AN INTERGENERATIONAL ORAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN EDGECOMBE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA FROM 1930-1980

by

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ABSTRACT

SEQUOYA DEATRICE MUNGO. An intergenerational oral history of African American students in Edgecombe County, North Carolina from 1930-1980. (Under the direction of DR. JEANNEINE JONES)

The literature about the history of African American education must continue to move beyond deficit-centered research and further explore the varied perceptions and experiences of African Americans from their perspectives. Traditional research often excludes the voices of marginalized populations such as African Americans, who are usually written about instead of being allowed to tell their own stories. Furthermore, the educational experiences of African Americans, as well as the purpose of education, differ from one generation to the next. Using critical race and Afrocentric theoretical frameworks, this study examined the education of three generations of African Americans in Edgecombe County, North Carolina through oral histories. This intergenerational approach focused on how the participants remembered, experienced, and understood education in Edgecombe County, North Carolina from 1930-1980. The questions guiding this research were: What were the educational experiences of African Americans in Edgecombe County, North Carolina across three generations? And, how have African Americans generationally understood the purpose of education? Findings suggest that participants across generations valued education, but the purpose of education differed by generation. Findings also suggest that students valued school environments that fostered community and positive relationships.

DEDICATION

To my mother Frangie Mungo,

It is truly because of your love and support that I have been able to accomplish this task, and all other endeavors in my life. I know that you will always support me 100 percent no matter what and that gives me the courage and motivation to pursue anything. I love you!

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First, I want to thank God for giving me the determination, will power, and motivation to get through this process. It has been extremely challenging at times and I know that only through you have I been able to endure. I also want to thank God for the people he has placed in my life. I have been blessed with the best family and friends in the world and I could not have done this without their support.

My family: I truly appreciate the support that all of you have given me not just through this process, but throughout my life. I'm always attempting something different and you all always make me believe that I can do it, whatever it may be. I love you all so much!

My friends: You all have been there for me throughout this process and have let me vent whenever it got stressful. You were always there to provide excitement and comic relief which allowed me to have balance in my life. My friends are like family to me and I could not have asked for a better support system. Love you all!

My Urban Education crew: I am so thankful that I went through this with you. We have shared laughs and tears throughout the process and will be life-long friends because of it. Your brilliance and dedication to urban education are infectious, and I can't wait to see the positive impact that you all will have on urban education. Thank you for listening to me talk about my topic over and over again. Thank you for letting me cry on your shoulders when I did not think that I could do it. And thank you for helping me have a little fun in the process!

My committee (Dr. Mickelson, Dr. Merriweather, and Dr. Ramsey): Thank you for your advice and commitment to me and my work. Your guidance throughout this

process was tremendously helpful and I could not have gotten through it without your dedication and expertise.

My committee chair (Dr. Jeanneine Jones): There are not words to express how grateful I am for you, not just as my chair, but as my “mom” away from home. You have the warmest spirit of anyone I have ever met in my life and I hope that I can be half the educator, scholar, and human being that you are. Thank you for your dedication to my project. Thank you for your genuine concern for my well being. You are one in a million and I am thankful that God placed you in my life. I love you!

My participants: I want to thank all of you for agreeing to participate in this study and for sharing your stories with me. I could not have done this without you and I hope that this work is something that you can be proud of as well. I also hope that you know that it is because of your educational journeys that I have been able to take this path and complete this dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 1865, immediately following the Civil War, newly emancipated African Americans from across Edgecombe County, North Carolina settled on land at the banks of the Tar River. This land, just across the river from the county seat of Tarboro, was essentially uninhabited due to its low elevation and tendency to flood. Nevertheless, the former slaves settled in the area with few alternatives for other available land. As usually occurs in groups, some people emerged as natural leaders. Such was the case with Turner Prince, a former slave who gained the respect of fellow African Americans. Under the leadership of Turner Prince, the inhabitants established the township of Freedom Hill, which was not unlike other all-black communities that emerged throughout the South in the years following emancipation. Turner Prince and the citizens of Freedom Hill, though, recognized that without a town charter establishing Freedom Hill as their own, they would continue to be under the jurisdiction of the town of Tarboro. Since the land was deemed unsuitable for farming or dwelling by most Whites in Edgecombe County, the former slaves did not meet with extreme resistance to their living on the land. As a result, they decided to seek a charter from the state of North Carolina to establish Freedom Hill as an independent town, which they renamed Princeville in honor of Turner Prince. In 1885 the state government granted the charter and Princeville became the first all-black town in the United States. One of the first actions as a town was to establish a school for the African American children (Mobley, 1986).

This rich cultural heritage has sustained the African Americans of Princeville and Edgecombe County for generations. The story of Turner Prince and Freedom Hill has been preserved primarily through oral tradition. Since Princeville was established in a flood zone (a fact that either escaped the limited knowledge of the poorly educated former slaves or one that was simply overlooked because they had no other options), frequent floods, one as recent as 1999, have almost completely destroyed any written records of the town's early history. As a result, citizens of Princeville and Edgecombe County have come to rely on the word-of-mouth history that has been passed from one generation to the next.

Just as the story of the history of Princeville is often told by citizens of Edgecombe County, the stories of the county's African American schools are often told by the older generations to their children and grandchildren. Though unique to Edgecombe County in some respects, these histories are not very different from the history of African American education in other parts of the southern United States. For many years historians told the stories of African American education from a deficit perspective, focusing on the disparities that existed in segregated African American schools as compared to white schools (King, 2005). With few exceptions (Anderson, 1988; Siddle-Walker, 1996; Williams, 2005), the historical research on education rarely included the counter-narrative, which focused on the commitment to education and resiliency that existed in many segregated school communities in spite of the disparities.

During the 1980s, African American educational historians (Anderson, 1988; Siddle-Walker, 1996) began to counter the traditional literature about African American

education. Much of the earlier literature (pre-1970s) focused on the inadequate resources, under-qualified teachers, and poor conditions of African American schools during the Jim Crow Era. Educational researchers such as Anderson (1988), Dempsey and Noblit (1993), Siddle-Walker (1996), and Williams (2005), though, reported on the educational resilience and agency of African Americans during Jim Crow. They presented counter-narratives that relayed that African Americans were extremely instrumental in advocating for universal education, adequate school buildings, and other educational resources. Researchers also found that African Americans believed that education was the only sure way to advance in American society (Anderson, 1988; Perry, 2003; Williams, 2005). They argued that African American schools might have lacked resources but they were still very dedicated to the students, and the African American community valued and supported their segregated schools, even though the conditions might not have been the most ideal.

Perry (2003) explained that African Americans have a philosophy of education that has existed across generations. Imbedded in this philosophy is the idea that education is important and necessary, and that education is a major part of African American culture. According to Perry, the importance of education has been passed from one generation to the next historically, and one way to inspire current African American students is to have them read narratives about previous African Americans.

Further, educational sociologists (MacLeod, 1987; Mickelson, 1990) found that African American students still believe in the ideology that education is the key to upward mobility. Mickelson (1990) noted that African American students' perspectives on education joined with their school performance to create an attitude-achievement

paradox because, while everyone's abstract attitudes about education reveal that they believe it is important and vital to their futures, their concrete attitudes and achievement do not mirror this enduring faith in education. This, I believe, is the result of a society and educational system that has not been effective in meeting the educational needs of African Americans. As Mickelson (1990) wrote, while many African Americans believe in the goals of education, they have not seen education benefit them or members of their families. Consequently their educational stories sometimes show a distrust of education and its value for African Americans, such as the case of Charlie Holcombe in Litwack's (1998) *Trouble in Mind*.

Trouble in Mind (Litwack, 1998) is a collection of autobiographies of African Americans during the Jim Crow era. In many stories education is central to the person's life. The very first story in the collection is the story of Charlie Holcombe, a sharecropper who believed strongly in the value of education. Because he was never able to attend school, he made sure that his oldest son did. The son attended North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro, where the father believed he would learn how to be a great farmer. After graduating from college, the son did not want to return home to work on the farm and the father recognized major changes in him. Equipped with an education, the son was angry and eager to confront the farmers who were cheating his father on the amount he should be paid. An argument with the farmers over this issue led to the son being murdered by the white farmers. The father blamed himself – and education – for his son's death. He felt that education had led to his son's intolerance of the way the white farmers treated him and other Blacks. From that point on he did not believe that any African American should pursue education because that

was not the African American's place in the world. He claimed that they should stay in a position of humility and subservience so as to not lead to worse conditions.

This is another example of how African Americans viewed education. It appears that the father continued to recognize the value of education, but he saw that even with it African Americans would still be subjected to the parameters established by Whites. This theme manifests itself from the Jim Crow era to the present, with many African Americans valuing the idea of education, but recognizing its limitations because of their race (Mickelson, 1990).

The autobiographies, narratives, and oral histories of African Americans are varied and complex, yet in almost every story there is some mention of the role of education in their lives. This shows that regardless of the outcomes, African Americans have a cultural connection to education (Perry, 2003).

My Story

My own family history provides insight into the role that education played in the lives of African Americans, and I cannot write about African American education in Edgecombe County without first including my own narrative. Telling my story helps explain why this study is important to me and why I believe it is a significant contribution to the research on African American education.

I am an African American female who grew up in Edgecombe County, North Carolina during the 1980s and 1990s. Both of my parents are from Edgecombe County, as are all of my grandparents and great-grandparents. Even today the majority of my family, extended family included, still lives in Edgecombe County. My neighbors are distant relatives and have lived in Edgecombe County for generations. My two best

friends today were my childhood best friends, and even though the three of us have left the county, our parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins still remain. My connection to the county and the people there is strong, and therefore this research is very personal; it is essentially impossible to disconnect myself from the research, and I would not want to. The story of Edgecombe County is my story, and the story of my family, friends, and community.

As a child, and even today, one of my favorite things to do was to sit and listen to my family tell stories of the "good ol' days:" Days when all of the kids played outside on the dirt roads until parents would come out on the porch and yell out their children's names when it was time to come inside for dinner. Weeks when, as family members recall, "mama would make a meal stretch and feed eight children." Months when "fifteen people lived in this three bedroom house, but we always found a place for everyone to sleep." Years when "the whole family lived within walking distance of one another."

These stories excite and inspire me because they are never filled with remorse or feelings of regret. Instead they are filled with laughter and memories of all the good times they had and the love they shared, even in circumstances that were less than ideal. Out of all of the stories that my family tells, the ones that capture my attention the most are the ones about their educational and schooling experiences. No matter what the original topic of the trip down Memory Lane is, something about their schooling and educational experiences always finds its way into the conversation.

I have spent hours listening to my maternal grandmother tell me about her experiences attending school during the 1940s and early 1950s: Stories about wanting to go to school so badly that she would walk miles even when it rained. Stories about

teachers she loved, who were African American like her and committed to educating students. Stories about graduating from high school even though older siblings had dropped out. Stories about raising nieces and nephews so that younger siblings could move north and become nurses. Stories of sacrificing so that her own children and grandchildren would not only graduate from high school but would also go on to college and learn everything they could because according to her, education is the one thing that no one can take from you once you have it.

I always excelled in school. Attending Edgecombe County Schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, I was always an overachiever, living on the honor roll and being the model classroom student. After high school I continued to college and then graduate school. It brings my grandmother great pride to tell people "I have three grandchildren. The oldest is getting her PhD, the middle one is getting her Master's, and the youngest one just graduated from the University of North Carolina." Education has always been important to her, and she instilled that same philosophy in me.

When I sit and talk to my grandmother about her life, her memories of her education are very detailed, and the stories never change. Each time she might highlight something different or include a detail previously left out, but the memories are clear because the experiences were so important. Her parents were sharecroppers in Edgecombe County, and she lived and worked on farms with them until she graduated from high school and moved to New York for a brief period. Her parents were not educated but they believed that there had to be a better way of life than the one they were living. Still, they struggled with educating their own children because their livelihood depended on the labor of their children. So my grandmother and her siblings attended

school when they could, mostly in winter, or during bad weather. My grandmother vividly remembers her siblings and her being referred to by classmates as "the rainy day children."

My grandmother was determined to graduate from high school, but college seemed out of reach. Her younger siblings though went on to college and became nurses, so my grandmother felt pride in their successes, and she saw how having an education could somewhat improve at least the economic condition of African Americans, if not their social condition.

I am certain that my grandmother's narrative of education has inspired my own passion for learning and teaching. I am also certain that there are other grandmothers, grandfathers, parents, and relatives sharing these same stories with their own family members across Edgecombe County and beyond. This is just a small part of my grandmother's story and mine. Our story and our philosophy about education inspired me to choose this topic. I love listening to stories about our history, especially the stories about education. But our story is not the only story. Many African Americans across the county have their own memories, experiences, and philosophies about the purpose of education. This research includes the stories of some of those people in Edgecombe County. Some stories are similar to my grandmother's, some are different, but all are worth telling. Knowing these stories will lead to a better understanding of education and people's perceptions about education for African Americans in Edgecombe County.

Problem Statement and Purpose of the Study

The literature about the history of African American education must continue to move beyond deficit-centered research and further explore the varied perceptions and

experiences of African Americans from their perspectives. Traditional research often excludes the voices of marginalized populations such as African Americans, who are usually written about instead of being allowed to tell their own stories (King, 2005). This presents African Americans as objects rather than subjects in their own histories. This literature is generally one-sided, and in the case of historical black education, presents African Americans as either victims of structural oppression with no human agency *or* presents them as responsible for their academic outcomes with no regard to the structures that marginalize them. African American educational history, and the current state of black education, is complex and should not be looked at in terms of either/or dichotomies.

Researchers (Gates, 1991; Okihiro, 1996; Litwack, 1998; Perry, 2003) recognized the importance of narratives, oral histories, and autobiographies in preserving the histories of African Americans. In many African American narratives individuals include their educational experiences and their beliefs about education in relationship to the rest of their lives, but few collections exist that are solely dedicated to oral histories about the education of African Americans. Furthermore, the educational experiences of African Americans, as well as the purpose of education, differ from one generation to the next. An intergenerational examination of education in Edgecombe County through oral histories illuminates the similarities and differences across generations.

Edgecombe County has a rich past as related to African Americans and therefore should serve as the backdrop for this study. Princeville holds an important place in the history of the United States as the country's oldest African American town, and African American families in Princeville have lived there for generations. Princeville School, one

of the first African American schools in Edgecombe County, still exists today. The original building is the site of the Princeville Heritage Museum, while the current Princeville School houses elementary-aged students.

Edgecombe County is also unique because it was home to twenty-six Rosenwald Schools (Knight, 2005). Rosenwald Schools were built throughout the South for African American children beginning in 1917 (Hanchett, 1988). North Carolina had more Rosenwald Schools than any other state, and Edgecombe County had among the most (Knight, 2005; Hoffschwelle, 2006). Rosenwald Schools were built only when the African American communities were able to provide resources in money, materials, and/or labor themselves. The Rosenwald Fund then matched the African American contribution (Hoffschwelle, 2006). The fact that this county had twenty-six schools, far more than many larger counties, suggests that there were African Americans there who were committed to building schools in the 1920s. Further researching the education of African Americans has helped answer questions about why the schools were built, as well as questions about whether or not this commitment crossed generations.

Though oral tradition and some primary documents preserved pieces of this educational history, the experiences of African Americans there, from their perspectives, had not been recorded and documented at length. These African Americans needed a chance to tell their stories and have a written record of their educational experiences so that future generations will be able to gain insight into education in their community.

This study examined the educational experiences and philosophies of three generations of African Americans through oral histories. This intergenerational approach

focused on how African Americans remembered, experienced, and understood education in Edgecombe County, North Carolina from 1930-1980.

