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BLACK AMERICAN INTERGENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION,
BLACK IDENTITY AND WHITENESS: A SOCIO-CULTURAL
AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Education
in the Graduate School of
Binghamton University
State University of New York
2012

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Accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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in the Graduate School of
Binghamton University
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2012

June 25, 2012

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Abstract

The aims of this study are to explore the socio-cultural contexts and experiences of Black Americans and their perspectives on the quality and value of education in their lives and to better understand how the socio-historical idea that Blacks are inferior has influenced the perception and disenfranchisement of Black youth in the U.S. educational system. This dissertation presents a qualitative study, incorporating historical documents and oral history interviews to collect first person accounts of the educational experiences of 53 Black people reflecting 4 different generations. The study found differences in the salience of race/racism in schools for individuals based on geographical location. In addition the study found a difference in the intergenerational value of education based on family heritage in the North vs. the South. Lastly the study shows the enduring legacy of eugenics through the continued experiences of the participants with racism. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to

- My husband Thomas who after 23 years of marriage is still the one that melts my heart and makes my knees go weak. Thank you for your unwavering support and belief. Having you by my side made this often crazy journey seem doable. Your personal sacrifices made it possible.
- To my children Gina and Rachel who were have become strong intelligent young women during this process. You walked each step with me, thank you for your patience and encouragement.
- To my late father James Edward Gray, Sr. and my late mother Irene Morgan Gray who taught me to love school, love learning and to care deeply about others.
- To my father-in-law Robert Yull and my mother-in-law Doris Yull, who cheered me on through this process and kept our family afloat, I can never thank you enough for helping to make this possible.
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- To my family in the Syracuse Regional Church of Christ whose prayers kept me uplifted.

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Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”
Matthew 19:26 (NIV)

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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction:

This dissertation is an intergenerational study investigating Black¹ people's changing views concerning the quality and value of education in the United States (U.S.). Using historical documents and the oral histories of four generations of Blacks, those born during the periods of 1930-1949, 1950-1969, 1970-1987, and 1988-1995. The point of this research is to better understand how the socio-historical idea that Blacks are inferior has influenced the perception and the disenfranchisement of Black people within the U.S. educational system. This study will also examine the ways in which racial inequalities and ideologies are reproduced in schools and what the implications are for the socialization of Black people.

Background: Race and Killing the Dream of Education

“Literacy for freedom and freedom for literacy” has been the mantra of many Black people since their arrival in the Americas as slaves (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard 2003). In his autobiographical narrative, published in 1881, former slave Frederick Douglass (circa 1818- February 20, 1895) shares stories of his own life's transformational experiences which support this idea (Douglas 1968). Once Douglass understood that being denied an education was an intentional action by Whites designed to keep him and other Blacks from questioning their enslavement, he made it his life goal to become educated, equating his quest for freedom with the acquisition of an education (Douglass, 1968).

By the turn of the 20th century, it was no longer illegal to educate Black people, but education was not used as a liberatory² medium in the Freirean sense, but as a continuing form of enslavement. Scholars (Anderson, 1988; Watkins, 2001; Woodson, 1933) suggest that at the turn of the last century the educational system developed for Black children was complicit in the continued political and social subordination of Blacks. Carter G. Woodson (1933) wrote in his seminal book *The Mis-Education of the Negro* about the academic struggles of Black children being taught in a Euro-centric educational system. Woodson (1933) suggested that many Black children suffered not freedom but oppression in such a system. During the time of his writings, Black people in the South were fully embedded in the legalized system of oppression called “Jim Crow” (1877-1965). The educational system held up the standards of Jim Crow and promoted the ideology of White racial domination, crushing the spirit of the Black child by “making him feel that his race does not amount to much and will never measure up to the standard of White people” (Woodson, 1933, p.8). By instilling this sense of inferiority in the mind of Black children, the educational system of the 1930s was successful in relegating Black people to a life of subordination to White people and impoverishment. Woodson suggested that for the Black community the primary objective of the school curriculum was to create accommodating, accepting, and conforming individuals. He contends:

“The problem of holding the Negro down therefore is easily solved. When you control a man’s thinking, you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his “proper place” and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go

without being told. In fact if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit, his education makes it necessary” (Woodson, 1933, Preface).

According to Watkins (1996) Woodson believed that the education Black children received placed the White lived experience as more superior than the Black lived experience and left Black Americans in a state of moral surrender. Woodson (1933) goes on to suggest that the few Black people who were successful at achieving a formal education embraced the tenets of White supremacist discourse in education and were complicit in the exploitation of their people. Those lucky enough to be formally educated justified the inequality experienced by many in the Black community as something brought on by the inadequacies of the Black community. This sentiment is still echoed by some Black people who have had the fortune of academic and economic achievement. A number of Black scholars (Wilson, 2012; Ogbu, 1998; Williams, 2006; Cosby & Poussaint, 2007) continue to dismiss the role that race plays in our society and prefers instead to shift away from racism as the primary reason for the problematic position of Black people in the U.S. to more popular explanations or social class, “cognitive ability, lack of work ethic or morality, human capital deficit, and family structure” (Clayton, 2000, p. 28).

In his autobiography, Malcolm X (1973) provides his lived experience as an example that supports Woodson’s theory. When asked by his high school English teacher, Mr. Ostrowski about his career goals, Malcolm X responded that he wanted to be a lawyer. The teacher quickly discouraged Malcolm of this idea remarking, “Malcolm, one of life’s needs is for us to be realistic. Don’t misunderstand me now, we all here like you, you know that But you have to be realistic being a nigger” (34). The racist

comments of this teacher had a profound effect on Malcolm. Although he had been academically successful, it did not matter, because he was Black. No matter how excellent his academic record, the teacher believed he lacked the intelligence to become a lawyer. In a state of moral surrender, Malcolm lost interest in school and interactions with White people. His story unfortunately is not uncommon, for in the United States, appearance, particularly skin color, can often serve to create expectations of success or failure, of brilliance or stupidity, or of power or impotence (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002; Yancy, 2008; Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

In the years since Malcolm X (1965) and Woodson (1933) wrote their acclaimed books, the educational journey of Black children has gone from mandated, legalized segregation to the landmark decision in 1954 of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* to desegregate schools and has returned to what Kozol (2005) calls the restoration of apartheid schooling in America³. A number of scholars including Leonardo (2009), Powell (1992), Shujaa (1994) and Watkins(2001), argue that the persistence of racism in the U.S. continues to be demonstrated in many of its public institutions, however the educational institution is the most distinguished since it is the most visible perpetrator of racism against Black Americans (Leonardo, 2009; Powell 1992; Shujaa, 1994; Watkins, 2001). The educational system for many Black children today at many levels is no different than that which Woodson wrote about, particularly those which translates into the exclusion of Black and other people of color as full participants in institutions of knowledge (Allen, Suh, Gonzalez & Yang, 2008, Delpit, 2012; Givens, 2007, Kozol, 2005, Leonardo 2009).

The history of the U.S. educational system provides many examples of how racial division translates into the exclusion of people of color as full participants in educational institutions (Allen, Suh, Gonzalez & Yang, 2008; Givens, 2007; Kozol, 2005; Leonardo 2009). The work of Castagno (2008) examines the way that the education system has legitimized White superiority by silencing the discourse on race in the schools. According to Castagno (2008), “silences around race entrench and rationalize Whiteness because they allow most White educator’s to maintain the illusion that race either doesn’t matter or doesn’t really exist and to continue schooling in a fashion that privileges White middle class values (p. 315).” has the effect of “ In the United States, political, economic and cultural systems place Whites in a position of power and control (Mills, 1997; Bonilla-Silva, 2006). The unconscious and conscious ideas of White superiority and White privilege are widespread throughout the society (Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 1990; Mills, 1997; Leonardo, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2006). The positioning of Whites as dominant and nonwhites, in particular Blacks, as subordinate is enacted on a daily basis (Mills 1997; Bonilla-Silva, 2006 & 2008). According to Cohen (2010) and Jones (2009) the consequences for Blacks in this country are dire as Black people continue to deal with the existence of “racial inequities in employment, housing, education, criminal justice, health and other areas” (Jones, 2009). Cohen (2010) writes that while Barack Obama’s victory has been touted as a reason to believe that America’s racial divide had been significantly narrowed, race continues to be relevant to the socio-economic positioning, educational opportunities, and general well being of Black Americans.

Like those in the educational system of Woodson’s time, today’s educators consciously and unconsciously teach the superiority of White people and the inferiority

of Black and other people of color (Castagno, 2008; Delpit, 2012; Givens, 2007; Horsford, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Lewis, 2003; Love, 2004). According to Castagno (2008) in educational settings, “silences around race entrench and rationalize White privilege because they allow most White educator’s to maintain the illusion that race either doesn’t matter or doesn’t really exist and to continue schooling in a fashion that privileges White middle class values” (p. 315). According to Delpit (2012) the result is a cultural conflict in the classroom between Black children and their teachers which has its basis in a society which is entrenched in a belief system that supports:

the cultural framework which dictates that ‘black’ is bad and less than and in all arenas ‘white’ is good and superior. This perspective is so ingrained and so normalized that we all stumble through our days with eyes closed to avoid seeing it. We miss the pain in [Black] children’s eyes when they have internalized the societal belief that they are dumb, unmotivated, and dispensable.” (p. xviii).

In support of Delpit, Bonilla-Silva (2006) suggests that by using the myth of a color-blind education based on ahistorical justifications, educators are complicit in the perpetuation of White racial supremacy. The work of Winfield (2007) suggests that the accountability and measurement systems of the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation (2001) has had the same effect on many Black Children and other children of color that IQ tests had at the height of the popularity of the 1994 *Bell Curve* analysis (Fraser 1995). The results have been for many educators to blame disparities in educational attainment between Black and White children on the innate inability of Black children to learn (Kozol 2005). According to Kozol (2005), NCLB with its emphasis on high stakes testing has resulted in many Black and children of color being relegated to “practical instruction”

rather than college bound instruction. Kozol (2005) gives several examples of students whose ambitions to go to college were crushed like those of Malcolm X. In one example a student who wants to take an Advance Placement class to prepare for college was told instead that she must take a sewing class (Kozol, 2005, 180). In schools that serve the economically advantaged and predominately White populations, removing the college option would be rejected outright.

How do we find ourselves in 2012 looking at school systems that have resegregated (Kozol, 2005; Lopez, 2012) and hearing about Black children who are receiving educations far below the level of their White contemporaries (Allen, Suh, Gonzalez & Yang 2008; Horsford, 2011; Kozol, 2005)? This work is interested in investigating the Black perceptions of these phenomena. Investigation of a cross generational perspective on the educational experiences of Black people requires we acknowledge the changing yet persistent forms that race and racism take in each era. Being Black in 2012 does not mean the same thing as it did during the Civil Rights era of the 1950s or the Black Power era of the 1970s. For us to comprehend the challenges that Black people face while negotiating the educational system in the U.S. requires that we acknowledge and comprehend the specifics of race, place, and space in each generation (Holt, 2000; Lewis, 2003). This pursuit is complicated because, according to Bonilla-Silva (2008), we live in a society which continues to deny the significance of race, and the current “climate in post civil rights America has delegitimized the public expression of racially based feelings and viewpoints” (139). Bonilla-Silva (2008) suggests that many educators today who subscribe to the rhetoric of color blindness bring into their classrooms a characteristic of superficial racial tolerance while ignoring or denying the

existence of the racist structural systems that are the foundation of most educational institutions. In fact, Lewis (2003) asserts that it is in these very classrooms that we learn, “the rules of racial classification” and where racial inequities present in the wider society are perpetuated.

Many scholars (Kozol, 2005; Shujaa, 1994; Delpit, 1995, 2012) have documented the struggle that Black children have within the educational system, particularly in urban settings. Some scholars (Ladson-Billing, 1998; Lewis, 2003; Watkins, 2001; Woodson, 1933) have investigated how racial ideologies shape and constrain the academic identities of students. Still other scholars have even looked at the importance of highlighting and exposing the ways in which race and White supremacy function in education (Banks, 2005; Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2009). Similar to these scholars, my research will involve examining and recognizing the ways in which racial inequalities and ideologies are reproduced in schools and the implications for the socialization of Black people into the wider society. Missing from the scholarship is research that illuminates the perceptions that Black people have of how their everyday lives are affected by the intersections between race, social experience, and educational outcomes. According to Mills, “hegemonic groups characteristically have experiences that foster illusory perceptions about society’s functioning, whereas subordinate [like Blacks] characteristically have experiences that potentially give rise to more adequate conceptualizations” (Mills, 1998, p. 28). For instance, the view of racialized experiences from the viewpoint of Black people and other people of color is a privileged perspective (Bonilla-Silva, 2001).

This research contextualizes the history of Black education in the literature through the lived experiences of four generations of Black people living in four cities located in upstate and western New York (Binghamton, Elmira, Syracuse and Buffalo) to tell the story of the Black school experience. This research is being done in an effort to contribute to the scholarship which investigates our understanding of how Black people have experienced school in the United States across several generations and what the impact of race has been on their experience.

The Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this dissertation is two-fold: first to explore the socio-cultural contexts and the experiences of Black Americans and their perspective of the quality and value of education in their lives. Secondly, this study is an attempt to understand how the social construction of Blacks as an inferior race influenced the educational experience of Blacks in past generations and today. This study will tell the story of the Black experience in school using the historical analysis of Black education from the literature and the oral histories of four generations of Black people who live in central and western New York, in particular Buffalo, Syracuse, Binghamton, and Elmira.

Theoretical Framework:

The conceptual framework guiding this study is Critical Race Theory (CRT). Critical race theory is an epistemological framework that emerged in academic scholarship as Black legal scholars in the academy challenged the slow progress being made in the Civil Rights movement (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT challenges the historical underpinnings of how race is considered in law, society, and education. Using the lens of CRT, I will examine the data collected during the

interviews in search of themes which relate to the six tenets described by Delgado & Stefancic (2001): (1) racism as common and ingrained in American life; (2) Interest Convergence: a challenge to race neutrality and colorblindness; (3) race is a social construction; (4) recognizing the experiential knowledge of Black people; (5) CRT is interdisciplinary, and (6) CRT works toward the elimination of oppression.

Critical Race Theory has been used by a number of researchers in education to analyze inequality in educational settings (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997; Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2009; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical Race Theory in education seeks to challenge racist practices by highlighting the pedagogical dimensions of racism and by supporting pedagogical solutions rooted in anti-racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Zamudio, Russell, Rios, Francisco, & Bridgeman, 2011).

Research Questions:

This study examined the educational experiences and philosophies of four generations of Black Americans through oral histories. This intergenerational study focused on how Black Americans remembered, experienced, and understood the significance of education. The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What generational differences relate to the expected role and value of education for Blacks?
- 2) How has the historical idea that Blacks are inferior influenced the participants perception and disenfranchisement in the U.S. educational system?
- 3) How does the Black community perceive, understand, and experience the role of the educational system in their lives, both historically and in contemporary contexts?
- 4) How does racial identity influence the educational experiences of Black children?

Significance of the study

Historically, Blackness has inhabited a strange and contradictory space within society. Blacks are often posited as a largely homogenous group without focus on any individuals while they live in a society which is fiercely individualistic. Delpit (1995) speaks of the deafening silence of Black voices within this society. To this end, this research makes a contribution by privileging the stories and the experiences of Black people living in the United States who have navigated with varying degrees of success through the educational system.

While life experience is often not respected as “real knowledge” within academic circles, it is exactly the lived experiences of Black people in the U.S. that form the foundation of their understanding of how racism operates in the educational system. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), life experiences serve as a powerful psychic function for communities of color due to the fact that many victims of racialization suffer in silence.

Based on the work of Solorzano & Yosso (2002), in educational settings, “marginalization is justified through research that dismisses stories from communities of color and privileges those stories told by the dominant group” (p.24). In educational contexts, the stories that are privileged are those of the White middle and upper class. This research seeks to tell the stories of the educational experiences of Black people both inside and outside formal educational settings. By documenting the voices of Black people across four generations, this research investigation will shed light on the stories of people whose narratives are often distorted and silenced.

One of the most important contributions of my study is that the information gathered through this research could help educators unpack some of their more easily accepted assumptions about race while simultaneously helping them to understand through the experiences of the participants how racism evolves and how race continues to be a defining marker of differentiation in the educational institutions of this society.

Limitations of the Study:

Despite the potential new insights that the findings of this study present, this study does have certain limitations due to the small sample size and geographical location. The total number of participants in the study was 53, there were 27 females and 25 males. Sixteen participants were in the Elder generational group, 13 were in the Black Power generation and the remaining generational groups, GenX and Gen Y each had twelve participants. Interviews in each geographical location were as follows: 17 in Buffalo, 18 in Binghamton, 9 in Elmira and 9 in Syracuse. The small sample size in each geographical location has the potential to affect the results of the study.

This study was conducted in four cities in upstate and western New York which limits its generalization to other parts of the United States. This research study employed in-depth interviews as a method of gathering data. Based on the work of Patton (2002) a general interview guide was developed and open-ended interviews of the participants were conducted for this study. Since the responses were self-reported by participants, their comfort level with the researcher and the questions being asked might have influenced how a participant responded to the interview questions.

Summary:

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. The next chapter, Chapter Two, presents the theoretical framework I used in this study. In Chapter Three, I review literature in the field to provide a framework for understanding Black educational experiences. In Chapter Four, I present an overview of the history of Black education. In Chapter Five, I provide an overview of the methodology that guided the data collection, my positionality, and a description of the data analysis process used to interpret the data. Chapter Six, I present the findings involving an analysis of the narratives of each generation separately. In Chapter Seven, I present the conclusions which include an intergenerational discussion of the research questions along with implications for future research and teaching practice.

Chapter II: Conceptual Framework

According to Maxwell (2012) “the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that support and inform a research study is commonly referred to as the conceptual framework of the study” (p.33). According to Maxwell (2012), the conceptual framework of a qualitative study must include (1) the researchers technical knowledge, research background and personal experiences, (2) existing theory and research and (3) thought experiments which Maxwell explains are speculative or “what if” questions, “that challenge you to come up with plausible explanations for your observations, and to think about how to support or disprove these.”(59)

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) and, as Maxwell (2012) suggests, my personal experiences with the educational system in the United States (U.S.). Based on this theoretical conceptualization, the current study examines the educational journeys of four generations of Black people in New York State in order to better understand how school is experienced by each generation. The participants in this study attended some portion of their schooling (K-12) in cities located in central and western New York, i.e. Binghamton, Elmira, Syracuse, and Buffalo.

Studying the experiences of Black people within the educational system requires an examination of race⁴, racism⁵ and Black identity development, not just in the educational settings, but within the wider society. This approach is critical since schools work as institutionalized microcosms of the society at large. CRT as a theoretical framework is useful in this research study because it provides a way “to theorize, examine, and challenge the ways that race and racism covertly and overtly impact the

social structures, practices, and discourses that occur within educational settings” (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). The objective for incorporating the critical race theory framework into this research study comes from my personal experiences with race and racism within the education system and the U.S. society at large. My experiences coupled with the fact that the educational system continues to be “racially stratified, unequal and a place that continues to disenfranchise racially oppressed people” supports my use of CRT as a means of analysis (Tyson, 2003, p. 20).

Critical Race Theory:

Critical race theory is an epistemological framework that emerged in academic scholarship as Black legal scholars in the academy challenged the slow progress being made in the Civil Rights movement (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT opposes the historical underpinnings of how race is considered in law, society, and education. CRT emerged into prominence in the 1970’s legal scholars sought to explain the reasons that race, racism and power continued to operate despite the legal gains of the civil rights era (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Drawing heavily from the critical legal studies movement, radical feminism, and conventional civil rights ideas, CRT scholars have sought to develop a framework that challenged the racialized ways in which laws affect people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Following the framework developed by legal scholars, Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (1995) proposed that CRT be used as a framework in education to examine the role of race and racism in education. They suggest that CRT is useful as a framework because it can provide researchers analytical power to explain the persistence of racism in educational policies and

practices, as well as the rationales used for and against confronting these practices in U.S. public schools.

In this dissertation, CRT is an important framework not only because it is useful in examining how race and racism operate in the production of inequality in schools, but also because CRT challenges ahistorical analyses. CRT scholars believe that it is important to use a historical and contextualized analysis when examining race. This dissertation collects information from four generations representing sixty four years of life experiences in an attempt to better understand the evolution of the Black experience in and perceptions of school and the education process. This dissertation incorporates CRT as an analytical tool to investigate the Black experience within the educational system in the United States over several generations. In this context, this study explores how race and racism influence educational opportunities and outcomes of Black people. I have chosen an intergenerational investigation of this phenomenon because as Holt (2000) suggests, an examination of race and racism within any milieu must be done within an historical context because the way in which race and racism is defined and experienced by people changes over time and space. Race is often dealt with as a static concept; it is, however, in continual flux, changing over time and space. What Holt (2000) is proposing is that the lived experiences of Black people in the U.S. are influenced by social structures and institutions which over time change as historical conditions have changed and disappeared. We no longer see the chattel slavery of my ancestors in the U.S. or the overt racism of the South which ended in the lynching of many Black men and women. Public establishments no longer post signs that suggest they have a limited clientele which excludes non-Whites. Yet an argument could be made

that racism still exists in this country. One only has to examine the disproportionality in school discipline (Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2002) to see that race still matters in this country and racism influences the live experiences of Black children. Racism has not disappeared it has only evolved and changed (Holt, 2000).

In keeping with my theoretical framework, I can give evidence of how racism has evolved over time by sharing the stories of the lives of my own family. My father who grew up in the segregated South and entered a segregated armed forces in 1952, shared with me the racism he experienced as a young soldier which involved Black soldiers not being treated as well as the Korean prisoners of war they were guarding. White soldiers by virtue of their position in the dominant race were given special privileges not shared by Black soldiers. According to my father, “the Korean prisoner often had better living accommodations and could eat in the same facilities as the White American soldiers; Black soldiers were not allowed to even eat with White soldiers.” Both my brother and my nephew who are career soldiers find my father’s experience unimaginable in today’s Army. Another example which illuminates the changing face of racism is found in the educational experiences of my family. Looking at three generations, we see that racism is a marker of the school experience; and that the lived experiences with racism changed from generation to generation. My father’s school experience was marked by segregation, but in many ways this segregation was a good thing in his eyes. When describing his schooling experience in North Carolina, my father’s memories included: hand-me-down textbooks, dilapidated school buildings and Black teachers who cared about their students. His experience with racism in school was not overt; in fact, he considered his educational experience to be more or less “devoid of White people” barring an occasional

visit to the school by the school superintendent. His conceptualization of race in the schools he attended had to do with his knowledge and understanding that his segregated school was also a second class school when compared to the one attended by White children. “We used to get their old stuff . . . They didn’t care really if we got an education. The Black teachers helped us, they told us we were just as good as those White kids and we had to work hard to show that we were better.” One of my father’s favorite sayings was, “you have to work twice as hard to get the same thing as White people”; he had drawn this conclusion during his early experience with education in the segregated South. The expectation for young Black people in my father’s era was just to survive and make some kind of living; school was not always the priority.

“We didn’t go to school all the time, sometimes we’d have to go and get work to help support the family, when we attended school the teachers always pushed us to be our best. They let us know that the White folks expected us to fail and not to do much with school, but we had to show them something different, that we were just as good as those white kids, we had to show them something different, you know be a credit to our race.” James E. Gray Sr.

My education differs from my father’s because my school journey began in Texas at a time when there was a push for desegregation because of the *Brown v. Board of Education*, Supreme Court ruling. I was a participant in a school integration program which required that I be bussed from a predominately lower class Black and Mexican neighborhood to a school in a predominately White neighborhood. So, unlike my father, my school experience was one in which I was embedded in a mainstream culture. I did

not experience the *de jure* racism of my father's time. However, as a child of the desegregation movement, I witnessed the hostility that many Whites felt about school integration. One day my sixth grade class was instructed to lie down on the floor because a White parent was outside threatening to shoot his gun into the school as a protest of the presence of the newly enrolled Black students. I spent most of my childhood in the Southern and Southwest portion of the U.S. I was fearful but not totally surprised by the outburst of this White man. My father's response to my experiences was to say, "You can pass laws but you cannot legislate what was in someone's heart." The schools I attended in my early years may have been mandated to accept Black children, but the White students and their parents made me and other Black children feel that we were not welcomed. The hostility I encountered usually came in the form of racial slurs. The result was that most Black students in the school participated in a self-imposed segregation from the White students. In my father's school experience, teachers were their champions; my school experience was marred by teachers continually questioning the intellectual ability of the Black students.

The lived experiences of my children and my nephews and nieces would suggest that their generation still continues to experience racism. My two daughters' lived experiences are quite different from mine in one very important way; they have grown up in a more affluent environment. They attended public schools located in the suburbs of the Greater Binghamton Area in upstate New York. My daughters who are now 18 and 20 have grown up in an era where legislation makes race discrimination illegal, and some view this as a signal that racism no longer exists. In their short lifetime, the discourse has shifted from terms like racism and racial equality to more palatable terms such as

diversity and multiculturalism (Rollock et. al., 2011). Some people have even suggested that my children are part of a ‘post-racial’⁶ generation, where race no longer has a role in the life outcomes of people. My children have benefited from a middle-class life style and the culture capital that goes along with it. Yet, they will share with you first hand that racism continues to inform and shape their life experiences, and that it is just more subtle and for most White people unrecognizable. Both my daughters were honor students who took Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses at their high school. According to my oldest daughter, her experience with racism was not necessarily in the classroom, but outside the classroom, as she tried to fit into a student body that was more than 97% white.

“I never really fit in, or got invited to parties. It didn’t really matter until it was time to go to prom and the guy that asked me to go backed out at the last minute because his Mom said he couldn’t go to prom with a Black girl. I was crushed, I couldn’t believe it we had been friends since the third grade, it was prom, and we weren’t going to get married. It all worked out in the end though because my parents helped me secure a date, with a black guy who was sort of a football legend in the area so it was all good.” The other thing that happened in school that makes me believe racism is alive and well is what happens at our school to a lot of the black kids that take regular classes; they seem to get sent to evergreen at some point. They come back to graduate but its weird how the black students seem to get sent there. There are not many of us so you notice it.”

When I asked my youngest daughter if she ever experienced racism and what it looked like, she talked about how she was never respected by her peers academically, “Every year it would seem like people were surprised that I was in advanced classes. I’d be thinking what the heck; we have been in advanced classes since the 7th grade together. Every time I received a high grade on a test, there was always a comment from someone about how they couldn’t believe I was getting an A in whatever. It was like they couldn’t believe a black person could be smart.”

My family’s experiences with racism gives me cause to accept Hoyt’s (2000) premise that racism must be discussed in the context of history because it evolves and changes. My daughters’ experiences with racism are different from mine and my experience is different from my father’s racialized experiences. The thread that binds the three generations is that racism is still being experienced by Black people. The idea that racism exists and continues is a foundational idea put forth in CRT; my lived experience concurs with this which is why CRT is an important framework in my research.

CRT also suggests that we look at the relational aspects of racism. In the U.S. society when the words race or racism are mentioned, it is considered as something that is a problem for Blacks or other people of color. Racism is something ‘they’ [i.e., Blacks and other people of color] confront in their daily lives. But racism, as I defined earlier [see endnotes], is not just something that happens to Black people; it is the expression of a very specific type of relationship between Whites and people of color. Racism describes the relationship of Whites and Blacks as that of White domination and Black subordination. The power dynamics in this relationship are important because it

fundamentally describes how Blacks and Whites experience race. Thus, to understand and make sense of the everyday racism experienced in the educational system by Black people, the experience must be examined in the context of relational racial difference. Even as race shapes daily life experiences of Black people, it also shapes the life experiences of White people; however, Whites do not always recognize it. Black feminist historian Elsa Barkley Brown (1992) points out that an examination of race requires that we not only look at how race and racialization affects the lives of Black people, but also how it affects the lives of White people. Brown is suggesting that a person can really understand what it means to be Black or White in this society when you juxtapose how the culture values and expresses Whiteness in comparison to Blackness. Brown (1992) states, “We need to recognize not only [racial] differences but also the relational nature of those [racial] differences (p. 299).” To explain what she means by this, Brown asks us to consider the lives of [Black] women in comparison to the lives of [White] women.

“As White middle class women moved from a primary concern with home and children to involvement in voluntary associations when they were able to have their homes and children cared by the services—be they direct or indirect—of other women [of color]. White middle-class women have been able to move into the labor force in increasing numbers not just differently from other women [of color] but precisely because of the different experience of other women and men.” (p. 299)

When White women increased their participation in the jobs outside their home, the jobs they did inside the home, such as cleaning, cooking, childcare, were disproportionately filled by Black, Latina and Asian American women (Glenn, 1992). As White women

began to shift from the home into the work force, they opened up an avenue of employment for lower class Black women to be maids and servants in their homes.

According to Brown (1992):

“Middle class white women’s lives are not just different from working class women of color.....middle class white women live the lives that they do precisely because working class women of color live the lives that they do “ (p. 298)

Can this critique, based on the work of Brown, be expanded to explain some of the differences in educational opportunities given to middle class White students versus those given to working class Black and even some middle class Black students? Can we say that White people possess the educational opportunities they have because of the lack of educational opportunities given some Black people in this country? I would argue that Brown’s insight does have application within the educational system. You do not have to look too far back into history to see a time where White children were able to get new school textbooks while their old textbooks were given to segregated Black schools in the South. Or, when “White Flight” sent middle class White families scurrying to create all-White suburbs taking with them their school funding tax dollars and leaving working class Black children were left with the remnants of a school system in the urban centers. I would assert that the educational opportunities given Black children can be arguably linked to those of middle class White children. We can further make this case if you consider the curriculum in public schools which privileges knowledge produced by Whites over that produced by Blacks and other people of color. White children sit in history classes year after year and hear the triumphs of their race, while Black children

must wait until Black History month or perhaps the chapter in their text discussing the civil rights movement to hear that they were more than just the ancestors of slaves. I use CRT as a theoretical framework in this study because it calls researchers to place race at the center of their research, to examine race in the context of history as well to include in the analysis the relational nature of race. From my perspective, the most appropriate lens to examine the educational experiences of Black people is to view it across four generations.

