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BONE BY BONE- Re-Collecting Stories of Black Female Student Activists at Fayetteville State Using Oral History Interviews

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ORAL HISTORY AND QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGIES

Educational Research for
Social Justice

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“BONE BY BONE”

Re(Collecting) stories of Black female student activists at Fayetteville State using oral history interviews with a life history approach

Francena F.L. Turner

Introduction

I entered graduate school already feeling deep loss. I was keenly aware of the passage of time and felt that there would not be enough of it to make sense of my reactions to the things and the people I learned. I was already academically wounded. Not by my P-16 experiences exclusively, but by implicit and explicit societal messaging that made it possible for me to be an annoyingly inquisitive Black girl who dissociated the wealth of knowledge in my home community from the scholarly world I entered daily. Such a dissociation meant that I beat myself up for not already knowing widely accepted exemplars among Black women while intentionally diminishing the awe-inspiring Black women in my hometown.

Perpetually impervious to “a child’s place,” I knew a lot about the women in my community. I knew because I felt compelled, in moments of silence, to ask. I remember how often the, “Girl, stop being so nosy!” look turned into gazing into the distance as if they could see themselves then—again. I never stopped feeling a bit emotional when I saw their look change to shock that anyone asked them the question in the first place—as if they did not realize how much they mattered. This compulsion to know the Black women around me—to know why or how they came to be who they are—profoundly informed my dissertation research and my interest in oral and life history methodology. Older Black women often speak in parables and riddles that only time and the listener’s experiences can make clear.

My earliest understanding of higher education was housed in a series of brick buildings a couple of blocks from my childhood home. As I was born and raised in Fayetteville, NC, Fayetteville State University (Fayetteville State) was the only college I saw for much of my childhood. At a young age, I decided I would become a Bronco and, eventually, I did. Young Black women, most often members of Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs) or other social organizations, did a great deal

of volunteer work in my childhood neighborhoods. I had no way of knowing that Fayetteville State students organized towards fundamentally altering both the city of Fayetteville and Fayetteville State’s campus. I had no way of knowing that Black female collegians heavily participated in those efforts.

I am interested in Black women’s stories of their participation in historical social movement work because I either founded or participated in a number of grass-roots organizing efforts in both community and college campus environments over the better part of the last two decades. Few of the masternarratives organizations construct for themselves will include me. I know something about the erasure of Black women’s work. In this chapter, I provide a study overview and my rationale for conducting oral history interviews with a life history approach. After sharing what I found, I close the chapter with my reflections on the process and some methodological and pedagogical notes in an effort to show some of the challenges of conducting oral history interviews using a life history approach.

Glasrud and Pitre (2013) argue that “we are still some distance from a convincing synthesis of national, or even regional, strategies and factors embodied in the history of the civil rights movement in this country” (p. 2). Historian Brian Suttell (2007) explored the Sit-In Movement in downtown Fayetteville and situated Fayetteville State students as integral actors in those protests in his master’s thesis. The study’s laser focus on 1963 glosses over Fayetteville State students’ desegregation efforts in 1960 and minimizes the stories of Black female student activists. While evidence exists—hidden in plain sight in institutional, local, state, and national reports on student protests—of Fayetteville State students’ participation in Civil Rights/Black Power Era activism, no attempt at a synthesis of the students’ experiences and larger local and national movement scholarship exists (Operations Permanent Subcommittee on Government Investigations, 1969). Mine is the first comprehensive study of Black Power Era activism on Fayetteville State’s campus.

Fayetteville and Black education

Fayetteville, located in Cumberland County, is the sixth-largest city in North Carolina and is a neighbor to the largest military base in the USA—Fort Bragg (United States Census Bureau, 2019). However, the county was just beginning to experience a population boom sparked by the growth of the base and several annexations of neighboring townships during the period under study. This population surge significantly increased Fayetteville’s Black population while also drawing the attention of Black North Carolinians from neighboring rural areas interested in leaving agrarian lives.