The questions guiding this research were:

1. What were the educational experiences of African Americans in Edgecombe County, North Carolina across three generations?
2. How have African Americans generationally understood the purpose of education?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it documents the memories of three generations of African Americans from their own points of view, and it allows those stories to be preserved. In the case of education, the vast majority of written accounts of Edgecombe County place African American education in the periphery, if at all, and there is almost no inclusion of the voices of the African American students who attended schools there. This research provides an account of African American education in Edgecombe County through oral histories in order for educators, researchers, and policymakers to acknowledge the stories of the people themselves and to make educational and policy decisions accordingly. Understanding education historically for African Americans, from the perspectives of African Americans, will provide insight into black education that can help advance current educational reforms. As Lisa Delpit (1997) stated, we should "…look at the past through new eyes in order to determine what we might learn to help address the apparently difficult educational issue of providing an excellent education for all African-American children" (p. ix). Finally, this research hopes to inform current students and future generations so that they might benefit from the knowledge of the

history of this place and the oral histories of its people. As a result, students might be educated by these stories and have the confidence to tell their own. From this historical knowledge, they might also reconnect with the role that education played in the lives of African Americans, and be inspired to continue their quest for education.

Organization of Study

Because this research study is historical by design, it does not follow the traditional organizational pattern of dissertations in the field of education. While the introduction, theoretical framework, and methodology are traditional, the remaining sections are not. This format better captures the voices of the participants. The following table will assist the reader with the format:

Table 1

Organization of Study

Chapter	Topic
Chapter One	Introduction: Problem Statement, Research Questions, Significance
Chapter Two	Theoretical Framework: Afrocentric Critical Race Theory Methodology: Intergenerational Oral Histories
Chapter Three	Literature Review: History of African American Education in the South
Chapter Four	Jim Crow Era Education in Edgecombe County;

	Oral Histories of four participants Generational Analysis of education based on research questions
Chapter Five	Civil Rights Era Education in Edgecombe County; Oral Histories of four participants Generational Analysis of education based on research questions
Chapter Six	Desegregation Era Education in Edgecombe County; Oral Histories of four participants Generational Analysis of education based on research questions
Chapter Seven	Intergenerational Analysis of Education in Edgecombe County Connecting Education in Edgecombe County to Education in the South via the literature
Chapter Eight	Conclusion: Theoretical Framework, Limitations, Implications, Recommendations

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Afrocentric Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory is an extension of critical theory that focuses on the issue of race instead of class. Afrocentricity was developed in opposition to Eurocentric theoretical paradigms. Combining these theories provides a lens for research that places the experiences and perspectives of African Americans at the center of the research. Throughout this dissertation I will refer to the combination of these two theories as Afrocentric Critical Race Theory.

Early African American sociologists W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) and Carter G. Woodson (1919; 1933) were among the first to deal with race from a theoretical perspective. Du Bois, in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), analyzed the social situation of African Americans as an oppressed race across the Americas, but particularly in the Southern United States. The oppression of African Americans occurred as a result of years of human slavery, during which time people of African descent were subjected to the domination of wealthy white plantation owners and poor white plantation overseers. After emancipation, African Americans found themselves in a society with no political, economic, or social opportunities, and they were still being oppressed by the societal structures that crippled their advancement and supported white domination.

Du Bois (1903) explained that the history of African Americans is one of strife that has been plagued by the issue of the double self. This "double self" is what Du Bois

termed double consciousness – the idea that African Americans have two existences and are always looking at themselves through the eyes of others. Double consciousness means being faced with being "an American [and] 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. 45). As a result, Du Bois argued, African Americans are constantly attempting to merge the two without sacrificing one for the other in order to make possible the existence of an African American who is not denied opportunity on the basis of his race (Du Bois, 1903).

Carter G. Woodson (1915; 1933) examined African American education during the pre- and post-Civil War years. Woodson's *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1865* was one of the first comprehensive studies of pre-Civil War African American education and discussed how African Americans' quest and desire for education began long before the end of slavery. Woodson later wrote *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933), which was a sociological look at African American education from Reconstruction through the early 20th century. In *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, Woodson dissected the issues surrounding the education of those of African descent in America and concluded that black people have been improperly educated on a variety of levels. In the case of those who had not had the chance to attend school, their mis-education came from a lack of exposure to formal education and from learning by seeing the behavior of Whites and educated Blacks. As for "highly educated Blacks," Woodson argued that they had been mis-educated through schooling that focused on the history and contributions of Europeans while ignoring that of Africa and African Americans, and when Africans were mentioned, they were considered inferior to all other groups. Woodson wrote that African

Americans needed to be reeducated in order to be successful and uplifted as a people. In order to do this he believed that education must first include the history of Africans so that people of African descent would understand that their ancestors were intellectuals with their own culture and contributions to the world. He also wrote that the highly educated must educate the masses and work with each other instead of the division that often occurred among African Americans (Woodson, 1933). This was in line with Du Bois's talented tenth philosophy which posited that the ten percent of educated African Americans were responsible for uplifting and leading the rest of the race (Du Bois, 1903). Woodson (1915) and Du Bois (1903) laid the framework for critical race theory and Afrocentric theory in the early 1900s, but the actual concept of critical race theory as it is known today emerged with legal scholars in the 1970s, while Afrocentricity came to prominence in the 1980s through the scholarship of Molefi Asante (Asante, 1988).

Critical Race Theory

Bell (1992) argued that as a result of the American institution of slavery, racism will always be a part of the American landscape. He believed that African Americans would forever be delegated to a place of inferiority in comparison to white Americans (Bell, 1992). Critical race theory emerged from the arguments of legal scholars like Bell who were critiquing the current legal system as it related to race. Struggling with laws and practices that were based on a history of property ownership and property rights in the United States, legal scholars proposed a theory that would explain how this history related to laws and rulings that inherently disadvantaged African Americans (Bell, 1992; Bell, 2004; Harris, 1993).

Harris (1993) wrote that property is a right rather than a physical object and that those who possess certain property are afforded privileges because of that. She equated property rights to white rights and concluded that holders of "whiteness" are afforded the same benefits as holders of physical property (Dixon, 2005; Harris, 1993), and consequently those who do not possess whiteness do not have the same privileges. Because of this, legal scholars concluded, African Americans and other minorities were disadvantaged by virtue of not possessing whiteness, and this caused them to be continually marginalized in the United States (Bell, 1992). Matsuda et al, (1993) identified six themes that define critical race theory in legal scholarship:

> 1. Critical race theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
> 2. Critical race theory expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness and meritocracy.
> 3. Critical race theory challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law … Critical race theorists … adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.
> 4. Critical race theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.
> 5. Critical race theory is interdisciplinary.
> 6. Critical race theory works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (Dixon, 2005; Matsuda et al, 1993, p. 6)

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) built on these themes and adapted critical race theory for use in educational scholarship. They contended that class (critical theory) and gender (feminist theory) are not powerful enough to explain all of the differences in school experiences of students, and that race plays a dominant role in students' educational experiences and outcomes. Or, as Collins (1990) noted, there is a matrix of domination that exists in society and in educational institutions. Gender, race, and class combined impact an individual's experiences. So while according to critical race theorists race plays the dominant role, it is important to remember that people's experiences are a result of the intersection of their ascribed characteristics. Critical race theory recognizes the central role of race and how it intersects with other forms of oppression, and seeks to eliminate all forms of oppression (Solorzano, 2001).

Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity is a paradigm that places African ideals at the center of analyses involving African culture and behavior, as opposed to Eurocentricity which views all things African through a European/Western lens (Asante, 1988). The contributions of pre-colonial Africa to the world were once completely excluded from Western writings and discussions, and today are still only marginal. As a result, any mention of people of African descent typically begins with the trans-Atlantic slave trade and ignores the history of African Americans before slavery (Franklin, 2000; Woodson, 1933). Because of this, many people including those of African descent in the United States and other Western countries, do not learn the true contributions of Africa and subsequently are denied knowledge of their own history, which further marginalizes them in Western societies (Asante, 1988; Traore & Lukens, 2006; Woodson, 1933).

Molefi Asante's (1988) Afrocentrism is a theoretical framework that views the African American experience from an African perspective. Afrocentrism rethinks the ways African Americans are taught, as well as the ways they are researched. As Mkabela (2005) noted, "Afrocentricity is generally opposed to theories that 'dislocate' Africans in the periphery of human thought and experience" (p. 179).

Afrocentricity is based on the following core tenets: cultural centeredness, transformation (regaining one's own platform), knowledge perspective (new path of interpretation), connection between the material and spiritual, the communal not the individual, and agency (action, ownership, key to freedom/liberation). This will lead to critical reevaluation of social phenomenon and self-conscious action (Asante, 1998; Traore & Lukens, 2006). The Afrocentric principles of cultural centeredness, the communal, and agency are essential to understanding this dissertation research.

Cultural centeredness means that studies of people of African descent must be grounded in their culture. As Asante (2003) noted, Afrocentricity is "…a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives dominate" (p. 2). In terms of research, "…cultural location takes precedence over the topic or the data under construction" (Mkabela, 2005, p. 179). By placing African perspectives and ideologies at the center of the research, a more accurate understanding of the experiences of African Americans can be understood.

The Afrocentric concept of the communal is in direct opposition to European individualism. Individual existence is only due to the fact that the community exists. Therefore, without the community there would be no individual. Related to this concept is the idea of connectedness. From the Afrocentric perspective, all are connected and

therefore all deserving of respect (Traore, 2006). As related to this research, the collective experience of the community is essential to the understanding of African American education in this community.

Human agency is central to Afrocentric theory. According to Asante (1998) "Afrocentricity liberates the African by establishing agency as the key concept for freedom" (p. 21). By placing people of African descent at the center of the research it allows them the opportunity to be subjects rather than objects in research about their lives. Afrocentricity seeks a voice for those of African descent so that through their own agency they will be emancipated from positions of oppression.

Many studies have been conducted focusing on the history of education for African Americans during the Jim Crow Era, but most have not been from an Afrocentric Critical Race perspective. Though studies like Anderson's *The Education of Blacks in the South* (1988) and Siddle-Walker's *Their Highest Potential* (1995) provide noteworthy accounts of African American education historically, there are still gaps in the research on how African Americans themselves explain and understand the purpose of education based on their educational experiences. Historical discourse would benefit from more stories grounded in the perspectives of African Americans who experienced education during that time. From an Afrocentric Critical Race perspective, the oral histories of African Americans need to be recorded in order to understand the collective experience of education in Edgecombe County specifically and across the South in general. This allows for a more complete portrait of what education looked like in a particular place during a specific time period. Afrocentric Critical Race Theory recognizes that there is

agency in the story telling and counter-narratives. This enables those who have been marginalized to move from the margins into the position of expert.

Methodology

Historical Research in the Education Field

Historical research is defined as "the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events" (Borg, 1963, in Cohen and Morrison, 2007, p. 191). Historians are concerned with recreating the past through collecting historical artifacts, analyzing them, and reconstructing events as accurately as possible (Cohen and Morrison, 2007; Henige, 1982).

Educational researchers who want a better understanding of the history surrounding a particular event or time period employ historical research methods. First, researchers identify a problem that needs to be addressed; in the case of this dissertation the problem was that the educational experiences of African Americans in Edgecombe County had not been documented. Then they formulate a set of questions or hypotheses related to that problem. In this case the questions were: 1) What were the educational experiences of African Americans in Edgecombe County, North Carolina across three generations? and 2) How have African Americans generationally understood the purpose of education?

Once researchers have research questions, they begin the process of collecting, organizing, verifying, validating, and analyzing data. These data usually include archived materials and primary documents, coupled with interviews (if it is recent history), alongside secondary sources. The researcher uses this information to answer the

research questions or test the hypothesis, and then writes the research report (Cohen and Morrison, 2007).

Educational researchers seek to better understand the current educational system. In order to do this, many recognize that they must first understand the history related to it in order to be able to fully grasp the reasons for the current situation. This is one reason why educational researchers turn to historical research. Educational researchers might also be interested in learning more about the past of a particular institution, like a university or grade school. They would also use historical research to tell the story of the institution. As Cohen and Morrison (2007) noted, history is interrelated. Therefore, one cannot study a person, institution or event in isolation. All of these contribute to the history and it is the job of the researcher to decide how to put the pieces together to best tell the story.

Understanding Oral History

The research design for this study was intergenerational oral history. Oral history research is a type of historical research that depends heavily on the testimony of individuals who in some way participated in or observed a particular historical event (Okihiro, 1996). Louis Starr (1996), one of two men credited with popularizing oral history research, defined it as "…primary source material obtained by recording the spoken words – generally by means of planned, tape-recorded interviews – of persons deemed to harbor hitherto unavailable information worth preserving" (p. 40). Therefore oral historians record and preserve stories that provide insight into a time period or event that cannot be found in written documents. The participants tell their stories because

their stories provide unique perspectives that cannot be understood solely through archival data (Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

Many topics must be addressed through oral history research because no other evidence exists to recreate certain historical events or to tell a particular side of the story. As Friedlander (1996) noted:

> To meaningfully describe patterns of behavior or to analyze the structure of an event are objectives which often lie beyond the reach of orthodox uses of data, particularly when one's interest shifts from the various intellectual, social, and political elites to the industrial working class. (p. 157)

The histories of marginalized people, such as African Americans, are often not detailed in written archived documents because written history is often the "history of winners" or the history of those in power, and often fails to represent accurately the history of the marginalized (Friedlander, 1996). There are, however, historians who have been effective in using those primary documents and interpreting them in a way that provides a different perspective of history (Anderson, 1988; Franklin, 1947/2000; Stampp, 1956). Still, because many historic documents fail to represent history from the minority perspective, historians of ethnic history depend heavily on oral history in order to include information that has been left out of written documents (Friedlander, 1996). Okihiro (1996) advocated the use of oral sources in ethnic history as a means of enfranchising and empowering people whose lives have been shaped by colonized history, and their histories have been written by those outside of their culture with no real appreciation for their contributions.

Historians must be critical of what has been reported as historical fact. For example, Okihiro (1996) related the story of the *Sambo* characterization of the African American slave. Based on historical documents, such as the papers of some white Southern plantation owners, African American slaves were simple, passive and unintelligent. They smiled and laughed and entertained Whites because they did not have the mental capability to know that they were being laughed at. However, African American slave narratives and autobiographies report a different story. They explain how their demeanor was a way of survival on the plantations; smiling instead of appearing weak, laughing instead of crying, knowing inside that they were being viewed as simple-minded by Whites, but intelligent enough to realize that by portraying this "Sambo" character they would ensure their survival (Stampp, 1956). Okihiro's (1996) example demonstrates how insider history is often different from the mainstream record. Without the oral histories of cultural minorities and the critical approach to historical documents of researchers, the stories of marginalized groups might remain untold.

On the other hand, researchers can still present biased information even when they include interviews with the marginalized. Henige (1982), for example, presented the case of the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) former slave narratives as an example of how a culture's history can be portrayed with bias or inaccuracy if researchers obtain their stories without care and clarity. In the 1930s, at the height of Jim Crow segregation, the WPA conducted interviews throughout the South as part of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal economic program. The interviewers interviewed former slaves about their lives during slavery. As a result of the time period, there was a huge cultural disconnect between many African Americans and Whites. So, when Whites went in to

interview African Americans (four-fifths of the interviewers were white), some had their own preconceived notions of what they thought slavery was like. Likewise, the interviewees likely had their own ideas about what the white interviewers (and possibly the African American interviewers) wanted to hear. As a result, many of the more than 2,000 WPA former slave narratives provide a picture of slavery that appears to be extremely different from that expressed in other slave narratives and autobiographies (Frederick Douglass, Olaudah Equiano, Harriet Jacobs) or from critical analysis of plantation owner papers, and other documents detailing slave life (Henige, 1982).