The tenets of Critical Race Theory:

“It is the understanding of lived oppression—the struggle to make a way out of no way—which propels us to problematise dominant ideologies in which knowledge is constructed” Tyson (2003, p. 20)

CRT researchers in education believe the time to debate the role of race in educational practice and policy is over. CRT scholars insist that the discourse on race and racism be made central to any educational analysis in the hope that teachers, policymakers, and society in general will develop a deeper understanding of the realities existing in U.S. schools. CRT reframes the discussion and provides a perspective on educational issues particularly those that affect Black children and other children of color which diverges from dominant discourses in educational policy and practice (Love, 2004). According to Taylor (2006), CRT “grounds racial problems in race-specific language in order to define and utilize ideologies free of the racial hierarchies that have defined much of U.S. history, politics and educational systems (p. 72).” The question of whether a racial analysis of educational institutions is still important is a point of much debate in contemporary discussions. There is disagreement about whether children of color [and Black children in particular] are treated differently from White children in the

educational institutions they attend. This results in a division which is often along racial lines, as Black children's lived experiences support the idea that there is differential treatment and many Whites are still holding on to the idea that schools are colorblind (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). These disparate understandings of the role of race in the school makes clear the need for CRT as a framework in the evaluation of educational institutions. Taylor (2006) writes:

“Without some unifying theoretical framework, it is difficult to formulate a cohesive set of policies and expectations. Indeed, what may happen when there is failure to meet performance expectations [e.g. Black/White achievement gap] is a splintering of stakeholders into blame-shifting entities—teachers blaming parents, parents blaming administrators, administrators blaming legislators, etc.—resulting in a fragmenting of effort, energy, and effectiveness...As a result, strategists may spend considerable time and energy trying to convince White educators that racial differentials exist, instead of devising coracial strategies to end it.” (p. 72)

Bell (1992) suggests that Critical Race Theory scholars believe that in the U.S. race is used to serve as society's means of allocating power and status, and that because of its entanglement involves all aspects of society and is endemic and permanent. Since Ladson-Billings' and Tate's first examination of education using the lens of CRT, a number of education theorists have used CRT as a theoretical lens to critique perplexing topics within education. Summarizing CRT's expansion into education, Ladson-Billings writes: “Like a maturing teenager CRT grows rapidly in unpredictable and surprising ways, awkward yet full of promise” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. vi). CRT's visibility as a theoretical construction has expanded since the first article by Ladson-Billings & Tate

(1995). Academic journals such as *Education Administration Quarterly* and *Qualitative Inquiry* dedicated complete editions to CRT's application in the field of educational policy while Bonilla-Silva (2001), Cole (2009), Delgado (2002), Dixson & Rousseau (2005), Gillborn (2005), Yosso (2006), and Zamudio, M. et. al (2011), Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva (2008) add to the list of scholars who continue to apply CRT to educational policy, and administration and practice. The following is a description of the defining elements of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Zamudio, 2011, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011):

Tenet One: Racism as common and Ingrained in American Life

Critical Race Theory begins with the idea that we should recognize that race and racism is endemic to American life. Racism is so embedded in the “our social order that it appears normal and natural to people” (Ladson-billings, 2004, p.5). For most people of color, racism is a common everyday experience. In *Faces at the Bottom of the well*, Bell (1992) suggests that racism is a permanent, fundamental, and institutionalized in American life. The task of a CRT researcher then becomes one of unveiling and exposing both the overt and covert of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997, Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). For example, Ladson-Billings and Brown (2008) posit:

“CRT rests on the premise that racism is not an aberration, but rather is normal and natural in American society. This notion is rejected by most Americans—White or of color—because it runs counter to our national narrative. We see ourselves as a nation moving ever closer to perfection, no matter how slowly. But CRT insists that racism is a constitutive element of the United States from its founding...to its emergence as a

superpower...thus, the role of the CRT scholar is to use race as a heuristic for understanding persistent social, economic, political, and cultural inequities (p.154-155).”

Bell’s (1992) claim that racism is permanent was fundamental to his concept of “racial realism” which he describes as a “philosophy that not only requires we acknowledge the permanence of racism but also the permanence of our [Blacks’] subordinate status” (p.373). According to Bell (1992), this acknowledgement “enables us to avoid despair, and frees us to imagine and implement racial strategies that can bring fulfillment and even triumph” (p.373). In support of Bell, Mills (1997) writes that the assumptions of Black inferiority and White Supremacy are so deeply ingrained in our political, legal, and educational structures that they are almost unrecognizable. According to Mills, “Racism is a global White supremacy and is itself a political system, a particular power structure of formal and informal rule, privilege, socioeconomic advantages, and wealth and power opportunities” (p. 3). Based on the work of Mills(1997) the encompassing nature of White supremacy makes it easily unrecognizable by Whites who are the beneficiaries of this political system. This makes the racial hierarchies within the educational system invisible to most Whites, thus making it difficult for them to understand and comprehend the Black lived experience that is produced because of this White domination. Crenshaw (1988) writes, “Black people do not create their oppressive worlds moment to moment but rather are coerced into living in worlds created and maintained by others” (p.1357).

One of the core objectives of a critical race theorist in education is to centralize race and racism in the research of educational scholarship and in the minds of

educational researchers. Carbado (2002) coined the term “racecentricity” to describe the idea of making race and racism central in education analysis. “Racecentricity is an explicitly race conscious approach to education, and maintains that educational institutions and discourses are complicit in the continuing reproduction of race and racism” (p.181). To make his point, he writes:

“...racialized discourses are deployed against, enacted upon, and given meaning through their associations with human bodies. In this sense, educational institutions(as sites of racial discourse) teach students not only about race (albeit rather poorly); they also—explicitly and implicitly—racialize students and teach them how to be raced, In short, schools produce racial knowledge and racial subjects.” (p.181)

Based on this understanding of the complexities of race and racism, CRT scholars in education examine the ways in which the social construction of race is deployed in “liberal” and “race-neutral” educational policies and practices.

Tenet Two: Interest Convergence: A challenge to race neutrality and color blindness

The second tenet of CRT suggests that racism advances the interest of Whites materially and working class people of color psychically, making it difficult to address since large segments of society have little incentive to find a solution to it. The idea that racism advances the “self-interests of Whites” (Castagno & Lee, 2007; Lopez, 2003, p. 84; Milner, 2008, Zamudio et. al., 2011) is sometimes referred to as interest convergence or material determinism (Bell, 1980). “Interest convergence stresses that racial equality and equity for people of color is pursued and advanced only when it converges with the

interest, needs, expectations and ideologies of White people” (Milner, 2008, p. 333; Lopez, 2003, p. 84). An example of this is found in the actions taken by the legislature of the state of Arizona regarding the recognition of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday. The state of Arizona had made a firm commitment not to recognize the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday and only reverse their position when the members of the National Basketball Association (NBA) and members of the National Football League proposed that neither the NBA All-Star Game nor the Super Bowl would be held in Arizona. Arizona’s willingness to compromise was a result of the state not wanting to lose its revenues. The change was motivated by the material interest of the state not because they had a change of heart about Martin Luther King, Jr. (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

The idea of interest convergence, or the “white self interest principle,” is neither new nor exclusive to CRT (Zamudio et al., p. 808). Malcolm X (1964) wrote about this concept when trying to explain what he saw as the position of White Americans on civil rights. He wrote that “...they don’t try to eliminate an evil because it’s evil, or because it’s illegal, or because it’s immoral; they eliminate an evil only when it threatens their existence” (p. 40). Zamudio et al. (2011) posit that even multicultural education, is an example of interest convergence. In the beginning years of its formation, multicultural education was seen as an attempt to conciliate people of color, while at the same time, assuring a continuation of White ideas of normativity. At its conception, multicultural education was conceived as an educational reform to effect change in “school and other educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic and other social-class groups will experience educational equity” (Banks, 1993, p. 3). Currently,

demonstrations of multicultural education in schools often “reduce it to superfluous examples and artifacts of cultures, such as eating ethnic or cultural foods, singing songs or dancing, and other less scholarly activities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.62). Ultimately, its implication was based on making the least change possible in education. According to McCarthy (1988):

“Multiculturalism is a body of thought which originates in the liberal pluralist approaches to education and society. Multicultural education, specifically, must be understood as part of a curricular truce, the fallout of a political project to deluge and neutralize Black rejection of the conformist and assimilationist curriculum models solidly in place in the 1960s.” (p. 267)

Instead of creating a radically new paradigm with a focus which includes social justice and radical change, multicultural education in its attempt to be inclusive became stuck in liberal ideology and allowed the status quo to prevail (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). My objective here is not to ignore the scholarship and the contributions made by multicultural education scholars such as Banks (1993, 2005, 2007), Chinn & Gollnick (2008), Grant & Sleeter (2011), and Nieto (2012) among others; it is to make a distinction between multicultural education and critical race theory in education. Critical race theorists make no apology for their race centered framework and articulate their positions, as Dubois (1903) stated a century ago in the classic text *The Souls of Black Folk* that “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line.” For Black people, this means that since race has been one site of our universal oppression a shift in our positionality, status, and access to opportunity requires that we start with the question of race.

In education, CRT scholars argue that the traditional claims of race neutrality and objectivity act as a smokescreen “for the self-interest, power and privilege of the Whites who are the dominant group in U.S. society” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p.26). A CRT theorist in education challenges claims that the educational system offers objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). What this tenet hopes to convey is that schools are structured, policies are adapted, and practices are implemented to serve broader political, social, and economic purposes (Gillborn, 2005). The ways in which schooling is structured and carried out daily are not natural, normal, or neutral. The discourse of equality in schooling has been used to serve the interests of the more powerful in society. School practices, like education policies, which are presented as neutral or objective serve to legitimate (i.e., justify) the disadvantage of students who are unequally impacted by these inherently biased practices and policies. One case that provides an example of this racist logic involves the “zero tolerance” policies. The idea here is that deviation from normalized and regulated behavior will be not tolerated by anybody. However, in practice, the results show that Black students – in particular – have been subjected to more stringent punishments for infractions and are more likely than Whites to be suspended or expelled for violating school regulations (Monroe, 2005; Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2002; Lopez, 2012).

Tenet three: Race is a social construction:

Critical Race Theory “holds that race and races are products of social thought which do not correspond to biological or genetic reality, but rather describes categories

that society invents” to put people with seemingly common origins (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p.7). Haney-Lopez (2000) contends that:

“‘Race’ is neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self reinforcing, plastic process, subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisions...terms like ‘black’ and ‘white’ are social groups, not genetically distinct branches of humankind (p. 65).”

Researchers have long concluded that race is a socially constructed category created to differentiate groups on the basis of skin color, phenotype, physique and hair texture for the purpose of showing the superiority or dominance of White people over Blacks and other people of color and that serves as a justification for racialized inequalities (Haney-Lopez, 2000; Yosso, 2006; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Smedley & Smedley, 2012).

CRT suggests that society often ignores scientific evidence that genetic features do not determine personality, intelligence, or moral character, thus approaching race as a dynamic concept which is not fixed in space or time (Omi and Winant, 2002; Haney-Lopez, 2000).

Tenet four: Experiential knowledge:

CRT insists on recognition of experiential knowledge of people of color. CRT finds “the experiential knowledge of Black people and other people of color legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing and teaching about racism” (Solorzano & Yosso, p. 26). Critical race theorists in education “view this knowledge as strength and draw on the lived experiences of people of color through the use of counter stories, narratives, and oral histories to illuminate the unique experiences of people of color”(Delgado, 2002, p. 109). People of color can narrate their experiences with racism,

and should be recognized as receptacles and originators of knowledge (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Moreover, Critical Race Theory recognizes that marginalized groups, disadvantaged by their position in society tell stories that are different from the stories of the dominant group. Our position in society as nameless invisible entities forces Blacks to live in two worlds in order to survive to develop two selves one that is true and one they show to White people. Blacks develop what Dubois (1903) referred to as a “double consciousness” in response to the external political, economic and cultural forces we are subjected to. According to Du Bois (1903), “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—and American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (p. 6). This concept of double consciousness referred to the negotiation of identities for Black people in terms of one’s Blackness and being an “American” in racialized contexts.

CRT urges Black people to write their experiences about race and racism using first person accounts which enables them to share their unique perspectives. Their unique perspectives comes from lived experiences that enabled the Africans brought here as slaves and their descendants to survive. This gained insight [knowledge] through double consciousness provides Blacks epistemic privilege with regard to racism and a unique understanding of how oppression works. CRT advocates for Black voices, instead of being ignored or silenced; Black people and other people of color are urged to use their

stories to better communicate with Whites about experiences that White people are unlikely to know (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Black people in their bottom-up view of society are privileged to see the world in a way that White people can never come to see it. Mills (1997), borrowing from standpoint theory, describes this view from the bottom as a:

“...cognitive advantage that is grounded in the phenomenological experience of the disjuncture between official [white] reality and actual[nonwhite] experience, the double consciousness of which Dubois spoke. This differential racial experience generates an alternative moral and political perception of social reality which is encapsulated in the insight from the black American insight.

Acknowledge that the experiences of victims might be repositories of valuable knowledge and thus allow that they have epistemic privilege, we are not thereby reduced to sentimental silence.” (p. 60)

Stories shared by Black people regarding their experiences allow others to see the world of Black people through a distinctive lens (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The stories are mutually beneficial to both Blacks and Whites because they “enable the hearer and teller to build a better world, which neither could make on their own” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2439). With a greater understanding of each other’s perspective both parties can begin the work of forging a just society.

Tenet five: CRT is interdisciplinary:

Critical race theorists contend that understanding the complexities of race and racism involves the integration of interdisciplinary theoretical conceptualizations through incorporating critical perspectives from various academic disciplines. CRT challenges

scholars to assume a socio-historical and interdisciplinary approach in educational research by insisting that analyses of race and racism be placed in both historical and contemporary contexts (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Solorzano et. al, 2005; Zamudio et. al, 2011). CRT scholars generally take an interdisciplinary approach which embraces a multiplicity of disciplines and/or research methods. Recognizing that gender, ethnicity, social class and sexuality can also operate as racialized systems of power, CRT often investigates these intersections (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

Tenet six: Elimination of oppression

According to Matsuda et al., (1993, p. 6) “CRT works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression”: racial, gender, language, age, and class. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). Critical race theorists concur that it is not enough to simply produce knowledge; in addition, scholars must dedicate this work to the struggle for social justice. In this pursuit, CRT scholars differentiate themselves as part of a movement rather than as passive educators. CRT scholars believe that the work engaged to capture the underlying dynamics that produce racial inequalities and contribute to theoretical and empirical understandings about the processes that obscure these dynamics serves the cause of justice. As such, critical race theory challenges the assumptions that often dominate White America’s view of its educational institutions as being objective, meritocratic, and places where race does not matter (e.g., the notion of colorblindness). According to Love (2004) “CRT scholars challenge the idea that schools are objective, neutral, and apolitical by unmasking the role that schools have in maintaining the existing

social order” p. 230). While educational institutions claim that their policies are designed to treat all students the same, Solorzano & Yosso (2002) found that these supposed fair and impartial policies often disadvantage students of color while offering benefits to their White counterparts. The belief that students will succeed or fail based on their own efforts is the cornerstone of the public schools belief that it operates within a meritocracy. An important element of CRT, particularly as it is applied to education, is to critique this “myth of meritocracy.” Love (2004) states that:

This myth of meritocracy has several supporting components, including notion of (1) neutrality, (2) colorblindness, (3) objective standards of performance, (4) equal opportunity to meet the standards of performance, (5) fair methods of assessment and evaluation, (6) neutral and objective reporting of performance results, and (7) the allocation of merit to those whose performance meets standards specified. The meritocracy myth hinges on two primary beliefs. The first is the belief that the system is fair and people ‘get what they deserve based solely on their individual efforts.’ The second belief is that the system is fair and the fact the certain people did not get more proves that they did not deserve more. (p. 231)

Discourses of colorblindness and calls of meritocracy absolve teachers and administrators of responsibility for racial disparities evidenced in academic performance, graduation rates, the disproportionate number of students in special education programs, and referrals for discipline. CRT challenges the discourses of colorblindness and meritocracy along with the notion of fairness in schools, as scholars using CRT as a framework have shown that students of color are more likely to be in remedial classes and generally have

limited access to advanced or honor classes (Darling-Hammond, 1997). The ultimate goal of CRT in education is to transform all inequitable aspects of educational institutions through social justice, by not only critically examining race and racism as social constructs, but also by providing educators and students with a basis for critical action (i.e., praxis, understood as critically informed action in service of social justice) intended to transform education to better serve the needs of all students (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 251-259). Borrowing from Parker (1998, p. 45): “CRT serves to illustrate is that despite the progress of civil rights laws and good intentions to eradicate racism, it is still an endemic part of life in the U.S. CRT maintains that racism has been ingrained through historical consciousness and events and those racist ideologies have directly shaped” how educational institutions operate in society.

Summary

This study incorporates CRT as an analytic tool for examining and understanding the role of race and racism in the schooling experiences of Black people across four generations. This dissertation is using the core components of CRT which include the idea that race and racism are fundamental in U.S. society; there is a need to challenge the dominant ideology of objectivity and colorblindness; a commitment to social justice; the importance of experiential knowledge and the use of interdisciplinary challenges to the notion of meritocracy within the educational system. The participants in this study tell stories of their experiences with racism and discrimination in their schooling experiences. Their stories challenge the notion that many Whites have related to the idea that racism is an experience of the past and that individual efforts serve as the only determinates in one’s academic achievement in school. The participants tell stories of overt and micro-

aggressive racism that is experienced as they maneuver, with varying degrees of success, through the educational system in the U.S. CRT provides an analytical framework and strategies to examine and understand these counterstories.

Chapter III Literature Review

“Here in lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being Black here in the dawning of the 20th century. This meaning is not without interest to you, gentle reader, for the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color-line.”

W.E.B. Du Bois (1903)

More than one hundred years after Du Bois made this famous declaration, the complexities of race and racism are present today with respect to the educational experiences of Black children in the United States. Historically, discriminatory laws and social practices have made race a factor in determining the educational experiences and outcomes of Black people (Anderson, 1988, Walters, 2001; Watkins, 2001). Evidence of the continued significance of race is readily seen in public education, particularly upon examination of educational disparities. The consequence of structural inequalities to the educational outcomes of Black students are well documented, such as: tracking of Black students into lower level classes (Mickelson, 2005; Oakes, 2005; Oakes, Wells, Jones & Datnow, 1997) inadequately trained teachers as well as limited and insufficient resources in schools across the U.S. (Cohen, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Kozol, 1991, 2005; Lopez, 2012); Black students have teachers who have low expectations with regard to their potential of academic achievement, academic failure, and social disenfranchisement (Kozol, 1991, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lewis, 2003; Lopez, 2012; Oakes, 2005; Watkins, 2001). The racial gap in educational outcomes continues to widen and is evidenced by: racial disparities in test scores, commonly referred to as the “achievement gap” (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Vanneman, A., Hamilton, L., Baldwin Anderson, J., and Rahman, T.,2009); retention and dropout rates (Orfield,2009); racial disparities in discipline which lead to disproportion in suspension and expulsions (Losen & Skiba,

2010; Skiba & Noguera, 2010; Skiba, Trachok, Chung, Baker & Hughes, 2012); overrepresentation of Black students in special education (Artiles, 2003; Artiles, Trent & Palmer, 2004; and under-representation in gifted and talented programs (Cohen, 2010; NCES; Kozol, 2005; Lee, 2008; Lopez, 2012).

Educational Disparities: The Black-White Achievement gap

The current reports of the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicates that although Black students have improved their mathematics and reading test scores, they still trail behind their White peers (NAEP, 2007). Analysis by the National Center for Educational Statistics in 2009 and 2011 shows that, on average, Black student fall behind their White peers by more than 20 test-score points on both the NAEP mathematics and reading assessments at fourth and eighth grades level (Appendix A & B). According to the NAEP study, this achievement gap equates to Black students being approximately two grade levels behind (NCES, 2009, 2011). The persistence of the academic achievement gap, as measured by NAEP, has been dire that in 2005 the National Governors' Association (NGA) declared: "Across the U.S., a gap in academic achievement persists between [students of color] and disadvantaged students and their white counterparts. This is one of the most pressing education-policy challenges that states currently face." Closing the racial achievement gap is one of the primary concerns and goals of recent education reform and policy efforts, as evidenced by *No Child Left Behind* and the *Race to the Top* legislations. Traditionally, the achievement gap has been measured by grades and standardized test scores. However, current research shows that racial disparities also exist when comparing dropout and enrollment rates in advanced

placement or gifted classes, and college completion among other success measures (NCES, 2007).

Explaining the Black/White achievement Gap

A number of explanations for the racial disparity in academic achievement have been offered by educational researchers. Scholars that support cultural deficit theories as the basis of the academic achievement gap suggest that Black children are entrenched in a ‘culture of poverty’ (Lewis, 1961), which leads to pathological lifestyles hindering their academic outcomes. The “culture of poverty” explanation for the historical under-performance of poor Black students became a popular discourse after the Moynihan Report (1965)⁷ suggested that Black family structures were dysfunctional based on Western/Eurocentric cultural worldviews and values: “Black America was a tangle of pathology because of its matriarchal structure...incapable of perpetuating itself without the assistance from the white world,” (p. 1). The “culture of poverty” advocates use a deficit model construction of Black students which is based on the individualistic ideology of poverty. Its proponents suggest that little can be done by schools to improve the academic achievement of Black children because they do not care about school, they are unmotivated, and they lack parental support (Gorski, 2008). The “culture of poverty” theory suggests that poor Black students do not value education and this leads to Black/White educational disparities in education. A number of scholars have opposed “the culture of poverty” concept as the primary reason for the academic achievement gap because it places the responsibility on Black children to solve the problems that are the results of long-term systemic and institutional developments in education (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Stereotype Threat

Claude Steele (2010) argues that “stereotype threat” contributes to the test score achievement gap between Black and White students. Steele’s theory suggests that Black students, saddled with inhibiting stereotypes of innate intellectual inferiority’ internalize the stereotypes which, in turn, affect their ability to perform in school, particularly on tests. Steele’s work has showed that Black students are keenly aware that the academic world as well as the wider society stereotypes them as less intelligent, lazy etc. Black students then experience the additional burdens of these stereotypes that have an impact on the testing situation, which are not experienced by students who are not negatively stereotyped. Black students take with them the fear that they will substantiate the negative stereotypes if they perform poorly on the test. According to Steele (1995, 1999, 2010), students have shown to perform poorly on test when they perceive that there is a chance they may be viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype or because they fear doing something that may inadvertently confirm a negative stereotype. Steele (2010) suggests that the *No Child Left Behind* policy and its emphasis on accountability testing has maximized the effect of stereotype threat because of the additional pressures placed on students, teachers, and schools to perform well on standardized tests. The stakes are so high that students seen as “weak links” in the testing process have the added concern placed on them that they might be jeopardizing their schools’ funding. The students are told that, if they perform poorly, this will lower the schools overall score, subjecting the school to scrutiny by the state. A number of researchers (Aronson, 2004; Lewin & Medina, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 2010) posit that the “stereotype threat”

phenomenon has led to the increase in Black students dropping out and being pushed out of high school.

Cultural Disconnect

A number of researchers (Coggins & Campbell, 2008; Delpit, 2001, 2012; Gay, 2000, 2002; Hilliard, 1967; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Pollard & Ajirotutu, 2000) have examined the challenges that cultural mismatch or incompatibility between home culture and school culture present challenges for the students, teachers, and administrators in schools. They suggest that the causes of student's academic disengagement can be found in the quality of instruction that Black students receive and the perceptions teachers hold of them. Delpit's (2001) concept of the "codes of the culture of power" posits that schools reflect behavior patterns and values that are commensurate with those of the White middle class teachers, and students that possess this "culture capital" will do better in schools. Black students that come to school without the benefit of this "cultural capital" will find themselves in a cultural conflict with teachers who require that they know the language code and value systems of White middle class culture. The students find themselves in a cultural collision (Beauchum & McCray, 2004, 2008) with teachers and administrators who send implicit messages to them that they are not welcomed or valued in the classroom. Suggesting that since most classroom teachers are White, their preconceived notions about Black children have an influence on classroom instruction, curriculum, pedagogical practices and school resources; these factors have been shown to have an impact on the academic achievement gap for Black students (Apple, 1990; Banks, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gay, 2004; Grant, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter, 2001 & Popkewitz, 1998). These researchers suggest that closing the academic

achievement gap for Black students requires integrating cultural competencies into the curriculum and understanding that Black students benefit from instruction that incorporates their history and culture in the curriculum.

Socio-economic Factors

A number of studies have looked at the relationship between low academic achievement and racial identity (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Vaught, 2008; Zarate, Bhimji & Reese, 2005) and suggest that while socio-economic factors plays a role in explaining the racial gap more of the variance in racial disparities in educational outcomes cannot be explained by social class differences alone (Hedges & Nowell, 1999; Jencks & Phillips, 1998). In a more recent longitudinal study of racial disparities in academic outcomes Berends, Lucas & Penaloza (2008) found that, despite improvements in the socio-economic status of Black families, racial disparities in academic outcomes persist.

The Illusion of Inclusion: The Colorblind Agenda:

The recent return to conservative ideologies in shaping public institutional policies has made it challenging to critically examine race in any aspect of society within the United States. This movement has been particularly successful at marginalizing the discussion of race within education with its promotion of the “color blind” agenda (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Many people refuse to accept the prevailing role that race continues to assume in our society, preferring instead to shift away from racism as one of the primary reasons for the problematic position of Black people in the U.S. to more popular explanations. Social class, intellect, poor work ethic, and single parent family structure, lead the list as replacements for race as the primary reasons for racial inequalities in

education (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; Ogbu, 1998; Williams, 2006; Wilson, 1980;). These explanations support the idea that the persistent racial gap in educational attainment between Black and White students continues because Black people are “the problem” (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Feagin 2006; Zuberi 2001). Zuberi (2001) suggests that the problem with this analysis is that it ignores the systemic problems in education, which are those of bias and racism. He reminds us that the statistical analysis employed in many educational studies has its basis in the American Eugenic movements of the 19th and 20th century. The Eugenics movement has an enduring legacy in the US psyche related to the concepts of White intellectual superiority and Black intellectual inferiority (Perry, et al. 2003). Accordingly, educational research seeking to examine educational achievement often negatively constructs Black people and other people of color as “the problem people” (Dubois, 1934; Zuberi, 2006).

Based on an education system that promotes color-blindness, we find that educators have been complicit in the perpetuation of White racial supremacy. The accountability and measurement systems of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation (2001) has had the same affect on many Black Children and other children of color that IQ tests had at the height of the popularity of the 1994 *Bell Curve* analysis (Fraser, 1995). This discourse has resulted in many educators suggesting that racial disparities in educational attainment between Black and White children have been based on the innate inability of Black children to learn (Kozol 2005). The *No Child Left Behind* legislation with its high stake testing emphasis has resulted in many Black and other children of color being relegated to “practical instruction” rather than college bound instruction. Kozol provides several examples of students whose ambitions to go to college were undermined. In one

example, a student who wants to take an Advance Placement class to prepare for college was told that she must take a sewing class (Kozol 2005, 180). In schools that serve the economically resource limited and predominately White populations, removing the college option would be rejected outright.

According to Bonilla-Silva (2008), the current climate in post civil rights America “has delegitimized the public expression of racially based feelings and viewpoints” (139). It is not politically correct to discuss race, leaving many educators living in a time of superficial racial tolerance, and in denial of the impact of institutionalized racist structures in educational systems. This is a time when many accept or insist that the significance of race particularly as it impacts the lives of Black people is passé (Cosby, 2007; Williams, 2006; Patterson, 2007; Steele, 1990; Themstorm & Themstorm, 1997; & Whorter, 2000; Wilson, 1980). Proponents of this “post- racial” discourse believe that the civil rights laws addressed core racial issues in US society. According to Bonilla –Silva (2008), “Today most Whites reject the old Jim Crow racial tenets in public discourse, yet endorse new ones that help maintain contemporary White supremacy....this is the post-civil rights way in which most Whites defend the racial status quo” (p. 140). The evidence of this shift in discourse is clearly seen in educational policies at the national level with the legislative dismantling of the Brown decisions. If we are a nation that believes that education can make a difference in one’s life, then our acceptance of the ‘color-blindness’ ethos has “profound consequences for how Black people will live their lives daily” (Fine et. al, 2003, 176).

Why Brown Did Not Work

With the landmark civil rights decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), the U.S. began its quest for equal educational opportunity for Blacks. The Court decision called for individuals to pay attention to racial oppression in the educational system declaring: “the basis of segregation and “separate but equal” rests upon a concept of the inherent inferiority of the colored race” (Patterson, 2001, p. 64). One problem with the Brown decision is that it rests on the idea of the “inherent inferiority of the colored race while the problem of imputed inherent superiority of the White race went untouched” (Sizemore, 2005). The focus on the inferiority of Blacks did not allow for the systemic problem of racism within the education system and the wider society to be addressed. The remedy to help the “inferior Blacks” was integration into the superior White schools. The Brown decision did not address the racism that privileged Whiteness and that had been historically integral to public education. According to Alexander (2001), “Schools operate very much like the wider society....the weight of historical and social science evidence acknowledges that there is no impermeable membrane between schools and the large society” (175). In other words, if Whiteness is privileged and Blackness is a mark of inferiority in the wider society outside of schools, then the racial stigmas that Blacks encounter in public spaces follow Black boys and Black girls through the school doors into the classrooms (Lopez, 2012). Prendergast (2003, p.24) states that “the arguments of psychological harm, as construed in Brown I, provided the grounds for overturning separate but equal without challenging White supremacy.” The Brown decision was weakened because of its accommodation of White supremacy. According to Sizemore (2005) and Ladson-Billings (2004), one implication

of the Brown decision was that Black children who sat in classrooms next to Black children suffered injury, because the all-Black schools were seen as inferior. The Black students entering the all-White schools walked into being looked at as less capable than White students. Sidle-Walker's (1996) work documents the fact that this idea of Black students being inferior was wrong because there is evidence which shows that some of the White schools were inferior to some of the all-Black schools with regard to student performance

The 1954 ruling by the United States Supreme Court concluded that school segregation was unconstitutional and inherently unequal in the first *Brown* ruling, commonly referred to as Brown I. A year later the decree to desegregate schools came with the declaration that the integration of schools could proceed with "all deliberate speed" (Brown, 1955). This decision is commonly referred to as Brown II. A fundamental flaw in the *Brown I* decision was that it rested on the idea of the "inherent inferiority of the colored race while the problem of imputed inherent superiority of the White race went untouched" (Sizemore, 2005). As previously stated, the focus on the inferiority of Blacks did not allow for the systemic problem of racism to be addressed within the education system and the wider society. The remedy to help the "inferior Blacks" was integration into the perceived superior White schools. The flaw in the Brown II decision was that it allowed the implementation of Brown I on the terms of White parents. White flight, a number of delaying tactics, and legal challenges helped to ensure that the vision of integrated equal educational systems never fully occurred (Ladson-Billings, 2004). The desegregation effort did lead to momentary gains in academic achievement made by Blacks in the 1970s and 80s and for a short time the racial gap in

educational outcomes was narrowed (Kao & Thompson, 2003; Horsford, 2011). Research has shown that the impact of these initial educational milestones decreased and that academic achievement gaps in mathematics and reading increased during the period of what is referred to as the “Reagan Revolution” (Hammon, Hyler & Williamson-Lott, 2012). During this period, several federal programs that supported K-12 schools in urban and rural communities were minimized or eradicated (Hammon, Hyler & Williamson-Lott, 2012; The Education Trust, 2004).

Today, nearly sixty years after the Brown decision, the school desegregation strategies that were promoted by this legislation have been ineffective in sustaining more and better educational opportunities for Black students (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). There has been a re-emergence of the old unconstitutional and inherently unequal separation of races philosophical tenets in our schools (Orfield & Gordon, 2001; Orfield & Eaton, 1996). This trend is often dismissed because of the popular discourse of “color blindness” which suggests that the separation of races does not necessarily result in unequal educational opportunities (Moses, 2011, p. 423). The Brown decision’s quest for “equal education” without acknowledgement of how society through its performance of Whiteness constructs a deficit identity for Black children in schools has allowed for the “color-blindness” view that currently permeates in education.