The city began as Campbelltown in 1762 and got its current name in 1784. Situated at the “farthest inland point of the Cape Fear River,” Fayetteville was a bustling port for the cotton industry (Corbitt, 1951). It is of no surprise, then, that the proximity to water and forestry led to the town also becoming a center of North Carolina’s textile industry. Due to Fayetteville’s urban nature, owners of enslaved folk often hired them out as an additional income source for both the

enslaver and the enslaved. This arrangement allowed previously enslaved folk to purchase their own freedom and it allowed for meetings and organizing efforts among enslaved and free folk. Despite de jure and de facto rules for both enslaved and free folks that meant to curb their freedom of movement and thought, Black Fayettevillians built community and educated their own.

The city's Black church and Black education formed and grew together beginning with the work of Henry Evans, a free Black man, shoemaker, and Methodist Episcopalian preacher who founded Evans Metropolitan Church. He led a biracial congregation until his death in 1810. The next Black church leader, African Methodist Episcopalian Zion (AMEZ) Bishop James Hood assumed control of the church from 1866 to 1868. The church was a center of Black organizing in Fayetteville. Hood found Black people from Fayetteville and the surrounding areas not only hungry for literacy and meaningfully useful education but also ready to control the same. His appointment as North Carolina's Assistant Superintendent for Public Instruction meant that Fayetteville had a strong ally in the state capitol when requesting fiscal educational assistance (Brown, 1961; Hood, 1895).

The Howard school

The American Missionary Association (AMA) was a protestant abolitionist organization that funded Black schools and sent teachers educated outside the US South into states that previously sanctioned the institution of slavery. This organization originally sent a White couple to head the education efforts in Fayetteville after the Civil War ended in 1865. Illness took them both and Fayetteville's Black community lobbied heavily to have a Black replacement. Ohioan Robert Harris was selected due to his Fayetteville roots in the Black elite, his record as an effective educator, and his experience organizing against slavery at his prior post in Virginia. Robert and his brother Cicero cited experience teaching enslaved folk in Fayetteville as their teaching experience on their AMA applications (Huddle, 1997, p. 141). Cicero Harris headed the Phillips (Elementary) School and Robert headed the Sumner (Secondary) School.

While the schools were founded and controlled by Black educators, Robert secured some degree of funding for the schools from the Peabody Fund. In North Carolina, this philanthropic organization, founded in 1867, was instrumental to the early funding of Black elementary education and to the creation of free-standing normal schools (Brown, 1961). Realizing that white philanthropy came with stipulations that might thwart the Black communities' goals for their own education, Robert set about fundraising from within local Black and White communities. Black grassroots philanthropy and Black teachers created the Phillips and Sumner Schools and such philanthropy was directly responsible for their 1867 consolidation into the Howard School. David A. Bryant, Nelson Carter, Andrew J. Chesnutt, George Grainger, Matthew Leary, Thomas Lomax, and Robert Simmons raised and pooled \$136 to purchase two lots of land from two Black men, Simmons and Henry McNeill. On this land, they constructed a new building and the Freedman's

Bureau contributed construction funds (Murphy, 1960). A cohesive and literate free antebellum Black community provided the basis of a robust focus on literacy and the postbellum pursuit of a full education. So much so that the Howard School served as the model for White public schools in Fayetteville (Murphy, 1960). Such was the rich context under which the precursor to Fayetteville State came into existence.

In 1877, the state legislature allotted \$2,000 for the creation of a Black normal school. The assembly explicitly called for the establishment of a normal school

in connection with one of the colored schools of high grade in the State, or otherwise, for the teaching and training of young *men* of the colored race, from 15 to 25 years, for teaching in the common schools of the state for the colored race.

(Murphy, 1960, p. 83)

Prior to 1877, the Harris brothers were well known due to the quality of their school and they were already producing Black teachers inasmuch as the more formally educated were able to teach the less educated (Huddle, 1997, p. 141). After much consideration, on May 31, 1877, Fayetteville’s Black leadership—with the assistance of Bishop Hood—successfully secured Fayetteville as the location of the state’s first free-standing normal school (Murphy, 1960). To keep with the letter of the original decree, the school’s principal, Robert Harris, made entrance exams for girls and women harder than those for boys and men. The move did not keep Black girls and women out of public normal education and, by 1879, the General Assembly corrected the language to explicitly include female students (Murphy, 1960; Noble, 1930).