Though the time period and context were much different in the 1930s than today, there are lessons to be learned from the WPA's mistakes. This example is important because it demonstrates how critical the role of the researcher is in gathering an accurate representation from the participants. Whether the researcher is from the same cultural background as the participants or not, it is important that the researcher connects with the participants and understands and respects their culture. Participants must also trust the researcher enough to reveal true representations of their experiences and not just what they believe the researcher wants to hear.

Hence, the role of the researcher is important in gathering the oral histories of the marginalized. As a cultural insider, I not only have insight into the culture that I am interviewing, but I also share the history of the participants. Henige (1982) stated that researchers must be "culturally sympathetic to the outlook of those they interview" (p. 116); therefore, although it is not necessary to be a member of the group you are interviewing, it is necessary to fully understand and appreciate their culture, points of view, and perspectives. As Okihiro (1996) noted:

> Ethnic history is the first step toward ultimate emancipation; for by freeing themselves from the bonds of a colonized history, they will be able to see their true condition, their own history. From that realization and from an understanding of the majority group and their institutions, minorities can proceed to devise means for total liberation. (p. 20)

Writing specifically about the role of oral history in ethnic research, he writes:

> Oral history proposes that we rewrite our history to capture the human spirit of the people, to see how ethnic minorities solved or failed to solve particular problems, how they advanced or resisted change, and how they made or failed to make better lives for themselves and their children. In short, oral history proposes nothing less than the writing of a people's history, liberated from myths and imbued with humanity. (p. 211)

Historical research, particularly oral history research then, can be a means of providing a voice to those who have been silenced by mainstream viewpoints and histories that overlook, consciously or not, their side of the story. Through oral history research, from an Afrocentric and critical race perspective, the African Americans who participated in this study had an opportunity to contribute to the history of African American education in Edgecombe County.

Criticisms of Oral History

One of the primary issues of debate associated with oral history research is whether insiders (members of a particular group) or outsiders are better equipped to study that group. There are benefits and problems associated with studying a group of which you are a member. Likewise there are benefits and problems associated with studying a

group that you do not fully understand. Being a part of the same cultural group as those you are interviewing might give you access to more authentic accounts of participants' histories (Foster, 1997). Furthermore, even though researchers might be members of the cultural group, there are more than likely important characteristics that separate them from the people they are interviewing (Foster, 1997). I am African American and from the same community as my participants, but I am from a different generation and no longer live in Edgecombe County. So while our similarities were beneficial because I share a part of their cultural and geographical history, our differences provided me with other views and experiences which allowed me to somewhat separate myself and my story from those of my participants. Still, I believe that my being an African American from Edgecombe County was a benefit to this study. Because I was a member of this community they were honest in the stories that they shared and they trusted me enough to tell me exactly what they thought and felt. This directly relates to Afrocentric theories and methods. As Mkabela (2005) stated:

> The Afrocentric method suggests cultural and social immersion as opposed to scientific distance as the best approach to understand African phenomena. This means that the researcher must have some familiarity with history, language, philosophy, and myths of the people under study….inversely, the…researcher although privileged with tools of language and proximity to the experiences …should not assume a privileged perspective. (p. 181)

Critics of oral history also rely heavily on the belief that memory is fallible and that over the course of many years facts become distorted. They also note that people's emotions play a major role in the way that they remember things (Friedlander, 1996).

Those with the most emotional attachment to an event are the ones that oral historians usually seek out as interviewees (Friedlander, 1996). Critics note that because of their emotional attachment however, their memory of the event will be based on their feelings about it and not actual fact (Starr, 1996; Tuchman, 1996).

For the purposes of my research study, I recognized that my participants' memories were essential to my research. I was interested in how the participants remembered and experienced education; therefore, the way they remembered education played a major part in my analysis. I wanted to know what they remembered and how they remembered it because the way that they recalled events related to how they felt about them, and their feelings and perceptions were essential to my analysis. Or as stated by Dempsey and Noblit (1993):

> Narratives are ways for people to be linked to the future and to have the meanings they value become part of a wider human discourse…to construct and reconstruct its culture…the significance of the story…is that people wish this to be their story and, as such, are no longer silenced. (p. 321).

Critical Race Theory and Oral History

The critical race theory tenet of voice is central to educational scholarship. Critical race theorists believe it is necessary for African Americans and other minorities to have a voice and tell their own stories. Therefore, critical race theorists often use counter-narratives (stories that are in opposition to what has been previously believed by mainstream America), poetry, revisionist histories, and stories to counter the dominant narrative (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Naming one's own voice is necessary for three reasons: 1) Reality is socially constructed, 2) Stories allow oppressed groups a way to

preserve their histories and ideas, and 3) The exchange of stories from teller to listener allows those who are unaware to see the world in a new way (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2005). This approach privileges the voices of those from oppressed and marginalized groups (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Critical race theory in education is "a radical critique of both the status quo and the purported reforms…scholars align with Marcus Garvey who believed that 'the Black man was universally oppressed on racial grounds and that any program of emancipation would have to be built around the question of race first'" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2005, p. 63)

Baszille (2008) built on the foundation of critical race theory and developed what she called critical race testimony, "the practice of bearing witness – from a critical perspective – to the traumas of racism" (p. 253). Critical race testimony is based on the following:

> (1) It is a first-person account of what has or is happening.
>
> (2) The teller speaks not only on his or her behalf, but in relationship to the group situation from which and because of which she narrates.
>
> (3) It reveals feelings, or the extent to which what is or has happened has taken a toll on the lives of real people. The testimony that is engaged is not only about race but also racialized; that is, it admits to the ways in which one's thinking is affected by one's racial experiences. (Baszille, 2008, p. 253)

Critical race testimony does not follow traditional academic analysis expectations, but rather steers away from universal truths and offers multi-layered (re)presentations in order to place the power in the hands of the African Americans (or other minorities) who are providing their testimonies (Baszille, 2008). Testimonies exist alongside prose, such

as historical data, so that "one's life, one's consciousness becomes a reference point for a broader social, cultural, and political history" (Baszille, 2008, p. 256).

Critical race theory in general and critical race testimony specifically are essential frameworks through which to answer the research questions of this study. Because the educational experiences of African Americans include decades of segregated schooling and limited access to educational opportunities in relation to Whites, race is significant to African Americans' educational experiences. Critical race testimony is directly related to the methodology of historical research which was employed in this study because the testimonies or stories of African Americans exist alongside primary documents in order to enhance the narrative of African American education, and to provide insight into the role race played in their educational journey.

African Centered Research

Afrocentric method "undertakes an African analysis and produces…knowledge that recognizes the African voice; that tells another story" (Mkabela, 2005, p. 184). Research that is African centered focuses on the voice of those of African descent and begins with their cultural experiences (Asante, 1988). Therefore culture must be the driving force behind the entire process, from inception to analysis, and the collective values and meanings of the participants are important to the process (Mkabela, 2005). In the case of this dissertation data was collected, interpreted, and analyzed with African American cultural ways of being at the center. This method is not in opposition to traditional qualitative research methodologies, but should be viewed as a compliment to qualitative research; the Afrocentric method is qualitative research that employs the Afrocentric paradigm (Mkabela, 2005).

Archival Data

Though oral history interviews provide the bulk of the data for this study, primary sources related to education in Edgecombe County were also used to provide context and as a way to present a vivid story of African American education. Archival data includes primary documents and records that provide insight into historical events, people, and places (Cohen & Morrison, 2007). These documents are often archived in local and state libraries and museums, but can also be found in the homes of individual citizens who were a part of that history.

As noted by Okihiro (1996), historians must be critical of historical documents and not assume that just because they are primary sources they are accurate representations of what actually occurred. In historical research, critical historians must be mindful of the primary documents that they discover. Information such as who wrote the document and under what circumstances it was written is important to critical analysis. Further, critical historians must be certain not to take all primary documents as absolute fact (Okihiro, 1996). As mentioned earlier, the papers of a slave owner might not provide fully accurate information about the culture of slavery on a plantation from the perspectives of slaves. Likewise, the documents of those in power will not always give the best account of what was happening in the lives of the majority of the people during a specific historic event. Therefore, when using primary documents it is important to recognize the conditions under which they were written and the purpose they were intended to serve.

Research Design

This study was an intergenerational oral history focusing on three generations of African Americans who attended Kindergarten through twelfth grade schools in Edgecombe County between 1930 and 1980. The study began with 1930 so that oral histories could be included since very few people in Edgecombe County today attended school prior to 1930. The study ended with 1980 in order to include the oral histories of the generation that attended schools in Edgecombe County after school desegregation. Nineteen thirty to 1980 encompasses three distinct generations and a significant amount of educational history in Edgecombe County.

The generations were divided to represent three time periods in educational history: 1930-1954: Jim Crow Era, 1955-1969: Civil Rights Era, and 1970-1980: Post-*Brown v. Board of Education* Desegregation Era. The first Era ends in 1954 because that is the year that the *Brown* decision was rendered. The third Era begins with 1970 because schools were officially desegregated in Edgecombe County that year. One participants' school era overlapped. Alvania attended school during the Civil Rights Era for the majority of her school years and spent her final years in school post-desegregation. This participant was placed in the Desegregation Era category simply because she had school experiences that included desegregated schooling and I believed these experiences connected her to the Desegregation Era more than the Civil Rights Era. A second participant, Derrick, spent years in school past 1980, but because he completed a significant amount of his education during the Desegregation Era, he was included in the study to represent that time period.

This study was intergenerational, which does not mean that all participants were members of the same family. It means that three generations of African Americans in Edgecombe County were interviewed. Some interviewees were related, but it was not a requirement that there be three generations of one family in order to participate in the study. Because of the close familial and communal ties that most African Americans in Edgecombe County share, there were connections between many of the participants, whether they were close relatives, distant cousins, neighbors, or past classmates. I have identified immediate relatives of participants on a participant chart at the beginning of chapters five, six, and seven.

Research Site. Edgecombe County, North Carolina is located in the Eastern region of the state between the capital of Raleigh and the North Carolina coast (Edgecombe County, 2010). At the time of this study, the county was home to about 56,000 residents. Edgecombe County consists of the town of Tarboro, which is the county seat, part of the town of Rocky Mount, and other municipalities including Leggett, Pinetops, Battleboro, Macclesfield, Whitakers, and Princeville. Most of the participants are from the Tarboro and Princeville area and currently reside in Tarboro or Princeville (Edgecombe County, 2010).

Sample. The sample for this study consisted of twelve participants, four per generation. I chose four per generation in order to include a significant portion of each participant's story in the study. Including so much information on more than four participants might be difficult for readers to follow. I also think that four participants per generation were enough to gain insight into education during a particular time period.

The sampling was purposive because participants must have attended school in Edgecombe County during the specific time periods and had to be African American. I used Michele Foster's (1997) community nomination method in order to locate participants. Community nomination "…is a selection process…in which the names of {people} were solicited through direct contact with individual black communities" (p. xx). In this case the nominations came from contact with people in Edgecombe County who suggested people to be interviewed. Snowball sampling was also used because participants informed me of other relatives, neighbors, and friends who fit the participant profile. Because the Jim Crow generation was older in age, they were from a smaller pool of possible participants; therefore, I purposely sought people who were in the age range of those who attended school between 1930 and 1950 based on people I knew and those who were suggested to me. The others were from a larger number of possible interviewees. The communal aspect of Afrocentricity was important to the selection process of participants (Asante, 1988). By asking people I knew in Edgecombe County to help me identify interviewees, I made this project a collective one, beginning with those I knew and expanding to those I came to know through recommendations.

Once I had a list of names I began contacting people by phone and email to see if they would be interested in participating. If they said yes, we scheduled times for the interviews. At the end of my first three interviews I asked participants if they knew of other people whom they thought I should interview. Each time the participants gave me a few names. I soon realized that if I continued to ask for names I would get well beyond the number of people I actually wanted to interview, so I decided that once I had four or five people from each generation who were willing to participate I would stop requesting

information on possible participants. I decided to have two male participants and two female participants in each category in case differences emerged based on gender, however, no significant gender differences emerged.

Data collection. Oral history interviews were the primary data for this project. Some archival primary sources and secondary sources related to Edgecombe County were included as data in order to provide the contextual background for Edgecombe County. The bulk of the study, though, relied on the oral history interviews with the twelve participants. The primary sources included archived microfilm and original copies of Tarboro Public Schools and Edgecombe County Schools Board of Education Minutes between 1930 and 1980, newspaper articles from *The Daily Southerner* and *The Rocky Mount Telegram*, school Principal's Reports, yearbooks, and other primary data related to the history of African American education in Edgecombe County. I retrieved this data from the Edgecombe County Memorial Library in Tarboro, North Carolina, the North Carolina State Archives Division of Public Instruction records in Raleigh, North Carolina, and the North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Because there were no African American newspapers in the area at the time, few in-depth stories from the African American perspective were printed in the local newspapers. Articles in *The Daily Southerner* and *The Rocky Mount Telegram* were used to provide context about education overall in terms of the number and types of school buildings, as well as white education as a comparison.

Interviews were conducted with the twelve participants and lasted from one to two hours each. All interviews occurred in Edgecombe County at the homes or work places of the participants. Since these are oral histories and based on an Afrocentric

Critical Race framework, the questions were open-ended so that participants could choose how to answer them and decide what was important to their stories (Baszille, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The questions did, however, focus on their educational experiences, their thoughts on the purpose of education, and their attitudes and feelings about education in general so that answers were relevant to the topic. As Friedlander (1996) stated, interviewers must be careful to establish theoretical frameworks and clear methods before conducting oral history interviews so that the oral histories move beyond "…the primitive stage of collecting anecdotes" (p. 153).

It is important in oral history research to maintain a critical stance and to continue to probe participants for details (Friedlander, 1996). It is also important to have a deep understanding of the topic ahead of time so that if participants say something that is contradictory to something the researcher has found through primary documents or heard from other participants, he or she can confront the participant with background knowledge and ask for clarification (Friedlander, 1996). Because of this, I often probed participants for more information. I also sometimes strayed slightly from the interview script to give participants a chance to elaborate on something they mentioned in a previous answer.

Data analysis. All interviews were audio recorded. I transcribed each interview myself in order to begin the analysis process as I listened to the interviews. As I listened and transcribed, certain themes became apparent before I actually began coding the data and looking for themes. This process was helpful because it allowed me to further familiarize myself with my data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I read the transcripts thoroughly and classified the data into three categories based on the research questions.

These three categories were related to each generation's Educational Experiences, Purposes of Education and Attitudes about Education in Edgecombe County.

For each educational era, I had three categories: Experiences, Purpose, and Attitudes based on the research questions and information that developed from the interview questions. I read each transcript in order to identify which information fit into what category. Each category was assigned a color. Educational Experience was yellow, Purpose of Education was green and Attitude about Education was red. After reading each transcript in Microsoft Word (MS), I used the text highlight feature to color code each transcript by category. I then reread each one to ensure that I put all pertinent information into one of the three categories. After reading and highlighting all twelve transcripts, I made word documents for each category by era. There were three Educational Experiences documents, three Purposes of Education documents, and three Attitudes about Education documents. Each educational era had a document for all three categories. Next I copied and pasted the passages from the transcripts to the documents by category so that I had all of the information for each era and category in one document. For example, all information about Educational Experiences from the Jim Crow Era participants' transcripts were pasted into one document titled Educational Experiences Jim Crow. Once there I color coded the responses based on participant to ensure that I did not mix up responses. For example, Educational Experiences were initially highlighted on the transcript in yellow. Once these responses were transferred to the Educational Experiences document, only the Educational Experiences questions were still highlighted in yellow. Each participant's responses though were highlighted in an assigned color (blue, green, purple, or grey). This way all of one participant's responses

across the three categories were highlighted in the same color, so there was no confusion about who the response belonged to.