A number of legal cases have functioned to roll back and effectively dilute the power and impact of the Brown decisions. According to Ladson-Billings (2004),

...legal cases that closed off the opportunity for racially isolated communities of color to draw from White suburbs in order to desegregate

include: *Milliken v. Bradley*(1974, *San Antonio School District v. Rodriguez* (1973), *Board of Education of Oklahoma v. Dowell*(1991) and *Freeman v. Pitts* (1992). In *Rodriguez* the Court ruled that children had no constitutional right to equal school expenditures; *Dowel* and *Pitts* allowed formerly desegregated school districts to return to neighborhood schools because they were determined to be unitary (p. 9).

Two cases heard by the Supreme Court in 2006 challenged the school desegregation legacy of *Brown* and brought the question of the role of race into education and educational achievement in K-12 schools. In both the *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*, the court ruled that it is unconstitutional to use race in an effort to desegregate a school district. The cases in each district boiled down to the question: Did the school districts' consideration of a student's race in its education system assignment policies violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. constitution? In both the 'Parents Involved' and the 'Meredith's' cases each school district was trying to solve the problems of racial imbalance in their school districts by assigning students to certain schools. In Seattle, Washington:

“The Seattle School District allowed students to apply to any high school in the District. Since certain schools often became oversubscribed when too many students chose them as their first choice, the District used a system of tiebreakers to decide which students would be admitted to the popular schools. The second most important tiebreaker was a racial factor intended to maintain racial diversity. If the racial demographics of any

school's student body deviated by more than a predetermined number of percentage points from those of Seattle's total student population (approximately 40% white and 60% non- white), the racial tiebreaker went into effect. At a particular school either whites or non-whites could be favored for admission depending on which race would bring the racial balance closer to the goal.” (The Oyez Project, 2012)

In Jefferson County, Kentucky:

“Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) were integrated by court order until 2000. After its release from the order, JCPS implemented an enrollment plan to maintain substantial racial integration. Students were given a choice of schools, but not all schools could accommodate all applicants. In those cases, student enrollment was decided on the basis of several factors, including place of residence, school capacity, and random chance, as well as race. However, no school was allowed to have an enrollment of black students less than 15% or greater than 50% of its student population.” (The Oyez Project, 2012)

The Supreme Court decisions in ‘Parents Involved’ and the ‘Meredith’ cases are important because they represent a reversal of the *Brown* decision. These two decisions which took place on opposite sides of the country have placed the U.S. on a course which turns the nation from the de-segregation vision of the *Brown* decision toward accepting a return to segregation of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Justice Clarence Thomas believed that the *Brown* decision had finally been rectified; in his opinion, the essence of the Fourteenth

amendment suggests an illegality of the consideration of race for any reason (Lemann, 2007). Asserting that “we have a colorblind constitution,” Thomas was clear that his intention was that Brown be reversed when he wrote: “What was wrong in 1954 cannot be right today” (Lemann, 2007). In his decision, Chief Justice Roberts puts forth the following argument, “The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race (Lemann, 2007).”

The Roberts decision was the direct opposite of an earlier Supreme Court decision made by Justice Blackmun in the 1978 *Regents of California v. Bakke* case. This case, similar to both the ‘Parents Involved’ and ‘Meredith’ cases, was also a test of the affirmative action policies except that it involved higher education rather than K-12. Writing for the majority, Blackmun wrote in his decision:

"I suspect that it would be impossible to arrange an affirmative-action program in a racially neutral way and have it successful. To ask that this be so is to demand the impossible...In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race"

While the Blackmun decision calls us to make race the central construct in our understanding of inequality particularly in schools, the Roberts court would have us believe that in this country the need for such race conscious remedies have long passed as we must move beyond race to one of colorblindness. The visionary words of W.E.B. Du Bois help to explain why the Robert’s decision, which is based on the ideological framework of color blindness, is problematic. This provides caution to his contemporaries that did not take into account the position of writers like Du Bois: “The

present attitude of white America toward black America” (Dubois, 1935, p. 328). He warned that it was a mistake,

...to deceive ourselves into thinking that race prejudice in the United States across the Color Line is gradually softening and that slowly but surely we are coming to the time when racial animosities and class lines will be so obliterated that separate schools will be anachronism.” (p. 328)

Until we have reversed the persistent gaps in educational funding, resources, teaching, learning and achievement that many Black children face in their schooling experience in the U.S., Moses (2002) writes we will need a race conscious educational policy.

School and Racial identity - Race-Talk in Education

One way in which race operates in the education experiences of Black children is that it positions them to negotiate the externally scripted identities given them (Brubaker and Cooper, 2002; Lewis, 2003). Researchers have also engaged in discussion regarding the salience of schools and racial identity in middle schools and high schools (O’Connor, 2001; Peterson-Lewis & Bratton, 2004; & Pollock, 2001, 2004). Most of these works use ethnographic research methods to discern how Black students experience and comprehend race in school situations.

A number of scholars have investigated how racial ideologies shape and constrain the academic identities of Black students (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billing 1998; Lewis 2003; Watkins 2001; Woodson 1933). Woodson (1933) produced a conclusive and useful evaluation of the educational system with a specific focus on how its undermining of

Black people; he used the term *Mis-education* to describe the Black school experience. Woodson's concept is still relevant and expressive of the Black school experience even in 2012. Now, however, this concept is stridently articulated by several individuals that likewise challenge the current problematic state of the educational system in the U.S. Nearly eighty years after Woodson, Delpit (2012) echoes him when she makes the case that Black students are not provided opportunities to reach their potential because they are hindered by "society's deeply ingrained bias of equating blackness with inferiority (p. 9)." Continuing an argument she first launched in her book *Other People's Children*, she advises teachers to learn about the children that sit in their classes, learn about their lived experiences, so as not to succumb to the effects of stereotype threat. In her ethnographic study of an elementary school, Lewis (2003) takes a more micro level approach in the book *Race in the Schoolyard*, as she explores how race identity and racial inequalities are reproduced on a routine basis in schools. Lewis states, "Schools act as racializing agents in the production and transformation of race. Schools are arguably one of the central institutions involved in the drawing and redrawing of racial lines (p. 7)." Based on the work of Lewis, schools teach racial identity in that they provide the setting where children learn the rules associated with racial identity. Historically, public schools have been central location for the contestation of race, racial meanings and racial entitlement in the U. S. (Lewis, 2001; Watkins 2001).

Summary

This chapter explored research germane to the educational experiences of Black Americans. Starting with an overview of the history of the Black experience in school and engaging in a discussion of the literature focused on issues regarding the Black/White achievement gap and the persistence of racial inequalities and inequities in schools. Some research has been conducted which looks at how Black identity construction affects the Black student's experience in school, but a number of scholars have suggested that more work needs to be done that examines how Black educational experiences and outcomes that come from their daily lived experiences with race and racism (Cohen, 2012; Horsford, 2002; Moses, 2002; O'Connor, 2009; Lewis, 2003; Lewis & Mueller, 2007; Lopez, 2012). This research is being done in an effort to contribute to the understanding of how Black people experience school in the United States and how their everyday experiences with racism affect their educational outcomes. Using the oral histories of four generations of Black people who live in upstate New York, this study gives voice to participants and enables them to describe their educational experiences. Chapter IV discusses the methodology and the procedures for this study.

Chapter IV: History Chapter: Confronting Race in Education

Black peoples struggle for an equal opportunity to learn has been synonymous with their struggle for freedom, empowerment, and human dignity (Leonardo, 2009; Allen, Suh, Gonzalez & Yang, 2008; Spring, 2009). The current state of Black education in the United States (US) would suggest that the struggle continues. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), Black students are nearly four times more likely to be placed in special education classes as compared to White students. They are three times more likely to be suspended from high school and at least twice as likely to leave school without a high school diploma. Black students in US educational systems experience substantial racial inequalities. These educational disparities shown in the statistics have been referred to as “The achievement gap.” There has been a myriad of educational programs that have focused on closing the “achievement gap.” The pursuit to eliminate racial disparities in educational attainment has been a problem large in scope. To better understand these complexities, we must examine the socio-historical contexts of the racial disparities in the educational achievement of Blacks in the US.

History of Black Education since Slavery

The historical writing about Black education in the U.S. seems to have developed as a separate entity from the educational history of the dominant culture. Educational historians have often only told the story of the dominant cultures’ educational experiences with only a minimal mention of those of African Americans, Latino/as, Asian Americans, immigrant groups, and women. Black education has been primarily influenced by White philanthropy, social control, and industrial education. Some of the

most notable Black authors that speak to this history are James D. Anderson (1988) in his book *The Education of the Blacks in the South, 1860 – 1935*, Eric Anderson and Alfred Moss's (1999) *Dangerous donations* and Horace Mann Bond's (1934) classic text *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order*. These works represent a traditional historical narrative on Black education. In this chapter, I will revisit their narratives and add to these narratives and research, while constructing the largely untold story of key components of Black educational history. While the historic debate between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington often anchors the historiography of Black education, ideals crafted about the educatability of Black people and their humanity influenced the White ideologues who, according to Watkins (2001), were the true architects of Black education long before the great debate occurred. The historical positioning of Black people as intellectually inferior to Whites provided a rationale for the justification to those in power to disenfranchise Black people from the pursuit of educational opportunities. Currently, Black America continues to experience the impact of institutionalized racism within educational social structures (Castagno, 2008; Delpit, 2012; Horsford, 2011; Lewis, 2003). This chapter speaks specifically to the experiences of Blacks through educational reform efforts in the U.S.; one of the major objectives of this chapter is to provide a salient socio-historical context for examining key moments in the history of Black education in the U.S. To do this, I will examine some of the critical events in the history of educational reform as a framework for this discussion.

Slavery and Education

When Africans were brought to the United States as slaves, educating them was thought to be a humane effort to bring them out of African savagery and taught

civilization (Bureau of education, 1917, p. 244). It is a common understanding that slaves were not allowed an education; however, prior to 1830, slaves were often educated as a means of becoming familiar with the doctrines of Christianity and in assisting their master's children in their lessons (Bureau of education, 1917, p.245; Carruthers, 1994, p. 45). In the 18th century, based on the development of the plantation system, Africans were transported from Africa to the U.S. to work as a part of the plantation economies with tobacco, rice, and cotton. The system of slavery was maintained, in part, through not educating enslaved Africans. The education of enslaved Africans was viewed as a mechanism for rebelliousness and uprisings. The attempted revolt by Nat Turner was used as an example to support this thinking. In 1831 Nat Turner led a group of nearly seventy enslaved Africans living in Southampton County, Virginia in an insurgency against slavery (Aptheker, p. 298). Based on the work of Aptheker (1993) Turner, believing he was divinely called, led a band of insurgents in a slave revolt killing some sixty White, men, women and children (p. 298). Turner along with a number of his conspirators were caught and executed. Turner's revolt is important but it is the response to the revolt that was most impactful for Black Americans. Motivated by revenge White citizens of Southampton County avenged the slaying of white citizens, but indiscriminately killing slaves, some were killed that had no connection with the rebellion (p. 302). In the aftermath of Turner's rebellion it was viewed as dangerous to educate enslaved Africans (Anderson, 1988, p. 244). This idea is clarified in the following speech to the Virginia legislature in the aftermath of the Nat Turner Revolt in 1831:

“Sir, we have, as far as possible closed every avenue by which light might enter their minds; we have only to go one step further—to extinguish their capacity to see the light, and our work would be completed; they would then be reduced to the level of the beasts of the field, and we should be safe” (Speech of Henry Berry, House of Delegates of Virginia, January 20, 1833).

As a result, the education of slaves was prohibited in the Southern region of the US during the early nineteenth century (Anderson, 1988; Anderson & Moss, 1999; Spring, 2009). Moreover, the critical role of Black labor was fundamental in providing the funds for educational opportunities of White children, “[A]s it was common practice for enslaved and (post slavery) “indentured” children to be “loaned” out for service as apprentices in exchange for cash to support the private school tuition of their “owner’s” children” (Themba-Nixon, 2001).

The common school movement was one of the first large-scale reform efforts in the history of U.S. education. In 1837, Horace Mann, as the first secretary of education in Massachusetts, developed annual reports that were viewed as archetypes or paradigms for school reform on a national level (Spring, 2009). Mann vied for the creation of the common school, meaning tax-supported public elementary schools. But, how common was schooling in the mid-nineteenth century when the common school began to take root? The common school was created with goals to transform the “foreigners” into acceptable Americans, who at this time were the white, Angle Saxon, protestant Americans. Mann also asserted that education could preserve social stability. He viewed school as the key to social improvement. He posited that schools provided opportunities to prevent crime through the promotion of moral values for students in schools. Mann

argued that public schooling would eradicate poverty through the development of the economic infrastructure of a community meaning individuals would be prepared to be economically successful (Spring, 2009).

During the 1840s, there were two primary schools for Black children in Boston, which were both segregated. Parents and reform-minded individuals discussed strategies to protest this situation. Ultimately a petition to desegregate the schools was sent to the Boston School Committee which resulted in no action being taken (Bernard & Mondale, 2001). In 1846, Benjamin Roberts, a Black man from Boston, filed a legal suit to allow his daughter to attend a White segregated school. The Massachusetts State Supreme Court ruled that the Boston School Committee could establish separate school facilities for Black and White students. Black taxpayers were subsidizing White education and receiving inferior facilities and teachers. Based on this ruling, Blacks recognized that they would not be invited into the “common” school and would need to develop their own schools for the education of Black children. At this time, the role of Black churches and philanthropic abolitionists was critical in terms of building Black educational institutions. In the South, slavery was still legal and the provision of education to slaves was not actualized, although many slaves were self-taught and taught each other to read often under penalty of death. By 1860, most southern states had outlawed Black education. Blacks took their efforts to become educated underground since by the middle of the century “an intelligent Negro became the object of suspicion” and it was not safe to be known as a Black person who could read or write (Bureau of Education, 1917, p. 247).” According to Woodson (1919), the number of “Negroes” who were educated in 1865 was much less than there had been in 1825. The effect of laws banning the education of

Blacks in the South was to make the slaves value the ability to read all the more. So despite the barriers to education, Black people viewed education as a birth right in the same light as personal empowerment, self-respect, and freedom (Anderson, 1988).

The autobiographical narrative of Frederick Douglass published in 1881, discussed stories of his own life experiences which support this idea (Douglass, 1968). Upon hearing his owner Mr. Auld reprimand his wife for attempting to teach him to read, Douglass experienced a transformation in which he was determined to learn to read. Douglass's pursuit for an education was initiated by his owner's intent to deny him one:

“...if you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master---to do as he is told. ” ... education would “spoil a nigger,” make him unfit to be a slave, make him discontent, unhappy and unmanageable” (p.159).

Douglass believed in the idea that freedom began with literacy. Douglass stated:

“ from that moment I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom...the argument that he [Mr. Auld] so warmly waged against my learning to read, only seemed to inspired me with a desire and determination to learn” (Douglass, 1968, p. 47-48).

Through various means both legal and illegal in 1860, despite the barriers they experienced, nearly 15% of the Black population was literate. When slavery was ended, Black people found themselves in a very difficult position. They had their freedom, but not much else: no land, money, or power. Education as a strategy to achieve freedom became even more important.

In addition to the common school movement, the mid-nineteenth century also saw a shift in social attitudes and the emergence of the social sciences. These two factors had a major impact on “progressive” ideas. The Revolutionary era of individualism and egalitarianism began to shift to a concept of people belonging to a particular group with a group consciousness. Hamilton Cravens (1985) provides an example of abolitionism to illuminate this point. American abolitionists prior to the 1830s saw all black people – free and enslaved as individual Africans separate and apart from Americans who were unable to fit in to American “civilized” society. According to Cravens (1985) from the 1830s onward, however, abolitionists defined slaves as

“members of a group, blacks, that constituted a natural part of the American social order and whose enslavement was both a moral blight upon the republic’s fair reputation and an affront to Christianity...By the early 1840s slaves were widely perceived as a group in society that constituted a social problem, just as free blacks in the North found that they had become redefined by the White majority as a troublesome group—with the enactment of many so-called Jim Crow laws in the 1830s and later” (p. 186).

Based on the work of Winfield (2007), with the shift from individual to group, the social sciences developed and provided a new focus of study. During the 1830s, the study of phrenology and polygenism developed. The core ideas of phrenology and polygenism had an impact on U.S. worldviews. Based on a multiplicity of craniometry, the study of phrenology articulated that the size and shape of the brain corresponded to an individual’s personality and intellect. Horace Mann read a text on phrenology, which “...provided him with the scientific hope that the mental faculties could be developed and

shaped to create a moral and good individual and, consequently, a moral and just society” (Spring, 2009, p. 83). Polygenism contended that the races had been created separately based on pseudo-scientific studies through the measurement of the skulls of individuals. The “Negro” brain studies were used to maintain scientific racism and the notion of the inferiority of Blacks. The concept of polygenism also served to support the provisions of slavery, which had an impact on educational reforms during the Progressive era (e.g., curriculum development).

According to Winfield (2007), Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* was published in 1859 during the time that John Brown was lynched for working toward the eradication of slavery. Darwin’s theory of evolution spurred a paradigm shift and provided the basis for many subsequent theories that would have a major impact on society and educational social policies. Building on the work on Darwin, an individual’s intellect juxtaposed with the evolutionary progression in human development. The scientific racism embedded in the Eugenics concept influenced the development of psychology, which in turn, had an impact on pedagogy and education (Rippa, 1997; Winfield, 2007). Winfield (2007) writes, “Eugenicists believed ability was innate and that the job of education was to sort students by matching inborn ability with the appropriate vocation” (p. 108). Hence “the relationship between eugenic ideology and early developments in curriculum was based on popular cultural understandings of racial hierarchy and ability” (p. 109).

W.E.B. Du Bois’ examination of the development of formal schooling in the antebellum South contended that there were two major impediments to the advancement of public schooling during the early post-Civil War era. The first was the large number of White property owners who challenged the idea of providing public schools at taxpayers’

expense. The second was the Southern White working class which failed to see the value of public schooling and made few demands for its provision (Dubois, 1998, p. 641). According to Du Bois (1998), many Southerners believed that education was a “private matter and not a concern for the state and that the most important training a child received was in the home where they were socialized into societal values” (p.641). In addition, the Civil War was a major obstacle from thinking about and implementing educational reform. However, during the Civil War and after, Blacks still attempted to create schools with the assistance of Black educators and missionaries from the North. For example, according to Anderson (1988), in 1861, Mary Peake was one of the first Black educators to develop a school in Virginia. Peake’s efforts to educate Blacks superseded those of the federal government. Efforts to assist in the education of Blacks began in earnest with the passage of the 13th amendment and the development of the Freedman’s Bureau in 1865 (Anderson, 1988). The first national superintendent of schools in the Freedman’s Bureau documented the eagerness with which Blacks engaged in educating themselves. According to the Bureau, there were freed slaves that created schools and former slaves that engaged in self-study with books. The Freedman’s Bureau also provided leadership in the development of historically Black colleges. These critical advancements had a substantial impact on the increase in Black literacy following the Civil War (Anderson, 1988; Mondale & Patton, 2001).

The Great Debate

According to Kliebard (1995), the debate pursued between critics and proponents of manual training (the precursor to vocational education), has been around since the inception of curriculum development. Manual training differed from classic education

because of its focus on learning a skill. Blacks were seen as incapable of the higher level thinking required for a traditional liberal education were predisposed to an education based on a manual training curriculum (Anderson, 1988; Kliebard, 1995). Created in 1867, The Hampton Institute was designed as a manual training school for Blacks and Native Americans. Based on the notion that Blacks and Native Americans were not biologically inferior but just at an earlier stage of development compared to Whites, the purpose of the school was to provide an education for people of color to advance through embracing Eurocentric or Western cultural norms or worldviews (Kliebard, 1995). The Hampton Institute also prepared freed slaves to be teachers whose primary purpose was to promote the values of morality and positive work ethic for students. Moreover, based on the work of Berry and Blassingame (1982), the critical educational debate between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington provided an illustration of the variegated philosophical frameworks that Black scholars engaged regarding Black education. This seminal debate has been influential in the shaping of Black education, historically and in contemporary contexts.

By 1900, whether one agreed with W.E.B. Du Bois and supported the idea of liberal education or shared Booker T. Washington's belief in vocational education, neither was comprehensive enough to make a substantial difference in the lives of Black people. As the debate between Du Bois and Washington was examined in the Black community, the White community supported Washington and showed its support for the philosophy of "special education" for the "Negro" modeled after the Hampton Institute's curriculum. The Hampton Institute was led by General Samuel Armstrong, who argued that the "Negro could best be morally and socially uplifted through labor and character

building” (Watkins, 2001). This notion of “Negro” education was embedded in the Lake Mohonk Conferences of the 1890s. Carruthers (1994) articulated the role that White educators assumed in the development and implementation of the “Negro” education system:

“Some leading White educators of this country met at Lake Mohonk, New York on June 4-6, 1890 and June 3-5, 1891, to read papers and discuss what they officially called the “Negro question.” By the time the second conference ended, they had decided the primary goals of education for Blacks should be morality and dignity of labor (i.e. working for White folks)..... The well known philosophical argument between Dubois and Washington came after the Lake Mohonk Conferences. General Samuel Armstrong was among the leading figures at the Lake Mohonk Conferences. Armstrong recommended Booker T. Washington, his best pupil at Hampton to be the principal of a new school at Tuskegee in 1881, and developed the educational model that Washington implemented at Tuskegee. DuBois and Washington never addressed the issue of White control over African-American education and indirect White control of the Black population through educated Negro elite. These fundamental issues had been decided upon by the powerful Whites who participated in the Mohonk Conferences and in other similar discussions of the ‘Negro question’” (p. 46-48)

Based on the work of Carruthers (1994) and Anderson (1988), segregated, industrial education was viewed affirmatively by Southern industrialists that attempted to avoid the unionization of Black workers. Northern philanthropists (e.g., Andrew Carnegie who granted a major endowment to Tuskegee) believed that it was necessary to educate

Black workers in order to preserve the United States' position in the world economy and this was to be achieved by promoting good work habits. The 14th Amendment giving citizenship to former slaves was ratified in 1868. The equal protection clause of this amendment implies the right to equal educational opportunities. This was a critical advancement for Blacks during this period. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* legislative statute mandated the principle of "separate but equal" in that segregated facilities were considered constitutional as long as these facilities were "equal." Significantly, this Supreme Court decision failed to operationalize the concept of equality, which had a critical impact on educational inequities and injustices for Blacks in the U.S., and – historically – has rendered persistent educational disparities for Blacks in this country.

The Progressive Era

According to Caruthers (1988), the Progressive Era, which occurred at the turn of the 20th century, was another major period of school reform. The effects of long-term economic, demographic, and social trends had a major impact on U.S. society and schooling during the Progressive Era. Industrialization had a substantial impact on social relations in the U.S. That is, the geographic expansion in the West and a colonizing impetus changed the physical and social boundaries of U.S. society. A number of salient factors during this historical periodization, including but not limited to demographic (e.g., urbanization, migration, and immigration), bureaucratization, and development of social sciences, influenced these manifestations. These large-scale transformations influenced Eurocentric and Western cultural milieus and values pertaining to the theories and practices of schooling. Additionally, during the 19th century, the natural sciences as well as the social sciences had an impact on the professionalization and bureaucratization of

education. These historical formulations, as situated in the concepts of Eugenics and Darwinism, influenced the practice of schooling based on the work of educators such as to G. Stanley Hall, Edward L. Thorndike, and John Dewey.

Child-Centered Theory

Innovations such as school lunches, playgrounds, and graded classrooms represent some of the improvements developed by the reformers. However, these developments were not provided to all students. Blacks experienced educational disenfranchisement through a variety of mechanisms (e.g., withholding of tax funds for Black schools). The separate education practices for Black students were cultivated through self-help and philanthropic entities.

Far from ignoring race, the educational reforms of the progressive era focused on contending with a racialized student. U.S. society at the time was confronted by race through immigration, and issues concerning the domestic populations of Blacks and Native Americans. Euro-centric curriculum, boarding schools, Americanization programs were just some of the ways students of color experienced the education system. Based on the work of Spring (2009), the quest to bring people of color into the normative idea of “American” resulted in the education systems enacting a program of Deculturalization. Blacks, by virtue of their skin color, would find it difficult to be brought into the American society and treated as citizens equal to Whites. As a result Blacks would be pushed into an educational system that meant segregation and manual training for them. The solution for Native Americans was to have their children forcibly removed from their homes and placed in distant boarding schools. The convergence of prevalent discourses

allowed for educational reform movements to bypass improving schooling for students of color in the early 20th century while directing their education to serve the needs of the economy and other social dictates. As Baker (1995) points out, discourses about race and nature combined to create theories such as Hall's culture epoch theory and movements (e.g., eugenics and child study).

According to Winfield (2007), child-centered theory was one of the first major curriculum reforms in the United States. Based on the work of G. Stanley Hall, the philosophical underpinnings of the child study movement juxtaposed child observation with curriculum that was based on the concept of stages of development for children. Hall posited that Black, Native American and "defective" children not only would not benefit from education but would actually have their health harmed by doing so (Baker, 1995). The concept of the stage theory of child development was based on Social Darwinism and Eugenics movements. Moreover, building on these ideas, culture epoch theory was developed. This belief contends that child development relates to the concept of evolution (e.g., the notion of "savagery to civilization"). Based on culture epoch theory, the childhood and adulthood phase of development is analogous to the phases that culminate in "civilization." Based on this notion, an evolutionary phase of genetics involved children starting from "savagery" through "civilization" in adulthood. Blacks were negatively constructed as biologically inferior to Whites. These ideas, grounded in scientific racism, provided a justification for the educational disenfranchisement of Blacks in the U.S.

Based on the work of Winfield (2007), social engineering also emerged as progressive ideology. Based on experiments with animals, Edward L. Thorndike, a

psychologist, developed theories related to an organism's response to the environment. Thorndike contended that education and schools could change individuals through scientifically determined methods. However, based on educational experiments, Thorndike postulated the concept of "native intelligence" and contended that test scores corresponded with genetics. These pseudo-scientific experiments by Thorndike used intelligence tests in the study of Black and White children as a basis to determine racial differences in their educational attainment.

Another important milestone in the history of Black education related to the state of the common school movement for Black students, which was evaluated in a study conducted by Atlanta University in 1901. The study showed that racial inequalities in the distribution of resources, and the deterioration of public systems and the resulting educational disenfranchisement for Black students. Some of the students from these schools were able to perform well and pursued college and career opportunities. It was often the case that high school graduates worked as domestic workers and chauffeurs for affluent White families. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, this system of education was the norm for Black children. In this context, Woodson (1933) and Anderson (1988) posited that the educational reform programs developed and implemented in schools for Black children were complicit in the continued political and social subordination of Blacks. Woodson (1933) explored the academic struggles of Black children being taught in a Euro-centric educational system. He concluded that Black children experienced racial oppression in these educational systems. Woodson (1993) contends that during the "Jim Crow" era Blacks were subjected to an education system which bombarded them with messages suggesting they were intellectually inferior

to Whites. The ongoing stigmatization Black children faced in classrooms instilled a sense of inferiority and uneducability in their minds. The education system from emancipation to the 1930s was successful in relegating Black people to a life of subordination to White people and impoverishment. Woodson indicated that for the Black communities, the primary objective of the school curriculum was to create accommodating, accepting, and conforming individuals.

The critical ideas posed by Black scholars, including Du Bois and Woodson, suggest that educational policy influences the educational opportunities for Blacks, and that these socio-historical and –political contexts have an impact on current schooling practices for Blacks in the U.S. (Bonilla-Silva 2006, Leonardo 2009; Allen, Suh, Gonzalez & Yang 2008; Kozol, 2005). For example, Shujaa (1996), asserts that, parallel to the positions of scholars regarding education during Woodson’s era, current educators maintain the idea of the inferiority of Black people and the superiority of White people on both conscious and unconscious levels. Moreover, Bonilla-Silva (2006), explores the concept of color-blind education in that educators continue to enact the idea that the cultural values and worldviews of Blacks are inferior and that of Whites are superior.

Based on the work of Margolis (2003), one could argue that the Progressive Era Education Movement led by John Dewey provided the ground work for dismissing race as important in education. Dewey theorized about an education system which is inclusive and democratic at the same time that Black children were being exposed to an educational system which prepared them to be excluded from the democratic process. Dewey is a seminal figure in education whose theories formed the basis of the Progressive Era educational reform movement and whose educational reform efforts did

not address the complexities of racism. In the context of Dewey's contemporaries, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Carter G. Woodson, and Alain Locke, whose scholarship attempted to examine the complexities of the educational status of Blacks during the beginning of the 20th century, one would imagine that Dewey's concept of educational democracy would incorporate the whole US society. One of the major limitations of Dewey's ideas related to the marginalization of the educational experiences of Blacks, especially those of Black children. According to Shujaa (1996), although Dewey was a founding member of the NAACP, his scholarship excluded questions of race and social class. According to Margolis (2003), there is a void in the scholarship of Dewey in that the ideas of Black scholars, including Dubois, Washington, Woodson, and Locke, during this historical era, have been excluded. The erasure of Black scholars from Dewey's theoretical ideas articulates a fundamental problem with the continuation of the "conceptual and theoretical Whiteness of western philosophy" Mills (1998).

According to Watkins (2001), in 1917, the year that the US entered World War I, the *Smith-Hughes Act* was passed (i.e., the Federal government supports job skill training), the Bureau of Education issued a report entitled, *Negro Education: A Survey of Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States*. This report collected statistics on attendance, facilities, funding, and curriculum for educational institutions. The significance for the report related to "the *necessity* of educating the so-called Negro student (Bureau of Education, 1917, p. 25)." So, it is fair to ask at this point, why is it suddenly so important to educate the Black student? This relates to the recent and pervasive perception of the un-educability of Blacks. The report states: "The future development of the Southern States in industry, in agriculture, in sanitation, and in

morality requires the effective education, not only of the White youth but also of the colored youth of those states” (Bureau of Education, 1917, p. 25). The report applauds the nation’s efforts to give Blacks access to education, though only through a “separate and unequal” educational system designed to prepare them for their designated “place” at the bottom of a segregated society. According to the Bureau of Education’s *Negro Education* report, “The report is presented to the public with the profound conviction that a knowledge of conditions as they actually exist in the field of Negro education can do only good” (p. xiii). Despite the limitations of segregation, generations of Black parents, children, and teachers fought and sacrificed for “a chance to learn” (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). The *Negro Education* report is one of the earliest comprehensive studies of Black education that documents the historical trajectory of schooling for Blacks in the United States.

From the turn of the last century until the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*, very little changed in the educational experiences of Black children, particularly those living in the South (Anderson, 1988). The ‘separate but equal’ doctrine based in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision was applied to many public schools attended by Black children (Anderson, 1988). Leading up to the *Brown* decision efforts made by legal strategist such as Charles Hamilton and Thurgood Marshall working on behalf of the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP) over the course of twenty years (1935 -1995) laid the groundwork which ultimately led to the *Brown* decision (“The U.S. National Archives”). According to Spring (2010), “The Supreme Court argued in the *Brown* decision, ‘In the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently

unequal” (p. 115). The *Brown* decision was a major criticism of the schooling that a disproportionate number of Black children in the U.S. had received. By the time legal segregation ended, Blacks were still unequal to Whites for educational achievement outcomes. Black children who left the all-Black schools and were being taught in integrated schools “were mainly taught by White teachers who reinforced racial stereotypes” (hooks, 1994, p. 3). The impetus for schools to develop a cadre of scientists and engineers and the increasing acknowledge of the “achievement gap” between Black and White children led some to again raise the question of the educability of Black children.