My family and Fayetteville

Melton (2019) reminds me that “my hometown’s history is not fixed, nor is my experience of my hometown. Rather it shifts every day as I encounter and re-encounter a place I think I know” (p. 310). In my understanding, and due to the sheer number of my immediate family members who reside in Fayetteville, the city has always been my family’s home and it comprises a big part of my identity. A simple conversation with my parents showed me the tenuous nature of my memories. While the Great Migration of Black folk out of the South and into the Northeast and Midwest is relatively common knowledge, we are apt to forget the number of Black families that moved in large numbers from rural areas to more urban areas within the same Southern states in search of access to better employment options and higher-quality schools for their children. The two arms of my family were within that lineage. My paternal grandparents, Eddie Dean and Patricia Ophelia McGirt, moved to Fayetteville from the Latta, South Carolina area in 1962 or 1963 when my father, Frank, was 5 or 6 years old. Eddie Dean wanted to escape the sharecropping life and, I suspect, he wanted better opportunities for

his children. He was originally from Maxton, a small rural town relatively equidistant between Latta and Fayetteville. My maternal grandparents, Cleo and Dorothy Idora Council, were both from Shannon, North Carolina and after they separated, my grandma moved her children along several years of a serpentine route. My mother, Dianne, was 10 or 11 years old in 1967 or 1968 when they arrived in Fayetteville. My parents met when both families ended up in the same neighborhood. They married in 1976 and I was born in December of the same year. That both of my parents moved to Fayetteville during years pivotal to my dissertation study—the Sit-In Movement protests of 1963 and the Black Campus Movement protests of 1967–1968—does not escape me. They were five years old during the Sit-Ins and 11 or 12 years old when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. In my experience of Fayetteville and the communities in which I lived, we passed down stories from generation to generation. I lost each of my grandparents well before I even contemplated graduate school and dedicated time to exploring my historical curiosities. Because my parents were young children at the time, I lost any opportunity to discuss familial nuances of living in Fayetteville during the time period under study. Because I know this loss of possibilities and history intimately, I found it important to conduct my study and preserve the stories shared with me.

Study overview

I explored and shared experiences of Black women who attended Fayetteville State from 1960 until 1972 with particular attention paid to their participation in organizing and Civil Rights/Black Power Movement activism. In the following section, I provide a brief sense of the relevant contexts in which Black women in North Carolina pursued higher education and I provide a brief historiography of student protests at the state's Black colleges and universities.

Black women's higher education experiences in North Carolina

North Carolina's six private historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs)—Livingstone College, Bennett College, St. Augustine's University, Johnson C. Smith University, Barber–Scotia College, and Shaw University—were strategically located in or near cities or towns with heavy Black populations. The five public universities Fayetteville State, Elizabeth City State, Winston-Salem State, North Carolina Central, and North Carolina A&T Universities, were equally strategically placed (Brown, 1961; Murphy, 1960). During the 12 years under study, Black collegiate women were just beginning to experience choices in academic majors. Fayetteville State was a normal school until the 1930s when it became a teachers' college. In 1964, the institution began offering majors outside education and, in 1969, it earned the university designation (Murphy, 1960). The careers most open to Black women were teaching, nursing, social work, and library sciences (Evans, 2007; Height, 2003; Hine, 1989a; Phinazee, 1980; Tucker, 1998). My study shows that Black women who attended Fayetteville State did so because it was affordable,

because it was close to their hometowns, or because they had friends or family who attended the institution. Due to racist, sexist, and classist hiring practices, the vast majority of Black college-educated women taught in elementary or secondary schools at some point in their career—regardless of major (Evans, 2007; Wilson, 2006). Most of the women in my study majored in elementary education or earned teaching certificates coupled with other majors.