Next I began the process of analyzing the data within and across generations. I printed a copy of each of the color coded documents, three for Educational Experiences, three for Purposes of Education, and three for Attitudes about Education. I began with the Jim Crow Era and using thematic coding went through the three documents implementing line by line analysis. I highlighted topics by writing notes to the side of the paragraph that stated the main topics of that section. I reread the documents another time to make sure I did not miss important topics. After I identified topics to the side of the paragraph, I made a list of all of the topics related to Educational Experiences, another list for topics related to Purpose of Education, and another list of topics related to Attitudes about Education. On each list I combined similar topics into overall codes related to education under the three main headings for the Jim Crow Era. I followed these steps for the Civil Rights Era and the Desegregation Era. After identifying the three to six main codes for each of the three main headings, I made an Analysis Chart that included all three main headings and the codes (subheadings) for all three generations into one chart.

I used the generational analysis charts in order to complete the intergenerational analysis. I used a color coding system to highlight codes for each of the main headings (Experiences, Purposes, and Attitudes) that were present on at least two of the generational analysis charts. For example if there was a code that existed in all three eras I highlighted it in red. If a code existed in Jim Crow and Civil Rights, I highlighted it in grey. Then I highlighted codes in each era (if they were not already highlighted) that I

thought defined that era using blue for Jim Crow, purple for Civil Rights and green for Desegregation in order to be sure not to exclude important information in the intergenerational analysis chapter even if it did not cross generations. This way I could also discuss significant differences across the three generations. I used this chart to complete the intergenerational analysis chapter and overall conclusions about education in Edgecombe County.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is a historical overview of African American education in the Southern United States from Reconstruction to desegregation. Seminal research on the history of African American education in the South has been included as it relates to the educational experiences and purpose of education for African Americans. The literature is also designed to provide a back drop of African American education in the South in order to later situate black education in Edgecombe County into this overall context.

Earliest African American Education

When Africans arrived in the United States as a result of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, they were leaving a continent where education was not only present, but valued (Franklin, 2000; Woodson, 1919). Eurocentric literature presents the continent of Africa as barbaric and uncivilized and fails to recognize the role that education played in the lives of Africans. However, as Woodson (1919) noted, when Africans first arrived in the Americas they were still eager to learn and were initially afforded the opportunity to do so. This occurred until slave owners began to feel that educating slaves and free Blacks could lead to possible slave rebellions and insurrections so slave laws and codes, as well as laws specifically related to free Blacks, were enacted in order to keep the Black population illiterate (Woodson, 1919).

Still, slaves and free Blacks such as Martin R. Delany were dedicated to becoming educated despite laws that forbade it (Adeleke, 1994). In the 1820s, Delaney moved from West Virginia to Pennsylvania hoping to be able to acquire an education, after being forbidden to attend schools with Whites in his community (Adeleke, 1994). Once there, he found a community of other black students who were eager to learn. This commitment to education then was not something that African Americans suddenly thought of once the Civil War was over, but rather they had always been committed to it (Franklin, 2000; Woodson, 1919). In the South, many slaves and free Blacks found ways to learn secretly, from Blacks who were literate or even some Whites who were willing to teach their slaves to read. The well-known autobiography of Frederick Douglass, which is considered one of the most influential African American slave narratives, explains the importance of education to Douglass' life and how he was secretly taught to read (Douglass, 1845).

Civil War and Reconstruction Era

The earliest Southern post-emancipation schools for African Americans can be traced to the Port Royal Experiment for Reconstruction, which took place on the sea islands of South Carolina and began during the Civil War (Washington, 1984; Williams & Ashleigh, 2004). Port Royal was an attempt at a small scale Reconstruction plan for Blacks who inhabited the sea islands of South Carolina (Washington, 1984). Abolitionist Edward Pierce was sent to the islands to essentially help establish a community for the former slaves. In an 1862 report to the federal government he noted the desire for education among the freedmen and said that though there was no school for them on the island aside from the Sunday school, they asked daily for books (Williams & Ashleigh,

2004). As a result of their eagerness to learn, Pierce petitioned northern friends for resources to hire teachers and purchase materials. The Port Royal African Americans were among the first former slaves to gain access to a formal education (Washington, 1984). Charlotte Forten, the only African American Northern missionary to teach on the island in the early years, wrote in correspondences that the students seemed very excited and willing to learn (Washington, 1984). According to Williams and Ashleigh (2004), the first schools on the island, though supported by northern abolitionists, were the result of the desire for an education by the free African Americans (Williams & Ashleigh, 2004). From Port Royal on, newly freed slaves sought formal education.

When the Civil War ended, newly emancipated slaves throughout the South were eager to begin their lives as free men and women. They hoped that freedom would give them the opportunity to make decisions for themselves, something that most had never been able to do under the strict confines of Southern slavery (Litwack, 1998). One of the first things on many former slaves' minds was education. As Litwack (1998) noted, "Outside of land, education ranked highest in the priorities of freed slaves, widely perceived as the proven way to free themselves from mental and physical dependency on Whites" (p. 56). Or, as Kluger (1975) proclaimed, "Next to land, the African American's great hunger was for learning" (p. 50).

Because teaching slaves to read and write was forbidden, most African Americans in the South and throughout the United States were illiterate in 1865 (Anderson, 1988; Woodson, 1919). Immediately, African Americans began to set up schools in old barns, churches, and elsewhere in an attempt to partake of this education that had been kept

from them (Anderson, 1988; Ballard, 1973; Butchart,1980; Morris, 1981; Vaughan, 1974).

During Reconstruction, the Freedmen's Bureau maintained schools for African American children through federal contributions and a property tax (Anderson, 1988). Religious societies such as the American Missionary Association (AMA) were also instrumental in helping African Americans obtain an education, sending Northern missionaries to teach in Southern schools (Anderson, 1988; Fairclough, 2007). Former slaves attended Freedmen's Bureau schools as well as schools established by religious organizations (Anderson, 1988; Brown, 2004). These schools were usually overcrowded and under resourced as a result of the number of students who wanted to attend (Anderson, 1988; Williams, 2005). African Americans, however, crowded into these schools despite the circumstances. The Freedman's Bureau's assistance though was short lived and by 1870, just five years after the end of the Civil War, the Bureau was shut down, leaving African Americans in the South to fend for themselves or to depend on the help of Northern philanthropic and religious organizations (Kluger, 1975).

Anderson (1988) attributed African Americans' quest for education to their view of literacy and education as a contradiction to oppression. According to Anderson (1988), African Americans believed that education was the best way to advance and improve their inferior social and economic status. As a result, their agency was based on the belief that true freedom and liberation from white dependency could only be obtained through an education. Therefore, education was not just learning to read, write, and do mathematics, but it was also the key to their absolute social, economic, and political freedom (Anderson, 1988; Perry, 2003). This concept of literacy and education for

freedom drove African Americans for generations to pursue an education (Perry, 2003; Williams, 2005).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Along with the efforts of African Americans themselves, Northern philanthropists and religious organizations continued their financial support of African American education and ultimately provided the monetary resources and white support needed to acquire schooling in the South during Reconstruction and after (Anderson, 1988; Spivey, 1978; Williams & Ashleigh, 2004). Most of these resources went to the establishment and maintenance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The history of HBCUs is significant to the history of both African American primary education and higher education because initially most HBCUs were not colleges at all but were more like common schools (Cole, 2004). In fact, many of these institutions educated elementary and high school-aged students until the 1930s (Cole, 2004; Williams & Ashleigh, 2004).

The first Historically Black College, Cheney University (originally the African Institute), was founded in Cheney, Pennsylvania in 1837 by Quaker philanthropist Richard Humphreys who endowed through his will a school for African Americans (Williams & Ashleigh, 2004). Other schools such as Lincoln University (opening in 1854, also in Pennsylvania) were founded in the North before the Civil War for the population of free Blacks in those states; however, it was not until after the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves in the South that the majority of HBCUs were established to accommodate the large number of African Americans who wanted to be educated (Brown, 2004; Williams & Ashley, 2004). Many of the schools were established by the

American Missionary Association (AMA), the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS), and other religious organizations and Northern philanthropists (Anderson, 1988; Brown, 2004). Black religious organizations such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), Colored Methodist Episcopal Church(CME), and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ) also founded institutions for African Americans, such as Morris Brown College, Miles College, and Livingstone College in North Carolina, respectively (Brown, 2004; Williams & Ashleigh, 2004). Some schools such as North Carolina Central University (originally the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua) and Fayetteville State University (originally the Howard School) in North Carolina were founded by African Americans independently of religious institutions (Brown, 1961). Many of these schools were later acquired by the state and became publicly funded institutions for African American students, but they originated because African Americans saw a need to educate themselves and were dedicated to raising the money to operate these institutions (Brown, 1961; Williams & Ashleigh, 2004).

It was often through the agency of African Americans themselves that institutions were built. African Americans opened schools such as Wilberforce College and the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua with the aid of northern philanthropists, southern benefactors, and religious organizations (Anderson, 1988; Litwack, 1998; Williams & Ashleigh, 2004)). These schools were privately funded but Blacks still sought free public education. Litwack (1998) stated, “The development of a system of tax-supported public education in the South was largely an achievement of the governments established under Radical Reconstruction, with Black legislators leading the

way in enacting the necessary legislation" (p. 62). Therefore, African Americans themselves were active in securing their schools, but without the monetary resources or educated labor force needed to sustain them, they depended heavily on the monetary support of philanthropists and human support of missionaries (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Savage, 2004).

The Morrill Act of 1890, which provided money for the southern states to establish public higher education for Blacks, was among the first efforts by the federal government (aside from the Freedmen's Bureau) to educate former slaves (Brown, 2004). The schools that were established as a result of these funds became known as land grant institutions (Brown, 2004). Many of them can still be identified because their names suggest their initial curriculum focus, agriculture and industry. For example, both North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University and Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University were land grant institutions (Williams & Ashleigh, 2004). Seventeen of the existing 105 HBCUs were originally land grant institutions (DOI, 2009).

As evidenced by the names of land grant institutions, many of the early HBCUs were established to train African Americans in agriculture, including Cheney University (Williams & Ashleigh, 2004). Those that were not agricultural were normal schools, or teachers colleges (Anderson, 1988), and many adopted the structures and curricula of their white counterparts, teaching Latin, Greek, mathematics and grammar in order to prepare blacks for the mainstream white society (Cole, 2006). It was not until the establishment of Hampton Institute in Virginia that the goal for African American education shifted to industrial education (Anderson, 1988; Spivey, 1978).

Jim Crow Era

Former plantation owners who at the time controlled the South politically and economically realized that they could not stop the universal education of African Americans, so by working with northern philanthropists who were monetarily supporting the cause of black education, they determined ways to make the educating of Blacks beneficial to the southern class structure (Anderson, 1988; Brown, 2004; Dennis, 1998; Spivey, 1978). Samuel Chapman Armstrong was a northern philanthropist who started Hampton Institute in Virginia as a normal school for African Americans. The Hampton Model, as it became known, emphasized manual labor and industrial education for African Americans (Anderson, 1988; Spivey, 1978). This model was supported by the white southerners who held power in the South because they believed that this method would not only teach Blacks the skills to keep them in the most menial jobs, but it would also teach them to appreciate and accept their subordinate status (Anderson, 1988; Spivey, 1978; Williams & Ashleigh, 2004). According to Anderson (1988) the white Southerners used curriculum and pedagogy to keep African Americans inferior and oppressed. As Spivey (1978) stated "In a sense, the schoolhouse was to replace the stability lost by the demise of the institution of slavery" (p.17) or as Dennis (1998) wrote, "…as advocates for school reform, these intellectuals (white southern university leaders) lent the authority of their institutions and the weight of their ideas to promote and defend an educational system designed to maintain racial control and Black subservience in the post-Emancipation South" (p. 142).

According to Spivey (1978) and Anderson (1988) African American teachers were taught to be subordinate to white leadership. Some influential African Americans

like Booker T. Washington, a student of Chapman's, supported the industrial model because they believed in a philosophy of "uplift through submission" (Brown, 2004, Spivey, 1978). Like Washington, these African Americans believed that political and social rights would come as a result of economic stability. Therefore, industrial education would allow African Americans to become economically self-sufficient while "staying in their place" as farmers and skilled laborers (Spivey, 1978). So the spread of industrial education was not only due to the influence of wealthy white Southerners and the money of northern white philanthropists, but influential African Americans who supported it as well. Some historians argue, though, that Booker T. Washington and others were merely supporting the industrial model because their educational institutions, and southern African American education in general, depended on the money of Northern philanthropists (Anderson, 1988; Spivey, 1978).

Other African Americans believed that industrial education was a way to keep Blacks economically and politically disenfranchised and socially subordinate, because Blacks would never have the economic power or social standing of Whites as long as they were taught a curriculum designed to keep them inferior (Anderson, 1988; DuBois, 1903). These African Americans then advocated for liberal arts education as the best way to learn how to liberate themselves from their conditions of oppression. W. E. B. Du Bois was a major supporter of the liberal arts curriculum and adamantly opposed educating African Americans exclusively by the industrial Hampton model (Anderson, 1988; Brown, 2004; Du Bois, 1903). Du Bois and Washington had spirited debates throughout the early 1900s over this issue, with Washington seeing the value in industrial education for the economic uplift of the black race, and Du Bois arguing that industrial

training would only lead to the continued subservience of Blacks economically and socially, while liberal arts training would liberate and elevate them (Du Bois, 1903). Washington went on to found Tuskegee Institute which adopted the Hampton Model of industrial education (Spivey, 1978). Tuskegee was able to flourish and become one of the most successful HBCUs because of its connection to Chapman and Hampton Institute, and because of the financial support of philanthropists who supported the industrial model (Anderson, 1988; Spivey, 1978).

Not all northern philanthropists and southern upper class Whites supported this method of educating African Americans, and many HBCUs remained dedicated to a liberal arts curriculum (Brown, 2006). Many teachers did not adhere to the ideology of the Hampton Model and their message to their students was less about subordination and more about racial pride and uplift (Brown, 2004; Kelly, 2010). Kelly (2010) stated that black teachers in segregated schools passed on educational capital to their students which equipped them with the educational and social skills to move beyond their current subordinate state. He said that in spite of their subordinate status and lack of resources, these teachers were able to "produce generations of black youth who later became teachers, preachers, doctors, nurses, scientists, and engineers…" (p. 331). Preston-Grimes (2010) found that black educators who were faced with the task of teaching the principles of democracy to students who were disenfranchised, "shaped their classroom environments and framed social studies teaching and civic education to be meaningful and liberating in a time of desegregation" (p. 38).