According to Spring (2011), the next significant educational reform policy affecting Black children was enacted, as part of the “War on Poverty,” the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed in 1965. Title I of this act specifically states:

“The Congress hereby declares it to be the policy of the United States to provide financial assistance....to expand and improveeducational programs by various means... which contribute particularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children” (Spring, 2011, p.16)

Black children fall into the group of “educationally deprived children” targeted in the ESEA act. The ESEA act provided more resources and funding to school districts to assist them in addressing the economic barriers children of color faced in their quest to access a quality education. Programs like “head start” were successful in elevating the capabilities of students of color. There were many indicators that the ESEA was making

inroads and many Black students were finding success in education. This all changed once the federal funding was cut and the school district lost much of the funding they used to target the special educational needs of the poor and students of color. There were indications that the removal of funding saw a reversal of many of the gains made as the educational disparities between Black and White students increased. This was evidenced by the conclusions drawn approximately 20 years later in the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk*. Again, the question is asked: How can we educate these Black children or how do we decrease the achievement gap? Achievement gap is the code word for the academic deficiencies of Black children. Parallel to Woodson in a previous era, Black scholars throughout this time period questioned the type of education Black children were receiving. The passages of the *Brown v. Board of Education*, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the 1968 Voting Rights Act show that Black children were always fighting on two fronts - one to receive an education equal to that of White children and, secondly, to live in a society that acknowledged their right to full citizenship. As a result of the *Brown* decision along with desegregation efforts, there was short-term progress made in educational outcomes for Black students (Horsford, 2011). For example, current research has indicated that these educational outcomes diminished over time (Hammon, Hyler & Williamson-Lott, 2012).

According to Spring (2011), based on the work conducted during the Civil Rights era, there was an increase in enrollment for Black college students during the 1970s. During the 1980s, with the advent of the “Reagan Revolution,” the achievement gaps in education juxtaposed with the racialized segregation of schools increased substantially (Kozol, 2005). Following this period, in 2002, the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB)

legislation was enacted during the Bush presidency. NCLB increased state funding to schools as well as federal mandates and sanctions. The mandates included testing and called for schools to hire “highly qualified” teachers (Spring, 2011). States receiving funding were required to meet targets for proficiency in math and reading with the goal of having all students proficient by 2014. Proficiency targets were measured by meeting *adequate yearly progress* (Spring, 2011). *No Child Left Behind* required that each state develop a system to ensure that overall student achievement was improving. In addition, it required the academic achievement of low-income and students of color to improve. Title 1 schools that did not meet the annual targets were required to offer tutoring or the opportunity to transfer out of the school (Spring, 2011). The outcome of *No Child Left Behind* resulted in substantial educational disparities for young people based on race and social class in the U.S. (Spring, 2011).

As the nation began to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision outlawing racial segregation in public education, a national discussion on the legacy of the ruling and the state of schooling in the United States emerged. Many people-educators, politicians and civil rights activists debated whether this historic case had lived up to its promise (Alonso, Anderson, Su, & Theoharis, 2009, p. 2). The promise embedded in this decision was the creation of racially integrated and equal schools. Yet, in 2004 as is the case today, many Black children enter schools which are even more segregated and unequal than those their parents and grandparents attended (Alonso et al., 2009; Kozol, 2005; Lopez, 2012). Today, as was the case for their ancestors who were newly freed slaves, there is a question about the educability of Black children. Masked in the terms such as the

“Black/White achievement gap” is the idea that Black children are somehow unable to learn as well as their White counterparts. Yet, while many of the reforms in the last 60 years have specifically targeted poor and children of color, the result has not been an achievement gap, but an education gap, as these children were the recipients of an inferior education.

The current state of Black education according to the National Center for Educational Statistics (The Condition of Education, 2011) shows that Black students are nearly four times more likely to be placed in special education classes. They are three times more likely to be suspended from high school (The Condition of Education, 2011; Losen & Skiba, 2010) and at least twice likely to exit school without a high school diploma (The Condition of Education, 2011). In fact, Black students in the US are negatively and disproportionately represented across educational outcomes. The educational disparities have often been referred to as “the achievement gap.” There have been a myriad of educational programs that have been focused on the closing the “achievement gap.”

Race to the Top

One of the major current initiatives to address educational disparities and the achievement gap in the U.S. relates to the “Race to the Top” educational reform legislation, conceptualized by President Barack Obama in 2009. According to Spring (2011), the primary objective of the “Race to the Top” legislation, based on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, is to promote educational reform through the achievement of performance criterion related to educational policies. In response to the

“Race to the Top” legislation, a number of civil rights organizations, including the NAACP, challenged the basic premise of the “Race to the Top”:

“More than fifty years ago, it took the persistent efforts of parents and students in cities and hamlets across the country to persuade the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* to rule that all students should have access to an inclusive, high-quality education. Today, our nation is still struggling to fulfill Brown’s promise. As a community of civil rights organizations, our objective is not to support prescriptions that only have the capacity to change a few schools for a few students. We want a blueprint for a federal commitment to education reform that embraces the entire nation and all of its people” (NAACP, 2010, p. 16).

The NAACP (2010) report addresses a multitude of factors related to President Obama’s objectives for the *Race to the Top* legislation. The NAACP (2010) report recognizes key components of President’s Obama’s legislation that advance public education. However, the NAACP (2010) report indicates that the *Race to the Top* legislation, as conceptualized by President Obama, promotes partiality for charter schools as the archetype to replace a failing public school system. For example, according to the NAACP (2010), questions were raised about the continued disenfranchisement of young Black people based on race and social class in relation to the charter schools. In addition, the NAACP (2010) report provides key recommendations (e.g., "universal, high quality, early childhood education" and "universal access to highly effective teachers"). Furthermore, according to the NAACP (2010) report, "If education is a civil right, why should children in 'winning' states be the only ones who have the opportunity to learn in a high-quality environment.” Another critique provided by the NAACP regarding the *Race to the Top* legislation

involves the corporate structure that has been embraced based on the concept of “competition.” There is some evidence of this already occurring if you just consider the recent “winners” of “Race to the Top” funding. In phase 1 of the contest the first round winners were Delaware and Tennessee together these states account for only 2.5 percent of students eligible for free and reduced cost lunches, “three percent of the nation’s Black students and less than one percent of Latino and Native American students across the nation” (NAACP, 2010). President Obama’s *Race to the Top* legislation continues to have an impact on the exclusion of a substantial number of Black students from the promise of an inclusive, high quality education. As Black students across the country continue to experience significant educational disparities based on resources and opportunities, we see that it is the themes of persistence and struggle that continue to anchor the Black educational experience.

Chapter V: Methods

This chapter describes the methods used to conduct the proposed study on the intergenerational educational experiences of Black⁸ residents living in central and western New York. This chapter also presents descriptions of the study design, participants, methods of data collection, protection of human subjects, and data analysis plan.

Study Design

The study incorporates a qualitative methodological approach using oral history interviews to gather stories about the educational experiences of four generations of Black people in upstate New York. This methodology is informed by the race-conscious⁹ framework (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001) of critical race theory along with an emic¹⁰ qualitative research perspective and my own positionality. Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest that qualitative research focuses on the socially constructed nature of reality and the influence of political and social realities that impact the researcher and their understanding of what is being studied. In the 90s qualitative researchers began to view the personal narrative as a valid expression of individual and collective experiences in education (Weis & Fine, 1993). Ethical and epistemological concerns with representation and voice have prompted an interest in this movement toward “first-person” narratives. Oral history methods are useful because they show how individuals make meaning of their lives within the social worlds they live in (Janesick, 2007). Foster (1997) contends that oral histories, as well as personal narratives are forms of analysis that can bring the experiences of Blacks into view in ways that make real the complexities of their

experiences. Oral histories not only provide relevant information about the individual lives but provide an opportunity to explore how these lives are shaped by educational opportunities that are received or not received. This will provide us with critical insights into the meaning and significance of education¹¹ in the lives of the participants in this study. One of the key objectives of using critical race theory as a theoretical framework for this qualitative research study is to understand the experiences of those who have been differentiated on the basis of race within an education setting. The stories of Black people, as well as other people of color often challenge the stories told by the White majority, which tends to legitimize the White and middle class worldview and perpetuate inequities in the educational system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

For the purposes of this study, the use of oral history methods will illuminate how Black Americans experience, and make meaning of the rules and their roles within the educational system they have to navigate (Janesick, 2007). Terkel (1995) suggests that oral history is history “from the bottom up.” The oral narratives provide another layer to the “official historical account” from the standpoint of those that have experienced it directly. In the case of this study, approaching the story of Black educational experiences by using the methodology of oral interviews and the theoretical tenets of critical race theory, changes its focus from the voice of the elite, or academic to that of the person at the ground level. The engagement of Black educational experience is situated within the context of the lives experiences of the participants.

Oral History Methodology

According to Ritchie (2003), the primary rationale for conducting an oral history is “to ask the questions that have not been asked and to collect the reminiscences that otherwise would be lost” (pg. 46). Oral historians have used many different terms to describe what they do. Bornat (2004) suggests that naming this varied discipline has it problems:

“Labels such as oral history, biography, life story, life history, narrative analysis, reminiscence and life review jostle and compete for attention. What is common to all is a focus on the recording and interpretation by some means or other, of the life experience of individuals. Though there are shared concerns and to an extent, shared literatures, there are differences, in approach and in methods of data collection and analysis” (Bornat, 2004, p.350)

Yow (1994) uses the terms “in-depth interview, recorded memoir, life history, the recorded narrative, taped memories, and life review” interchangeably with the term oral history; however, she suggests an added meaning which “implies that there is someone else involved who inspires the narrator to begin the act of remembering, jogs memory, and records and presents the narrator’s words.” The confusion from using multiple terms may be one reason why researchers have difficulty agreeing on the validity of oral history as a research methodology. Another may be that since oral histories. For many in the Black community, the successful navigation through the education system provides an opportunity for an individual to improve their economic and social position. This makes the topic of education one of interest to several people in the Black community and by Thompson’s assessment, well suited for the oral history methodology.

Exploring Oral History and Memory

According to Thompson (2000), oral history “brings history into, and out of, the community. Oral histories create a space for ‘contact’—and hence understanding—between social classes, and between generations” (p.23). It has been described as the combination of orality and historic interpretation, with an emphasis on the cultural meanings of memory. Oral history is used to do research in history, as well as many other disciplines, such as education, sociology, social work, and nursing. Frisch (2007) describes oral history as an “indispensable” link between “scholarship and public interest in-and practice of-history.” This study will use oral history methods to collect and analyze the narrative experiences of four generations of Black American perceptions and recollections of their educational experiences in primary and secondary education (K-12).

Ritchie (2003) suggests that memory is the core of oral history, from which meaning can be extracted and preserved. In other words, “oral history collects memories and personal commentaries of historical events through recorded interviews” (p.1). Frisch (1990) argued that while oral history is important in maintaining the memory of past events, what matters most is not history itself, but the role history has played in a person’s life. Frisch (1990) suggests that public history has been presented in a “relatively casual way” (p.15) with attention generally given to how events unfolded rather than the meaning of those events. Public history projects was used to collect information that was used for mostly oversight purposes, i.e. documenting public research, social project or other policy-related history on business and government projects. Missing from many accounts are the participants’ voices and memories, the

effects on their lives, as well as the larger historical context all of which impact the historical meaning.

While the scholarship of Frisch (1990) focuses on memory Thompson (2006) argues that oral history has a social purpose. According to Thompson (2006), the content and the purpose of oral history is transformed when one moves the focus from simply remembering to areas of inquiry that integrate the lives and experiences of communities and individuals previously ignored in many histories. This serves the social purpose of empowering participants by interpreting events in their own voices. Clark (2002) writes that “Oral history is a liberatory¹² practice which can empower communities to speak for themselves and act on their own behalf” (p. 103). Thompson and Clarkes’ discussion of the social significance of oral history corresponds with my own effort to gather information on the Black experience in the educational settings of central and western New York. In this study, oral history is being used to ensure that a particular story of education gets told, one that includes the perspective that Black people about their educational advances and challenges in central and western New York and one that will not be marginalized in the larger story of the education of New Yorkers.

Since memory is at the core of oral history, this focus has placed oral history under scrutiny in the world of social science. There are problems that one cannot prevent when dealing with an individual’s memory. Ritchie (2003) discusses challenges such as an individual’s ability to recall experiences, but this can be balanced by others who can recall individuals and events as corroborating evidence, as well as the use of historical documents when available. Ritchie discusses the advantages and disadvantages associated with the timeframe in which an interview takes place, whether it is

immediately after an event or years later. This study will involve recording the oral histories of the educational experiences of the participants starting at pre-school through to high school. For the older generation of participants this involves remembering events that are older than the entire life span of the younger participants. This broad time frame requires that my questions be broader in nature so as to provoke a conversation that will produce more information (Ritchie, 2003).

Oral Tradition and the Oppressed

Vansina (1985) believes that oral tradition has served to shape the historical understanding of mankind. Black communities have historically relied more on the oral tradition because of all their position within the social hierarchy of society. The oral tradition of Black Americans has roots that reach back to their African homelands. As enslaved people their oral traditions became not only part of their heritage but were important to very survival of Black culture. The power of oral tradition is most clearly seen through the stories and songs of Black American slaves. When slaves were forcibly taken from Africa to America they brought with them their culture, their heritage, their language and their customs. The oral tradition encapsulated in the stories of the African griots¹³ was one of the cultural vestiges Africans transported to America (Hamlet, 2011, pg 27; Banks-Wallace, 2002, p. 412 -413). The stories told by the relocated Africans “provided an opportunity for enslaved people to commit to memory the language, sounds, smells and textures of their homeland” (Banks-Wallace, 2002, p. 412). The traditions and values that were transported from Africa were interlaced with the new realities of enslavement in the United States to form a new Black American culture (Banks-Wallace, 2002; Mintz, 1992). The oral traditions of the Black American “culture continue to

evolve and change in response to the changes in the lived experiences of Black people. The stories told by Black Americans affirm the ongoing commitment of a culture determined to survive in the midst of an oppressive environment” (Banks-Wallace, 2002, p. 412). Today we see this oral tradition is still important in the Black American community manifesting in the words of the socially conscious hip-hop artist who just like the griots of their African past tell the stories of Black marginality in contemporary American culture (Kiwani, 2003).

Oral history as a research methodology makes a valuable contribution to historical research (Frisch, 1981; Portelli, 1991; Perks & Thompson, 2006; Etter-Lewis, 1993). It offers those who have been overlooked or silenced throughout history “including women, the working class and [racialized] minorities (Perks & Thompson, 2006, p. vii) an opportunity to document their own experiences. For the participants in this study oral history research methodology will give them an opportunity to document their own experiences as they share their knowledge and insights into the Black experience in education. This methodology offers future generations one version of the truth as told by persons who experienced it, giving voice to those who have not been honored as a deserving part of history.

In the 1960s oral history began to be utilized as a means to challenge political views in the United States. The Civil Rights movement, Black power movements and feminist movements demanded that the racialized peoples, i.e. Blacks, Native Americans, Latino (as) and women no longer be overlooked in mainstream accounts of history. Oral historians began to focus on the voices of those previously unheard. The goal was to

“give a voice to the voiceless, to raise consciousness, and to empower those who now found a place in history” (Summerfield, 2005, p.48).

Etter-Lewis (1993) states that “oral history is a dynamic, interactive methodology that preserves an individual’s own words and perspectives in a particular, authentic way.” Oral history is both a process and product that mediates the boundaries between history, language and literature. It is a collaborative transaction that reconstructs a life once lived; and it is a text that makes relevant to the present metaphors of a narrator’s past (p. xii). Oral history gives insight into the storyteller’s interpretation and understanding of her/his own unexpurgated life (Etter-Lewis, 1993). By recounting the story of one’s life you step back reflect and make meaning of your life (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). In addition to the personal reflection of one’s own life, narratives have been used to provide a bridge to bring people together as well as serving as catalyst for ethical or moral action. “Understanding the narratives and contextual dimensions of human actors can lead to new insight, compassionate judgment, and the creation of shared knowledge and meanings that can inform professional practice” especially in the field of education (Noddings, 1991, p. 8).

Oral history research can offer “critical insights into larger social processes, by connecting the lives of individuals to society” (Foster, 1997, p. xxi). As such it makes perfect sense to use the oral history methodology in this study which examines the educational experiences of Black people from their perspective.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Participants are selected first for their self identified status as descendants of slaves in United States and second for their age to determine their generational status.

This criterion of selection is important because as Ogbu (1998) suggests Black people who live in the United States and can trace their heritage to slaves brought to the United States would respond to issues of race and racial dominance differently than those in other more recent immigrant Black communities. His rationale is that the historical and socio-cultural adaptation of a minority group into U.S. society would be linked to “their response to their own history within the society and their subsequent treatment or mistreatment by white Americans” (158). The second selection criterion is age and participants were required to be at least eighteen years old to participate in the study.

This work will tell the story of the educational experiences of Black people in central and western New York State across four generations born from 1930 to 1993. The generations were defined by historical events that impacted the “Black community” in the United States. The participants belonged to one of the following generational groupings; those born 1930-1936; those born 1949 – 1955; those born 1968 – 1973; and those born 1987-1993. The generational demarcations were chosen because of their alignment with historical events that are significance to the Black experience in the United States.

Sample Size and Sampling Strategies

The selection of the participants for this study was done using a purposeful and non-random sampling approach which combines criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling” (Patton 2002, pg 230- 243). In keeping with the goals of the study, I have chosen to include only Black people who can self-identify as descendants of African slaves who were brought to the United States. The initial participants were intentionally selected from different social classes, different genders, different educational levels and different geographical locations, to create maximum variation. I purposefully selected

participants by contacting traditional enclaves within the Black community, i.e. community centers and churches through phone calls and letters to ask for participants. Maximum variation sampling required that I searched for “disconfirming instances or variations” among the potential participants who volunteered (Merriam, 1998, p. 63). For the purposes of this study, I chose to interview twelve people from each generation, forty eight people in total. Within each generational grouping, I plan interviewed both men and women to account for gender differences.

Protection of Human Subjects

To protect the study’s subjects each participant was informed about purpose of the research. Protecting the participants’ confidentially was critically important. The participants were provided with a written statement that was also read verbally that explained that the study was confidential. A consent form was developed and used to confirm agreement from the participants to participate in the study. This document was reviewed and explained at a scheduled meeting prior to the beginning the interview. The interview began when the consent document was methodically reviewed, signed and the participants questions were answered. At the meeting, I made it clear that participants did not have to participate in any follow-up conversations or meetings if they did not wish to do so and that they may stop the interview at any time. If the potential participant decided to sign the consent document and to participate, the interview followed immediately.

The digital audio recording was maintained by the researcher for research purposes. The identities of the participants were not revealed in the findings and fictitious names were used instead. The audio recordings of the interviews were stored on a password-protected desktop in a secured location and will be kept for at least three years

in compliance with federal regulations. Written materials such as transcripts and demographic forms were maintained in a locked file.

Data Collection

“At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience (Siedel, p. 9) I worked with each of the interviewees to determine the best location to ensure privacy. One characteristic of this type of qualitative research is conducting research in a natural setting, in a place where the participants are comfortable (Creswell, 2003). The scheduling of the interviews was based on the availability of the participants. Patton’s (2002) interview guide approach was used as a guideline for the open-ended interviews of the participants. The interview guide developed provided an introduction, questioning prompts and closing for the one-on-one interviews. This approach involved developing an outline prior to the interviews that included a set of issues that were explored with each participant. The guide allowed for free conversation within a topic area while ensuring all questions are adequately covered in the interview process. The interview guide was divided into the following sections: 1) Warm-Up questions/demographic information, 2) Early memories of school- primary school, 3) Early memories of the town they grew up in 4) Memories of middle school/high school, 4) Memories of life as a teenager, 5) Educational history of parents, 6) Educational history of grandparents, and 7) Participants thoughts on education in general. (see appendix)

Data Preparation

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, including all recognizable grammar, slang phrases, pauses, and incomplete elements of speech (i.e. ‘um,’ ‘uh-huh,’

“aah,” and etc.). Interviews were de-identified during the transcription process by substituting all instances of the participant’s name with a pseudonym or by using the word participant. Individuals named by the interviewee will also be de-identified using a pseudonym. Once the interviews were transcribed they were checked for accuracy by comparing the written text with the audio recording. Any significant or unresolved discrepancies were resolved by the researcher. Using methods of grounded theory analysis (Glaser & Strauss 1967), data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, allowing for the data analysis to influence data collection. The first step in performing open coding is to view the documents for large passages of meaningful text, devoid of predefined headings or topics. Broad descriptors were attached to these codes. Next the codes were reviewed for commonalities and refined by either clustering into existing codes, refining code names or eliminating codes altogether. This resulted in the generation of code families or categories. Texts marked with the same code will be clustered together and reviewed for coherence and adherence to the code definition. Meaningful texts were reviewed to make clear core segments. Finally codes were compared with one another for relational value. The codes were analyzed for interconnectedness and interrelationships within and between one another. In the final analysis themes were developed, clearly defined and supported with examples from participant interviews.

Positionality

In qualitative studies the positionality of the researcher is an important and vital discussion. As Jones, Torres & Arminio (2006) suggests, the position of the researcher will influence not only how the data is collected, analyzed and interpreted for meaning.

This study considers the perceptions that Black people have of the education system in the United States. As a Black female who has navigated through school systems in many parts of the United States I have strong interest in and opinion about how the school system affects the lives of Black people. I consider the education system to be one of the most important and influential institutions of the social systems we engage in. I saw firsthand in my own family how the educational system could set some on a path to higher education and meaningful employment while simultaneously directing others to lives of subsistence. The educational system impacted my life and it continues to impact the life chances and life choices of Black people in the United States. I believe that being a Black woman engaging in research about Black people, I bring strength to this research in my ability to acutely understand the racialized positionality of Black people. My “emic” perspective of the historical positioning of Black people in the United States coupled with my knowledge of the education system both as a student and as an educator strengthens my position as researcher in this study. It has been said by researchers such as Tillman (2002) that researchers do not have to come from the racial or cultural community under study to conduct research in, with and about that community. Hatchett and Schuman (1975-76) tell us however “the race of the interviewer is significant when assessing subjects responses to topics such as education” (p. 525). The goal of this principal investigator is to study the phenomenon called the Black educational experience and arrive at some “truth” which is representative of the researcher and participants’ voices, perspectives and narratives, while not privileging my voice. According to Nieto (1994) researchers can acquire this “truth” in research when they value and listen to the self, to others and to the self in relation to others (Milner, 2007). Being a Black woman

who has navigated through the halls of many educational institutions, I realize that my experiences have the potential to both collide and intersect with those of the participants in this study. As a researcher it is my charge to be vigilant and mindful of the objective of the project—to hear the voices of the participants and account for them.

Understanding and being in touch with my own subjectivity as it applies to this research effort is an important and necessary act. Glesne and Peskin (1992) write:

“...subjectivity is the basis for the story that I am able to tell. It is a strength on which I build. It makes me who I am as a person and as a researcher, equipping me with the perspective and insights that shape all that I do as a researcher, from the selection of the topic clear through the emphasis made in writing. Seen as virtuous subjectivity is something to capitalize on rather than exorcise.” (p. 104).

My educational experiences have led to my interest in this topic. My educational journey has evolved from experiences in a number of locations within the United States (the mid-west, the south the northeast) and a short stint in Germany. My father was a career soldier in the Army, which accounts for all the movement. My mother was a homemaker. Education was important to my parents and the phrase “they can’t take that away from you” often accompanied any discussion about the prospect of continuing ones education. The “they” my parents were alluding to were White people. It has been my personal experience as student who was part of the coveted STEM educational track ultimately achieving degrees in mechanical engineering and mathematics, and in my current capacity as a researcher and educator in the humanities, the one single strand that remained constant whether I studied mathematics or educational theory is that “race matters”!

I will share three instances in my own educational experience which have profoundly affected my views on the educational experiences of Black people in general. The first occurred when I was moving from the fifth to the sixth grade in El Paso, Texas. I was being bused to a new elementary school on a different side of town and I learned firsthand that I would not necessarily be measured by “the content of my character” but rather, by the markings on my body. It would be my Black skin and that of other students that would incite the parents of some White students to shoot rifles into the school as a protest of the integration efforts being made. What kept this incident from completely derailing me academically is an opportunity my mother sought out for me to participate in an after school program organized by a local chapter of the Black Panther Party. The year was 1969 and James Brown came out with a song that would be the theme song for my life “I don’t want nobody to give me nothing...just open up the door and I’ll get it myself”... what I learned in the afterschool program is that being Black is something to be proud of. I learned that my people made great sacrifices and contributions to help build this country. But most importantly I learned that my ancestry did not start with slavery, but with people whose strength enabled them to endure the harsh realities of slavery. I learned that what I had to offer society may be blocked by White people, but if I remembered my ancestors and their sacrifices I would have to work hard to be successful (economic success). I did work hard and I took all the mathematics courses that were made available to me in each of the three high schools I attended (Virginia, Germany and New York) I graduated from high school and decided to attend the University of Buffalo where I learned another lesson about our education system, sometimes working hard is not enough, sometimes your Blackness will keep you out, or

in my case a professor tried to keep me out because of my Blackness. In 1979 I was student in the Mechanical Engineering program and as I was told by one professor that I should consider changing my major, because I was not engineering material. I was crushed by this incident, I can remember sitting outside the engineering complex discouraged and distraught. In an instant it all came back, the incident at the elementary school in El Paso, my parents saying get your education because “they can’t take that away from you,” James Brown singing “I don’t want nobody to give me nuthin.” In that instant, it did not matter that I had worked hard and I have earned the right to be a student in that engineering program, I was being told that I was not good enough. I took his statement that I was not engineering material to mean that my complexion or my Blackness was not welcome in the engineering profession. In spite of this professor’s comments I did graduate with a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering. My life was forever changed by this encounter, I suddenly understood what my parents meant when they said “they can’t take that away from you”, it did not matter that I had done all the things I was supposed to do. I had learned the codes of the academic culture, I knew how to talk, and walk and act like a successful student. I was armed with a good foundation that coupled with my hard work would ensure my successful completion of the B.S. in engineering. I had done all I was suppose to and now I am faced with an outcome I was unprepared for, I was not welcome not because I was not qualified but because I was Black. It was my Blackness that prompted, the professor to speak to me that day, I felt this because there were other women in the program at the time, but there were no other Black students vying to obtain a degree in Mechanical Engineering at the time. My own experiences say to me that race matters, but the experience of my daughter attending a predominately

White school in upstate New York let me know that it still matters. My youngest daughter has always been an outstanding student; she was on the honors track of what has been called one of the best high schools in the area. Although she achieved academic distinction throughout her four years of high school, not one single year went by without her contemporaries questioning of her competency. “How did you get the highest grade”, she was asked on a number of occasions, with the subtext in her mind being she must have cheated. “How did you get into Cornell and the University of Pennsylvania?” is how she was greeted on college admit day as she watched the other students congratulate each other. My daughter came home, discouraged; as only two students in her cohort of honors student congratulated her while many whispered that she did not deserve what she had gotten. One student boldly told her that she must be part of an affirmative action program, suggesting that she certainly could not have earned a place in those prestigious schools. The idea of the uneducable Black child had continued into another generation. It is my belief that research such as this which gives voice to the black community whose voices are often silenced, misinterpreted, misrepresented and placed at the margins (Dillard, 2000, Tillman, 2002; Collins, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995) continues to be important as history weaves together the story of education.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have proposed four criteria to be considered when judging the “trustworthiness and rigor of a qualitative study: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability” (p. 290).

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is “equivalent to internal validity in quantitative research” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). According to Merriam (1998) credibility establishes the believability of the research from the participant’s viewpoint. “How congruent are the findings in the study with reality?” To establish credibility in the proposed study the principle investigator will draw on member checking, and triangulation. In the member checking process participants are asked to corroborate the findings of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 313-316). To ensure the data’s trustworthiness, in this study member checks will be conducted by returning the transcribed interviews to all participants so they could check for accuracy and clarity.

Triangulation is a process which involves using different methods and/or sources to generate data. Sources from which triangulation may occur in this study are data triangulation, as well as site triangulation. Data triangulation will occur by when another source such as a document or another interview substantiates an interviewee’s memory. The proposed study will involve interviewing people from four different cities in New York State: Binghamton, Elmira, Syracuse and Buffalo. These cities are different sizes, in terms of population and also percentages of Black persons living there (see table 1). The distinct geo-distant locations of the cities along with their separate and distinct geographical, historical and cultural epicenters provide another source of triangulation.

Table 1 (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3673000.html>)

City	Population, 2010	Percent Black Persons, 2010
Binghamton	47,376	11.4 %
Elmira	29,200	14.6%
Syracuse	145,170	29.5%
Buffalo	261,310	38.6%

Transferability

Transferability, the second criterion of trustworthiness is concerned with providing a thick description of the phenomenon in question to allow for comparisons to be made (Lincoln & Guba 1985). The task of determining the transferability of the findings is not the task of the researcher, they can only provide sufficient information, so that the investigator can determine whether the findings will be applicable to a situation different from the actual study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure the potential transferability within this study maximum variation sampling will be used, as described in the sampling strategies above.

Dependability/Confirmability

The third and fourth criteria of trustworthiness require the processes in the study to be reported in detail, thus enabling a future researcher to repeat the study. Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest this assessment be done by means of a “confirmability” audit trail consisting of “1) raw data, 2) analysis notes 3) reconstruction and synthesis products, 4) process notes, 5) personal notes, and 6) preliminary developmental information” (p. 320-

321). To facilitate this in this study the research design and implementation will be described in great detail. Details of the gathering of data, field notes, literature search articles, drafts of data analysis and coding schemes along with dissertation drafts will be filed accordingly.

Validity

The aforementioned steps to achieve trustworthiness maximized the chances of achieving validity. Validity within qualitative research is a culturally and historically situated process that relies on interpretive skill rather than a singular consensual truth. In qualitative research the degree to which something is valid is in the eyes of the beholder. It is important that the oral histories taken represent the ideas and experiences of the participants. Validation would then mean that there is a match between the participants' analysis and interpretation and their actual experiences in school. Validation would ensure that the researcher does not co-opt the participants' experiences or misinterpret them. As such the finding must be subject not only to the scrutiny of those in academia who have an awareness of the historical experiences of Black people in schools, but also an ethical obligation to provide the participants with a clear rendition of discoveries made about the Black educational experience in the United States.

Chapter 6: Findings

Chapter Six presents the findings from this research study. The findings are presented separately for each generational grouping. The emergent themes and supporting narratives are presented for each generation. Beginning with the Elder/Silent generation, which are then followed by the Black Power, Hip-Hop, and Millennial generations. The final section of this chapter discusses the cross-generational themes that emerged from this study.