Black college activism in North Carolina

North Carolina's 11 historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) render the state fertile for the study of Black student activism. Scholars of student activism at HBCUs most often focus on using broad strokes across multiple campuses and multiple states to get a macrohistory of the time (Biondi, 2012; Rogers, 2003; Turner, 2020). Scholarship specific to North Carolina focuses on student protest efforts at North Carolina A&T University and Bennett College located in Greensboro and Durham's North Carolina Central University (Benson, 2010; Bermanzohn, 2003; Brown, 2013). This focus makes sense as Durham and Greensboro were North Carolina's Black economic centers during such protest efforts. Only studies of Bennett College centered Black collegiate women's experiences or told broader stories from their vantage point and sought to correct the masculinized masternarratives of the Southern Sit-In Movement in Greensboro (Brown, 2013). A read of these previously mentioned studies might convince one that they have learned all that they need to learn about the histories of activism at Black colleges broadly and within the state. Broad surveys of student protest would not be possible without microhistories, social histories, and case studies of individual campuses (Benson, 2010; Bermanzohn, 2003; Brown, 2013; Forman, 1968; Lefever, 2005; Kinchen, 2016; Norrell, 1985; Pitre, 2018; Suttell, 2007). These focused studies allow for a nuanced view of student experiences by location, college type, and student body demographics. Therefore, I chose to study the experiences of Black women at one historically Black college in one Southeastern town across two sub-movements within the larger history of the Civil Rights/Black Power Movement. I draw from sociologist Belinda Robnett's (1997) argument that:

a gendered analysis of movement activities provides a much-needed understanding of leadership within African American communities in particular and mixed-sex social movements in general. All previous accounts lack a sense of the interactivity of relationships: the symbiosis on the one hand and the conflict on the other.

(p. 4)

In this essay, I discuss the findings for two research questions: How did Black women participate in the Civil Rights/Black Power era activism while students at Fayetteville State? What family, community, and/or educational experiences shaped their involvement in organizing and activism while enrolled at Fayetteville State?

Methods

I grounded this study in the historical and contemporary struggles of Black feminist intellectuals to bring Black collegiate women's actions and strategies into conversation with extant accounts and scholarship that omits them (Rodriguez, 2001). I believe in the inherent value of Black women's lives and, by extension, their stories. I felt a triple kinship with the stories Black women shared with me in this study; we shared Black womanhood, experiences in the town of Fayetteville, and the experience of walking the halls of Fayetteville State as students. This sense of connection, in some ways, complicated and, in other ways, drove the research (Turner & James-Galloway, in press). I remained anxious that I might disappoint narrators that I saw as my elders (Yow, 1997). These feelings drove the research by fueling me to diligently develop more thoughtful questions based on our triple kinship.

Using an array of traditional and digital archives, I found that even when Black female collegians held the pen, they often wrote themselves out of their own protest stories. Institutional records such as Board of Trustee Minutes provided me with one list of male and female student leaders for a protest in 1971. There was no way for me to explore the ways women experienced student activism without conducting interviews and I chose to conduct oral history interviews in order to (re)collect their stories for posterity's sake.

Mackay et al. (2013) define oral history as:

primary source material collected in an interview setting with a witness to or a participant in an event or a way of life and is grounded in the context of time and place to give it meaning. It is recorded for the purpose of preserving the information and making it available to others. The term refers to both the process and the final product.

(p. 11)

Dougherty (1999) further posits,

We intentionally label our field oral history [as opposed to simply oral interviewing] because we draw upon diverse analytical traditions to point out how the stories we hear are not merely anecdotes, but rich sources with which we may better understand the significance of the past. (p. 722)

Ritchie (2003) names those stories "memories and personal commentaries of historical significance" that we "collect through recorded interviews" (p. 19).

Mulvihill and Swaminathan (2017) suggest that "the terms respondent, narrator, oral author, and participants all show a degree of closeness and the development of a relationship between the interviewer and the narrator" (p. 74). I use the term narrator due to the storytelling aspect of my work. My narrators discussed their experiences at Fayetteville State with their friends, family, and fellow alumni. My narrators told me as much. However, current and future student organizers and

activists could all benefit from hearing about these historical choices, concerns, or methods to ground their contemporary efforts. Alice Walker (1983) explained that

A people do not throw their geniuses away . . . if they are thrown away, it is our duty as artists, scholars, and witnesses for the future to collect them again for the sake of our children . . . if necessary, bone-by-bone.

(p. 92)

Perhaps the stories I share have not been “thrown away,” but dominant Civil Rights/Black Power historiographies overlooked or obscured them (Barnett, 1993; Robnett, 1997).