In the 1910s and 1920s, even after universal education had become a reality for all Americans, African Americans still struggled to obtain equal educational access in

comparison to Whites (Siddle-Walker, 1996; Williams, 2005). Many of the African American struggles can be attributed to the racial climate of the country, which still held Blacks in an inferior position, even as compared to poor Whites. The amount of tax money spent on the education of black children, for example, was significantly less than that spent on white children (Anderson, 1988; Kluger, 2004). As Kluger (2004) stated, in majority black towns such as Clarendon County, South Carolina, most of the African Americans were sharecroppers. The white leaders felt that since the white people paid the most in taxes they should get the best schools. Kluger (2004) wrote that this "…stood in dire contradiction to the very purpose of compulsory public education as it had evolved in the United States to become the pride of the nation and the envy of the world" (Kluger, 2004, p. 7). African American children therefore continued to lack adequate schools and educational resources.

Unequal taxation, though, was not the only factor that kept African Americans from receiving an adequate education. African American children across the country faced other factors that made obtaining an education difficult. Those in the most rural areas of the South were even more apt to receive an inadequate education because of the overall poverty that permeated the area (Leloudis, 1996). Most rural Blacks worked in the farming system, and working on the farm was far more important to the family's immediate survival than going to school (Litwack, 1998). This was true across the South for both African American and poor white children. Whenever work needed to be done on the farm, parents kept their children out of school. Most parents understood the importance of education, but they needed the help of their children on the farm (Litwack, 1998). They knew that if they were not successful the farm owners would find someone

else to do their work. Many rural and poor African American and white children would not start school until after the farm work had been done, which was usually months after the beginning of the school term. Others recalled only going to school on days when it rained, because those were days that they could not work in the fields. In some families only the younger children were allowed to go to school, while the others had to stay home and help on the farm (Litwack, 1998). This was just as much a class issue as a race issue in many areas.

The economic burdens placed on African Americans in rural southern communities hindered the educational process. Still, in places such as Edgecombe County, African American parents wanted schools built in their communities in order for their children to get an education whenever possible; also, if schools were closer to home, it would be easier for children to both go to school and work on the farm (Anderson, 1988). Even though school interfered with their immediate income, parents recognized the importance of education to the future economic stability of their children so many African Americans continued to stress the importance of education by allowing their children to attend school whenever possible (Litwack, 1998; Williams, 2005).

Some African Americans, though, were hesitant or even adamantly opposed to their children being educated for reasons other than just economic ones (Litwack, 1998). Though economically poor white children in the rural South faced some of the same barriers as Blacks, racial tensions as a result of obtaining an education was a worry that only African Americans had to face. This was highlighted with the story of Charlie Holcombe in the introduction of this dissertation, a man whose son was killed as an indirect result of his college education (Litwack, 1998). There were African Americans

who believed that education would be more harmful than helpful to their children, not because they did not believe in the benefits of a formal education, but because they did not believe that African Americans would benefit from it like Whites, or as with Charlie Holcombe's son, education would have an adverse effect and be more negative than positive (Litwack, 1998). They believed that they were stuck in their positions as sharecroppers and low-wage workers and that Whites would continue to have all of the economic and social power with education doing more harm than good (Litwack, 1998). This, however, seemed to be the view of only some African Americans, while many still valued education and sought it, even if meant that they were risking both their livelihood and their lives (Litwack, 1998; Williams, 2005).

As a result, Blacks across the South continued to want schools built close to home to educate their children, and even began petitioning local school boards and local governments to build schools in their communities (Hoffschwelle, 2006). The racial climate and the disenfranchisement of African Americans made it difficult for them to demand that white governments build schools and provide transportation and books; according to the literature and primary documents, however, they did so anyway, though their requests often were not granted (Anderson, 1988; Siddle-Walker, 1995; Williams, 2005). Most local school districts insisted that they did not have money to support the building of new schools, or money for transporting rural students to existing ones (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Savage, 2004; Strong et al, 2000). Once again, Blacks could not depend on southern governments and school systems to provide them with an adequate education. They had to rely on themselves and the help of religious

organizations and northern philanthropists in their continued quest for education (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Savage, 2004).

Self-help, philanthropic support, and education for freedom.

A notable example of African Americans' self-help and Northern white philanthropy is the Rosenwald Fund which began in 1917 (Hanchett, 1988; Hoffschwelle, 1988). The Rosenwald Fund was an effort by philanthropist Julius Rosenwald to help build schools for African Americans in the South. Rosenwald was the president of the Chicago-based Sears, Roebuck, & Company. In 1910, Rosenwald read Booker T. Washington's autobiography *Up From Slavery* (1901). After reading Washington's book, Rosenwald decided to support Washington's cause of better education for Blacks. Rosenwald supported Washington's vocational, manual, and agricultural training agenda and decided to become a major benefactor of Tuskegee University (JBHE, 1999). After Rosenwald made his initial contribution to Tuskegee, Washington asked if he could use part of his contribution to build schools in rural Alabama communities for black students. Rosenwald, who believed that people should help themselves, agreed in part, stating that he would match the funds raised by individual communities (Hoffschwelle, 2006). Out of this, the Julius Rosenwald Fund was born.

The first school was built in Lee County, Alabama in 1913 near Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. Rosenwald contributed one-third of the money, while the remainder came from local tax funds, money raised by the black community, and money contributed by local white supporters (Hoffschwelle, 2006). The state of Alabama and Lee County agreed to maintain the school as part of the public school system. After the completion of the Lee County school, Rosenwald gave $30,000.00 to Tuskegee to

build 100 additional schools. Ninety-two schools were actually built, with the majority of them being built in the state of Alabama. In 1917 the Rosenwald Fund was chartered to build public schools for black children throughout the southern United States, with the stipulations that the Rosenwald Fund would only match the contributions of the African American community itself, and that the school had to become a part of the local school system (Strong et al, 2000). The fund grew to include rural communities in fifteen states across the South. By the end of construction in 1932, the Rosenwald Fund had aided in the building of over 5,000 educational facilities in 883 counties. North Carolina housed the most with 813 schools, twenty-six of which were in Edgecombe County (Hanchett, 1988; Hoffschwelle, 2006; Strong et al, 2000), the site of this study.

The Rosenwald Fund matched contributions from the black community and combined these with local tax funds in order to build new schools for black students (Hoffschwelle, 2006; Strong, et al, 2000). African Americans pulled together to raise their share of the money for the schools. Local churches, black businesses, and some local Whites pooled their resources in order to have enough to build new schools for the African American children (Hanchett, 1988; Hoffschwelle, 2006; Strong, et al, 2000).

The African Americans who contributed to the Rosenwald Schools were also paying local taxes. Anderson (1988) referred to the practice of African Americans paying public taxes for education while also having to provide money and resources for their schools as double taxation, because essentially Blacks were paying for education twice. Though African Americans paid education taxes, they still were not supplied with adequate school buildings or adequate resources for existing schools (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Savage, 2004). In fact, in many instances, African American tax funds were

used to supply school buildings and educational resources for white children (Franklin & Savage, 2004). As Franklin noted (2004) religious organizations such as the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church held fundraisers to support the cause of African American education. The AME Church hosted an annual "Education Sunday" to support AME educational institutions across the country (Franklin, 2004). Likewise black churches, civic organizations, and communities across the United States held programs to raise money for their schools (Franklin & Savage, 2004). Without such programs many African American schools would not have been built or maintained. Certainly the vast amount of Rosenwald schools would never have existed without the African American contribution.

The Rosenwald Fund, like many philanthropic efforts previously, had an industrial education agenda (JBHE, 1999; Strong, et al, 2000). Though most African Americans did not anticipate building schools that would be used solely for industrial training, they still used the Rosenwald funds to access new school buildings (Anderson, 1988; JBHE, 1999). Then, once the buildings were completed, many teachers at the schools abandoned the industrial curriculum altogether, even using the mandatory industrial shop rooms as additional liberal arts classrooms (JBHE, 1999). African American teachers recognized that industrial training was not the only way to access economic and social freedom and therefore abandoned it or taught it alongside a curriculum and pedagogy that emphasized racial pride and critical thought (Anderson, 1988; Brown, 2006).

Between the 1930s and 1950s African American students, especially those in the southern United States, were still victims of inferior schooling as compared to white

students (Hoffschwelle, 2006). Even though Rosenwald funds significantly increased the number of school buildings, and the Jeanes Fund (founded in 1901 to assist rural schools for African Americans in the South) paid the salaries of many African American teachers, African American schools still lacked resources in terms of books, teachers, space, and transportation, when compared to white schools (Fairclough, 2007; Leloudis, 1996). Black schools still did not have the space for the amount of students who wanted to attend. There was no transportation available, so even though schools now existed in rural areas, they were spread out and miles away from many students. Textbooks were usually old ones that white students had already used (Strong et al, 2000). Despite these conditions, African Americans continued to attend the schools, and some even walked miles just to obtain a basic education (Kluger, 1975). This was a result of what Theresa Perry (2003) called the African American philosophy of education. Perry stated that African Americans over generations understood that "the task of achievement was distinctive, and that out of their lived experience they developed a theory of knowledge and a philosophy of education that was capable of responding to the dilemmas of achievement embedded in this task" (p. 10). In other words, African Americans' quest for a liberating education was so strong that they developed resiliency in order to achieve that education, even in the midst of inadequate facilities and oppressive circumstances. As Heather Andrea Williams (2005) phrased it, "African American parents often saw education as a commodity, making direct links between schooling and upward mobility" (p. 140). This is why African American parents continued to struggle and fight for equal education and continued to send their children to school. Students witnessed the hard work and resiliency of their parents at least somewhat be rewarded with new school

buildings. According to Perry (2003), this was a part of the narrative of the African American philosophy of education, which motivated African Americans across generations to vigorously pursue education (Perry, 2003). Perry (2003), though, believed that African Americans valued education even when it was not directly tied to rewards such as economic advancement. Or as Kelly (2010) explained, black teachers were not just teaching with the hopes that education would lead to economic advancement but they wanted to "increase racial awareness and pride, as well as knowledge of white racism and discrimination" (p. 332).

Further, as Anderson (1988) and Litwack (1998) suggested, African Americans saw school as synonymous with freedom; therefore, the concept of literacy or education for freedom drove them to continue their pursuit of education. Whether it was economic freedom (Spivey, 1978) or political and social freedom (Du Bois, 1903), African Americans believed that education would afford them a better chance at obtaining these freedoms. As noted through the personal stories of African Americans in the Jim Crow South in Litwack (1998),

> To be educated was to be respected. To be educated was to be somebody…To be educated, many came to believe, was to be like the Whites they had seen using education to their advantage…When Charles Whiteside's master informed him that…freedom was essentially meaningless, that he would always remain a slave 'cause you got no education, and education is what makes a man free'… Whiteside was impressed. He worked hard and sent each of his thirteen children to school – 'to make them free' as he said. (p. 56)

Civil Rights Era

African Americans continued their fight for better schools for their children through the 1940s and 1950s. By the time the Supreme Court rendered its decision in the landmark case *Brown v Board of Education* (1954), African Americans led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had been arguing for equal opportunities for decades, including equal schools (Bell, 2004; Kluger, 2004).

According to the decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) separate facilities, including schools, were constitutional as long as they were equal. However, in 1899 the Supreme Court ruled in *Cumming v. Richmond* that since state and local taxes financed schools, building a high school for African Americans was a state issue and not a federal one (Kluger, 2004). As a result of *Plessy*, which essentially legalized segregation, and *Cumming v. Richmond*, which demonstrated that issues pertaining specifically to schools would be left to the states, African Americans would be victims of separate, inferior educational opportunities for at least the next fifty years (Kluger, 2004).

By the 1940s, the NAACP had tried a number of cases in local and states courts attempting to better the conditions of African American schools. Many of these cases were related to the admission of African American students to predominately white graduate schools. In 1936 in *Murray v. Pearson*, for example, the Maryland Court of Appeals allowed an African American student to attend the University of Maryland law school (Kluger, 2004). Though significant, this case did not bring an end to the overall system of racial inequality and segregated schooling that existed in the South. The

NAACP would have to focus on cases that were specifically related to separate and unequal schools and hope that the courts would rule in their favor (Bell, 2004).

Such cases included *Briggs v. Elliott* which began in Clarendon County, South Carolina with one plaintiff's complaints that the district did not provide buses to transport his children to school (Kluger, 2004). That case was dismissed on the grounds that the plaintiff did not technically live in the school district where his children attended school. In 1949, led by Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP, the citizens of Clarendon County decided to once again file a lawsuit against the school district. When Marshall became involved in the case, he stipulated that the Clarendon County Blacks needed at least twenty plaintiffs in order to have a case and that instead of just requesting buses, the plaintiffs should list all of their grievances against the district (Kluger, 2004). By 1950, twenty people had agreed to serve as plaintiffs in the case, and the lawsuit expanded from just requesting buses to asking for equality of schools across the board (Kluger, 2004). The Clarendon case became known as *Briggs v. Elliot*. By the time it reached the Supreme Court, it had become one of the five cases that would be tried by the NAACP as part of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (Kluger, 1975).

The well known *Brown v. Board of Education* case actually consisted of five separate cases. Those cases included *Briggs v. Elliot* (Clarendon, SC), *Davis v. County School Board* (Prince Edward County, VA), *Gebhart v. Belton* (Wilmington, Delaware), *Boiling v. Sharpe* (Washington, D.C.), and *Brown v. Board of Education* (Topeka, KS) (Ogletree, 2004). All of these cases were in some way related to African Americans not being afforded equal educational opportunities when compared to their white

counterparts, and the NAACP believed trying them together would achieve better results (Bell, 2004; Kluger, 2004).

As apparent with *Briggs*, desegregating schools was not the initial goal of many African Americans who filed lawsuits against their school districts. Rather, they were concerned with their students having access to the same resources as white students (Kluger, 2004; Morris, 2008). This counter-narrative was much different from the mainstream view which suggested that African Americans' main goal from the beginning was school integration (Morris, 2008). African American communities wanted school districts to provide schools that were equal to their white counterparts in terms of funding and resources. They also wanted to be able to attend schools that were close to where they lived (Kluger, 2004; Morris, 2008). Their goal was to be afforded the same educational opportunities and educational resources as white students.

This goal is apparent when one examines the literature about the role of segregated schools in the African American community (Dingus, 2006; Foster, 1997; Siddle-Walker, 1996). Cecelski (1994), Dempsey and Noblit (1993) and Siddle-Walker (1996) all studied segregated school communities in North Carolina and found that there was an extremely strong relationship between the African American communities and their schools, and that Blacks actually valued their schools and the commitment of the teachers to their students. Similarly, Dingus (2006) noted, "Personal narratives underscore racial, gendered, relational, familial, and social class complexities, reframing segregated school environments as sites of supportive relationships where students were pushed to excel despite overwhelming circumstances" (p. 213). Therefore, even though

their schools lacked resources, African Americans felt an intense connection to them and valued the relationships they formed and the education they received.

The NAACP initially began their fight by attempting to equalize schooling for African American children through numerous lawsuits (Bell, 2004). However, as time progressed, under the direction of Thurgood Marshall the NAACP decided that a better plan was to directly attack segregation on the grounds that it was unconstitutional, instead of just focusing on equal resources (Bell, 2004). Marshall and the NAACP believed that they had a much stronger case if they focused on the unconstitutionality of *Plessy's* 'separate but equal' clause (Bell, 2004).

Brown became the leading case because the NAACP believed it was their best chance at attacking segregation since the case dealt directly with integrating Topeka, Kansas schools, and since Kansas was not located in the "Deep South" (Kluger, 2004). The local NAACP had been working for a number of years in Topeka to end school segregation. They were not only challenged by the school board and white citizens who did not want their schools integrated, but many Blacks, including teachers, feared that integration would mean black teachers would lose their jobs (Kluger, 2004). Some of the best black teachers in Topeka felt that the African American students were getting a quality education from black teachers because these teachers truly cared about the students and knew how to best educate black students; they were fearful of the treatment their students might receive from white teachers in integrated schools (Kluger, 2004). Still, the NAACP had enough people as plaintiffs in the case against the school board. They identified Oliver Brown as the lead plaintiff primarily because he was a union member and would not be faced with losing his job if he participated in the case, and also

because he was not a member of the NAACP and was considered to have a non-militant disposition (Kluger, 2004).