Elders/Silent Generation

Let me introduce you to the participants in this study who were a part of the Elder generation. In this group I interviewed seventeen people, eight men and nine women. Seven members of this group were born in the southern part of the United States, in particular, Alabama, Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, and moved to the north with their parents who were seeking employment opportunities in New York during the 1930s -1950s. Like a cadre of Black people who lived in the South, these families moved North in search of employment opportunities which would give their families a better life, and seeking refuge from the Jim Crow racism of the south. They were part of what has been called the Great Migration (Berry & Blassingame, 1982). Eight members of this group could not trace their roots outside of New York State, as far as they knew their families had always lived in New York State.

For the participants in this study who were part of the Elder generation, there were four emergent themes which will be presented in these findings. The themes were 1) The value of education; 2) It takes a village - the importance of community; 3) School

experiences; 4) A Bill Cosby moment – perceptions of the Millennial generation and education. Below, these themes are fully developed in the narratives which support them and a discussion of the findings.

“The Value of an Education”

The work of Perry, Steele and Hilliard (2003) suggests that “Literacy for freedom and freedom for literacy” has been the mantra of many Black people since their arrival in the Americas as slaves (p. 6). Using the lived experiences of many famous Black Americans, they build the case that in Black communities across the United States, education has always been valued, and that juxtaposition of education with freedom and civil rights is a concept that has been passed down through the generations of Blacks who are the descendants of slaves brought here from Africa.

To gain insight into whether the participants in this study and their families valued education, they were asked the following questions: 1) What were your parents views on education?; (2) What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?; and (3) When you were raising your children, what did you think a good education would be for them? The following narratives have been selected because they represent typical responses that were provided by the participants in the study. The participants’ names were replaced with pseudonyms and each person is identified by their age and the geographical location they attended school in.

In the first narratives, Eleanor, Theresa, and Ruby, are examples of participants whose families did not discuss the importance or value of education.

Eleanor (68, Binghamton)

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

“My Parents, aah, we never discussed school. But I was determined to go because I saw all those White girls going to school and I wanted to go too.

They [my parents] wanted the boys to finish high school and get a job, but they never said much about school to the girls.”

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

“My husband and I told our boys that school was very important. We wanted them to finish school. They were all sports stars in school.”

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

“High school, we wanted them to get good jobs you could get a job then with just a high school diploma.”

Theresa (73, Binghamton, NY)

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

“My parent's never talked about school, I think it was because my father only went when to the eight grade and my mother went to the 10th grade., She did not like school because things were not great for black people back then...My parents

did not say much about education, and that was my problem. I didn't grow up thinking the way I should have thought about education...I didn't like school either."

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

"If I could do things differently I would, I would have them [my children] realize what an education means. When I was growing up, I didn't think about, you know, [how] important it was [or] realize how important it was. So I even made the same mistake with my own kids. I didn't push them hard enough. I'm sorry I didn't. Today I tell my grandkids school is important."

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

"I wanted them to finish school, high school."

Ruby (73, Elmira)

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

"My parent didn't really talk about school, they just talked about working. My mother didn't go to school. My dad didn't go to school."

Could they read and write?

“No. But my mother knew how to run a house though. And she knew how to count money. She can count her money. She knows if you’re jipping her. She really didn’t talk to us about going to school, it was mostly about getting a job.”

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

“I told him what little bit I knew. I’m going to feed it to you. I didn’t, and they knew that I didn’t have much schooling, but the minute they got in the house, [I’d ask] where’s your homework. And, if I didn’t understand it I prayed? just like I did understand it. And, what little bit I did know I pushed it and pushed it and pushed it and pushed it. When they went to school they know why they was there. They wasn’t there to play around. They was there to get an education. Because I told them I want them to have the best of the best that they can get.”

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

“High school, cause you could get a good job with just high school.”

The stories shared by Wes and Rosie are similar to the earlier narratives in that they did not get the message from their parents’ family that an education was valuable. They diverge from the others because at some point they did get the message. In Wes’ case, when he saw the White kids in his school aspiring to go to college, he began to think of it as possible for himself, and when his sister married a man from Georgia whose

family had been highly educated, his eyes were opened to the fact he should not only go to college but that many Black people had successfully completed college.

Rosie's parents did not talk to her about anything regarding education; it was when she moved to live with her second cousin that they instilled in her the value of an education.

Wes (64, Binghamton)

Do you remember what your parents views were on education? It's value or importance?

“My Mom used to say that you want to do your best in school because you can't just be good, you have to be better than [White people]. But she only expected us to finish high school and then get a job. My Dad believed that girls have no need to go to school since they're going to get married anyway and your husband will probably work, so don't waste your time. So get your high school education, and there was no talk of college. And for the boys, it was get a job and take care of your family. College wasn't something that was discussed much in our house. I think the only reason I became interested in college is because most of my school experience had been with White people. All the schools I'd ever gone to were predominately filled with White folks, and because they began to talk about college. I began to think it as a possibility.

Through meeting my older sisters' husbands and stuff. Particularly, the one from down south. I learned that Black people were getting an education long ago. Our Black folks had educations; we had people who were lawyers and doctors. When I talked to my one brother in-law, particularly the one from down south, it was

interesting how the White folks would close the schools rather than integrate, so they my brother in law's family and other families in the south that they knew then shipped their children around the north so that they got their education. They all graduated from college. Families of ten all graduating from college, earning PhD's in the South, and up here we were like what are we doing?"

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

"Extremely important, I told them, both the boys and girls, that getting a college education should be their goal. If they wanted to have career not a job they needed to do well in high school so that they could go to college. I wanted my kids to be like my brother-in-law's family to even see PhDs as possible."

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

"College, especially because when my children were coming up it was clear to me that they would need a college education."

Rosie (63, Elmira):

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

"Um, well ... well, no. You know, um, they ... they ... you know, 'cause I only can speak for my mom 'cause my dad wasn't around for me to really know that much, you know, about him. But as far as, um, my mom, you know, she didn't speak, um, anything about education other than, you know, she had no

education.”

Well, did she want you to get an education?

“Um, well, actually it wasn't, um, my mom that, um, talked to me about, um, education; it was more so the two people that raised me, my second cousin and his wife, that, you know ... it was important to ... for an education in order that you could better yourself.”

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

“I told them if they want get ahead and get a job that they had to get an education”

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

“High school, I wanted to make sure that they all finished high school so they could get a job. I had to drop out of high school because I was pregnant with P___ and things were much harder for me.”

In the following narrative Junie shares that he did not get the message about the importance of education from his family, they only expected him to get his high school diploma and get a job. His encouragement to continue his education came from the family of a girl he was dating at the time.

Junie (77, Syracuse)

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

“ My father wasn't around and my mother, well, she didn't talk about education, how she felt or anything like that. She never said anything about school to us.

To me, because of the kids that I hung around with that had a father and a mother in their family, and I had a little girlfriend at one time, who, they were the ones that told me to stay in school. You stay in school, at least get a high school education. And, you should go to college. I mean, that's what my girlfriend's mother always used to tell me. Uhm, because she went to college. My girlfriend did. Uhm, and that's where I probably got it from outside the house. My uncles, or whatever, they never said anything about, uh, education. But, the Dunbar Center, Mr. Harrison, you know, told us that you need an education to make it. And, back in the day when I graduated from high school, which was in 1953, uhm, high school education was very important. You go fill out an application, you know, what subjects you took, I took academics, college prep course, courses, algebra, trig, geometry, chemistry. I took all that stuff. Uhm, it was just, in fact a lot of my friends thought I was crazy taking, you know, some of them thought I was crazy taking academic courses like that. Because they probably, I didn't know if I was, I didn't think I was going to go to college.”

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

“You need it. It’s very important, because you’re not, you, if you don’t have a college education a lot of companies and a lot of places not even going to look at you. This is true. I mean, it’s, where have you been, what can you do, can you express yourself, can you write? You know, all these things that companies look for if they want to use you in the future. So, I mean, it’s, I knew that. I got my youngest, my son, I thought the computer age was going to be, be great. And, I got him to take computer courses, but he didn’t like it. He graduated from college, but, Oswego State. Uhm, and uhm, my middle daughter got her degree. First she went to a two year school. Then she went to a four year, got her, you know, her four, uh, year degree. And, my second to oldest she went to school four years in a row and got her degree. And, my oldest daughter got married. But they all graduated from high school? And all but my oldest daughter finished college.”

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

“College at the minimum.”

The following group of participants have southern roots, meaning that they were born in the Southern portion of the United States. They migrated with their families to New York State, and attended, at the minimum, middle school in New York. Their response gives one the sense that the idea of education being valuable was cultivated by their parents and is something that they, in turn, passed on to their children. Just like the narratives found in the work of Perry, Steele and Hilliard (2003), these participants had passed on to their

children the idea that an education is invaluable. It will not just help you find a job – with an education “You can be somebody.”

Ike (72, Binghamton)

Do you remember what your parents’ views were on education? It’s value or importance?

“ My dad only went to the sixth grade, my mother went to the 11th grade. My parents always told me you have to be twice as good as White people to get the same thing, that’s why my mother and father strived for us to be educated, to keep educated. Because I can even go back and it was funny I think I was a sophomore, I decided I was not going back to school. All that summer I’m laughing at them [my siblings] getting ready for school mother and father didn’t say a word; about a week before school father said, my dad called me junior, junior what are you doing? Oh daddy I am going to stay here and help you, oh when you become the man of the house I make suggestions around here, I think it’s time for you to get yourself ready back going to school, I said oh no daddy, oh yes you are son, No son of mine will lay around and do nothing, no son of mine will not be educated to face this world that is being presented to us, we raised you up to get an education. We have struggled all our lives to put you in the best situation, the best schools you’re going to get an education that was it.”

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

“I told them that an education was not optional, it was very important ‘cause we had made sacrifices so that they could go to school.”

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

“Going to school we expected them to finish college, and all my children finished college, my oldest son has a PhD.”

Janie (69, Buffalo)

“I don’t have anything idea about my parents’ education. As far as I know neither one of them finished school. But they wanted us to finish school. They told us that you needed to get an education, if you want to be somebody. Other than that you won’t get nowhere in life unless you did have an education and that’s why they pushed us to go to school, stay in school. My father’s family had pooled their money to help sent some older cousins of mine to college. He always wanted some of his to go to college too. Going to college meant showing those White folks you were something. One of my brothers got into Morehouse, but there wasn’t no money to send him.”

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

“I told them it very, very important. I just wanted them to get an education. I didn’t want them to be in school sitting like a bump on a log. I went back to school when they started school. I got my a degree I guess it was a degree, whatever I am a LPN [Licensed Practical Nurse].”

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

“I wanted them all to go to college. It’s like my father said, if you want to be somebody. My girls did, they went two years, V__ went to community college and J__ went to Bryant and Stratton. My son, he didn’t want anybody telling him what to do, he did finish high school. He’s still like that today, hard headed.”

Discussion – The value of education:

The narratives in this study show that for those whose family have roots in the south and migrated to the north, their value of education seems to line up with the ‘literacy for freedom’ values indicated by Perry, Steele, and Hilliard (2003). In these families, there indeed does seem to be an intergenerational value of education, as well as an aspiration for higher education (i.e., education past high school). Getting an education for these participants’ families meant that you would “be somebody.” Those participants who have roots in the north did not seem to have the same intergenerational value of an education. For these participants getting an education was not always discussed or pushed within their household, if you could get a job without an education it did not seem that some of these families even felt that an education was necessary.

The narratives that were shared by the participants who I label as northerners, meaning, they did not claim any connection to the south; as far as they could go back their ancestors were from New York State. The northerners showed some differences in the messages they received from their parents regarding the importance of school, particularly when compared with the narratives of those participants who were connected

to the South. One interesting trend you see in this group is that their parents did not talk to them about school or the importance of school. If they received this message, it came from other places, friends, other family members, mentors at community centers, and so on, but not from their parents. The other salient finding that emerged from these narratives is that individuals whose families have roots in the north did not aspire to an educational level past high school while those participants whose families had roots in the south believed that a college education was the minimal level of education that they should strive for.

“It takes a village-the importance of community”:

Another important theme that came out from the narratives of the participants related to the importance of the Black community. Two sub-themes emerged: one was the importance of Black community centers to the social and cultural lives of people in the Black community and the second was the devastating effect that urban planning had on the Black communities.

This first set of narratives discussed the community centers that were pivotal in their respective communities. In Binghamton, the community center was called the Interracial Association, Elmira had the Neighborhood House, in Syracuse it was the Dunbar Center, and Buffalo had the Michigan Avenue YMCA. These places represent more than just community centers, as these were the places where the Black community found solace. The elders describe these as places where adults held meetings and children came to play, teenagers danced at socials, and where other activities were organized. The community centers offered afterschool help with homework and, in some cases, mentors

that encouraged the children in the Black community to pursue higher education. The community centers in Binghamton, Elmira, and Syracuse were connected through intramural sports programs, like football and baseball. I was surprised that none of the participants mentioned the Black church as having an important role in their lives. Black churches have historically been important social institutions in the Black community (Berry & Blassingame, 1982).

In Binghamton, the community center that was pivotal in Black life was the Interracial Association. The following narratives speak to the importance of this cultural center in the Black community:

Theresa (77, Binghamton)

“ I mostly hung out with Black people. I had white friends but we didn’t go to their house and they weren’t coming to our house....There were not many Black people when I was growing up in Binghamton (she could name all the families).....We mostly stayed with our own. We did a lot of stuff at the Interracial Association. That’s where we went for lots of stuff, I went to girl scouts there, we had fish fries, dances, and the adults had their meetings there....It was interracial but I don’t remember there being any White people going there..... They organized basketball and other sports games with Black kids from out of town, Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, Elmira, and Syracuse. We would go out of town and play other Black teams. We had a good time. The interracial center was like a hub for the Black community... There is no black community not like it used to be., There are more Black people in Binghamton, but it is not like is used to be,

things are not the same, There isn't a place like the interracial association that pulls us together, we used to be close knit, everybody knew everybody."

Eleanor (68, Binghamton)

"We used to go to the Interracial Center. It was on Lisle and then it moved to Carroll Street., It's the Urban League, that's where we went for extra things, like if you wanted to do a little art afterschool you could do that, you could do different things and they provided games and all the good stuff for kids and...I had my graduation party there. We had a lot of fun back then it was all of us Black folks together, we did everything together....it was a real Black community.....yea, like if we wanted to go roller-skating they [people at the Interracial Center] would rent a hall and all the Black folks would go roller-skating and it was just us. The White folks weren't that into us. So we did our own thing... it was mostly Black. it was like Elmira's Neighborhood house. We had intramurals of different sports teams, we would play Blacks from Elmira and Syracuse and Wilkes-Barre. There wasn't a lot of socializing with White people back then."

In Elmira, the community center that was cultural and social center for the Black community was the Neighborhood house. It was important and when one of the most famous Blacks to grow up in Elmira, Ernie Davis, died, his memorial service was held at the Neighborhood house.

Rosie (63, Binghamton)

“Yeah. Yeah, we had the Neighborhood House. And we all ... we played together, game and whatever, and um, it was a place to got to ... to ... to play, and um, they had, um, um, workshops, like crafts that we ... we did. I went to Brownies there. I went to Girl Scouts there. When got older it was a place to hang out, we had dances there, sports clubs, all the Black people hung out there.”

In Syracuse the Black community center was called the Dunbar Center.

Junie (77, Syracuse)

“ I loved my neighborhood growing up. Because it was small. Everybody knew each other. And, uhm, you know, if, it, when they say, it takes a village to raise a child, there’s a lot of truth to that. Because, uhm, my mother, even though she raised four kids by herself, she had two brothers that lived in Syracuse, who sort of looked out after us. And, uhm, uncles, aunts. And, then there were cousins. And, then there were the adults in the neighborhood who looked out for you.

But, when I was a kid we never had any black teachers. No black teachers at all. No black role models in school, or whatever. Our, our role models were outside the school at the Dunbar Center. It’s the settlement house. Dunbar Center, where we used to go. We learned to play basketball and ... Socialize. They had ice cream socials. They had dances. Uhm, they had, uhm, Boy Scouts. I would say 99 percent of the people that went to the Dunbar Center were Black. There might have been, very few whites went there, if any, that I can remember. I mean, I don’t believe, I can’t remember any whites going there. We went to Jewish

Community Center, but none of the Jewish kids came to the Dunbar, I don't think. Every once in a while Syracuse University students would come down, and teach certain things, whatever. At the Boy's Club, the Boy's Club was another place we socialized that was really a black and white mixture. But, the Dunbar was basically 99 percent was black. Isaiah Harrison. Who was, he was at the Dunbar. Uhm, taught me how to play basketball. Kept me straight so I wouldn't get a big head. (laughs). You know, told us education was very important. Called him Ike, Big Ike. And, uhm, he helped one young man that we hung around with get a scholarship at Syracuse University. The first black to get a scholarship at Syracuse University was a guy named, uhm, Emmanuel *Breland*. And, he helped him get in."

Mike (66, Syracuse)

"Syracuse had a real Black community when I was growing up. Yeah, it was that way here at Syracuse. There were always eyes on you. Whatever you did somebody would see you and you knew that after a while because by the time you got home your Mom and Dad knew it....You couldn't get away with too much when I was growing up.....It was a village that everybody protected the children. For socializing, one of the outlets we had was the Dunbar Center. They used to have dances and programs for kids, basketball teams and basket ball games and things like that there. So that was, that. It kept us out of trouble away from the bad areas and stuff kids were getting into. But it was not hard to stay out of troubles because basically our parents were kind of like all over the place and they

did raise us. I mean there was nothing you could do and get away with it without somebody looking out their window and telling your Mom and Dad.”

In Buffalo, the Black community gathered to socialize at Michigan Avenue YMCA.

Ray (73, Buffalo):

“When we moved to Buffalo we lived downtown on the east side. The happening place was the Michigan Avenue Y. That was a place to hang out we had good times there, parties, playing ball. I learned how to play cards hanging round some of the older men that used to go there.”

Mildred (82, Buffalo):

“Oh, back in those days there wasn’t many places for Blacks to socialize, now the ‘Michigan Street Y’ that was the spot. We had dances there, sometimes we saw speakers there and you know guys could stay there, that’s where a lot of colored musicians stayed when they came to town...Different Black businesses would sponsor sports teams and we used to go to the Y and watch the games sometimes. I even played basketball there; we had a woman coach for basketball.”

The second theme which emergences in the discussion of the importance of community is: the impact of urban renewal on their respective Black communities. Many of the participants from this elder generation saw urban renewal efforts in their respective cities as destructive to the Black community.

Ike (77, Binghamton):

“Urban renewal destroyed the Black community. Now, you know, as I look at that here in Binghamton, I remember when I was working with the Urban League and I used to strive and tell the people do not leave your community. They would say Ike you don’t know what you’re talking about. I said do not move out of your community. Urban renewal is just buying you off, getting you to sell your property, moving you out of the community. [They responded] Oh no no no they going to give us some money and then we can come back into the neighborhood, the neighborhood around Susquehanna St. used to be all Black.

That whole area down there was all Black. The new houses that they built that you see, that whole area was all black, with houses, businesses, Black businesses, all of that. Urban renewal took them out, but they did not mess with the Italians, the Italians are still there in the neighborhood. St. Michael’s church is still there you know. They [Black people] didn’t believe it would happen. Now you go back and try to move back into them places now, you can’t afford it.”

Junie (77, Syracuse):

“They displaced the community that, even though Blacks didn’t own a lot of businesses. And, they didn’t own the majority of the houses because of redlining. The Fifteenth Ward where the Blacks lived was all one area. And, it bounded, uhm, Jackson Street all the way to Washington Street to Renwick Ave. It was all like this little area, and urban renewal came, tore down a whole bunch of cold water flats and businesses, you know, we had bakeries. We had Jewish bakeries.

And, we had delicatessens and we had grocery stores. We had drug stores. I mean, they took all of that and destroyed the Black neighborhood completely. They tore them down. And built high rises. You know where Upstate Medical Center is? There used to be houses over there?

The highway came later. They put the highway right through the Black neighborhood. Urban renewal they took, they went to area of least resistance, which is Black neighborhoods where they don't have power.

Before they tore our neighborhood down, we went to school with people you grew up with. Same people we went from, you know, all the way through grammar school, through high school together, and the majority of people stayed in the neighborhood when they became adults. So I mean the relationships with people were great.”

Mildred (82, Buffalo):

“We lived in an area that was pretty much integrated. They called it Humboldt Park area. There really wasn't any issues with race or anything. As the colored people moved up [economically] they would come and buy houses there. There was a nice park, we used to play together [Black and White children]. They messed this area up with that urban renewal, when they put a highway right down the middle of the community. By the time the highway went in, we didn't live there anymore. But can you imagine, the street I lived on was split into because of the highway, one part of Oakgrove Ave is on one side of the highway and the

other part is on the other side of the highway. They tore down those beautiful houses. It was terrible; the area was never the same.”

Discussion - It takes a village-the importance of community:

The elder generation made repeated reference to the importance of the Black community in their lives. The community was a place where they felt safe, where people “looked out for you.” In the community, children were never alone even when their parents were not around because, as Mike shared, “there was always eyes on you...it [the Black community] was a village that everybody protected the children.” The Black community bonded at the community centers which became the hub of social and cultural activities for these communities. White people did not seem to infiltrate the social and/or cultural activities in these communities. Junie shared that “we went to the Jewish Community Center but none of the Jewish kids came to the Dunbar.” In Syracuse and in Buffalo many Blacks lived in segregated housing areas, which were established in some part because of the Red Lining practices that were established by the Federal Housing Administration (Kraus, 2004; Stamps & Stamps, 2008). Samson (2012) describes Red Lining as the practice of systematic racial discrimination in housing where actual Red lines were drawn on maps and areas to ensure that Blacks would be designated to live in certain areas. This practice, according to Samson (2012), promoted White flight to the suburbs and made it difficult for Blacks to secure home loans to purchase homes in Black communities or to fix them up. A consequence of these segregated housing practices was that most Blacks in Syracuse lived in an area called the 15th ward (Stamps & Stamps, 2008). Based on the work of Kraus (2004), most Blacks living in Buffalo lived on the East Side in a number of different, predominately Black neighborhoods, called the

Ellicott Mall area, the Fruit Belt and Hamlin Park (the more affluent Blacks lived in this area).

Growing up in their respective cities one common theme shared among this group of elders was the Black racial solidarity they felt growing up, and how the different community centers fostered this sense of Black racial solidarity in their communities. This community solidarity led to Black children being raised in a sense by not only by their parents but also by others in the community, “The Village.” In the cases where the participants did not necessarily get encouraged to aspire to higher education from their parents, mentors in the community at the community centers filled that void, as was expressed by Junie, his mentor “Big Ike” taught him that education was important. Some of the elders sat in classrooms where they were the only Blacks, as was the case for Theresa in Binghamton, who she went to school with Whites but she had fun and socialized with Blacks at the Interracial Association. Binghamton and Elmira did not have Black communities as large as Buffalo and Syracuse, but there were small enclaves within each city where a number of Blacks did live together. The disruption of these Black communities came with the various urban renewal projects enacted in the different locations. In Buffalo, the construction of the Kensington expressway literally sliced the community into two separate areas. On the street where Mildred lived, Oakgrove Ave, before the expressway was constructed, you could walk from one end of the street to the other [end of the street] and in the middle. Mildred described a parkway lined with trees. It was a beautiful neighborhood. According to Kraus (2004), Mildred’s neighborhood at the time of the construction of the highway, was where middle class Blacks and small numbers of Whites lived. This once predominately Jewish area had large houses and few

renters. Most of the people in Hamlin Park owned their own homes. Mildred states that if you were to walk down Oakgrove Ave today, you would not be able to complete the same walk she did when she was younger. Part of Oakgrove Ave is on the North side of the Scajaquada Highway New York State Route 198, and the other section of Oakgrove is on the Southside of the highway. According to Kraus (2004), other Black neighbors also disrupted by the urban renewal process suffered the same negative consequences of urban renewal:

“The negative consequences of the project for the black community became painfully apparent after demolition was completed in 1961. The Ellicott District Redevelopment Project covered a 36-square block area on the lower east side and displaced 2219 families over 80% of who? were African Americans....because African Americans were prevented from living in many parts of the city and suburbs...the persistent housing discrimination faced by African Americans meant that blacks had few residential options...the vast majority of African Americans were confined to east side and moved into housing projects.” (p. 105)

Urban renewal changed Buffalo by moving Black people to different types of housing arrangements, but still relegated Blacks to housing on the predominantly Black east side of Buffalo. As Kraus (2004) reports, another consequence of urban renewal in Buffalo was that schools became “hyper-segregated as mayor, common council and the school board took the opportunity to redraw school district lines and deliberately segregate schools.... the schools in the black districts receiving less funding and less attention (p. 106).” In this study, most of the participants from Buffalo who were part of the elder generation did not attend these segregated schools, they had completed their primary and

secondary education prior to this forced segregation of schools in Buffalo, but their children did. A discussion of this will occur in the Black Power generational findings.

Junie, a participant in this study, shares that urban renewal in Syracuse destroyed the Black community in Syracuse. According to Sieh (2003),

“Under the guise of urban renewal Syracuse Mayor William F. Walsh began razing the predominantly African-American neighborhood on the city's East Side to pave the way for a museum, a new police headquarters, a state hospital, a middle-income housing complex and an elevated interstate highway. Walsh was among many of the nation's mayors in the 1960s who took advantage of the federal "urban renewal" program, which supported the development of public urban centers over affordable housing. That vision displaced nearly 1,300 residents of the old 15th Ward, once a hub of Syracuse's African-American community. Many of the city's blacks relocated to the South and Southwest sides, and others to the East Side. That, in turn, helped spark white flight to the suburbs. The exodus of longtime residents to the suburbs depleted the city's tax base and created neighborhoods with abandoned and dilapidated buildings.” (p. B1)

In Syracuse, the urban renewal efforts resulted in the Black community being dispersed to different parts of the city, in the reverse of what happened to Buffalo. Junie, one of the Elders in the study who grew up and went to school in Syracuse, shared the following stories about going to school in the 15th ward where he lived:

Junior high was fun too. Junior high was ...I mean, we had good teachers. I mean, I can't, all of them, I mean, most of the students were Black and all the teachers were White, but they were good. They made sure that you got an education. Which I think was a good education. The public high schools when I was a kid I thought were great.

Mike shares a story of his experience of schooling in Syracuse: "When I was in elementary school the majority of kids that would go to the school were Black...in high school my family moved and I was in a school that was predominately white D___ High School, there were a few Blacks we had to stick together to help each other

What I found particularly interesting was how the "racial politics of urban renewal" (Kraus 2004, p. 101) affected the schooling experiences of the elders in Syracuse and Buffalo, as well as disrupting the solidarity of the Black communities. Mike, an elder in Syracuse, shares that, "We don't really have a Black community anymore, we are not as tight."

A Bill Cosby moment – perceptions of the millennial generation:

I was motivated by the infamous speech Bill Cosby delivered at the NACCP celebration of the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board* decision. During his speech, Cosby (2004) concluded that Black identity particularly in urban America was being shaped not by racial discrimination or structural inequities but by individual and collective behavioral dysfunction. Cosby cited parental failures, a cycle of eluding personal responsibility and blaming problems on everybody else except themselves as the reasons that Black youth have not taken advantage of the opportunities afforded them

since the Civil Rights revolution of the 50's and 60's. "Brown v. Board of Education is no longer the White person's problem," said Cosby. "It's not what they're doing to us. It's what we're not doing." In Cosby's portrayal of Black America, he blasted poor Blacks as being socially irresponsible and poor parents. Cosby mocked everything from urban fashion to Black spending and speaking habits:

"Ladies and gentlemen, the lower economic people are not holding up their end in this deal,"....These people are not parenting. They are buying things for kids \$500 sneakers for what? And won't spend \$200 for 'Hooked on Phonics.'....They're standing on the corner and they can't speak English," he exclaimed. "I can't even talk the way these people talk: 'Why you ain't, 'Where you is'..... and I blamed the kid until I heard the mother talk. And then I heard the father talk....Everybody knows it's important to speak English except these knuckleheads."

According to the website Ask.com, Bill Cosby's is 74 years old. His age falls within the age range of my elder generational group. I was interested in determining how similar or different the views of the participants in this study would be from Bill Cosby's regarding the youngest generational group, the millennial, and their educational priorities. The following narratives are the responses to this query.

Theresa suggests that the problem the young might be in the rap music, but that the more significant problem that the students today are having in primary and secondary education has to do with the police present and teachers that are incompetent.

Theresa (73, Binghamton):

“I don’t like that rap music. I don’t like some of the language, you know, like hos and niggas, I don’t like that.

From what I hear down there at the Binghamton High School, I don’t know, it doesn’t sound good, you know, having the police come in there and being involved with the kids. I don’t think they should, teachers are not that good be in there. I mean has it gotten that bad? You know, when I was young, who would ever think about the police man being in the school. Why is that?

I think some of these...Some of them are young, and I don’t think that they are as educated as they should be about Black kids and Black culture. I think the way they think...the problem might be with some of the teachers, the way they talk to the kids that might be the problem.”

Rosie believes that schools are not tough enough and that the kids today are too plugged into their digital equipment like I-Pods and cell phones to pay attention in school. She believes that the learning standards have lowered and that schools are moving students through to get rid of them, and possibly because teachers cannot deal with them and/or are afraid of them.

Rosie (63, Elmira)

“I think it’s hard to let the schools ...First of all, the school is just only teaching the basics. Because we’ve got some kids coming out of school these days that can’t even read. They’re just like passing them through and passing them

through. And, if you don't have a mother and father that understand what's going on, and helping you when you come home to grasp at the things that need to be taken care, just forget it. Because the kids in the schools these days that I'm finding in young people they're only thinking about playing, and, and, uhm, not going out getting exercise, and understanding what's going out there in nature. But, they're on, they're on computer, i-Pod, or whatever they got, cell phones. The littlest kid now walking the street got a cell phone. Texting [while they are] sitting in school, instead of listening to the teacher. And, the teachers is scared of them."

Ike suggests that the Black youth are in need of mentorship, and that the most established people in the Black community have a duty to reach back and help these kids, in particular he thinks that Parents need to play a larger role in the life of their children.

Ike (77, Binghamton):

"I always strived since that I have been working with kids is that I even start with the urban league teen center, my strive back then were to make sure that the kids in the community be productive in? everything that we used to do. Now what I have found out since I've been back is that the kids withhold to the wolves. Nobody in the black community really cared about them. When you have black leaders working in these big companies making all these amounts of money and forget about these other kids coming up, and when all you big organizations turn your back on them, the Urban League hasn't done anything for the kids, the only thing the Urban League has been doing for the community is to make sure that

they keep their ratings up, the kids don't know... before I left Columbia playground, Columbia park was the key area of all the activities for the black community. We had different programs for them, educational program at the teen center for them. But now I see that the kids are lost there are two things, you let the drugs come in and took over the community, and they have let kids step by the way side that should be up allowed to get a better education, and we do not have nobody among, what I call among college kids, that come back and help the kids in your community, if you know some of them go away and they stay away now that's... other than that I feel sorry. I really feel sorry for the kids in this area, I feel sorry more for the males in this area because we do not have no males, because we do not have no males that seem like they want to strive to be leaders in your community. Only thing that I see is that these kids are having more babies than they are having anything else.