Over a seven-month period, I interviewed 18 men and women who attended Fayetteville State between 1960 and 1972 and each interview lasted between one and three hours. I found narrators using a purposive snowball method. I began with prior student activists that I knew from my matriculation through Fayetteville State and the names I found in student and local newspapers and Board of Trustee minutes. Each narrator suggested other narrators. I also found narrators through the use of social media. In these ways, I was able to “simultaneously capitalize on and reveal the connectedness of individuals in networks” as it relates to student activism at Fayetteville State (Bryman, 2012, p. 424). While I conducted exhaustive archival research to provide the historical, political, and social contexts for the years under study, I grounded the project in the oral history interviews I conducted and, in the student-authored newspaper accounts of their organizing and activist efforts.

Life history approach to oral history interviewing

My introduction to life history research was housed in a journalism course entitled *Immersion Journalism*. Professor Leon Dash guided our class through the extended interview process (abbreviated for our course) he used while conducting research for two of his books—*When Children Want Children: The Urban Crisis of Teenage Childbearing* (2003) and *Rosa Lee: A Generational Tale of Poverty and Survival in Urban America* (2015). Dash conducted embedded ethnographic research over many months for a longitudinal view of a community and its members. This “immersion” into the community’s story allowed Dash to build rapport with his narrators as well as a connection to and understanding of the communities that shaped and were shaped by the narrators. Because of this rapport and his consistency, his interlocutors gave him a considerable amount and depth of access to the stories of their lives. He conducted many interviews with the same people over a longer expanse of time than that most common in the oral history interview process.

Within the course, Dash instructed us to conduct several topically based interviews for a couple of reasons. The numerous interviews allowed us to build rapport and they allowed time for the narrators to begin to trust our process. This trust building led to, perhaps, more open and honest life stories than there would have been in just one interview. I found his research style incredibly helpful for this

study and I abbreviated his longitudinal interviewing process and referenced it while constructing my interviewing style. While my major research questions concerned the narrators' experiences while students at Fayetteville State, I knew from personal experience that the fabric of our childhood profoundly influences our experiences in college and beyond. I wanted to begin to understand my narrators' experiences—particularly with schooling, community, segregation, Jim Crow, and spirituality—as parts of the conversations we might have about their experiences with student activism while college students at Fayetteville State during the Civil Rights/Black Power Era(s).

Dash's style intersects at investigative journalism, anthropology, sociology, and history. He asked probing open-ended questions about key milestones in one's life such as adolescence, adulthood, schooling, and religion. Life history research also crosses disciplinary boundaries but must connect to "additional stories, theories, context, and interpretations which add richness" (Wright, 2019). While I did not engage my narrators for extensive lengths of time, I did construct my interview protocol to include pointed redirection prompts around their childhood communities, schooling and educative experiences, religions, family education and work lives, and the racial climate in their childhood home communities.

Mulvihill and Swaminathan (2017) showed that studies like mine often cross back and forth between "oral history, formal narratives, personal narratives, and life stories" (p. 61). In a word, Mulvihill & Swaminathan describe critical approaches to research—such as life history research—as "messy" (p. 11). The messiness they described refers to the choices researchers make in how they construct the histories, but there is also a messiness—perhaps necessarily so—to how we attempt to construct and describe the study. I collected oral history interviews for posterity. My interdisciplinary training made articulating my research design and methodology a bit complicated. I knew that I might not be able to triangulate the stories my narrators told. I conducted the study because Black women were silenced and sometimes silenced themselves in the archives. Asking that I corroborate their stories with written records, then, is a bit wrongheaded. Because my goal was to explore and understand Black women's experiences during two components of a longer social movement arc, I needed to explore how they came to understand community, rights, education, and their gendered selves prior to college. Only a life history approach to oral history interviews could both provide a record for posterity and provide historical stories for such exploration.

Life history methodology makes use of multiple kinds of data including oral history interviews, additional interviews, and analysis and comparison across interviews and sources (Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2017). The life history interview is considered a different form of in-depth interview (Berg & Lune, 2012). I loosely structured my interviews around the following three broad life prompts and I supplemented each prompt with more detailed guiding questions as the participants told their stories: (1) Tell me about your experiences at Fayetteville State; (2) Tell me about your experiences prior to Fayetteville State; and (3) Tell me about your experiences after Fayetteville State.