Finally, in 1954 the Supreme Court rendered its ruling in the *Brown* case deciding that separate schools for the races were unconstitutional, thus ending decades of de jure school segregation and inequalities in the United States (Kluger, 2004; Ogletree, 2004). Next began the tedious process of desegregating the country's schools, a task that would take over a decade in some counties, and even longer in others (Ogletree, 2004).

Desegregation Era

The Supreme Court's ruling meant that southern communities would have to reconstruct their school systems and integrate their schools, something that most districts had been adamantly opposed to for decades. Since the Court was not specific about when systems would have to desegregate, most counties did not make any immediate changes (Ogletree, 2004), and some state and local governments were determined to defy the ruling altogether. The well known attempt at integrating Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas provides an example. When African American students attempted to integrate Central High School, Arkansas's governor relied on the state's National Guard to block their entry (Dejong-Lambert, 2007).

Even though the 1954 *Brown* decision ended de jure school segregation, a subsequent case, known as *Brown II*, assigned the task of desegregating schools to district courts with 'all deliberate speed' (Ogletree, 2004). This gave each district the power to determine when they would desegregate their schools (Bell, 2004; Kluger, 2004; Ogletree, 2004). As a result, throughout the 1950s and 1960s most schools remained segregated. It was not until the Supreme Court ruled in *Green v. County School*

Board in 1968 and *Alexander v. Holmes* in 1969 that school districts with dual systems, meaning separate schools for black and white students, were mandated to desegregate immediately (Bell, 2004; Kluger, 2004; Ogletree, 2004; Orfield, 1983). Then in 1971, the Court ruled in *Swann v. Mecklenburg Board of Education* that busing could be used as a method of desegregating school systems (Orfield, 1983).

Between 1968 and 1980 the number of African American students attending segregated schools in the South declined tremendously (Orfield, 1983). In fact, in 1980 the Southern states had the highest level of desegregation of any region in the country (Orfield, 1983). As a result of court mandates, African American and white children were finally attending schools together throughout the South. Though physically desegregating schools had been realized, actual integration within schools and communities was still a concern of many in the African American community (Foster, 1997; Siddle-Walker, 2009).

As Siddle-Walker (2009) noted, by the time most schools desegregated in 1970 African Americans were anxious about the possibilities that this arrangement would lead to for black students. They hoped that integration would mean that African American students would have access to better school conditions and opportunities, but that the agency and resiliency that had been instilled by black educators during Jim Crow segregation would not be lost (Siddle-Walker, 2009). African Americans individually and collectively through organizations such as the National Council of Officers of State Teachers Associations (NCOSTA) advocated “real integration” (Siddle-Walker, 2009) and not “second-class integration” (Siddle-Walker, 2009). Real integration meant that black students would not be marginalized in white schools, black teachers and

administrators would not be fired and replaced by white educators, and that the overall mission of black schools would not be lost (Siddle-Walker, 2009). These were concerns because in many districts across the South, including cities such as Atlanta, Georgia, second-class integration was taking place (Siddle-Walker, 2009).

Desegregated schools as they existed in many areas were not the reality that the NAACP and the black community had hoped for. As Horsford (2010) stated, "Although few dispute the importance of *Brown's* historic role in ending de jure racial segregation, some argue that too much emphasis was placed on the *separate* and not enough on the *equal*" (p. 291). Without real integration African American students might enjoy the physical resources of their white counterparts but they would lose the black educators who were a part of their communities, who knew them, and who were determined to instill racial pride and resilience in their students (Foster, 1997; Siddle-Walker, 2009). As a result, the mainstream narrative of desegregated schooling focused on the access to resources gained by African Americans post-*Brown*. The counter-narrative though, focused on the still-present disparities that exist between African American and white students due to second-class integration (Kozol, 2005; Mickelson, 2001; Orfield, 1996; Siddle-Walker, 2009). Horsford (2010) interviewed fifteen African American superintendents of school systems and found that they had mixed feelings about the "value and viability of school desegregation in promoting equal education" (p. 298). Still, the fact that throughout the 1970s most southern school districts were racially desegregated was a tremendous accomplishment considering the decades of opposition to school desegregation by most systems (Orfield, 1983). Real integration, though, would be another fight that would continue well into the next century.

The history of African American education in the South is long and complex; therefore historians tend to focus on specific aspects of that history. Central to this literature review was the quest and determination of African Americans to be educated from the beginning of American slavery to the post-*Brown* era. African Americans across the South exhibited agency and resiliency as they struggled to obtain educational opportunities during Jim Crow segregation, despite the southern landscape that left them marginalized. This literature presents the overall context of the history of African American education in the South. Chapter four explores the history of African American education in Edgecombe County, North Carolina through historical and secondary documents. Chapters five, six, and seven present the stories of African Americans who were educated in Edgecombe County. Together these chapters situate African American education in Edgecombe County into the larger context of education in the South.

CHAPTER 4: JIM CROW ERA

This chapter tells the story of Jim Crow education in Edgecombe County from the perspectives of Carrie Bridgers, Ed Bridgers, Mary Cotton and Herbert Ricks. The chapter begins with an overview of Jim Crow Era education in the county, followed by a table that includes information about each participant. The remainder of the chapter is divided into three main categories, Educational Experiences, Purpose of Education, and Attitudes about Education. Each category includes codes that emerged from the participants' stories, as well as quotes from the participants to support the codes. The chapter ends with the overall themes of Jim Crow Era education based on the archival data and oral histories of these four participants.

Early Record of Education

During Reconstruction, many small private and public schools were established across Edgecombe County for white children, while black schools consisted of one room schools in rural areas. It was not until the late 1800s that the county schools established solid schools for its white and black children. There were several academies in the county for white children and small school buildings situated throughout the county for black children. According to local historians Jno L. Bridgers and J. Kelly Turner (1941) there were twenty-eight white schools in the county and forty-four small black schools in 1879. By 1882 there were thirty-three white public schools and forty-one black schools, with an enrollment of 1,882 white students and 2,759 black students. Average daily attendance was 464 for whites and 1,504 for blacks. Many of the schools, black and

white, were in poor condition, or were not schools at all, but old barns and stables used for schooling. There were also some isolated areas of the county where no schools existed at all. The school term at this time was four months, and many districts were unable to afford maintaining and running the schools. State aid amounted to very little, and the sources of county funds, which consisted of fines, penalties, forfeitures, and poll taxes, were not enough to provide for the cost of running a school, including teacher salaries and building repairs (Bridgers & Turner, 1941).

Overview of School Systems and Schools

From the 1880s to the 1950s black and white schools in Edgecombe County went through a variety of changes. In 1910 two school systems were established in the county – Edgecombe County Schools and Tarboro City Schools – and remained that way until the two systems merged in 1993 (Gresham, 1941). Changes for white students occurred immediately and consistently over the years whereas significant changes did not occur to black schools until the onset of the Julius Rosenwald Fund in the 1920s. Small white schools were consolidated into larger buildings in the 1920s, and secondary schools were built for the county's white students in the late 1910s and early 1920s (Gresham, 1941). Tarboro High School was built for white students in the town of Tarboro in 1922. At the same time the county began to allocate funds for one and two room buildings for black children to replace poor buildings as well as to build schools where none existed (Edgecombe County Board of Education, 1922). In the southern part of the county, the schools at Crisp, Macclesfield, and Pinetops were consolidated into the South Edgecombe School for whites in 1926. In 1927, the small elementary schools in the West Edgecombe district were consolidated. West Edgecombe School became one of the

largest consolidated schools in the state. In the 1930s, consolidation began on African American schools, and high school instruction for blacks began (Gresham, 1941).

Princeville School. The largest black school in the County was Princeville Colored School, established in the 1880s, in the all black township of Princeville around the same time that the Tarboro Graded School opened for white students just across the Tar River in Tarboro (Princeville School, 1888). Other schools were erected throughout the county's rural areas, but Princeville School and Tarboro Graded School were located in the most populated district of the county (Gresham, 1941).

The curriculum for Princeville School in the initial years consisted of elementary education and vocational training. There was no high school for the black students in Edgecombe County at this time. In 1909 Princeville School held its first eighth grade graduation exercises. Later, Tarboro Colored School was established in East Tarboro in order to better accommodate the large number of black school children in the area. W. A. Pattillo became principal of the school, and African American students in Princeville and Tarboro finally had a high school in close proximity (Mobley, 1986; Sorenson, 2002).

Brick School. While Princeville Colored School educated the majority of black children in the Tarboro and Princeville area, Edgecombe County had a large number of black residents living and working on rural farms in the county. In many cases there were no schools in these remote areas to educate the large number of African American children. In 1890, Julia Elmer Brewster Brick offered land between Whitakers, Edgecombe County and Enfield, Halifax County to the American Missionary Association to build a school in the area (Ottolenghi, 1979). The AMA had been establishing schools throughout the south for black children since the Civil War (Anderson, 1988). The AMA

accepted the land, and the school was named for Brick's late husband (Ottolenghi, 1979). Joseph Keasby Brick Agricultural, Industrial, and Normal School was located on land that belonged to Edgecombe, Nash, and Halifax Counties. (Ottolenghi, 1979).

On November 18, 1915, State Negro Schools Agent Nathan C. Newbold attended a Conference at Brick School and wrote about the school,

> I found all these people very much interested in the work and plans of Bricks School…Bricks School is in position to be of real service to North Carolina. It is one of the best equipped progressive schools for Negroes in the state. (Newbold, 1915)

John Keasby Brick Agricultural, Industrial, and Normal School educated students from all areas of Edgecombe County, because for many years it was the only high school in the area for black students (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1922-1923). Though Brick School was at the core of black education in Edgecombe County, many students could not afford to attend (Ottolenghi, 1979). Some of the school's students came from outside of the area, including twelve states and almost all North Carolina counties, though most students came from within a fifty mile radius of the school (Ottolenghi, 1979). Through the course of its history Brick School housed an elementary, high school, and junior college (High School Principals Annual Report, 1922-1923, 1934-1935).

Petitioning the School Board and the Rosenwald Fund. By the 1910s many of Edgecombe County's black citizens recognized the need for better schools in their districts (Edgecombe County Board of Education, 1912). Many of the rural schools, with the exception of Brick School, which was run by the AMA and did not operate under the

Edgecombe County Schools System, had been in existence since Reconstruction. Schools in areas such as Pinetops and Battleboro were old and in need of major repairs (Edgecombe County Board of Education, January 1, 1912). In some cases schools did not exist and students had to walk miles to attend a school or did not go at all. Even where there were decent schools, the number of qualified teachers was limited because of the poor working conditions and low salaries (Edgecombe County Board of Education, 1912). In January 1912 some black teachers petitioned the Edgecombe County Board of Education for a salary increase. The board ordered that no salaries would be raised that year due to lack of available funds in the year's budget (Edgecombe County Board of Education, 1912).

Black citizens throughout the county began to petition the Board for either new schools or repairs to existing buildings (Edgecombe County Board of Education, July 7, 1914). Blacks in the Battleboro and Whitakers communities petitioned for schools as early as 1912 (Edgecombe County Board of Education, July 7, 1914). In 1914, citizens of Pinetops asked the Board for a new graded school in their township (Edgecombe County Board of Education, July 7, 1914). Their request was not granted on the grounds that the Board believed that the proposed site was not a suitable location for the school and that the school should exist in a more central location (Edgecombe County Board of Education, July 7, 1914).

In the mid-1910s, Edgecombe County began to make much needed improvements to black education in the county (Edgecombe County Board of Education, 1912-1914; Newbold, 1914). The state Department of Education had included a Division of Negro Education a few years earlier, and the state agent visited the county on several occasions

(Newbold, 1914). On a visit to Edgecombe County in 1914, state Negro agent N.C. Newbold, attended a meeting for community progress (Newbold, 1914). County Superintendent W.H. Pittman had arranged a series of meetings, and representatives from across the state were present (Newbold, 1914). At the meeting Newbold discussed community cooperation and progress with special reference to local taxation for schools (Newbold, 1914). On a later visit in 1916, Newbold inspected the Tarboro Colored School and commented on the poor condition of the school and the overcrowding of the classrooms (Newbold, 1916).

After Newbold's visits, Edgecombe County began to pay closer attention to educating its black population. The county hired a Superintendent of Negro Education and began to take into consideration building new schools for the black children (Edgecombe County Board of Education, July 7, 1920). Once Edgecombe County became aware of the willingness of Blacks to raise funds for their schools, the county began to seek out Rosenwald Funds, which would match the amount raised by each community. As a result, twenty-six new schools were built across Edgecombe County for African Americans in the 1920s (see Table 2) with the help of the Rosenwald Fund (Edgecombe County Board of Education, July 7, 1920).

Table 2

Rosenwald Schools in Edgecombe County

School	Location	Type	Year
Logsboro No.1	Leggett	2	1921-1922
Whites Chapel	Speed	2	1921-1923
Acorn Chapel	Hwy 258 N.	3	1922-1923
Bellamy		3	1922-1923
Chinquapin	Chinquapin Rd	3	1922-1923

Kingsboro	Antioch Rd	2	1922-1923
Willow Grove	Lancaster Farm Rd	2	1922-1923
Bryan		2	1922-1923
Dogtown	Burnette Farm Rd	2	1923-1924
Harry Knight	Hwy 43 E	2	1923-1924
Lawrence	Hwy 258 N	3	1923-1924
Logsboro No. 2	Leggett	2	1923-1924
St Luke	McKendree Church Rd	2	1923-1924
Tarboro	East Avenue	8	1923-1924
Coakley	Howell Rd	2	1924-1925
Dixon		2	1924-1925
			1924-1925
Draughan	Coker Rd	2	1924-1925
Lancaster		2	1924-1925
Leggett		4	1924-1925
Living Hope	State Rd 124	2	1924-1925
Marks Chapel		2	1924-1925
Mt. Olive	State Rd 1141	2	1924-1925
Wimberley	Hwy 94 E	3	1924-1925
Pittman Grove		2	1925-1926
Hickory View		2	1926-1927
Providence	Howard Ave	3	1926-1927

Knight 2005; RF, 1924-1927

Twenty-five of Edgecombe County's Rosenwald Schools existed as part of the Edgecombe County Schools system. The Tarboro Colored School was the only Rosenwald school that was located in the Tarboro City Schools district (Knight, 2005). Since most Rosenwald schools across the South were built in rural communities, the Tarboro Colored School was one of the few exceptions (Hoffschwelle, 2006). The school was an eight-teacher building, constructed to house the large number of black students in the district (Credle, 1924).

Tarboro Colored School. Tarboro Colored School was initially built in order to educate the children in the Tarboro area when Princeville School became too crowded. The eastern section of Tarboro housed a large number of Blacks, so there was a need for a school in the area. In 1920 the school opened with W. A. Pattillo as principal (Sorenson, 2002). Later the school was enlarged with the help of the Rosenwald Fund (Credle, May 5, 1924). It was one of the few schools built by the Rosenwald Fund that was not in a rural area (Credle, May 5, 1924). It also differed from other Rosenwald schools because of the number of rooms. Tarboro Colored School was an eight teacher building, while all of the other Rosenwald schools in the county were constructed as two, three, or four teacher buildings (Credle, May 5, 1924).