I think what the schools should be doing your counselors should be working with a lot of the black kids and I think they should get more black teachers in the school system that can work with these kids and show them to strive for something in life, if you don't have no models, if you take a basketball player and make him your idol, make him your goal and you lose everything else. No teacher have given these kids how do you say it, a drive for them to be something else.

I had parents that made sure that I got an education, that's why I think its two things that we have to deal with in life now, the parents have to become somebody in these kids' life along with the school system. And I think the important part of the whole package is when I went to school the school was

responsible for me from the time I got there till I got home. Now the school is not responsible for the kids, a kid can walk in the door and say I'm here then turn around and walk out, there's nothing done. When I was coming I was there for eight hours as long as there is my time the school took on the responsibility of being in control of that, of me in the school at that time, and I think that is our basic problem now. We have given kids too much Leigh? way and given them too many rights to do nothing. If I walk into a school and say I don't want to be here today I'm going back then we had truant officers.

I want the school to take on some kind of responsibility that these are my kids, the principal say that this is my family, if these kids are not coming I'll send a truant officer to they? House, the school is responsible and if the mother and father do not see fit then we can do something, not send no police man.”

Junie suggests that the school system is failing Black children because most of them are in inner city schools with inferior teachers and that, coupled with teen pregnancy, or as he calls it “babies having babies,” is a large part of the reason why Black children are not succeeding in schools.

Junie (77, Syracuse):

“It's not like now. It's not like the majority of the kids that go to school now are bused or whatever. But, the majority of the kids that go to school in this area now are, I mean, they're black. And, the system's failing. The system is really failing.

Now, of course. I mean, you've got, all your suburbs are going to have the best schools. They've got the best schools. The best teachers. Nobody wants to teach

in inner city. Those that do teach in the inner city are very dedicated. Regardless of whether they're white, black or green. But, when I was a kid we never had any black teachers. No black teachers at all. No black role models in school, or whatever. Our, our role models were outside the school at the Dunbar Center.

Another problem is babies having babies. And, the babies that are having babies didn't get an education because they had to raise their baby, or their grandmother, I mean, their mother had to raise their baby while they tried to go to school. We had a program, uhm, called YMED, Young Mothers Education, D ... I'll say Department, I don't know what the D stood for. Where kids could go to school pregnant. And, if they had the baby, they had a daycare for them. And, they could continue their education. And, a black lady started that. Peggy Woods started that. She worked, uh, for the county. It was a county program. Uhm, but now you've got a young kid in grammar school, I mean, in junior high, well, some grammar school kids are having babies too. But, in junior high school pregnant. She could go to school, and then have the baby, and still continue, continue her education, because they would take care of their baby. But, if, you know, if they didn't finish in that YMED program they dropped out of school. So, now they don't have an education. So, they don't know how to raise a baby, because they're babies themselves.

I mean, I mean, at least in the black neighborhood, I mean, that's how it went that ... And, then young men, uhm, there's something about the young men now that can't put a sentence together, and the young girls, that school doesn't mean anything to them. It doesn't, it's no importance. And, we do have a lot of good

young kids. There's a lot of good young kids that graduate from, from school. But, there's a lot of kids that don't. And, the picture that's being painted now, uhm, isn't that good, because these young men are standing on the corner making babies, some of these guys are 20 years old and got four kids. Uhm, and girls. So, I mean, it's, it's just a sad situation. And, you've got drugs. And, you've fast money. People, kids want to make fast money. And, you've got, if you think about it, see, we didn't have TV when we were kids. We had a radio. And, when we listened to the radio you had to think.

You had to imagine what was going on in your mind. Uhm, and we got a TV when I was, I don't know, 14-15 years old. But, we were outside all the time in the summer. We weren't inside. And, kids today, uhm, they're playing games on their computer, or they're doing, you know, they don't, there they are computer savvy, but they're not mind savvy. They don't think outside the box.”

Discussion - A Bill Cosby moment – perceptions of the millennial generation:

When Bill Cosby made his speech, the elders in this study concurred with Cosby on a couple of points: the first being students are not working hard enough because they are preoccupied with digital media gadgets and the second was that teen pregnancy is a problem as we are seeing a generation of students whose parents were also teen parents. The reasons just cited along with his perceived lack of parental guidance formed Cosby why Cosby believes Black students are not succeeding in school. The elders do differ with Cosby on a major point. They suggest that it is not just the fault of these children that they are not being successful in school. There are inequities in socialization and

resources that leave these children at a disadvantage. They do not necessarily believe like Cosby that the *Brown* solved the problem of educational disparities and individual effort is what is needed for Black children to turn things around academically. The elders in this study believed that some responsibility should be taken by the schools and the Black community at large for the educational disenfranchisement of many of the young people in their communities.

Demographic Information – Elders/Silent Generation

Geographical Location	Name	Gender	Age	SES	Highest level of Education
Binghamton	Ike	Male	72	Middle Class	Associates Degree
	Sheldon	Male	76	Working Class	High School
	Theresa	Female	73	Working Class	High School
	Eleanor	Female	68	Middle Class	High School
	Dorethea	Female	70	Middle Class	High School
	Billie	Female	81	Working Class	Degree
	Wes	Male	64	Middle Class	Bachelors Degree
Elmira	Rosie	Female	63	Working Class	High School
	Bob	Male	67	Working Class	High School
	Ruby	Female	73	Working Class	Did not finish High School
<i>Syracuse</i>	Junie	Male	77	Middle Class	High School some college
	Hazel	Female	65	Working Class	High School
	Mike	Male	66	Working Class	High School some college
Buffalo	Janie	Female	69	Working Class	Associates Degree
	Ms Clay	Female	89	Middle Class	High School
	Rob	Male	67	Working Class	High School
	Ray	Male	69	Working Class	10 th Grade

Black Power Generation

This section presents the educational experiences of the participants who were born during the years 1950 – 1969. This generational grouping is generally referred to as the Baby Boomers (Strauss & Howe, 1992). In this study, I refer to this group as the Black Power generation because this group gained economic power as a result of the civil rights movement, because this was the first group of Blacks to go to college in large numbers. This generation is also the group of Blacks who came of age during the Black Power Movement (1964-1972) in the United States. In this group, I interviewed 13 people, six men and seven women. All the participants in this group were born in one of the geographical areas being considered in this study, Binghamton, Elmira, Syracuse, or Buffalo. For the participants in this study who were part of the Black Power generation, there were three emergent themes which will be presented in the findings: 1) The value of education, (2) School experiences: education, desegregation and Roots and, (3) Describing Racism.

“The Value of an Education”:

To gain insight into whether the Black Power generation participants and their families in this study and their families valued education, they were also asked the following questions: (1) What are your parents’ views on education? (2) What did you tell your children about the importance of an education? and (3) When you were raising your children, what did you think a good education would be for them? The following narratives have been selected because they represent the typical responses that were provided by the participants in the study. The participants’ names were replaced with

pseudonyms and each person is identified by their age and the geographical location they attended school in. All the participants in this study from the Black Power generation completed high school, with six going on to successfully complete college.

Paul (50, Syracuse)

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

“My parents went to school in South Carolina and their teachers were all black. I know my father and mother tell me that they would, they had to walk several miles to get to school, and when the school busses that took the other kids, the White kids,[would pass them] they [the White kids] would spit on them. When they got in school they had the White kids' handed down school books, because they had White kids writing in them, and they were hand me downs, so that's the situation, some of the situation they told me about.

For my parents getting an education was very important. They said education is the key, to ah, to improve yourself. To have a good career, so you could do whatever you wanted to do. Education was very important to them. My father didn't go far when he was younger, he dropped out in the 8th grade, but he went back to school to finish, getting his GED after the kids were grown.

My mother at the time, she graduated [from high school], she did have the opportunity to go to college, she started working, she needed money. But her father was a college graduate. Yes, Joseph Miller, my grandfather was a college

graduate, yes he was. So it [going to college] was kind of important in her life. She knew the meaning and importance of education.”

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

“I told them if you want to be successful and have a good quality of life to live, you need an education. The dynamics of our, of our jobs situation has changed, a high school diploma can’t do anything for you today.”

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

“Now it’s a four year degree or a Masters.”

Cynthia (52, Buffalo):

Do you remember what your parents’ views were on education? It’s value or importance?

“ My dad was not so, he wasn’t really about the school thing and [is] still [not] till this day, he either... he looks it, whatever you do you have to work hard at it, okay, in terms of whether it's school, whether it's a job that you decide to do; you need to work hard at whatever you decide to do. Education wasn't something that he actually stressed that was... it just wasn't. Because, and I look at this in terms of their background, you know, it was nothing that ever was stressed for them because when they were growing up, what their thing was, was that they would have to help maintain of ?taking care of the land; that was their job to do that, not necessarily education, you know.

Now for my mom it was different, you know, there was... my grandmother worked. My grandfather, her husband, they worked, and still it wasn't like education was stressed for them, but it was different than how she viewed it with her children; she told us that education would be a stepping stone for a lot of the things that you may want to do in life. It was important for her. She wanted us to be a college graduate, you know, that meant for you is that you have the opportunity to do whatever you want to do in life, okay, but you have to make a decision what it is that you want to do. Her parents thought a good education was to get out of high schools. But college, that was her goal for us. I just want to reiterate that eventually my father caught on the school idea. He did go back to school because he became a licensed electrician and it was extremely difficult but he did it, you know, but he did. He did it. So I think it was later on in life after what it took him to get to where he wanted to be, that he saw how important education was, you know.”

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

“I still tell them today that an education is very important. I am even going back to school to get my associates degree. I talk to them about my brothers who did not graduate from high school, they are a mess, and I talk to them about my sister who has an associated degree, and she owns her own house. Getting an education, that makes a difference. I can't move up in my job because I don't have a college degree, that's why I'm going back.”

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

“You need a college degree at least an associates.”

Joy (49, Buffalo):

Do you remember what your parents’ views were on education? It’s value or importance?

“My dad dropped out of high school to get a job, but he used to tell us, to stay in school, education is a must. To get a good paying job. He used to say better job, better outlook, better person, knowledge is power. Mom, oh, she encouraged us. It was nonstop. Education was important. It was deeply important to her, she went to college for nursing.”

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

“I always told them its power. Education is power. Be mindful, be strong, be the best you can be. Just be the best you. I encouraged them to go to college, but of course, it doesn’t always work. ‘Cause now my youngest son still has a... a job. But I still would like for him to go to college. My oldest son dropped out of school he got his GED I don’t know....college isn’t for everyone.”

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

“College. That’s all I ever known, go to high school get a, uh, you know, a high school diploma and then go to college.”

Pete (49, Elmira):

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

“My parents used to say that school was the most important, important thing, yeah, school was. We kind of messed up sometimes but my parents stayed on us and we corrected ourselves. The older we get the more, you know, we corrected ourselves in a lot of things. They wanted all of us to finish high school mostly because they didn't.”

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

“I told them that it is the most important thing. That's the most important thing. I said education is the most important thing. Because today you've got to have a, ah, ah, college degree in most of your jobs you get and everything and I, I just wanted, you know, just wanted them to get the education, go to college. I want them to do better than me, okay.”

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

“A college degree.”

Carl (50, Binghamton):

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

“They wanted all of us to go to college, so that we would be more successful, get better paying jobs...My parents graduated from high school, and later in life when he was working, my Dad. My Dad was always pushing education... get your education you don't want to be a bum. He told me and my brothers that if you get your education nobody can take that away from you... and you have to work twice and hard as White people to get the same thing, so if they can get a job with high school diploma you will need college.”

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

“I always told them I wanted to get a get education, but I never pushed for college, I always told them that if they were digging ditches and they were happy I would be fine, I understand that school wasn't for me.”

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

“Well it depends on what job. But probably at least a two year degree.”

Peaches (43, Elmira):

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

“Well, my dad was... he felt like education... he was really the one that pushed the education. He was really big on education. I think because he didn't finish school he wanted to make sure that we all finished school, not only that we finished school but we excelled and that we went on to college and you know he's... he just felt like education is the most important thing and that's the only way you're gonna get ahead, so. And my mother she was kind of, I... I don't wanna say she didn't care, but she just... she wasn't as hard as he was. You know what I mean? She... she... she just had other things. She just wanted me... and I thought it was probably some of her beliefs. She just wanted me to know how to be a... a young lady, how to take care of myself, how to cook, clean, and different things like that.

But my father was just really big on education. He... he always, you know, tells stories like, um, the job that he retired from, he had been there close to 40 something years and they always tried to offer him supervisory positions and different positions where he knew the work but he couldn't write, read and write that well, and spell. So, he always used an example where he would be further ahead had he stayed in school.”

What did you tell your children about the importance of an education?

“I tell both of them that they need to get their education so that they can get job and support themselves. You need some college today even more than a Bachelors.”

When you were raising your children what did you think a good education would be? What level?

“Oh, I've seen, uh, a Masters Degree people still not making no more than \$30,000, \$40,000 a year. So, a Masters or, you know a Bachelors or... or above. You know what I mean? I think it's... it's important. If you can get your Master's it... it's good.”

Discussion - The Value of an Education:

The narratives of the Black power generation show that most of the participants had parents who taught them to value education. Their parents expected them to all graduate from high school and, in most cases, their parents had aspirations for them to go to college. I do find it interesting that some participants in this generational group did have aspirations for their children to go to college. It is not surprising that this generational group looks at college as the minimum educational level that a person should aspire to achieve. This generation, according to Williamson-Lott et al. (2012), would have been witness to an almost doubling of Blacks enrolling in colleges across the country, because of legislation that offered need-based financial aid as a result of affirmative and the Great Society initiatives. This generation is the one which who could go to college if they wanted.

“School experiences: education, desegregation and Roots”:

When the participants shared their experiences in school and their memories of school, what emerged from their stories about their education journeys were sub-themes that included incidents of racism that they experienced in school and out of school. In Buffalo and Syracuse, the impact of segregation was felt through the lived experiences of students as they found themselves in predominately white schools. For the students in the Binghamton and Elmira areas, being the only Black or one of a few was part of their normal school experience. The participants were to share their memories of school going as far back as they could remember. The narratives below are some of their shared memories of school, starting with elementary and going through high school. The narratives that I have chosen speak to the experiences of many of the participants in the Black power generation. One thing that I was completely surprised by when interviewing this particular group, was the connection many of them made between racial incidents in their schooling experience and the airing of the television mini-series *Roots*. The mini-series *Roots* was an adaptation of a novel by Alex Haley, which was aired on television for eight consecutive nights in January of 1977. Marmon (1977) writes:

“*Roots* is Alex Haley's story of his family's passage from an ancestral home in Africa to slavery in America and, finally, to freedom. Along the way, Americans of both races discovered that they share a common heritage, however brutal; that the ties that link them to their ancestors also bind them to each other. Thus, with the final episode, *Roots* was no longer just a bestselling book and a buffo TV production but a social phenomenon, a potentially important bench mark in U.S. race relations.”

Carl (50, Binghamton):

“My elementary school years were terrible. I went to B___ I was always a kid that was very hyper. I mean I couldn’t sit down, I had to run around, and I’m talking, I’m joking, and my parents were always getting called in to school, the teacher told him I can’t control him, he’s too hyper. They didn’t really work with me I don’t think, they just put me back a year because of that, and my parents were really pissed because they didn’t think I got the attention I really needed in class, they were like well if he’s going to do this thing we’ll just ignore him, I won’t try to explain anything to him and all that stuff, my parents were very upset with my kindergarten teacher... There was another Black kid in my class named J___ and the same thing happened to him, he was like the opposite of me he was quiet and they put him back, come to find out he was deaf, but he spend the whole year that class, and because the teacher basically ignored him like she did me they didn’t even check. They didn’t really invest a lot of time with us. Me and J___ were the only black kids. My parents thought that the teacher just gave up on me. My parents moved me out of public school to Catholic school after that.

I went back to public school in high school in Binghamton, and I started playing sports. The more I got involved in sports I felt they were treating me differently, I could do less academically and get away with it. I got along good with the teachers, but they didn’t really push me.

When Roots came out, I hated it. I was suddenly on the spotlight with White kids, as soon as it came out, they thought they knew Black people and they thought

they knew everything about slavery. Suddenly every black person had a Chicken George for a father or an uncle. I got asked questions about Black history and they would expect me to answer them. Even the teachers would ask me questions, it was ridiculous. White kids that weren't asking questions were running around scared like I was going to take it out on them that we were slaves. They were always incidents where prejudice was involved, like the name calling, and if you liked a White girl, you were okay for a friend but you couldn't be my boyfriend because my parents wouldn't like it. There were prejudiced people. My best friend in the 10th grade was white and his girlfriend threatened to break up with him if he didn't drop me as a friend, because I was black. There was always the sneaky stuff when you think you know somebody, my mother used to always tell me that if you get a White person mad enough the last thing that would come out of their mouth would be the N word. My dad used to say if somebody calls you a nigger then you beat the hell out of them and I will deal with their parents later. I didn't have to fight a lot, but every once in a while I had to slap some guys up. When I was in the tenth grade, my parents moved to Endicott. I was really excited because I thought this will be a new start and I could get away from the prejudice in Binghamton. The first day I walked into the school I went into the cafeteria, and when I was walking in two guys walked by a friend of theirs who was tanned and said you look just like a nigger, now and then looked up and saw me and they took off. There is a notion that Black people are lazy or stupid, and I used to get that a little bit from the teachers and kids at school...they would say things like or what they do, you know."

Peaches (Elmira):

“My memory of elementary school was that something happened. Something major happened. I can't... I don't know if I got in trouble for fighting for someone calling me a nigger, but I know it was, uh, a big incident. It was something big, and... and what stood out because I was got called to the principal's office, that I didn't like especially about, um, um, my elementary school was there was a principal and I guess that's when they could still put their hands on kids, but this man was, like I felt like he was abusive. You know, where he would slam kids against the wall, you know hit kids and... and different things like that. So, that... Mr. Augustine, I'll never forget him. He was... he was the worst principle ever. Yeah. So, that probably is probably like the worst thing for school.

When I was in high school around the time Roots came out, we almost had a riot, the students walked out. It was because Mr. A____, was his name was a art teacher, he thought he was being funny and called a couple of Black students nigger George and say oh I mean chicken George. Everyone felt like he should've got fired for being prejudiced. And it seemed like to us, maybe something did happen to him but, you know, we wouldn't have known if something happened, if, you know, if he was reprimanded for what he said. If he was reprimanded for what he said but, um, um, it didn't seem like anything happened to him. So, I could remember it was hot, it was summer and, um, we just formed a little protest and we walked out. Then we [Black students], you know, we walked out. I could remember that. Not everybody walked out . But quite a students, you know, quite a few students. We walked out. We had a voice... it seemed like we had a

little voice and we walked out... The school Um, I could remember them calling us in... in the auditorium, just trying to de-escalate the situation. They didn't want it to go any further, they didn't want, you know, too much more to happen. You know what I mean? ... they basically was telling us they saw us, they heard us; we listened to what you had to say now it's time to calm this down. There was prejudice at the school, but most of the time it was behind your back now? in your face. We were mad, and that is when I learned about the word tenure, so they couldn't do anything to him."

Joy(48, Buffalo):

"I don't remember much about elementary school except in was all Black and walking distance from the Ellicott Mall [the projects downtown], and I have fun with my friends. Junior high was pretty much the?, I don't remember Clinton Junior High School, my goodness. Some of them teachers I do not remember. It was a really nice school though. I went there through the eighth grade, and then I went to high school. South Park High School, oh my goodness what a change. I had gone to schools that was all Black and walking distance, never took a bus, and now I was bussed to the other side of the city, to an area that, well, that was mostly white. Caucasian. It was different. We had more Caucasians than there was of us, of African-Americans. It was a little different in environment. [They were] racist. We didn't belong there...They said it was their school, [and they] didn't think we belonged there. But we was not able to go anywhere we wanted to go. The teachers had to be pleasant, that's their job. The students was mean.

I went there from '77 to '81. And the year Roots came out. It was real different. It was riots... They would throw bus... throw eggs and rocks at the bus. They didn't want us there. But the busses were coming in full of black kids, and it was the Caucasian people who was out there throwing eggs and stuff like that at us. They didn't want us there. It was a mess. They would had security out there. We had cops. They would arrest anybody who did it, but it was... it went on for while...I was angry. Because I didn't understand why, but I was also scared, I would've stayed after school for nothing because then you had to catch a special [school bus]. I wouldn't stayed after school because if I missed that special would have to go around the corner and catch that Sixteen South Park, no. No can do. I was not getting' caught in that area. It was very unsafe. It was a mess. Scary. Once the bus I was on they [White kids], um, threw rock and busted a girls head open. It was so scary. It was (makes noise). That was crazy... My parents they would just talk to us about White people being ignorance, but said we'll be okay. We trusted our parents, so we went to school.

In the beginning of high school I was bitter, but I still know I had to go to school, get my A's and B's, but learning was kind of, difficult. You didn't know what to expect. The school didn't do much about the racism.[,] They said it was wrong, but for some reason they still let those kids do what they wanted to do 'cause they still thought we didn't belong there.

...like in the '80s, it started getting a little better. I think I just go used to it, but I never stayed after school, I just went to school and went back home. I finished high school; I graduated from high school in 1981. South Park at the time, they

said South Park was a bad school, but I didn't think it was bad compared to some others, I thought it was a great school at least in the classroom. They should've said that South Park is a racist. That would have been a better term to describe it."

Paul (50, Syracuse):

"My elementary _____ school was outside of Syracuse in Tully. It was majority white. Most of the time I was the only Black kid in my class. I remember a lot, especially at _____, realizing I was the only black kid there, and the racism I experienced at times, with the name calling was there nigger this [and] nigger that. At times the teacher would treat you like they realized that maybe you're not up to par enough, because you're Black. Like nothing sunk in, they [teachers] didn't think that you could catch on. Most of the time they [teachers] would ignore you. I always felt they [the teachers] was judging my ability to learn.

My parents switched me to another school, closer to the city, in fourth grade. I went to a different school, called D _____. I walked in there in fourth grade, September, I had a Black teacher. That was different. There was a few more black people, at time, it was busing. We were bused to school. It was exciting. It was more black kids. It was inter-city? kids, who were kind of more outspoken. It was just a different energy.

When I was in high school I had some bumps. Um, ah, a little bit, yes. I did. Not a lot. I think I got a little bit. They put me in remedial reading, and I said why am

I in this class? ... I think my 10th grade English teacher put me in, yeah. Because, yeah, because there was a teacher's aid in there who happened to be Black, Mrs. T____, who said Paul, why are you in here? You're reading way beyond these kids.... I don't know, now that I am older sometimes I think it was because I was Black. . I didn't see it being about race then, because there was white kids in the class too. But looking back there were not a lot a Black kids at the school and a lot of us ended up in remedial classes. I ended up staying for one semester, yes. Yes, I did. It slowed me down.”

Leroy (52, Buffalo):

“In elementary school they [teachers] were talking down to you, like you were stupid or they just didn't talk to you at all? They only thing good about elementary school and junior was it was in the neighborhood and we could walk to school.... And they were all Black I did like some of my teachers in junior high school. They would talk to you.

Went I went to high school at E__ that was my first experience with white kids... it was different because in elementary school and junior I was use to seeing black faces all the time. Except for the teachers. But in high school we had black teachers, but also mostly white classmates ... and I'd be walking down the hallway like, wow, blondes, brunettes, red heads. I'm like: They're white. Like I said, I can make friends with anybody. It was just different 'cause I never ... I never dealt with White kids before until I got to high school.... A couple of them tried to be cool, but like I said, I never really had a racial experience in junior

high school. In high school ...my freshman year of high school, that was the year "Roots" came out... Well, the white racist came out... there were ... there were ... I'll put it to you this way: white kids were getting beat up when they called Black kids slaves or niggers... but they was ... white kids was getting beat up all the time after that. The school didn't do anything because it was all happening after school. We got called nigger before Roots, mostly behind our back not to our face, but after Roots things was crazy for a minute.

I played football so I got along with most of the White kids. Everything was good except for we to go out to Riverside. We're in high school, that's where the field was, and all ... and it was like we had to be prepared. Because Riverside was a predominantly white area... Oh, it was very racist. Very racist. But that's where we had to play. That's where the field was ... Riverside Field, behind Riverside. My first time I went to Riverside, I was scared... I was scared to death. I'm like, we're going way out here. See, E_____ was on Sycamore. More whites in the school, Emerson was located in a mixed area, it had Blacks and whites... That first game at riverside we was all together and Emerson was ... all the black parents ... and all the Black students ? Emerson was together, so nothing happened, but it was tense.”

Discussion- School experiences: education, desegregation, and Roots:

The participants in this study entered high school during the years 1964 – 1983. In these decades, after the Brown I and Brown II decisions, some of these students took part in their school districts' efforts to implement school desegregation. The Brown decisions did not apply to northern schools in general, because they did not practice de jure segregation. The participants in the Black Power generation were going to school during a time of national turbulence. Across the nation, schools were facing the turmoil of forced integration, which generally meant that Blacks were moved into White schools. According to Williamson-Lott, Darling-Hammond and Hyler (2012),

“Blacks grew tired of the opposition they encountered as they were forced into white schools only to meet the resistance and repression. Frustrated by the large discrepancy between expected results and actual achievement of Black children, many Blacks became disillusioned with desegregation as the ‘answer’ to Black America’s problems. ...Whites voted their sentiments about desegregation by moving to the suburbs in a phenomena (phenomenon?) known as ‘white flight’ and leaving black students in racially homogeneous and poorly funded urban schools. Ironically as Blacks in the south marched toward desegregation northern Blacks increasingly found themselves in segregated school environment”

(Williamson-Lott, Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2012).

In the school districts involved in this study, Binghamton, Elmira, Syracuse, and Buffalo, only Buffalo had a court ordered desegregation program (This information was documented by Nancy St. John in the *Review of Educational Research* which was

published in 1970). The court order came in response to the fact that Buffalo had purposely redrawn their school district lines to segregate their schools by race. Syracuse had a voluntary school desegregation program (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1968). Binghamton and Elmira, because of the low numbers of Blacks attended school, did not engage in school desegregation program for either school district.

The participants in the Black Power generation attended school after the Urban renewal plans were implement, and in Syracuse and Buffalo, the Black communities had been reconfigured. Unlike the elder generation whose narratives support the idea of Black community that was steeped in solidarity, the Black power generation did not speak of community with the same reverence as the Elder generation.

No matter where the participants attended school a common feature of their collective experience is that they all experienced racism in schools. This phenomena is not new of course, as many scholars have written about racism experienced by Black children in schools (Lopez, 2012). In this particular study, what I found interesting was the expressed connection between the airing of the television mini-series *Roots* and racial incidents that many of the participants experienced. *Roots* was indeed a social phenomenon. Hur & Robinson (1978) suggest that along with being a social phenomenon *Roots* was also an experiment in the power of media to shape racial attitudes. Based on the work of Hur and Robinson (1978), the broadcast had some immediate effects on both White and Black viewers, “Many white viewers of *Roots* expressed feelings of guilt, anger and sympathy. Black viewers on the other hand thought *Roots* finally set the record straight for the history of Africans arriving on American soil and the history of Europeans arriving on American soil are brutally different” (Marmon,

1977, p. 35). Many Blacks were inspired to search out their own genealogies (Hur & Robinson, 1978; Marmon, 1977). For the participants in this study, *Roots* had a strong impact on their lives. Joy along with other Black children who were being bused to a predominately White area, arrived at school to the angry taunts of Whites and the pelting of their bus by eggs, just after the series aired. Carl found himself being placed simultaneously in the position of spokesperson for the entire Black citizenry, and constructed as an angry, scary black man to be feared. Peaches and other Black students walked out of the school in protest of a teacher calling a student “nigger George,” a twist on the name of one of the characters in the TV series named Chicken George. Leroy witnessed White kids, who felt empowered to call Black kids slaves and niggers, get beat up. Their experiences were not unique. Across the country *Roots* had a similar impact. Marmon writes:

“A handful of people, mostly teenagers, reacted violently. In Greenville, Miss., some white junior high school students taunted blacks: "You ol' slave, my granddaddy owned you once upon a time." Chanting "Roots, roots, roots," a gang of black toughs roughed up four white youths at Detroit's Ford High School. A well-to-do white woman in Atlanta voiced one fear: "I thought Roots was awful. The blacks were just getting settled down, and this will make them angry again." (Marmon, 35)

This Black Power Generation is my generation, but I must admit that the stories they shared did not seem to be from a people who felt empowered. Theirs are stories of what it was like when you were the one Black student, or one of a few. Their experiences were different from mine, and I must admit that I was surprised at how muted their responses

to the racism they experiences were. I was expecting this group to have a more radical and politically developed critique of the racism they experienced. I expected a different racial consciousness. Instead of James Brown's "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" I felt a more appropriate song to describe their experience would have been Gloria Gannors' "I will survive." When they spoke of incidents of racism that happened to them, being called a "Nigger" seemed to be a typical experience, and they responded in a manner I would find typical of young people, by fighting or walking away. They did not see this name calling as part of a systemic racial problem, however. They saw the name calling as acts of individual aggression. When the participants from Buffalo, who were engaged in school desegregation efforts involving forced bussing, shared that they were afraid because, as Joy put it, "we didn't belong," they still talked about these racist acts as the acts of a collection individuals. In Joys' case, fear came when she was traveling to and from school she seemed to feel safe at school, and Leroy's fear came from being located in a part of town that was hostile to Blacks. Both individuals found ways to cope. They did not make a connection between the racist acts they were experiencing and the school system; they saw acts of individuals.

"Describing Racism":

The following narratives highlight the final theme emerging from the stories told by the Black Power Generation. What I saw in the narratives was the way the participants talked about racism was different depending on the geographical location of the participant. One observation that I made from the narratives related to how differently participants talked about racism. In Binghamton and Elmira, when the participants were describing incidents that I would have looked at as racist, they used the term 'prejudices'

to describe the incidents. By contrast, the participants from Buffalo and Syracuse used the word 'racist,' when they were describing incidents that would have been seen as racially motivated.

Carl (50, Binghamton):

“They were always incidents where prejudice was involved, like the name calling, and if you liked a White girl you were okay for a friend, but you couldn't be my boyfriend because my parents wouldn't like it. There were prejudiced people, my best friend in the 10th grade was white, and his girlfriend threatened to break up with him if he didn't drop me as a friend, because I was black.”

Peaches (43, Elmira):

“When I was in high school around the time Roots came out, we almost had a riot, the students walked out. It was because Mr. A____, was his name, was a art teacher, he thought he was being funny and called a couple of Black students nigger George and say oh I mean chicken George. Everyone felt like he should've got fired for being prejudiced.”

Joy (49, Buffalo):

“We had more Caucasians then there was of us, of African-Americans. It was a little different in environment. [They were] racist. We didn't belong there... They said it was their school, [and they] didn't think we belonged there.”

Paul (50, Syracuse):

“My elementary _____ school was outside of Syracuse in Tully it was majority white. Most of the time I was the only Black kid in my class. I remember a lot, especially at _____, realizing I was the only black kid there, and the racism I experienced at times with the name calling was there nigger this nigger that. At times the teacher would treat you like they realized that maybe you’re not up to par enough, because you’re Black. Like nothing sunk in, they didn’t think that you could catch on. Most of the time they would ignore you. I always felt they [the teachers] was judging my ability to learn.”