What I found

Black women were active participants and leaders during the student protests of the Sit-In/Black Campus Movement(s) at Fayetteville State. Gendered social norms, however, mediated their participation. Raymond Privott discussed a key gendered social rule that interrupted Black female leadership options. He said,

We [the men] could come and go at will. Women had to check in and out. When we got ready to go down there [to protest], we just caught the bus and went downtown. But they [the women] had to sign out of the dorm, sign in the dorm, and then at night they had curfews. We didn't have that.

(2019)

Annie Chavis, a former Ms. Fayetteville State who took part in several campus protests, remembered heavy gendered surveillance. She said,

The Dean of Women called me in once. I had run across the grass, rushing to get to class and someone saw me and, of course, reported it. She said, "Annie, I understand that you were running across the grass going to class. You can't do that. You are a lady. You represent every lady. You are Miss Fayetteville State."

(2015)

Strict residence hall curfews and social norms meant that female students who lived on campus could not take part in leadership planning meetings in person even though they found ways to make sure their needs were considered by the male leaders and spokespersons. Black women made up most of the student body and students collectively made decisions about boycotting classes, lists of demands, and other protest efforts. When asked how protest leaders organized students during the Sit-In Movement, commuter and student leader Jeanette Council replied, "Personal power. Personal power and working through those guys. We had an ability to communicate with each other and we widened the circle. And gave power to others. We let them stand and lead the meetings and we just shared the spotlight" (2019).

While the student body chose Black men as its spokespersons, each leader I interviewed understood Black women to be integral to their positions and important in any decision-making. Robert Steverson remembered,

I think being at Fayetteville and being in a predominantly Black institution, you automatically saw women in strong roles. It wasn't a surprise because I grew up with women in strong roles, so I expected them to be in positions. And I'm thinking that some of the more outspoken people at Fayetteville were female.

(2019)

Between 1963 and 1972, the Student Government Association (SGA) served as the central sociopolitical voice of the student body. As such, the SGA president served as the community and campus leader for Fayetteville State students' organizing and activism activities. Black female students were central in selecting campus leaders. James Nesby, an SGA president during the Black Campus Movement, noted,

Let's put it this way, when we decided to run for student government, there were like four or five female dorms and two male dorms and we understood the influence that women had over men and where the votes were. (2019)

The simple act of being and growing up Black in the USA radicalized my narrators. Several narrators recalled microaggressions and less subtle acts of racism in their childhood that affected, if not drove, their desire to push for societal change while students at Fayetteville State. Jacqueline Mathews experienced one of many quotidian events that showed her some of the layers and the absurdity of racism and segregation when she was 6 years old. She said,

It was like sitting at the lunch counter. My mother wouldn't sit there. I said that I wanted to sit and eat my hot dog because they would let you order, but you couldn't sit. And, a lot of times, we knew the cooks behind the counter. They didn't take the money, but they did the cooking and we knew the people. I sat down and Mama said, "Come on honey, I am going to buy you something," Trying to get me away from them. And I just said, "I want to eat right here." But again, I didn't know, and she didn't try to explain that it was because of my color. She didn't want to tell me.

(2018)

My narrators' membership in organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and their childhood and adolescent connections to faculty and community members who were politically educated also aided in the students' forays into grassroots organizing and activism.

Brief reflections

Time, relationships, social standing, economic class, and intergenerational respect matter—for both the researcher and the narrator—in life and oral history research in places we consider home (Beoku-Betts, 1994; Hurston, 1942; Rodriguez, 2001). I study moments fraught with physical, psychic, and emotional pain. In order to collect these kinds of deeply retrospective stories, a researcher must devote a significant amount of time to building relationships and developing rapport with narrators (McDougall, 2014). I conducted two interviews in person, one by video conference call, and the rest of the interviews by phone. While I recorded them all, I believe I may have missed important contexts by not being able to see my narrators' embodied responses during our interviews (Friedman, 2014). Further,