Tarboro Colored School grew into an elementary and high school (Sorenson, 2002). Initially Rosenwald schools and all black schools in the county only went to eighth grade (Sorenson, 2002). If students wanted to continue their education parents had to pay for them to attend Brick School which was miles away from where many county residents lived. With the development of Tarboro Colored School students were able to obtain high school level education through the eleventh grade (Sorenson, 2002). The school held its first high school graduation in 1924 (Sorenson, 2002). In the years following the school grew, developed a better curriculum, added the twelfth grade and more classrooms, and hired new teachers (Sorenson, 2002).

W.A. Pattillo was the first principal of Tarboro Colored School (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1934-1935). In the initial years he served as principal of Princeville School and Tarboro Colored School. In the High School Principals Annual Report of 1934-1935, Principal Pattillo reported to the North Carolina Department of

Public Instruction that Tarboro Colored School consisted of separate buildings for the elementary school and high school. Along with classrooms, the high school consisted of an auditorium, playground, ballpark, library, and principal's office (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1935).

In 1934-1935, the first record of the school in the state's High School Principal's Annual Reports, Tarboro Colored School had a total of twenty-three elementary school teachers and five high school teachers. High school enrollment was 108 with an average daily attendance of ninety students. Elementary school enrollment was significantly higher with 1,132 students. Average daily attendance for the elementary school was 817 (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1935).

In 1941 Tarboro Colored School officially became W. A. Pattillo High School (Sorenson, 2002). At this time the school was consolidated and W. A. Pattillo retired as principal. His son W. H. Pattillo was appointed as his replacement (Sorenson, 2002). W. A. Pattillo School was the first public high school in Edgecombe County. Still students living in the rural parts of the county did not have high school buildings. Most were still attending two, three, and four room Rosenwald buildings or traveling miles to attend Brick Tri-County School or W. A. Pattillo School and parents and African American citizens were complaining that their children still needed adequate education (Edgecombe County Board of Education Minutes, 1930-1940).

Changes to Black Education. In 1937 North Carolina Director of Negro Education Nathan C. Newbold appeared before the Edgecombe County Board of Education to discuss problems related to the black schools in the county (Newbold, 1938). Newbold presented maps of Wake, Warren, and Johnston Counties, which

showed the progress that they had made in the consolidation of their black schools. When Newbold visited again in 1938, Superintendent Gresham showed Newbold a map of Edgecombe County and revealed that the Board of Education had begun a plan which would result in the consolidation of the black schools (Newbold, 1938).

On February 21, 1940, the Edgecombe County Board of Education met for the sole purpose of discussing problems related to black education (Edgecombe County Board of Education, 1940). The Board discussed possibly rebuilding a one-room school at Otters Creek that had been destroyed by a fire a few weeks earlier (Edgecombe County Board of Education, February 21, 1940). Members of the Board expressed not favoring one-room schools and stressed the need to consolidate them and add high school instruction for black children (Edgecombe County Board of Education, February 21, 1940). Lloyd Griffin, Secretary of the State School Commission, appeared before the Board and informed them of their responsibilities to black education. Griffin reported on the approximately forty black schools in Edgecombe County, stating that most were one, two, and three teacher schools (Edgecombe County Board of Education, February 21, 1940). He advised the Board that with such a large African American population the county should group these schools into larger ones. The Board decided that a consolidated elementary school and high school should be constructed in the South Edgecombe district, providing a bus to transport students to the school (Edgecombe County Board of Education, February 21, 1940).

W. F. Credle, former Rosenwald Schools Agent, now Director of School House Planning for the state of North Carolina, helped the county with consolidating black schools (Edgecombe County Board of Education, May 6, 1940). Credle presented maps

of Edgecombe County, showing the location of black schools as well as the areas where black children of elementary and high school ages lived, in order to help the county establish the best places to build schools (Edgecombe County BOE Minutes, May 6, 1940).

The consolidation of Edgecombe County's African American schools began in Pinetops, in southern Edgecombe County (Edgecombe County Board of Education, May 6, 1940). Carver School opened as a consolidated school in 1940, providing elementary and high school education (Edgecombe County Board of Education, May 6, 1940). With the opening of Carver many of the smaller schools, including Rosenwald schools, were finally closed. Within the next ten years, Edgecombe County had consolidated the majority of its schools into larger, consolidated school buildings (Edgecombe County Board of Education, May 6, 1940).

Oral Histories

Carrie, Ed, Mary, and Herbert all attended school in Edgecombe County during this time period and have memories associated with their experiences. The following sections include their perceptions of African American education in Edgecombe County.

Table 4
Jim Crow Demographic Information

Name	Age	Gender	Schools Attended	Residence While in School	Relatives in Study
Carrie Bridgers	89	Female	Pattillo, Princeville	East Tarboro	Husband Ed Bridgers
Ed Bridgers	92	Male	Pattillo, Princeville	Princeville	Wife Carrie Bridgers
Mary Cotton	76	Female	Pattillo	East Tarboro	
Herbert Ricks	91	Male	Daniels, Princeville, Pattillo	Rural Edgecombe County	Daughter Rosena Ricks

Educational Experiences: "We was segregated all right."

Carrie Bridgers, Ed Bridgers, Mary Cotton, and Herbert Ricks all shared experiences related to their schooling in Edgecombe County. Memories of their experiences focused on the schools they attended and the role that segregation played in their educational lives. From these four participants three main categories emerged: Socials, Sports, and Extra-Curricular Activities, Books and Classes, and Segregation.

Socials, sports, and extra-curricular activities. Socials and sports were consistently mentioned by the participants when discussing their fondest school memories. School for them provided an environment not only for learning but for social interaction with peers that existed beyond the classroom. From organized sports and theatrical productions to simply socializing with members of the opposite sex, social life was a significant aspect of schooling during the Jim Crow Era. The participants recollected the following memories about socials, sports, and extra-curricular activities:

Mary

> I was in all kinda plays at the school and they always put me in all kind of debates, all kind of plays that were funny. I was everything that was funny, 'cause I always had a drama type thing going on. I remember one I was in called Benny and the Bees. I had on a black pin-striped suit, that was my brother Charles suit, and his hat…I was probably about in the 5th grade. And so I had to say 'Tis suit too big' you know 'Tis suit too big.' Charles said girl you better get up from the floor with that tuxedo on. (laughs) And then we was always in plays like line dancin' plays with straw skirts on and we had on paper skirts doing the hula thang and stuff like that. I was in the sixth grade then. And we used to have another

thing. Called it Battle of the Bands and they used to come to the school. And they would just march up and down all the streets all over. Bands from different places and I remember Wake Forest had the prettiest band. I aint never forget that band …it was at the school you know cause they would march from Main St and march on down here to the school…All I know is they were pretty folks to me in those uniforms.

Carrie

Tarboro Colored School was nice. I played basketball…we played against Bethel, we played against Parmelee, played against Scotland Neck…

Ed

Always had a recess 12:00…get out there sit around under the flower trees and talk and stuff like that. No such thing as a lunch room or anything like that so you go down to a lil' store down the block there and buy a box of saltine crackers. And sit around one of the flower trees and things like that boys and girls…and talk and talk you know, 'til we left there.

These social experiences provided a way for the participants to become engaged in all aspects of the school environment. Participating in extra-curricular activities might have also been a way to enjoy time spent at school and detach from the issues that being African American presented during Jim Crow. As mentioned in the next section, students often faced challenges associated with limited resources that impacted their educational experiences. Taking an active part in social life at school was a way to balance those challenging experiences with enjoyable ones.

Books and classes. Issues related to school books and the significance of certain classes were also noted in the participants' stories. Participants remembered that they used books that were previously used by white students, and they discussed the impact that this had. As Carrie recalled:

> And then something else about school we used hand-me-down books and that was sad to me 'cause, books that were brought where the whites had used you know and you would open the book up and you would see their names in there and that was really sad…And we talked about that a lot in school and Ms. Bea Parker… she taught civics and we learned a lot from her…we sure did

In the above recollection Carrie also revealed the role of her teacher and Civics class in discussing the issue of used textbooks. Because her teacher openly discussed the situation of having to use books that were no longer wanted by white schools, Carrie identified the teacher and the class as providing her with plenty of knowledge. Herbert also remembered using "hand-me-down" books and having very few school resources aside from these used books. Mary underscored another issue that was mentioned by Jim Crow participants, book fees that often kept students from being able to receive an education. These fees ultimately led Mary to quit school and find employment, which was not uncommon for African American children whose parents did not have the economic means to support their children's educational aspirations. As Mary remembered:

> At the age of probably about fourteen when my daddy got sick he told me one day you gone really miss me because I try to give yall everything. He said but one day gone come when you gonna need something but you not gone be able to get it

> because I aint gone be able to give it to you. And that day came. It came 'cause we had to by our books and I didn't have any money to buy my books. But I still was smart now. So I didn't have any money to buy my books so I said well ok, I'll just stop school…I was in the 10th grade. I said I'll just stop school. So what I did I said I'll get a job and go to work. So I started working when I was 15. Uh huh, 15 years old.

Stories such as Mary's highlight the tragic toll that segregation and economic difficulties took on the education of black students who were passionate about learning. As Mary recalled, she could not pay her book fees but she was still smart, emphasizing that even though she could not complete school she was still proud of the education that she had received, and still valued her intelligence.

Segregation. All four participants relayed stories about the impact of segregation on their educational experiences. Carrie's statement, "we was segregated all right, I'm telling you," defined the sentiment of these four participants in regard to their memories about education and segregation. The Jim Crow participants emphasized that life in Edgecombe County, education included, was completely racially segregated and interaction with Whites, aside from those they worked for, was nonexistent. As Ed exclaimed:

> Back when we were going to school it was segregated. We couldn't eat at the lunch counters and all that kind of stuff you know and the cafes you had to go to a side window and back doors to get food things…well we was used to it, was used to it back then, nothing we could do 'bout it you know we didn't have no black

> policemen or nothing like that, we just living in a segregated world…So we accepted segregation and just went on…

The participants were adamant about just how segregated the races were during the time period. As Herbert emphasized, "you didn't do nothin' with white kids." Through their stories these participants revealed that for them segregation was just the norm, and it was accepted because they believed that there was nothing that they could do to change it, or no one to complain to. As Ed stated, there were no black police officers or political officials, therefore African Americans in Edgecombe County felt that they would continue to live and be educated in a segregated world.

Purpose of Education: A way out

The purpose of education, as described by the Jim Crow participants, was to get off the farm, get out of poverty, and learn in order to get a job and better themselves. These participants lived and worked in all areas of Edgecombe County but there statements about what an education would afford them were very similar regardless of where and how they lived.

Get off the farm. During the Jim Crow Era many Blacks in Edgecombe County resided on farms owned by white farmers, and sharecropped for wages. Children like Herbert would often have to help their parents with the farm labor in order to ensure that the work was completed and the family had enough money for food and other necessities. For Herbert an education meant the opportunity to leave the farm in order to avoid the immediate day to day tasks, but more importantly it meant having an opportunity to become educated in the hopes of breaking the cycle of sharecropping that his family had been victims of since emancipation. As Herbert related:

> Daddy told us said yall go 'head on don't have to stay on this farm…so that's what we did. We left the farm and left the country and came up to East Tarboro and lived with my mother's uncle. We went to school to get off the farm and get away from work…with education I could better myself. Without an education you can't do nothing.

Get out of poverty. Similarly education was considered an avenue out of poverty and the segregated South, whether you lived and worked as a sharecropper in rural Edgecombe County or your parents were day laborers in Tarboro. Ed and Carrie both recalled the relationship between poverty and education:

> Carrie
>
> They had problems 'cause they didn't have finance…They didn't have the stuff… uh huh, and some of the teachers like Ms. Waddell…They helped some of the boys go to college
>
> Ed
>
> We just living in a segregated world and the way to get out was to get an education…That was the way out. Throughout the South, most people you find in your black history some calendars and some books and you see the different peoples in there like Frederick Douglass and all those kinds of people there back in those days how they got out you know, and that was a way out

Learn and better yourself. Jim Crow participants also emphasized that school was as much about knowledge in and of its self as a reward, as it was about improving their social and economic status. They recalled that they were excited about learning and

that teachers in their Jim Crow schools insisted that students know the material. Mary recalled:

> Cause back then the teachers made you learn. If you had to write that word fifty times you wrote it fifty times. And the next time you saw it you knew it. It aint like you put it on that piece of paper and put it in my book bag to carry home. You did that on that blackboard. When she put it up there and I don't care if you didn't get up she gon' make you stand there and rub it off and write it and rub it off and write it until you get it right. Cause you were gon' do that. The class was laughing' but she didn't care she made you learn. Yeah you learned and that's how I learned to act. Cause I always was up in front of the class. See what I'm sayin'.

Mary's story contradicts the mainstream narrative that teachers and schools during the Jim Crow era were ill-equipped to properly educate students and that teacher expectations were low. Mary insisted that teachers demanded the highest level of academic success from their students and as a result students were able to grasp the material. As Mary also recalled, she accurately remembered historical events that she learned about in her seventh grade history class.

Participants revealed that being educated would lead to a better standard of life. Herbert returned to school after being drafted by the military in order to learn a trade because he believed:

> With education I could better myself. Without an education you can't do nothing. That's where it got to the point now, that used to be when I was coming up if you got to make high school you was on top of the world but now a days when you

> make finishing high school is just like finishing kindergarten 'cause it's no good, if you consider getting a job see, a decent job, that's right. You got to have a good education now just to wash dishes.

Attitudes about Education: Education made you "Somebody"

The Jim Crow Era participants identified four key codes that characterized their attitudes about education, and demonstrated that for them being educated increased one's status within the African American community, whether or not it changed their social or economic status in comparison to whites. In fact, based on the stories of these participants, measuring up to white standards or the approval of whites never seemed to be their goal in pursuing an education. They wanted an education because of what it provided them as mentioned in the previous section. The following codes underscore the perceptions about education of the black community during Jim Crow, as well as the situations that they personally endured as testaments to their own feelings about the importance of an education.

Walking. Ed, Carrie, and Herbert all recalled having to walk miles to attend school due to the distance of the black schools from their homes. All of the participants were determined to attend as frequently as possible and there only option many days was to walk because there were no school buses in Edgecombe County for African American children during the time period. They describe leaving home early in the morning in order to arrive at school on time and discussed the impact of inclement weather on their school attendance. Carrie explained:

> We used to walk from my house in East Tarboro, Bradley Avenue to over in Princeville every morning. We would leave home at 8 o' clock or quarter to 8 or

> something to get over here before the bell would ring, but on rainy days my daddy would take us to school and we would pick up whoever else was walking…

Herbert, on the other hand, revealed:

> We walked…Yeah that's why half of us didn't never finish school, 'cause bad weather and everything you couldn't go to school 'cause you had to walk…And the white kids would ride by and throw things at us and laugh at us…We be out there walkin in the rain and they be ridin by us in the school bus. Those were some tough times out there but we made it though…Yeah, we went, yeah, times when we didn't have to get in that field and go to work. Pick cotton and shake peanuts, stuff like that.

Carrie and Herbert's stories provide examples of the importance of school attendance for them. Due to the difficulty of actually getting to school they could have chosen to not attend at all. Instead they chose to walk because they valued being educated so much that they were willing to make sacrifices in order to receive an education.