Leroy (50, Buffalo):

“... In high school ...my freshman year of high school, that was the year "Roots" came out... Well the white racist came out.. there were ... there were ... I'll put it to you this way: white kids were getting beat up when they called Black kids slaves or niggers... but they was ... white kids was getting beat up all the time after that. The school didn't do anything because it was all happening after school. We got called nigger before Roots, mostly behind our back not to our face, but after Roots things was crazy for a minute.”

Discussion- Describing racism:

The participants who live in Binghamton and Elmira describe incidents that I would consider racist as ‘prejudice,’ and those from Syracuse and Buffalo have described the (same type of) incidents using the words ‘racism’ or ‘racist.’ Can we use the words ‘prejudice’ and ‘racist’ interchangeably? I would suggest the answer to this question is no. Based on the work of Beverley Tatum (1997), she defines prejudice as “a

preconceived judgment or opinion, usually based on limited information.” She goes on to suggest that we all have prejudices, simply because we are continually exposed to misinformation about others” (p. 102). Tatum(1997) argues that you cannot use racism and prejudice interchangeably because “racism is not a personal ideology based on racial prejudice, it is a system involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals” (p.103). In the United States, Tatum (1997) contends, racism clearly operates in a way that disadvantages people of color and gives advantages to White people. Critical Race Theorists (e.g., Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) would examine the situations described by the participants and conclude that they were incidents of racism, not individual acts of racism, but racism which privileges White people over Black people. This places White as superior and Black as inferior. In Binghamton and Elmira, the Black population has always been significantly smaller than in Syracuse and Buffalo. Living in the southern tier for more than one generation, many of the participants in this study seemed to be almost embarrassed to discuss the issue of race and racism. The participants from Buffalo and Syracuse were connected to much larger Black communities, which might account for their raised level of racial consciousness. Yet, none of the participants in this study made a critique of racism that connected it to the larger systemic and structural racism which is foundational in this (Smedley & Smedley, 2012).

Demographic Information – Baby Boomers/Black Power

Geographical Location	Name	Gender	Age	SES	Education Level
Binghamton	Peggy	Female	46	Middle Class	High School Graduate
	Carl	Male	50	Middle Class	Community College 2 nd yr
	Mike	Male	52	Working Class	High School Graduate
	Renee	Female	50	Middle Class	College Graduate Master's Degree
Elmira	Peaches	Female	43	Working Class	College Graduate Bachelors Degree
	Pete	Male	53	Middle Class	High School Graduate
<i>Syracuse</i>	Paul	Male	51	Middle Class	College Graduate Bachelors Degree
	Evette	Female	50	Middle Class	College Graduate Masters Degree
Buffalo	Joy	Female	48	Working Class	College Graduate Associates Degree
	Leroy	Male	51	Working Class	High School Graduate
	Darin	Male	48	Working Class	High School Graduate
	Renee	Female	47	Working Class	High School Graduate
	Cynthia	Female	52	Middle Class	High School Graduate

Gen X/Hip Hop Generation:

This section presents the educational experiences of the participants who were born during the years 1970-1987. There were 11 participants in this study that were part of this group, which has been traditionally called Generation X (Strauss & Howe). Bakari Kitwana (2002) coined the term Hip Hop generation to describe this generation, which was the first generation of Black Americans to grow up in the post civil rights era. Merging the two descriptors, in this study, I will use GenX/Hip Hop to describe this generation. There were five women and six men who were participants in this study, as part of the GenX/ Hip Hop generation. For the participants in this generation, two emergent themes will be presented in these findings. The themes are: (1) The value of education and (2) School experiences, which include the sub-themes of being isolated and/or feeling alone in concert with having negative expectations placed upon them which result in feeling judged.

“The value of an Education”:

Similar to the Black Power and Elder generations, this generation was asked about how they and their parents view the importance of education, in order to gain insight into how they value education. Unlike the earlier generations, I did not ask this group the questions referring to their children, as many do not have children nor have children that are too young to attend school. The narratives selected represent typical responses that were provided by participants in this study. The participant’s names were replaced with pseudonyms, and each person was identified by their age and the geographical location in which they attended school. One of the 11 participants in this

study from this generation dropped out of high school. The remaining 10 participants all either completed high school or got a GED, with seven going on to successfully complete college.

Maurice (35, Elmira):

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

“Both my parents went to school in Elmira and they both finished high school. They stressed the importance of education but just to the point of graduating from high school and that was it.”

What would you tell young people who are still in high school today about the importance of an education?

“You must go to school, my parents never insisted on anything past high school, but I want my kids to go to college. They won't be able to get a job anywhere without a college degree.”

Chasity (27, Syracuse):

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

“My dad didn't like school. He told me he was always skipping, it's a wonder he graduated. But my dad always stressed that education is important, that's the key to success, and um, he would say don't wind up like me. Make sure you go to college. My mom, it's interesting, she definitely promoted, you know, her

children to go to school, and made sure we went every day, but nothing about how important school is ever came out of her mouth. It's interesting my paternal grandmother always talked about college, to get a good education you have to go to college. For my mom high school seemed to be enough."

What would you tell young people who are still in high school today about the importance of an education?

"I do believe that education...educational achievement is important because it allows you to um, experience different things and um, and when I say that you can...once you, um. Decide to go to college, you can decide what you want to do, um, and then if you don't even like that career choice, you can change it. Like, there's so many different opportunities, um once you decide higher education and, um the...the opportunities are just...just there if you aspire to have higher education and continue on with it. You know, if you stop that's a whole different story because, you know, you don't have that degree to apply for a job and ...hopefully get the job that you desire... I think today you have to strive to get a master's degree... bachelor degrees are not even that high, you have to keep going past..."

Renee (40, Buffalo):

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

"My mother and my stepfather both finished high school. My mother went further and has a 2yr accounting degree from Bryant and Stratton. They were

both deathly serious about education. There was no, there was no two ways about it. You had to finish school. High school wasn't what they meant either, they meant college. So, it had to be good grades. You had to behave yourself in school. And, there was always the connection between this and having a good job, and doing well in life. So that was always emphasized in my house."

What would you tell young people who are still in high school today about the importance of an education?

"I think college is important because it trains your mind. It's not so much the content, because when you enter the workplace each workplace has its own way of handling things, and a lot of that philosophy flies right out of the window. But it does train your mind. It trains you, it trains you out of concrete thinking, and into abstract thinking, which is necessary in order to make, you know, your life work."

Bill (31, Buffalo):

Do you remember what your parents' views were on education? It's value or importance?

"My mom finished high school and a couple of years of college, my dad finished high school and that was it. My mom always say that school was important, cause without school then you won't be nowhere in life. My dad never talked to me about school, he left when I was little."

What would you tell young people who are still in high school today about the importance of an education?

“I want them [my children] to have a whole better life, a whole better education than I had. School is important. The first thing I’d say is, I’m sorry but don’t be like your dad. I went to school and ...messed up. And you need school. School is very important. Don’t stop at high school, you need college today.”

Ari (28, Buffalo):

Do you remember what your parents’ views were on education? It’s value or importance?

“My parents told me that an education is very important if you want to get anywhere nowadays in life. It’s even more important now because of the times changing. So they pushed me to finish school they pushed me to better myself. If you don’t have some type of education nowadays, you’re not going to be working anywhere. They wanted me to go to college. I believe my parents wanted to go to college but they couldn’t because of money. Both my brother and sister finished college. I hope to go back sometime.”

What would you tell young people who are still in high school today about the importance of an education?

“Go to school, don’t waste your time with this or that make sure you finish school. More than high school, these kids today need to be thinking college from day one.”

Will (31, Binghamton):

“My Mom and dad did not go far in their education. Mom went to the 8th grade and Dad dropped out in the 6th grade. My mom knew that education was important. I don’t think she knew very well how to convey that other than “you better get your butt to school” that’s all she would usually say. My Dad however tried to work with us, he did as much as he could do and he taught me not to give up, if you are struggling you have to keep working at it and keep trying to study it. I took this lesson and I was never afraid to ask for help. I think that their lack of education hindered them in helping us further our education or realize how important education was. My parents thought a good education would be to get thru high school or at least get a GED.”

What would you tell young people who are still in high school today about the importance of an education?

“I tell my kids that you have to be smarter than the white kids in their class because these White kids will come in and they will know their ABC’s and 123’s, you need to know this even better than them because they are expected you not to. I expect my kids to go to college, no excuses.”

Discussion - “The value of an Education”:

The participants in this study from the Hip Hop Generation without exception believe that an education is important. Even the case of Bill who dropped out of high school but wanted his children to have a “better education,” believed that “You need college today.” For most of the participants in this group, a college education was linked

to secure employment. One thing I found particularly interesting was that there were a number of participants in this group whose parents only encouraged them to obtain a high school degree. This finding overlaps with one of the things that I found when interviewing the Black Power Generation; within that group, I also saw parents who did not encourage their children to pursue college.

School experiences - “Isolation/feeling alone”:

The narratives from this generation show how the face of racism has changed. Based on the work of Sue (2010), the term ‘micro aggressive racism’ was coined to describe racism that occurs in the form of racial slights, indignities, unfair treatment, and exclusion. Describing their experiences as filled with isolation and loneliness, their stories serve as counter narratives to the dominant accounting of education as color blind and inclusive.

Will (Binghamton):

“I felt out of place in school, when I was in the 6th grade we move to Endicott, I was the only Black kid there that I saw anyway. I felt like I exiled. I had a double whammy, because I was the new kid and I was the Black kid and it seemed like I couldn’t get anyone to like me per se. I remember thinking dang, I wonder if it would be easier if I was just White, then maybe I could just fit in and it wouldn’t be so hard... I was embarrassed to talk to anyone about it, why wouldn’t you want to be what you are.”

Maurice (Elmira):

“I was nervous, because I went to Elmira South side which was in sort of a rich side of town, with a lot of well off to do White people, so I was a little nervous about that. I was coming from EFA Junior High School that had a lot of Black kids, I felt uncomfortable from a school where I felt comfortable, where there were more of us walking around to going to this school, I felt out of place. I felt like I don't fit in...the first year, I didn't know many people at all. I just felt kind of like an outsider.”

Uthman (Binghamton):

“I was never a part of the school culture...I was the only African American in my class, and when I went out on the play ground I was the only African American in my grade, I was on my own most of the time.”

Naime (Binghamton):

“It wasn't very diverse, most of the time I stayed to myself. It was a lot of racial tension there, I didn't have a lot of friends, I hung out with t___ sometime, he was Laotian... when he wasn't at school there wasn't really anybody to talk to in-between classes.”

Discussion - Isolation/feeling alone:

The narratives in this section suggest that Black children continue to experience racism in schools. The experiences shared suggest that the racism is more covert than that experienced by the Black power generation. For the participants in this study the more subtle and microaggressive racism (Sue, 2010) was just as debilitating as the overt racism faced by the Black Power generation. Moreover, Tatum (1997) suggests these acts of racism which result in the isolation of Black children has to the potential impact their academic performance. Base on the work of Tatum (1997), in schools where there are a number of Black children the tendency is for them to self segregate themselves as a way of being rejuvenated. For these young people who must deal with racism in its various forms throughout the school day, congregating with “one’s cultural community” provides a rest, a temporary escape from the weight of dealing with racism (p. 10). Participants in this study found themselves in situations where they had no relief. They were in some cases like Uthman, “the only African American in [their] class.” In such cases, Tatum (1997) suggests that these students need to be provided a safe space to go so that they can get a respite from dealing with racism. Without a safe space Tatum (1997) suggests the students might not have the energy necessary to be successful academically.

School experiences - “Negative expectations/being judged”:

The last significant theme from this generation was that of feeling that people, in particular teachers and peers, had negative expectations of them, which often led to a feeling of being judged. The participants were judged for being incapable of producing academically.

Renee (buffalo):

“I went to catholic school and the teachers had expectations for behavior and for grades and things like that that was far too low. They didn’t expect us to fail but they expected us not to know things, not to work hard, not to step it up. I think sometimes they would lower their expectations so that the students wouldn’t fail, you know...I did have some teachers that were like, okay, you’re never going to do anything. You’re lazy. I had some of those.”

Sherita (Binghamton):

“In high school they had different expectations for the Black kids, they expected more out of the white kids. Like if I didn’t hand something in, the teacher would be like oh whatever, but if one of the white kids didn’t hand something in, they would be like, why didn’t you get this done, why didn’t you come to me, what is the reason, they would really go in and try to figure out why wasn’t this work handed in. To me, it would be like oh she didn’t do it or she was lazy.”

Will (Binghamton):

“I was in this ladies class and we were talking about something and I don’t remember how we got into an argument, but she said something to me and I said, “that’s why you look fake wearing all that makeup” and she said, “that’s why you look like a monkey and you have big ears” and I was like word and everybody in the class was laughing and I was embarrassed and she kept going, she said, “you think you’re going to college to play basketball, you’re not going to college, you’re not smart enough you’re not going to this you’re not going to that, find a

good street corner because that is where you are going to be doing nothing...like she was really goin' in on me.”

Bill (Buffalo):

“I didn't like the teachers in the school.. 'cause to me at point in time I would feel like they were treating me different because I was...African American and they knew I was raised in a project, so they would treat me different...There were some kids, like , I know I've heard of kids that weren't even from the city that were there at M_____... I had got in trouble with a guy a Caucasian guy and they [the principle] tried to tell me that I didn't like Caucasian people. That wasn't never true though. There's a incident where we was in the gym, he took something that belonged to me and I asked him about it, questioned him and the teacher pulled me away and started telling me that I was like ghetto... I got in trouble, went to the office, and went home and told my mom and mother handled it.... They thought 'cause I was African American from a... from the projects or something I didn't belong in their school. Like I didn't know how to act, but I did.”

Uthman (Binghamton):

“I remember when I was in elementary school, someone in my class was missing \$5 and the students and the teacher actually convicted me of taking the \$5...I was the only African American in my class... he [the teacher] was adamant in saying that I took the \$5... it was like after that I always felt that everybody was always taking about me I would walk into something all heads would turn to look at me.”

Shauna (Binghamton):

“When we move out to Johnson City, I felt like there was a lot of racism. I didn’t feel like they treated me like everybody else. Some of the students were a little harsh a little mean to me which when I first got there I didn’t know why but I pretty much figured it out, they would say smart remarks, they would call me colored and say why is she here or asking me if I could sit somewhere else because they didn’t want to sit next to me they was all Caucasian.”

Discussion - School Experiences:

The experiences of these students are consistent with what has been written in the literature by Kozol (2005), Lopez (2012), and Lewis (2003). The participants attended schools steeped in colorblind ideologies which claim meritocracy, but all things are not equal as these participants have described situations in which they perceived that they were being treated differently simply because of their race. The participants shared stories of experiencing more covert forms of racism, and some felt that they were being treated with overt hostility in school because of their Black skin. If you consider just the selection of narratives shared, it seems apparent that these students’ experiences of isolation and being judged have a connection to them being seen as inferior or not capable because of their race. Consider Bill when his teacher declared, “You’re not going to college, you’re not smart enough.” Consider Shuana’s experience, “They would call me colored and say why is she here or asking me if I could sit somewhere else.” These students walked into educational institutions and they became suspects. They were suspected of being thieves, as was Uthman’s experience. They were being accused of

being lazy, not fit to sit next to and not academically capable to succeed. They were subjected to this judgment which was not based on their actions necessarily. They were being judged because their skin was Black.

Unlike the Elder and Black Power Generations that preceded them, the Hip Hop Generation has not been confronted with Jim Crow segregation during the socio-political upheaval witnessed by the baby boomers in the school desegregation era. The Hip-Hop Generation is distinct from these others because, according to Kitwana (2002), "The hip-hop generation is not only confronted with mass unemployment, mass incarceration, and mass disenfranchisement, but continues like those before to be the recipients of America's unfulfilled promise of equality and inclusion." (p. 32)

As Kitwana (2002) suggests, this generation is a part of the continued struggle of Black people to find a space in U.S. society. The activist messages in the music of the Hip Hop Generation, heard from artists like Public Enemy and Mos Def, speak to the fact that these young people clearly understand how Blackness is perceived as problematic in this society. One participant succinctly expressed the problem that continues from generation to generation to define the fundamental problem with the educational system and why in this third generation Black students still talk about experiencing racism. Robin, expressed her frustration with her school experiences, saying that, "Whites, in general, don't really see Blacks as equal."

Demographic Information – GenX/Hip Hop Generation

Geographical Location	Name	Gender		SES	Education Level
Buffalo	Robin	Female	30	Middle Class	College Graduate Masters Degree
	Mike	Male	31	Middle Class	College Graduate Masters Degree
	Bill	Male	31	Working Class	High School drop out (10 th grade)
	Renee	Female	30	Working Class	College Sophomore
Syracuse	Chasity	Female	27	Middle Class	College Graduate Masters Degree
	Miller	Male	29	Working Class	High School Graduate
Elmira	Maurice	Male	35	Working Class	College Graduate Associates Degree
	Lois	Female	34	Working Class	High School Graduate
Binghamton	Shauna	Female	28	Working Class	College Graduate Bachelors Degree
	Will	Male	31	Working Class	College Graduate Associates Degree
	Sherita	Female	35	Working Class	High School Graduate
	Uth	Male	32	Working Class	College Graduate Associates Degree

Generation Y/Millennial Generation

This section presents the educational experiences of the participants who were born during the years 1988 – 1994. This generational grouping is referred to as Generation Y or the Millennial Generation. There were six female and six male participants in the study from this generational grouping. Yoseph (2008) writes that the Millennial (Strauss & Howe, 2000) have been called the colorblind generation. According Yoseph's (2008) article, the night Barack Obama became president of the U.S., many of the political analysts who were giving commentary used words to describe this generation that included "post-racial," "not bothered by race," and "They don't see skin color." The participants in this study pose a counter narrative to this dominant discourse of the new post-racial/colorblind generation, particularly within the realm of the educational system. The two themes that will be presented for this generational group are (1) The value of education which speaks to how the participants view the importance of education and (2) And the Teacher Said which speaks to the messages the participants received from their teachers. These messages suggest that they were academically incompetent and doomed to failure. The GenY/Millennial generation participants in this study have experiences that suggest that race still matters.

"The value of an Education"

To discover how the GenY/millennia's viewed the importance of education, two questions were asked. The first question inquired of their parent's views on the importance of education and the second question asked about their personal educational goals. The narratives selected represent typical responses that were given. The

participant's names were replaced with pseudonyms, and each person is identified by their age and the geographical location in which they attended school. One of the 12 participants from this generation dropped out of high school, three were seniors in high school, and the remaining individuals were in college.

Kyle (19, Binghamton)

Do you remember what your parents views were on education? It's value or importance?

“My mother she'd say, “you have to get good grades and get out, if you don't get good grades what are you going to do, you'll be staying here, you're not going to get out of here [Binghamton] . I know you want to get out...If you finish high school and go to college and get good grades then you can be somebody, you can be successful...you want to be something, you don't want to be a nobody...school is the path to success.”

What are your educational goals?

“ I want finish out at BCC and I hope I can transfer someplace to play ball.”

Kristin (21, Binghamton)

Do you remember what your parents views were on education? It's value or importance?

“My Dad is a dentist and my Mom teaches at BCC, they believe that obtaining an education is not only important but they considered it a requirement for me.”

What are your educational goals?

“I’ll be graduating from BCC with a nursing degree, I hope to continue on for my Bachelors in Nursing.”

Cornell (18, Buffalo)

Do you remember what your parents views were on education? It’s value or importance?

“My mom really wants me to go to college...because you’re not going to get nowhere if you don’t have an education. I don’t talk to my dad about school he’s not around.”

What are your educational goals?

“I want to go to college”

Sissy (19, Buffalo)

Do you remember what your parents views were on education? It’s value or importance?

“My grandmother raised me and she used say that I should finish school and go to college ‘cause she never had a chance to. I could be the first one.”

What are your educational goals?

“I don’t know, I had to drop out of high school. I need to get my GED and then maybe I can go to ECC [Erie Community College].”

Amber (21, Buffalo)

Do you remember what your parents views were on education? It's value or importance?

“[my parents] they've taught me that it's extremely important. It's always been nonnegotiable for us. It was not an issue after I graduated high school. We were all definitely going to college.”

What are your educational goals?

“I am currently a student at SUNY Oswego, I am finishing my bachelors degree in broadcast journalism. I may go on for a Masters at some point but right now I want to find a job.”

Daniel (19, Buffalo)

Do you remember what your parents views were on education? It's value or importance?

“School is very important. They always want all three of us to go to college. They want all three of us to finish college. They want all three of us to get great educations and they want us to just do whatever we want with our lives.”

What are your educational goals?

“I'm studying to be a Social Studies teacher at Buffalo State...I'm a freshman.”

Ahkeem (19, Syracuse)

Do you remember what your parents views were on education? It's value or importance?

“My parents just said finish your education, it important if you want to get a job...because unless you're going to be like a pro something, you're probably not relying on that so you'll be relying on your education most of your life for a job.”

What are your educational goals?

“I just finished my first semester at New Hartford, I got a football scholarship and I am majoring in Biology. It all works out I'll be a bio teacher so I'll need to get a Masters.”

Laura (18, Elmira)

Do you remember what your parents views were on education? It's value or importance?

“My Mom always told me that you need an education just to get by today.”

What are your educational goals?

“I went back to school this semester to study nursing at TC3 [Tompkins Community College]. Once I finish, I'll probably just get a job. I don't know about going back to school.”

Discussion -The value of an Education:

These findings provide a counter narrative to the contemporary and popular characterizations of young Black people as situated in the “culture of failure” (Patterson, 2006; Williams, 2006) or as Cosby (2004) declared, “Fighting hard to be ignorant.” The idea that education is valued and important and should be pursued was a theme that was continually articulated through these narratives. Their parents shared the same belief system regarding education and have clearly passed it on to their children, which support the findings of Perry, et al. (2003) who suggests that Black Americans have historically recognized the value of education and its connection to economic rewards.

“And the teacher said”

The narratives that were just shared suggest that the participants in this study have absorbed the message that education is important and valued; it is embedded in their psyche. Their aspirations of education transcend beyond high school even up to the level of a Master’s degree speak to this. The narratives below showed that this message, however, runs counter to the messages many of these participants received from their teachers at school.

“They don’t give us books to take homework; we don’t have homework...because there are not enough books”

Cornell, (18, Buffalo)

“Teachers used to get mad because they would say there was more money going to the jails than the schools and stuff. We had to share textbooks in health class because they didn’t have enough books.”

Sissy (20, Buffalo)

“I feel like the teachers in high school, I feel like a lot of them were becoming more, how do I explain it. Biased on the like race...like I feel like they expect you to fit that stereotype of that one kid that just doesn't ...there wasn't many black kids in the school so I would probably be like the only one of two or three black kids in the class and then think you fit that stereotype of that on black kid that just doesn't know what he's talking about, he's ignorant, goofs off all the time and when you're really just trying to work and I feel like it affected their grading too sometimes.” **Ahkeem (19, Syracuse)**

“The [high school] teachers don't care, they are just there to get a paycheck. They don't even try to teach you ...people always getting sent to the principal's office, the least little thing.” **Laura (18, Elmira)**

“...[high school] I felt like “What's the point of me goin' to school?” Basically. But first of all, all I was going to school, I was trying to learn and another thing that was so bad was the kids was so bad and disrespected the teachers, the teachers got to the point where they don't want to teach. They didn't care if it was like two or three good kids in the classroom, they just...they wouldn't teach; they would just sit at their desk and let the kids do what they want 'cause the kids was so disrespectful. I used to always hear teachers say, “Well, I got my degree, you got yours to get”. They used to say that because kids was so disrespectful. I mean it didn't make no sense.” **Mallie (19, Syracuse)**

“The teachers are all about this zero tolerance...it doesn't matter if you're a good child or not; they don't care. You can do something small that they don't like, you get suspended especially if you look like [points to himself] this.”

Roy (19, Binghamton)

“I hate to say it but most white teachers, already think that black kids is not gonna amount to nothin'. And then you got some black kids , like me, that want to learn and that come to school to learn, but with so many black kids pulled in the wrong direction, they can't help but to think that most black kids don't want to learn nothing.”

Reyan (18, Binghamton)

“...out of the whole school maybe a handful of teachers really cared, but the rest of them, they didn't because they already knew what was going end up happening to the kids...like there is a prison down the street and that's where they expected most of the black kids to go.”

Fred, (20, Elmira)

“I had this teacher who used to tell us that most of us were gonna end up pregnant...if we're not already pregnant now, we're gonna end up pregnant, on welfare. That's what he said to us girls. And then he used to say to the dudes that “when I see y'all on the corner in my car and y'all asking for change, I'm gonna throw something back at y'all.” He was basically saying all the dues was gonna grow up to be a bum on the corner, or end up selling drugs , or dead or in jail.”

Sissy (20, Buffalo)

“I had this one teacher, who I really liked, he was such a cool teacher and one day going up the stairs and he was singing. Three Africans jumping on the bed, one fell off and broke his head and then we went to class ...he was a Jewish teacher and he was saying there was no wrong in saying Spic, Spic, Spic or Nigger, Nigger, Nigger and all that stuff... and I don't know... a lot of kids didn't like him...the thing about that teacher was he never bit his tongue, whatever came out of his mouth came out of his mouth.” **Kyle (19, Binghamton)**

Discussion - And the teacher said:

According to Perry et. al (2003), “A child’s belief in the power and importance of schooling and intellectual work can be interrupted by teachers who explicitly or subtly convey a disbelief in the child’s ability for high academic achievement, and the child having a rightful place in the larger society (p. 79).” The authors further contend that the dilemma of achievement for Black children is tied to the Black identity and society’s view of Blackness as representing intellectual inferiority.

What is to be said about how these teachers spoke to these Black children who were placed in faith under their care? It would be easy to make this an issue about the individual teachers, but as Cohen (2010) asserts, “There is a historical understanding of the black deviant which has been constructed to justify the continued oppression and second class citizen status given Black people (p. 45).” In today’s era of microaggressive racism (Sue, 2010) coupled with the neo-liberal project promoting colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), Perry et. al (2003) suggest that few within the educational system would “acknowledge or pay attention to the reproduction of the ideology of Black inferiority and its potential impact on Black students.” These narratives suggest,

however, that many students can bear witness to instances when they were assuming to be intellectually incompetent or socially deviant. I believe that they also support the idea that young Blacks who are in the Gen Y/Millennial are not under any illusion of a post-racial society, because their lived experience suggests otherwise.

Summary

This chapter presented a summary of the findings for each of the generational groups. A more in depth discussion and analysis of the major and minor findings for this study are presented in this chapter. In summary I will reiterate the three major themes which emerge from this study.

Theme One: Differences in the salience of race/racism in schools for individuals based on geographical location. The experience of race/racism in schools for individuals from smaller cities was less central than for those from larger cities.

Theme Two: The study found an intergenerational value of education, including an aspiration for higher education, for those families that have Southern roots and migrated to the North. Those participants who have roots in the North did not seem to have the same intergenerational value of an education.

Theme Three: Participants experienced racism in school resulting from the enduring legacy of the eugenics movement within educational institute.

Chapter Seven presents a discussion of the findings as linked to the research questions and provides implications for future research and teaching practice.

Demographic Information – Gen Y/Millennial

Geographical Location	Name	Gender	Age	SES	Education Level
Buffalo	Cornell	Male	18	Middle Class	High School Senior
	Daniel	Male	19	Middle Class	College Freshman
	Amber	Female	21	Upper Middle Class	College Graduate Bachelors Degree
	Sissy	Female	20	Working Class	High School dropout (11 th grade)
Binghamton	Kristin	Female	22	Middle Class	College Graduate Associates Degree
	Kyle	Male	22	Middle Class	Community college 2 nd year
	Reyan	Female	18	Working Class	High School Senior
	Roy	Male	19	Working Class	Community College 1 st year
Syracuse	Mallie	Female	19	Working Class	College 1 st year (4yr)
	Ahkeem	Male	19	Middle Class	College 1 st year (4yr)
Elmira	Fred	Male	20	Working Class	Community College 2 nd year
	Laura	Female	18	Working Class	High School Senior

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Seven presents an intergenerational discussion of the research questions and provides implications for future research and teaching practice. This intergenerational discussion is grounded in the findings from this research study. The intergenerational discussion integrates the Elder/Silent, Black Power, Hip-Hop, and Millennial Generations.

The research questions which guided this study are:

- 1) What generational differences relate to the expected role and value of education for Blacks?
- 2) How does the Black community perceive, understand and experience the role of the education system in their lives, both historically and in contemporary context?
- 3) How has the historical idea that Blacks are inferior influenced the perception and disenfranchisement of Black youth in the U. S. educational system?
- 4) How does racial identity influence the educational experiences of Black children?

For this final chapter, I first discuss the research questions that guided this study. The questions posed have an intergenerational context in addition to presenting findings that succeed in engaging the research questions. I also present three additional findings that have an intergenerational context. There are three emergent themes that are cross generational; they are (1) the value of education, (2) experiencing racism in school, and (3) geographical influence in regard to the discussion of race. The first theme provides insight and begins to answer the first two research questions that have guided this study. The last two intergeneration themes together with some of the findings from Chapter 6 will be used to engage the last two research questions. In addition to the discussion of the

research questions, I provide my thoughts on the implications this research investigation has for practice as well as suggestions for future research.

This research aimed to give voice to 53 Black people who represented four generations and enabled them to share their stories about their educational experiences and thoughts about school in general. Although this research involves a limited number of participants, the oral histories shared will enable us to have a better understanding of how many Black people experience school. Their experiences may serve as a way to explore how racial inequalities and ideologies are reproduced in schools and what the implications are for the socialization of Black people into school culture and the wider society. The data gathered through the oral histories of the participants provides an opportunity by which one can examine structural inequalities within educational institutions that continue to produce salient incidents of racism that are often experienced by Black people. According to Cohen (2010) the words of folks like Bill Cosby and even President Obama often discount the structural explanations for the variegated problems that Black youth encounter today by placing emphasis instead on their personal agency as the solution. When Cosby delivered his controversial speech at the gala event celebrating the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Color People (NAACP), he concluded that Black identity particularly in urban America was being shaped not by racial discrimination or structural inequities but by individual and collective behavioral dysfunction (Cosby, 2004). Cosby cited parental failures, a cycle of eluding personal responsibility and blaming problems on other areas except themselves. His comments suggested that these were the reasons for the educational disparities that Black youth face. According to

Cosby (2004), Black youth have not taken advantage of the educational opportunities afforded them since the Civil Rights revolution of the 1950's and 60's.