the US media and the Academy often misrepresent Black women's lives and words. As a result, Black women often resist being studied or recorded in person, much less over the telephone (Hine, 1989b; McDougall, 2014). Because I had limited time to build trusting relationships, I know that the life histories I collected pale in comparison to the richness of my narrators' experiences. Nevertheless, eight Black women and ten Black men agreed to spend time talking to me about their lives. They discussed the ways they lived and contested the Jim Crow South. They each gave me some form of advice about the doctoral studies process, about being a student parent, and about conducting this kind of research. While I believe that this occurred, in part, due to the purposive snowball method I used, I also believe that this occurred because my elders recognized me as their progeny. The experiences that formed the core of my study were but a relatively small fraction of the many hours of narrator interviews—enough to tell some of the tales, but not enough to satisfy my original hopes. This study, then, is a beginning to a project that might more fully chronicle the movements under study at this institution. As Mulvihill and Swaminathan remind us, "Just because the project is complete does not mean all the sources are exhausted" (p. 45). While my potential narrators and I live, I continue to build relationships and pursue and conduct interviews that expand what we know about this institution and its students.

Methodological and pedagogical notes

My study and my experiences conducting the study have several practical and methodological implications. Those desiring to undertake life history research using oral history interviews with survivors of sometimes violent or traumatic social movements must secure research travel funding so that they might conduct each interview in person. This removes faceless technology as an intimidating factor that may convince narrators to decline an interview. I also encourage interviewers to video record the interviews to capture key embodied responses that an oral historian may miss with an audio-only recording.

Next, my study focused on Black women's experiences. Generational differences in beliefs around gender and social norms, when addressed without care, also threaten to disrupt trust-building in interviewing (Turner & James-Gallaway, in press). I had to remain open to broadening my target population. Each named movement or campus leader was an intentionally placed Black man and this cloaked archival connections to Black female student activists. I could have missed important facets of Black women's experiences—experiences some of my female narrators minimized by redirecting the focus to the communal nature of the campus—had I maintained a narrow view of prospective narrators. Council, when asked if she experienced things at Fayetteville State that she wished had been different, said,

The only thing . . . Looking back, I know that we adopted the philosophies that we were more supporters of guys. There weren't that many of them.

There were more women than men, but we were more supportive because that's how we were brought up. That women supported the men. That's what it was in the [Black] community, so, it wasn't strange. It wasn't. It was just kind of accepted. So, you may have a group that is made of mostly women, but the leaders would be men.

(2015)

Further, it is vitally important to conduct careful and thorough background research on each narrator. Several of my narrators served on the university's Board of Trustees and held local and state political positions. One narrator served an eight-year term as the university's chancellor. A thorough historical overview of the place of the study—be it the researcher's hometown or a place unknown to them prior to the study—is necessary as well. The institution, the city, and the proximity to Fort Bragg Military Base all contributed to the historical moments in which my narrators' stories took place just as much as the people involved in their stories. By this, I mean that the military base's proximity to and economic impact on the city and the university mediated local and campus response to Black student activism and allowed the city to maintain a mythology of progressive race relations (Suttell, 2007; Turner, 2020).

Lastly, if our narrators are the center of our historical explorations, then we must continuously interrogate and revise our preconceived notions of their stories. We may declare some immaterial things pertinent and miss other key facets of the overarching tale. I experienced this early on in my study when I asked direct questions about gendered differences in student experiences. While I was interested in how Black women may have experienced the Sit-In and Black Campus Movements differently than Black men, my female narrators' stories coalesced around themes of communalism and family. Even when Black male narrators easily described the differences I sought to explicate, they insisted that gender did not matter. SGA president, Willis McLeod, indicated that he did not consider gender an issue while he led the Sit-In Movement. He said,

No, it wasn't. No, it wasn't. Because the women on campus stepped right up front and we had more women involved in the marches and sit-ins than we had men. I could depend on more women than I could men when it came to organizing the marches and staging the sit-ins downtown. Certainly, people like Dr. Council, but um . . . she was one of dozens [of women].

(2018)

Of the campus protests during the Black Campus Movement, Steverson recalled,

I don't believe we got caught up in gender because we needed everybody. And so, you looked to who had that idea, who were strong leaders at the time, and it didn't matter whether you wore a dress or didn't. (2019)

In short, a researcher conducting life history interviews should be open to adjusting their questions or aims based upon the stories they collect. Oral history research using a life history approach is always an iterative process.

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