiences across gender, ethnic, and socio-economic lines.

Implications for Practice

In terms of practice, how teachers and administrators deal with diverse populations must be a concern of colleges of education and school systems. The participants in this study felt left out -- that there was nothing at Singer High School for them. Unless the school policy makers, such as teachers and administrators, listen and respond to the voices of the students, there will continue to be marginalization of students in daily practice.

Colleges of Education can help by emphasizing inclusion and requiring future teachers and school administrators to experience diverse school situations. Inclusion and diversity can be included in the educational training for teachers and administrators. One way to accomplish this is to have preservice teachers and preservice administrators serve as mentors for children in the school system. They could work with the students on developing and implementing school projects. This type of collaborative work with students could underscore the importance of listening to students and seeing things from their perspective. Another way to incorporate exposure to diversity would be for college of education students to put together workshops or resource material for schools for specific problems. For instance, if a particular school was experiencing racial conflict, a support group from the college of education could work with the students, faculty and administration to help understand and alleviate the problem.

Administrative policy on diversity that stresses accountability and commitment is necessary. School systems should implement

plans that would require the staff to learn about the student populations they serve, ideally before the students' arrival. An understanding of the students and their needs can help schools to better prepare for diverse populations. To aid in planning schools use a social outing as a way to get to know future students. In that setting, school personnel could interact informally with future students. In this kind of setting, students might be more prone to share their concerns. Teachers and staff might also arrange meetings in the students' communities to get to know their families. Easing students into a situation where they are in a minority might be accomplished by establishing a mentoring program whereby individual students are assigned to a teacher or an older student. The mentor would help the student adjust by being there to answer questions, advise, and encourage. According to Hale (1994):

Schools need to become more sensitive to ethnic and cultural groups that do not conform to the white middle-class model. Only when members of the helping professions are able to understand the ways the African American culture intersects with the mainstream culture will solutions be found to the problem of achieving equal educational outcomes for African American children. (p. 199)

Schools should have printed guidelines on sexual harassment available for every student and all personnel. One way to accomplish this is for panels consisting of students, school faculty, and preservice teachers and administrators to create handbooks on

sexual harassment. Explanations of sexual harassment policy could then be explained and understood from the perspectives of students and staff. Guidelines should be explained thoroughly to all students and staff. A workshop for staff that includes explanations, examples, and a questions and answers period should be mandatory. An assembly for students, by sexes, that also includes explanations, examples, and a question and answer period should also be provided. Additionally, there should be a friendly and accessible means of reporting sexual harassment for students, especially women. Perhaps a male and a female teacher could be designated to guide students through the process of filing a complaint. An existing mentor program might also be used to handle sexual harassment complaints. According to Bogart and Stein (1989):

Most educational institutions are sincerely motivated to improve the social and educational environment within which students, faculty, administrators, professional, and support staff study and work. However, many schools and colleges continue to lack information about conditions, policies, and practices that can prevent and address sexual harassment. (p. 158)

Colleges of education and school systems must work toward developing school personnel and policy that exposes and corrects gender and ethnic bias. A commitment to serving all students with respect for difference without hierarchy can move us in the direction of schools that, in policy and action, promote equity.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL
EXPERIENCES
A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROJECT
INFORMATION SHEET

I invite you to participate in a study I am doing in your school. I want to learn from this study what it is like for Black high school females in majority White high schools. There have been many changes in the Knox County public school system. I want to understand the experiences of students in order to (1) provide school officials with information to better plan for minority students and (2) add to the existing literature about female adolescents.

If you agree to be in this study, I will interview you. I will ask you questions about your school experiences. The interview will last about one hour and it will be audio taped. To protect your privacy I will not use your real name. You will make up a name to use for this study. After the interview is typed, you may see it. You will be paid \$10.00 at the end of the interview.

I will store all of the consent forms, interview tapes, written copies (transcripts) and other material for this study in a locked file in my office. I will keep your consent forms and the audio tapes for three years. After three years, the audio tapes will be erased.

I plan to share the results of this study with the scientific community. When this happens, the name you made up, not your real name, will be used. Your school's real name will not be used.

Whether or not you decide to be a part of this study is entirely up to you. You will also need the permission of your parents/guardians. If you later decide you do not want to be in this study, you may change your mind and withdraw. You may also refuse to answer any questions at any time. There will be no penalty.

I would be happy for you to contact me if you have any questions about the project or about participation in it. I appreciate your help.

Faye L. Hicks-Townes
205C Claxton Education Building
College of Education
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996
423/ 974-4193

APPENDIX B

**AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH
SCHOOL EXPERIENCES**

PARENT CONSENT FORM

I understand that the purpose of this study is to learn what it is like for Black females in majority White high schools. I understand that I may or may not agree to allow my child to be in the study. If I allow my child to be in this study, she will be interviewed. She will be paid \$10.00 for her time. I understand that this interview will be audio taped for accuracy.

I understand that my child or I may decide at any time to withdraw from the study. My child may also refuse to answer any questions at any time. I understand that there will be no penalty in either case.

I understand that my child's privacy will be protected. Her real name will not be used. She will be asked to make up a name (pseudonym) for the study. This made up name (pseudonym) will be used on all written reports.

I understand that the researcher will store all consent forms, interview tapes, and written documents in a locked file cabinet. This locked file cabinet is in the researcher's office. The consent forms and audio tapes will be kept for three years.

I understand that I may contact the researcher if I have questions about the study. I may contact the researcher with questions about my child's participation. I may do this at any time.

Signature _____

Name (Please Print) _____

Date _____

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

STUDENT PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

I understand that the purpose of this study is to learn what it is like for Black females in majority white high schools. I understand that I may or may not choose to be in this study. I understand that if I choose to be in this study, I will be interviewed. I understand that this interview will be audio taped for accuracy. I will be paid \$10.00 for the interview.

I understand that at any time I may decide to withdraw from the study. I may also refuse to answer any questions at any time. I understand that there will be no penalty in either case.

I understand that my privacy will be protected. My real name will not be used. I will be asked to make up a name (pseudonym) for use in this study. This made up name (pseudonym) will be used on all written reports of this study.

I understand that the researcher will store all consent forms, interview tapes, and written documents in a locked file cabinet. This locked file cabinet is in her office. The consent forms will be kept for three years. The audio tapes will be kept for three years and then erased.

I understand that I may contact the researcher if I have questions about the study. I may also contact the researcher with questions about my participation. I may do this at any time.

Signature _____

Name (Please Print) _____

Date _____

VITA

Faye L. Hicks-Townes was born in Jackson, Mississippi on March 31, 1952. She attended school in the Jackson City Public School system. Graduating from Lanier High School in 1970. In 1970, she entered Knoxville College, Knoxville, Tennessee where she received a Bachelor of Science in English and Speech Education. After teaching in the Knox County School System, Knoxville, Tennessee, she entered the Master's program in curriculum and instruction in 1989. She received the Master's degree in August 1990 from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She continued at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville working towards the Doctor of Education Degree. She graduated in December, 1996 after completing the Doctor of Education Degree in Curriculum and Instruction .