The work of Cohen (2010) suggests that President Obama's call for Black parents to turn off their television and read a book and Cosby's call for personal responsibility "make for nice sound bites, but ignores the reality that structure or environment limits agency and choice" (p. 12). The type of education that Blacks receive in this country often has very little to do with personal agency. Watkins (2001) contends, "Education policy toward black people, in theory would ensure the reproduction of a race of who would in the words of Dubois be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (p. xi). The educational policies that would have an impact on the lives of Blacks during the Civil Rights era and continue today have not been controlled by Black people but are predetermined often without their input (Watkins, 2001). Cohen (2010) asserts that the freedom of agency that we have individually as Black people to control or improve our educational outcomes is limited and "constrained by the social, political and economic opportunities that are made available to us" (p. 12). In lieu of the continued educational disparities between Black and White children that have historically plagued the educational system, the words of Cosby, President Obama along with others (Williams, 2006; Patterson, 2006) suggests that the cultural deficit model remains the only explanation for the gap in educational achievement between Black and White children. With Black children often seen as lacking, this would permeate the dominant discourse to become one that questions whether Black culture is one that promotes and values education. Alonso et.al (2009) suggests that when Cosby spoke at the NAACP gala and declared, "lower... and lower-middle economic [Black] people are not holding their end

in this deal” on education, he was making the classic cultural deficit argument for the lack of academic and economic success in the Black community fanning the flame for folks to ask: “What is wrong with Black children? Don’t they understand the importance of an education?” Alonso et. al (2009) asserts that Cosby’s (2004) assertions fueled the debate which ultimately placed the blame for any educational disparities firmly on the shoulders of Black children. It was my curiosity about the statements that Cosby made that initially led me to this investigation. I believed that there has been a generational disconnection regarding the value of education. I wondered if the dream of education, as an avenue to success, had changed in the Black psyche over time. Having grown up in the Southern portion of the U.S., the value of education as economic freedom which is espoused by Perry et.al (2003) had been firmly planted in my psyche. I believed that the pathway to achieving the American dream goes through schoolyards of the education system. Education, in my assessment, was one component that would provide opportunities for the way we might become real players in the U.S. economy. The findings in this study suggest that the ideas about education that are so important to my family and found in Perry et. al (2003) regarding the importance and value of education are internalized in the psyche of some Black people.

The findings from chapter 6 for each generation related to the emergent theme “value of an education” directly responds to the following questions which were posed in this study:

- What generational differences relate to the expected role and value of education for Blacks?

- How does the Black community perceive, understand and experience the role of the educational system in their lives, both historically and in contemporary context?

Across all the generational groupings, I found, as the narratives below support, that education is viewed as important and valuable. Participants see education as a “way to get a job.” Many of the participants in this study aspire to obtain a college degree, from a two year or a four year school. When historical studies are done which examine the educational experiences of the Elder generation in this study, those born between 1930-1949, the discourse is generally dominated by a discussion of the pros and cons of segregated schools (Siddle-Walker, 2000). In this study, only the participants from the Elder generation that attended segregated schools were in Syracuse. Syracuse’s population, at the time the Elder generation was in school, was residentially segregated with the majority of Black residents living in the area called the 15th Ward (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1968). The residential segregation in Syracuse coupled with Syracuse’s public schools adhering to a neighborhood system model (e.g., a person went to the school in the neighborhood that they lived in) resulted in Black children in Syracuse attending all Black schools during this time period (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1968). As I reported in the findings in Chapter 6, the Elder generation’s notion of an education being valued and ascribed to them from their parents was dependent on whether the family had its root in the Southern portion of the United States and then migrated to New York as opposed to those families who had always lived in the New York (a more in depth discussion of this phenomena is in chapter 6). Whether the participants from the Elder generation received the message that school from their parents

or from outside sources (e.g., other family or community members) they did, in most cases, receive the message and passed it on to their children and grandchildren. The result being that an intergenerational cultural transmission of the value and importance of education, as supported by Perry et. al (2003), was articulated clearly from generation to generation. This is evidenced by the participants sharing their educational philosophies with their children in the following narratives.

Elders

I told them if they want get ahead and get a job that they had to get an education

(Female, Elmira)

You need it. It's very important, because you're not, you, if you don't have a college education a lot of companies and a lot of places not even going to look at you.

(Male, Syracuse)

I told them that an education was not optional, it was very important cause we had made sacrifices so that they could go to school.

(Male, Binghamton)

I told them it very, very important. I just wanted them to get an education. I didn't want them to be in school sitting like a bump on a log.

(Female, Buffalo)

Black Power Generation

Getting an education that makes a difference. I can't move up in my job because I don't have a college degree that's why I'm going back.

(Female, Buffalo)

The dynamics of our, of our jobs situation has changed, a high school diploma can't do anything for you today.... Now it's a four year degree or a Masters [that you need] **(Male, Syracuse)**

Hip hop

You must go to school, my parents never insisted on anything past high school, but I want my kids to go to college. They won't be able to get a job anywhere without a college degree. **(Male, Elmira)**

Go to school, don't waste your time with this or that make sure you finish school. More than high school, these kids today need to be thinking college from day one. **(Female, Buffalo)**

Gen Y/Millennial

My mom really wants me to go to college...because you're not going to get nowhere if you don't have an education. **(Male, Buffalo)**

[my parents] They've taught me that it's extremely important. It's always been nonnegotiable for us. It was not an issue after I graduated high school. We were all definitely going to college **(Female, Buffalo)**

Cohen (2010) suggests that even in situations where Black parents communicate clearly to their children that education is important and valuable; these messages can be undermined if their children have experiences in school that are unfair and discriminatory. Since as, Critical Race Theory purports, racism is endemic in this society (Delgado & Stefanie, 2001; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Zamudio et.al, 2010) it is unrealistic to suggest that Black children will enter an educational institution in the United States without experiencing racism (Lopez, 2012; Kozol, 2005). When I reflect on

the ideas of Cohen (2010), Delgado & Stefanie (2001), Dixson & Rousseau (2005) and Zamudio et.al (2010) the question that comes to my mind is one that W.E.B. Dubois (1903, p. 7) asked more than one hundred years ago, “How does it feel to be a problem?” When I think of this question as applied to the educational system today, I believe that Dubois’ question translates to the following question: What does it feel like to be constructed racially as Black, navigate the social institution of education that has historically considered Black people to be intellectually inferior (Winfield, 2007; Watkins, 2001) all while being told that race does not matter in education? The last two questions which guided this study engage these very ideas:

- How has the historical idea that Blacks are inferior influenced the perception and disenfranchisement of Black youth in the U. S. educational system?
- How does racial identity influence the educational experiences of Black children?

Although the findings from this study do not answer these questions completely they provide insight into the experiences that Black people across generations have encountered when attending school while Black. The first set of narratives speaks to the question, “How does racial identity influence the educational experiences of Black children?” There are two different findings that emerge from the oral narratives of the participants in the study; one suggests that there is evidence to support the finding that Blacks have an intergenerational experience of being subject to racism in school. The second finding shows that there is a geographical context to how the participants see and experience racism in schools. This finding of the experience of race/racism being

connected to a geographical location was evident when you compared the way the participants from the larger and more urban settings talked about the racism they experienced in school with those participants from smaller communities. Binghamton and Elmira participants were less willing to acknowledge racism as a factor in the schooling, or in some cases to even use the word racism to describe situations that I would clearly define as racist. In the narratives that follow, you will hear the voices of the participants in support of both of these findings.

Experiences with Racism in school

The four narratives that follow support the finding that the participants in this study across generations experienced racism in school. The first of these narratives was given by a participant from the Elder generation who lives in Binghamton. I would have clearly described the incident as racist yet when talking to him about his school experiences in general he did not allude to experiencing racism in school, “I never really had anything like racism experience in school everyone just fit in.”

Male (Elders/Silent, Binghamton)

“And I always tell people that it was very, very funny cause I was in high school sometimes I had mingling in the community and I guess and the schools was so good that a lot of times I did not realize that I was Black until I would go to the bathroom and see in the mirror and I realize oh my God I’m Black. But they did not make me feel that way, they made me feel I was a part of them and I was doing the same thing they was doing and living in the same world they was living in and they was treating me as one of them. The only problem I ran up against is

how well I presented or how well I would be accepted when I used to go on field trips or something like that you know that was the hardest part.”

Researcher: And can you give me an example

“like ok with the school usually I would go on a field trips and... like I’ll tell you it used to be Glenwood Park and it was an all White park you know everything’s White and when we used to go there you would hear mocks from other kids, other White kids would yell “there’s a nigger” and a lot times the friends from my school would protect me and they would tell them shut up he’s one of us and you all leave him alone and if you all be calling him any kind of names we gonna beat you up or something like that and I used to tell them don’t worry about it hey I know who I am I know where I come from and I know my boundaries... you learned when you come up against that situation somewhere else you know how to face it and keep going because we were always taught its best to laugh about it and be able to live another day to tell about it.”

Female (Black Power Gen, Buffalo)

“...the year Roots came out. It was real different. It was riots... They would throw bus... throw eggs and rocks at the bus. They didn’t want us there. But the busses were coming in full of black kids and it was the Caucasian people who was out there throwing eggs and stuff like that at us. They didn't want us there. It was a mess. They would had security out there. We had cops. They would arrest anybody who did it, but it was... it went on for while...I was angry. Because I didn't understand why, but I was also scared.”

Female (Gen X/hip-hop, Buffalo)

“When I was a freshman in high school, we went to Glens Falls to play them in basketball. When we got there and began playing everything was okay until our team started winning. We were having a great time, cheering and yelling and suddenly the mood changed. I know that we were really throwing it in their faces that we were winning, but when they started with the nigger this and nigger that we were surprised. As the game went on the group from Glens Falls seemed to get more and more hostile. At one point one of the coaches from the Glens Falls teams got right up in the face of one of our players. The chaperones who had come with us began to round us up and talk about an exit plan. They were worried that we might get hurt, they wanted us to make sure we had a buddy and to go to the bus immediately when they signaled. I was really scared, we were just kids but on the Glens Falls side it was “grown people” yelling and screaming at us and at the team. At one point a fight broke out, but it wasn’t the kids fighting, it was the adults, the coach from the Glens fall team shoved one of our players and our coach decked him. All hell broke loose, we hustled out to the buses, it was wild, I didn’t know what would happen. We were all the way out in the middle of no-where. We all got back safely but I will never forget the looks on the faces of those grown white people, as a kid it was terrifying to see adults look at you with such hatred.”

Male (Gen Y/Millennial, Binghamton)

“I had this one teacher, who I really liked, he was such a cool teacher and one day going up the stairs and he was singing. Three Africans jumping on the bed, one fell off and broke his head and then we went to class ...he was a Jewish teacher and he was saying there was no wrong in saying Spic, Spic, Spic or Nigger, Nigger, Nigger and all that stuff... and I don't know... a lot of kids didn't like him...the thing about that teacher was he never bit his tongue, whatever came out of his mouth came out of his mouth.”

Male (Gen X/Hip Hop, Buffalo)

“A lot of my White friends would tell Black jokes, in freshman year I remember specifically I sat a lunch table, because we had lunch periods at a table with all White kids and they used tell Black jokes. I never liked it, but if you're the one Black kid at the table and it was a freshman cafeteria so like none of the older kids could come in and I didn't have lunch with any of my Black friends because they just didn't have the same lunch period as me. I would sit at a table with all White kids and they would make Black jokes because I was the only one there. Once I would get around my Black friends I wouldn't hear them making a joke, when it was me and a bunch of my Black friends it just when I was alone at the table that they would make all the jokes. I didn't like lunch freshman year.”

Female (Gen Y/Millennial, Binghamton)

“I don’t know but I think it was prejudice how at this year’s senior day prank a food fight happened and the only students that got in trouble were Black. I mean the police came in and they were manhandling these Black guys. It was like out of control. They arrested students, but it was mostly Black students...a couple of White students got arrested, but it was mostly Black. Oh yea, the only students that got expelled were Black. Even the couple White students that got arrested did not get expelled. Some of the students were out for a year. It was bull.”

This next set of narratives suggest that the enduring legacy of the Eugenics movement has permeated in the minds of Americans the idea that Blacks are innately inferior to Whites (Perry, et. al, 2003; Winfield, 2006; Lewis, 2003). These ideas are not cultivated by accident. They are reinforced daily in the media constructions of Black men as violent and aggressive and Black women as hyper sexualized (Hill Collins, 2005; Roberts, 1998). The following narratives speak to the realization that Black people have been and continue to be perceived as “a problem”:

“.. I was having a hard time in stuff like you know, math, so they put me in...I was in the 10th grade they sent me a boys vocational that was a school for, um more like troubled kids, you know, kids that, you know, was in a lot of trouble in school that was always in trouble. And I don’t know why they sent me there because I wasn’t a troubled kid. And I guess somebody told me it wasn’t only for troubled kids, it was for dumb kids too. So I figured that’s why they sent me there, because I wasn’t troubled. That school was...it was a pretty tough school.

They had strict rules, you know....it was mostly kids like me, you know, colored.” **(Male, Elder, Buffalo)**

“At times the teacher would treat you like they realized that maybe you’re not up to par enough, because you’re Black. Like nothing sunk in, they [teachers] didn't think that you could catch on. Most of the time they [teachers] would ignore you. I always felt they [the teachers] were judging my ability to learn.”

(Male, Syracuse, black power)

“I hate to say it but most White teachers, already think that Black kids is not gonna amount to nothin’. And then you got some black kids, like me, that want to learn and that come to school to learn.” **(Male, Syracuse, Gen Y)**

“...out of the whole school maybe a handful of teachers really cared, but the rest of them, they didn’t because they already knew what was going end up happening to the kids...like there is a prison down the street and that’s where they expected most of the black kids to go.” **(Male, Elmira, Gen Y)**

Implications for practice/further research

The findings in this study suggest that racism continues to be a critical problem in the educational experiences of Blacks in this country. The stories that the participants discuss related to their experiences with racism in schools run counter to the dominant educational institutional discourse of colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Lewis, 2003; Lopez, 2012; Leonardo, 2009). One problem that educators face relates to the misinterpretations of what racism looks like in the lived experiences of the Black students they teach. These educators often have interpretations of what racism looks like that based on a model that suggests racism is individual, overt and violent (Sue, 2010,

Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Sue (2010) writes that, “Most people in America see racism as individual acts, those overt, conscious and deliberate individual acts meant to harm, place at a disadvantage or discriminate against Blacks” (p. 7). While racial progress has been made, one implication of this study would be to help teachers understand that racism is experienced in contemporary times does not necessarily fit their standard definition but has morphed into “more insidious and subtle racialized institutional practices, which are more invisible and more indirect and yet continue to oppress” (Sue, p.8). Sue indicates that these more subtle forms of racism which he calls microaggressive racism continued to be perpetuated in the form of “daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities” and have damaging consequences for Black students. Finding ways to make educators in the field and teachers in training aware of the continued need for educational practices and policies that incorporate a consciousness related to the influence of overt and covert forms of racism in the routine experiences of Black children and other children of color. I believe that this awareness could contribute to more meaningful opportunities for Black children in educational settings. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Perry et. al (2003), Lewis (2003), and Lopez(2012) contend that the use of oral narratives and the counter narratives of Black educational experiences need to be told so that educators understand the Black educational experience as Blacks have historically lived it.

Another implication of this study challenges the notion of the one size fits all approach to educational policies and programs directed at Black children. Educational disparities, as outlined in the studies presented in the National Center for Educational statistics studies, Vanneman, et. al (2009), suggest that educational disparities between Black and White children cross boundaries of social class, and geographical location. The

findings in this study suggest the way that students experience race may be different in smaller communities with smaller populations of Black people than they are in communities with larger populations of Black people. This might preclude that approaches to eliminating educational policies aimed at reducing the disparities in the Black/White achievement gap may need to be different for these communities. For example, educational policies and programs that may work in New York City, may not necessarily work in Binghamton or Elmira.

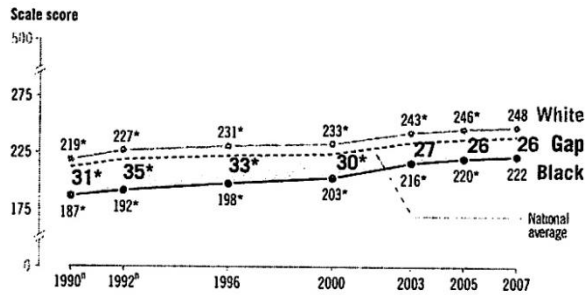
Additionally, studies need to be conducted that focus on families whose familial histories lie in New York, thus expanding this research to explore their educational experiences. This study would provide a comprehensive examination of the experiences of Black youth based on the work of Anderson's (1988) classic study on the schooling experiences of Blacks in the South. I also believe that it would be interesting to expand this study to include more voices of Black people that live in rural geographical locations in New York. Moreover, this study does not address issues surrounding the complexities of gender for Black women. I am interested in expanding this study to look particularly at the intergenerational educational experiences of Black women. In this study, I use the definition of race consciousness given by Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva (2008). To start, it is important to understand that a race consciousness position does not essentialize race. To be race conscious is "to be aware of the system of racial stratification, and to recognize the acts of survival by those marginalized by racial hierarchies, it means as researchers that we openly acknowledge our positionality and that our epistemologies reflect the racialized identity and history of oppression not only experienced by Black people but

shared by all people of color. This standpoint is best suited for producing realistic knowledge about racial matters” (pg 313).

Appendix A

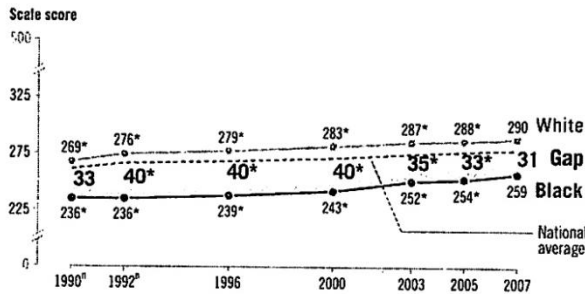
Trends in mathematics scores and achievement gaps, 1990–2007

Figure 1 Mathematics achievement score gaps between Black and White public school students at grade 4: Various years, 1990–2007



^a Accommodations were not permitted for this assessment.
 * Significantly different (p<.05) from 2007.
 NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), various years, 1990–2007 Mathematics Assessments.

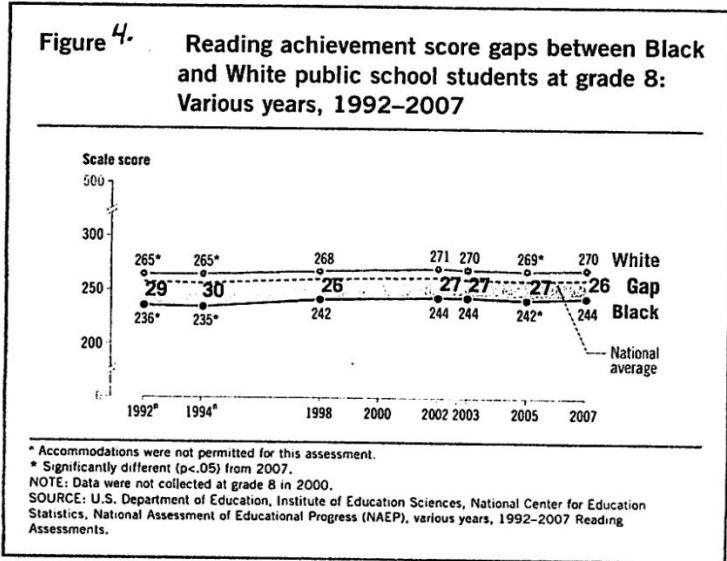
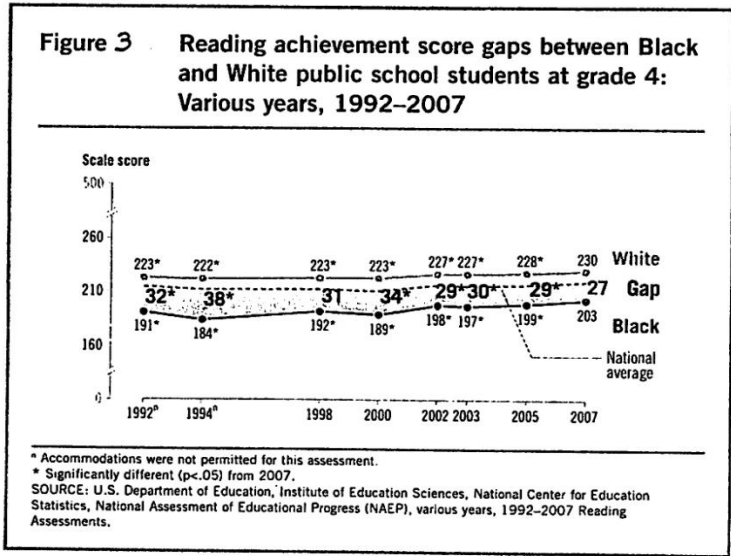
Figure 2 Mathematics achievement score gaps between Black and White public school students at grade 8: Various years, 1990–2007



^a Accommodations were not permitted for this assessment.
 * Significantly different (p<.05) from 2007.
 NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals due to rounding.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), various years, 1990–2007 Mathematics Assessments.

Appendix B

Trends in reading scores and achievement gaps, 1992–2007



Appendix C

Tentative Letter of Invitation

Dear _____

My name is Denise Yull and I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Binghamton University working under the direction of Dr. Gladys Jimenez-Munoz. As partial fulfillment of the doctoral requirements, I am planning to conduct a study on the perspectives of Black residents in New York State regarding their educational experiences. Your participation in this study is being requested because you self identify as an African American and you attended primary and/or secondary school (Kindergarten through high school) in central or western New York.

If you decide to participate in this study you will be asked to complete an interview at a location and time of your choice. The interview will require 1-2 hours of your time. With your permission the interview will be taped and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality you will not be identified by name on any tape or in any report. You will also be offered a copy of the transcript. During the interview you will be asked to tell me about your “schooling” experience. How important is educational achievement to you and why? How important are factors such as: luck, effort, intellectual ability, gender, race, family social economic status, where one lives, knowing the right people and parental education to one’s academic success and in what ways?

In the next week I will be contacting you to answer any questions you may have concerning your potential participation in this study. At that time we can arrange a meet to do the interview. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study at any time.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of my request and if you agree, I look forward to your participation.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Sincerely

Denise G. Yull
EdD Candidate in Theory and Practice
School of Education
Binghamton University

Appendix D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Principal Investigator: Denise Gray Yull, Graduate Student Binghamton University

Research Title: **African American Intergenerational Perspectives on Education and Black Identity: A Socio-cultural and Historical Analysis**

You are invited to participate in a research study that will explore the influence of cultural beliefs on the educational experiences of African Americans in the United States. You were selected as a potential participant because you identify yourself as an African American with slave ancestry in the U.S. and fit into one of the following generational groupings: those born 1930-1949; those born 1950 – 1969; those born 1970 – 1987; those born 1988 - 1993 .

If you decide to participate in this study you will be asked to complete an interview at a location of your choice. The interview will be conducted by Denise Yull and will take about 1-2 hours. During the interview you will be asked to tell me about your “schooling” experience. How important is educational achievement to you and why? How important are factors such as: luck, effort, intellectual ability, gender, race, family social economic status, where one lives, knowing the right people, and parental education to one’s academic success and in what ways? Following the interview, you will be asked to complete a brief demographic form. I cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this study.

The information that you share during this interview will be treated confidentially. Your interview will be digital audio recorded. The digital audio recording will be used to make a written transcript of the interview by a professional transcriber. Multiple procedures are in place to assure that the information you provide will not be associated with your

name or other identifying information about yourself or anyone that you mention during the interview. For example, the digital audio recording, transcripts, and demographic form will be labeled with a participant ID number only. The digital audio recording will be maintained by the researcher for research purposes and will be destroyed at the completion of the study. Further, your name or any other identifying information that you share during the interview will not be used in any reports or publications that come from this study.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with Binghamton University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

Before you sign this form, please ask any questions on any aspect of the study that is at all unclear to you. If you have any additional questions later, feel free to contact myself (**Denise Yull, 607-972-1914, dntyull@msn.com**) or my faculty sponsor (**Dr. Gladys Jimenez-Munoz, 607-777-6244, gjimenez@binghamton.edu**) we will be happy to answer them. If at any time you have questions concerning your rights as a research participant you may contact Binghamton's Human Subject Research Review Committee at (607) 777-3818.

Thank you for your assistance with this study

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You have the right to decline to be in or withdraw from this study at any point without penalty. I have talked to Denise Yull about being in the study. I have had a chance to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I agree to be in the study. I will receive a copy of this form

Signature of Participant _____

Signature of Witness _____

Signature of Investigator _____

Appendix E

Bulizak, Diane

From: Bulizak, Diane
Sent: Wednesday, June 16, 2010 11:15 AM
To: 'Denise Yull'
Cc: Jimenez-Munoz, Gladys
Subject: Human Subjects Protocol Approval

Date: June 16, 2010

To: Denise Yull, SOE

From: Anne M. Casella, CIP Administrator
Human Subjects Research Review Committee

Subject: Human Subjects Research Approval
Protocol Number: 1463-10
Protocol title: *Black American Intergenerationaf Perspectives on Education, Whiteness and Black Identity: A Socio-cultural and Historical Analysis*

Your project identified above was reviewed by the HSRRC and has received an Exempt approval pursuant to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations, 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

An exempt status signifies that you will not be required to submit a Continuing Review application as long as your project involving human subjects remains unchanged. If your project undergoes any changes these changes must be reported to our office prior to Implementation, using the form listed below:

Any unanticipated problems and/or complaints related to your use of human subjects in this project must be reported, using the form listed below, :

and delivered to the Human Subjects Research Review Office within five days. This is required so that the HSRRC can institute or update protective measures for human subjects as may be necessary. In addition, under the University's Assurance with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Binghamton University must report certain events to the federal government. These reportable events include deaths, injuries, adverse reactions or unforeseen risks to human subjects. These reports must be made regardless of the source of funding or exempt status of your project.

University policy requires you to maintain as a part of your records, any documents pertaining to the use of human subjects in your research. This includes any information or materials conveyed to, and received from, the subjects, as well as any executed consent forms, data and analysis results. These records must be maintained for at least six years after project completion or termination. If this is a funded project, you should be aware that these records are subject to inspection and review by authorized representative of the University, State and Federal governments.

Please notify this office when your project is complete by completing and forwarding to our office the following form:

Upon notification we will close the above referenced file. Any reactivation of the project will require a new

application.

This documentation is being provided to you via email. A hard copy will not be mailed unless you request us to do so.

Thank you for your cooperation, I wish you success in your research, and please do not hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions or require further assistance.

cc: file

1

Notes:

Chapter I

¹ In this study Black will be used deliberately as an inclusive term referring to all people who self identify as descendants of African slaves. I have also chosen to capitalize racial labels throughout this paper to draw the readers' attention to racial categories (Black, White) and racial formations (Whiteness, Blackness). Racial labels that are part of quotes will not be capitalized unless already done so by the author. This study recognizes the complexities and differences which aid in defining the various Black communities residing in the United States. Harris (1981) suggests the Black community does not come from the Black imagination but is a consequence of Whiteness. Under this structural system Blacks within the society are identified as one largely homogeneous group.

² Liberatory education raises students' consciousness, preparing students to engage in larger social struggles for liberation. It attempts to empower learners to critique and challenge oppressive social conditions and to envision and work towards a more just society (Freire 1970).

³ Kozol's (2005) *The Shame of the Nation* argues that integration is necessary for equity in education. His journey through segregated schools in many urban areas in the United States, showed the inadequate education many poor children of color receive on a daily basis. The U.S. Bureau of the census reports that in 2008 nearly 34% of Black children in the U.S. live in poverty. Accordingly this suggests that nearly 1/3 of Black children receive an inadequate and inferior education compared to their White counterparts.

Chapter II

⁴ In the U.S. the general notion of race is that it describes a distinct biological type of human being, based on skin color or other physical characteristics (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). It has been a conclusion in many scholars work that race is socially constructed, with no biological basis (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yancy, 2008). To say that race is socially constructed basically means that notions of racial difference are human created as opposed to eternal or essential categories. Yosso (2006) writes that racial categories are created to differentiate groups for the purpose of showing the superiority of dominance of one group over another. In this dissertation there are three key ideas which will be fundamental to discussions involving race: (1) racial categories have a history and are subject to change (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Holt, 2000), (2) race is a fundamental category of analysis and praxis, and the persistent and real effects of race are manifest in a history of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Yancy, 2008) and (3) the social meanings applied to race are justified in the ideologies of racial superiority and White privilege (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Yancy, 2008, Yosso, 2006).

⁵ Racism is defined as a systemic oppression of Black people and other people of color which privileges Whites (Yosso, 2006; Marable, 1992). Yosso (2006, 5) defines racism as (1) a false belief in White supremacy (2) a system that upholds Whites as superior to all other groups and (3) the structural subordination of racial groups. Tatum (1997) defines racism as "a system of advantage based on race or 'prejudice plus power'" (p. 7). As such in this study the researcher concurs with Beverly Tatum (1997) when she explains that a system of privilege depends on identity so although people of color can harbor racial prejudices, but they cannot be called racist because they do not possess institutional power or the

means to enforce. Given that this study is specifically focused on the experiences of Black people racism will be considered within the context of the Black-White dichotomy.

⁶ According to Parks and Hughey (2011) post racial is a term used to define a theoretical environment in which our society would operate as color blind and race, racism and discrimination would no longer be an issue. Some in America believed the election of Barack Obama was a signal that the U. S. society was moving toward a society in which racism is part of our past, but not our future.

Chapter III

⁷ The Moynihan (1965) report entitled: *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action* was written by then Assistant Secretary of Labor for the Johnson administration Daniel Patrick Moynihan. His controversial report asserted that Black Families suffered from instability and breakdown, because of the absence of nuclear families (defined as having a mother and father present) and that this condition resulted in a cycle of joblessness and poverty. Moynihan's report suggested that the root of the problem was the Black families Matriarchal structure which hindered the Black community's ability to progress toward economic and political equality along with the psychological and social damage caused by slavery were at the root of what he considered to be a dysfunctional community. (Wilson, 2009)

Chapter V

⁸ In this study Black will be used deliberately as an inclusive term referring to all people who self identify as descendants of African slaves. I have also chosen to capitalize racial labels throughout this paper to draw the readers' attention to racial categories (Black, White) and racial formations (Whiteness, Blackness). Racial labels that are part of quotes will not be capitalized unless already done so by the author. This study recognizes the complexities and differences which aid in defining the various Black communities residing in the United States. Harris (1981) suggests the Black community does not come from the Black imagination but is a consequence of Whiteness. Under this structural system Blacks within the society are identified as one largely homogeneous group.

⁹ In this study I use the definition of race consciousness given by Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva (2008). To start it is important to understand that a race consciousness stand point does not essential race. To be race conscious is "to be aware of the system of racial stratification, and to recognized the acts of survival by those marginalized by racial hierarchies, it means as researchers that we openly acknowledge our positionality and that our epistemologies reflect the racialized identity and history of oppression not only experienced by Black people but shared by all people of color. This standpoint is best suited for producing realistic knowledge about racial matters" (pg 313)

¹⁰ An emic approach refers to an approach that deals with the insider's view of the culture that is being studied; this is usually done by a native to the studied culture (Patton, pg 84).

¹¹ The term Educations is being used to denote a formal education or formal schooling and refers to the structured educational system provided by the state for children.

¹² Clarke is using liberatory in the same spirit as Paulo Friere's (1970) definition of a liberatory exercise.

¹³ A storyteller in western Africa who by memorizing and reciting historical details of a village or family perpetuates the oral tradition the village or family (Irele, 2010, pg 420)

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