Neighborhood differences. Though students from all sections of Edgecombe County came together to attend Tarboro Colored School (later W. A. Pattillo), their experiences and memories about those experiences differed somewhat based on where they lived within the County. Mary Cotton and Herbert Ricks, for example, had opposite opinions related to the observed differences between students who lived in East Tarboro and those who lived in other parts of the county. (Almost all African Americans in Edgecombe County during the Jim Crow Era lived in either East Tarboro, Princeville, or on rural farms). While Mary, who grew up in East Tarboro remembered thinking the

students from Princeville were great friends and enjoyed going to social gatherings with them, Herbert recalled that people in Tarboro thought they were superior to those from Princeville and the "country" and therefore treated him and others who were not from East Tarboro as if they were inferior. People in Princeville and rural Edgecombe County were keenly aware of the negative ways in which they were perceived by those from East Tarboro. While those from East Tarboro stated that there were no differences between Blacks based on area of the county. The differences in perception are apparent when comparing Herbert's and Mary's stories.

Herbert

> Yeah it was different, much different yeah…When we went there, the people in Tarboro would refer to you as you live in the country. Always say you from the country. You won't supposed to know what they know 'cause they lived in town see. It was a big difference, yes suh…Yeah they thought they was above you, yes suh …See black children when they come up was always segregating they self from other people. We always segregated ourself…It was a big difference being from East Tarboro than it was being from Princeville 'cause it just was. I don't know it was just a difference…yeah, they thought they were better. Shoot. And round then East Tarboro won't never flooded out and Princeville was always flooded. Always getting flooded out.

Herbert's story revealed how passionate he felt about how he perceived he was treated by black students from East Tarboro (which is where Tarboro Colored School/W. A. Pattillo School was located). He also mentioned what appeared to be the root of East Tarboro students' sentiments about Princeville students, the constant flooding of the Tar

River, which separated Princeville from Tarboro. As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, Princeville was founded by freed slaves on land at the base of the Tar River and consequently Princeville citizens for generations were subjected to constant flooding. Though East Tarboro citizens in later years would realize that they were also subjected to the flooding of the Tar River, during the Jim Crow Era they saw Princeville students as less fortunate because they lived in closer proximity to the river.

Mary, though, did not reveal that there were differences between students based on neighborhood. She insisted that she enjoyed the students from Princeville and did not consider them inferior because of where they lived. As she remembered:

> Oh I loved them Princeville gals. Lawd have mercy! Yes suh chile! Go to Princeville, I knew all of 'em. I still remember them girls today. Yes suh I loved them Princeville gals child they had some balls. Cause they could get out and have a good time. Go down Cleo's and party and we'd go down there…

It is not surprising that Herbert and Mary would respond differently to feelings about students from different regions. Since Mary was from East Tarboro she was not the target of the taunting that Herbert remembered. Therefore, her memories of Princeville students are based on the relationships she built with classmates who lived on the opposite side of the bridge.

Education of their children, grandchildren and siblings. All four participants discussed education as it related to their children, grandchildren and siblings. All of them had siblings and children that were able to further their education because of the participants' influences which clearly demonstrated their continued value of education. Ed was the only one of the four participants who actually attended college himself. The

other three however either spoke specifically about their efforts to assure that relatives received an education, or spoke proudly of children and grandchildren who were fortunate enough to attend college. Ed and Carrie spoke of their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren who were college graduates or currently attending college. Ed also spoke of a brother who became a principal in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Mary emotionally recalled her experiences helping her sister through high school and college. Herbert stated that many black people, including himself worked for white people to ensure that their children got the opportunity to go to college. Their stories below highlight their sacrifices to help their family members obtain an education and their pride in their relatives' successes.

Carrie

You know Cullen Jr., he has his doctorate degree, he has three boys and one is his second year at Syracuse University. Uh huh, the other one is at Maryland University, and BJ is at the university of Pennsylvania...Pittsburg and MJ he's in Salisbury, what's the name of the school in Salisbury?...Livingstone…Yeah, but anyway let me tell you this we got two more goin' off to college in June, that's Cullen Jr. third son …He spent a year in China, sixteen years old studying…at sixteen, uh huh and then Nicole daughter going, she hasn't really made up her mind she's saying Penn State, but we tryin' to get her to go to Bennett College so we'll have six great grandchildren in college…and that's a blessing

Ed

My brother William was a graduate of Fayetteville State University then and Dr. Seabrooks was head down there then and he had gone to school and graduated

from Fayetteville State, New York University had his masters degree and he had a school he was a principal down there before he, he's passed now, but he was there…the granddaughter now, graduated from Harvard University and working for an insurance company and don't interview nothin' but doctors and lawyers.

Mary

And then when you wanted to buy something to wear you had to go down to Adler's. That was the popular store and you go down there and put fifty cent down and pay fifty sent a week til you got it out…yeah and one day I went down there I said Ms. Adler my sister is runnin' for Ms. Pattillo High and she need something pretty to wear. I said will you let me have a suit. She said sure. I said I'll pay you on Friday. So I got her a red suit it was a pretty suit, red suit. And I went down the street to Ms. Lendora and I said Ms. Lendora will you let me, I don't like to talk about it, will you let me use your stove I said for my sister and so she said yeah. So I dressed her she was real pretty, and then she went off to school and she said Lil' Sis I want to go to college I said you know I can't afford no college…So she went on to school. It was 1961 when she went to college…She got a grant. See I didn't know nothing about that stuff. She got a grant and she went on to A & T. 330 Gibb Hall. I still remember.

Herbert

They wanted us to go to school but we had to work see…Wanted us to go to school but we had to work…I didn't get a chance to go to college so I was intent for my daughter to go…A lot of these black boys and girls got to go to college because they parents was workin' for those white people…That's the only way to

make it. They mamas was workin' for those white folks and they got a chance to go to college.

Education made you somebody. Jim Crow Era participants recalled the admiration that African Americans had for anybody who they considered educated, especially teachers. Since teachers were the ones responsible for the education of the black community they were highly regarded in Edgecombe County. Mary and Herbert similarly described the feelings of African Americans toward education. Their stories provide insight into the intense admiration that Blacks in Edgecombe County had for anyone who they considered educated. Their memories also suggest that education itself was valued by those who lived in Edgecombe County.

Mary

Oh now they thought education, now they thought when you were educated, they thought you were somebody. When you were teaching school, and you got to be a school teacher, and you were this and that oh they thought you were the best thing God ever sent from heaven, yes. Oh education was something. Great. Great. Education. Uh huh sho' was.

Herbert

Back then you were somebody if you were a teacher, yes suh

The memories of the Jim Crow Era participants related to the codes of Walking, Neighborhood Differences, Education of Children, Grandchildren, and Siblings, and Education Made You Somebody reveal that African Americans had positive attitudes towards education and endured difficult circumstances to achieve it. As a result, those who were fortunate enough to receive the highest levels of education were considered

"somebody" among their African American counterparts, because everyone understood the commitment and sacrifices that achieving an education demanded.

Jim Crow: Hard Times But We Made It

Schools were social and academic environments. Although students endured difficult times as mentioned above, the participants recalled very pleasant memories of the times they actually spent in school. All four participants emphasized their fondness for socializing with peers and participating in sports and extra-curricular activities, which highlights the impact of school on the social development of students during Jim Crow. It also shows that African American students during Jim Crow participated in the same types of activities as future generations and that these social activities for them not only helped define educational experiences in Edgecombe County, but helped develop their interests and hobbies beyond the core subjects.

Education was valued. Based on the memories of these four participants education in Edgecombe County during the Jim Crow Era was valued by the African American community but difficult to obtain due to a racial and economic climate that created barriers to education and upward mobility for most Blacks. These "hard times" as the participants articulated made consistent school attendance difficult for many students. Participants recalled that their primary means of getting to school was walking because the school system only provided bus transportation for white students. These difficult times also forced students to stop attending school because like Mary they could not afford the book fees, or like Herbert their family's livelihood depended on their labor. However, in spite of these difficult circumstances students like Mary and Herbert continued to value education and pursue it for themselves when they could. When

obtaining an education proved too challenging for them to continue, they placed their educational values and aspirations on their children and siblings. The Jim Crow generation, therefore, was instrumental in the educational pursuits of their siblings' and children and grandchildren. These four participants' experiences underscore what educational historians have previously recorded about the hardships Blacks faced historically in their quest for an education (Anderson, 1988; Siddle-Walker, 1996 ; Litwack, 1998). Yet, as Anderson (1988) wrote, despite the obstacles they encountered, African Americans during Jim Crow continued to pursue education because they believed that education would allow them to advance economically and socially. These four participants like those interviewed by Litwack (1998), revealed that the purpose of education was to equip them with the knowledge to be able to leave the sharecropping, poverty and subservience that they were victims of in Edgecombe County. They also revealed that they thoroughly enjoyed learning and chose to attend school whenever they had an opportunity regardless of whether their parents required them to attend or not. They also firmly believed that their teachers were dedicated to ensuring that students retained what they learned. Their memories and attitudes about education support Theresa Perry's (2003) argument that African Americans during the Jim Crow Era had a connection to education and a philosophy of education that placed value on the importance of knowledge and learning regardless of the tangible rewards or outcomes that resulted from an education. Therefore even though they faced immense challenges, they never stopped believing in the value of an education.

Being educated during the Jim Crow Era in Edgecombe County required the dedication and determination of the African American population. These four

participants recognized the value of learning and the benefits of being educated and even though it was extremely difficult to obtain they still sought it because they believed that without an education their existence would continue to be defined by economic and social subservience. They also tried to pass on their value of education to their siblings, children and grandchildren with hope that future generations would continue to recognize the importance of being educated, and not face the same “hard times” in their quest for educational opportunities.

CHAPTER 5: CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

Like the Jim Crow Era chapter, this chapter presents education in Edgecombe County during the Civil Rights Era through the stories of four participants. First an overview of education is presented, followed by the memories of the participants. The chapter concludes with the overall themes of education during the Civil Rights Era based on the archival data and oral histories of Elzatia Andrews, Rudolph Knight, Quincy Robinson and Rosena Ricks.

During the Civil Rights Era, Edgecombe County expanded its African American schools to include high school instruction for students across the county. The first public black high school built in rural Edgecombe County was George Washington Carver High School, built in the town of Pinetops in 1940 (Edgecombe County Board of Education, 1940; High School Principal's Annual Report, 1942). Carver, like Pattillo, educated students in the elementary and high school grades, going up to grade eleven initially and adding grade twelve the following year. The school's first principal was S. A. Gilliam, who served for one year before C. M. Carraway claimed the position (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1942). The main difference between the curricula of the two schools was that Pattillo had no home economics or agriculture classes in the 1940s but offered art and music classes, while Carver taught home economics and agriculture but did not teach art or music, according to the courses reported by the principals (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1942).

Unlike Pattillo, Carver had one building for elementary and high school classes, with thirteen classrooms total (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1942). In its first year there were only three elementary school teachers, compared to twenty-one at Pattillo (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1942). The school's elementary and high school enrollments would soon grow, outnumbering the number of students enrolled at Pattillo by 1950 (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1950). Still, in 1941, eighteen students graduated from Carver, only one less than Pattillo and four less than Brick (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1942).

In 1948 Brick School closed after over fifty years of educating students in Edgecombe, Nash, and Halifax counties (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1947-1950). The same year the county erected consolidated school buildings to accommodate the black population in the other parts of the county (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1947-1950). Phillips School was built in the town of Battleboro, and Conetoe School was opened for black children in the town of Conetoe. Both schools consisted of one building that educated children of all ages (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1947-1950). In its first year Phillips School enrolled 262 students, with an average daily attendance of 176 (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1947-1950). Like Carver, Phillips School also had home economics and agriculture departments, and did not have a lunchroom (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1947-1950). Phillips first graduating class numbered thirty-one students (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1947-1950).

The black citizens of Conetoe had been petitioning the Edgecombe County School Board for a new school in their community in the years leading up to 1948.

Initially the Board said they would look into the issue, but stated that there were not enough funds to build another new school (Grand Jury, March 1948). At the same time, the community's white high school had an enrollment of only ninety-five students. In 1948 the Board decided to bus those students to Tarboro High School and allow the black students to use the Conetoe High School building (Grand Jury, March 1948).

Conetoe School consisted of one building, which was used for the elementary and high school students (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1947-1950). Since the school previously belonged to the white students it also contained an auditorium and a gymnasium, which the other black schools did not initially have (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1947-1950). Conetoe's first principal was E. Batts, previously the coach at W. A. Pattillo School (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1947-1950). The curriculum at Conetoe was similar to that of the other county schools, including English, math, history, science, home economics and agriculture (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1947-1950). In 1948 Conetoe had an enrollment of 108 high school students with an average daily attendance of eighty-three, graduating ten students in its first year (High School Principal's Annual Report, 1947-1950). By 1950 black students in all areas of Edgecombe County had access to public high school instruction (see Table 3).

Table 3

African American Student Enrollment, Daily Attendance, and Number of Graduates for the 1949-1950 School Year

School	Enrollment	Average Daily Attendance	Number of Graduates
Carver	244	200	34
Conetoe	146	129	16
Pattillo	205	183	42
Phillips	259	203	34

Annual Report (1947-1950)

The primary interaction between the four county schools was in the area of sports. Pattillo, Carver, Phillips, and Conetoe participated against each other in all sports. The *Daily Southerner*, the local newspaper, often covered the competitions. In 1954, the newspaper reported on the basketball game between Conetoe and Pattillo. The title read "Conetoe defeats Pattillo twice" (Cherry, 1954). The schools also competed in countywide basketball tournaments. Pattillo won the county's tournament in March of 1954. Then in April in the first game of the baseball season, the Pattillo Trojans defeated Phillips School, 12-3. The Trojan baseball team finished the previous season as the state champions (Cherry, 1954).

Since high school students had to pay a book fee of three dollars and an athletic fee of fifty cents, schools often raised money through fundraisers and benefit games. Pattillo School held a benefit game in 1954 to raise money for jackets for the baseball teams of all four county schools (*Contest Planned,* 1954). The county basketball tournament All-Stars competed against Edgecombe County school faculty. Admission to the game was fifteen cents for students and twenty-five cents for the general public (*Contest Planned,* 1954). Pattillo School also held a popularity contest in the auditorium with a small admission, which was used to promote Little League and Pony League baseball during the summer months (*Contest Planned,* 1954).

Though sports played a major role in the interaction between the county schools, athletics was not the only area of competition. Students competed against each other in academic areas as well. One of the major contests was the oratorical competition, where students from all four county schools spoke on a particular topic. In 1954 a student from Carver won the countywide speaking competition (*Carver Student Wins,* 1954).

Edgecombe County's black citizens also interacted through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). There was one PTA for all four schools of the African American high schools and meetings usually alternated from school to school (*County Negro PTA*, 1954). The PTA encouraged parental and communal involvement by having prestigious presenters on the program. At the April 16, 1948 meeting for example, Dean James T. Taylor of North Carolina College for Negroes in Durham was the guest speaker (*Negro PTA*, 1948).

From PTA meetings to sporting events, Pattillo, Carver, Phillips, and Conetoe played major roles in African American life in Edgecombe County. These four schools were the center of life in the black community. They were not only beneficial to the students, but they also allowed the community to get involved and unite around the common goal of sufficient education for black children.

Oral Histories

The following table includes demographic information for participants who attended school during the Civil Rights Era. These participants shared their educational experiences and perceptions about education in Edgecombe County.

Table 5
Civil Rights Era Participants' Demographic Information

Name	Age	Gender	Schools Attended	Residence While in School	Relatives in Study
Elzatia Andrews	65	Female	Pattillo, Princeville	Princeville	
Rudolph Knight	65	Male	Perry, Pattillo	East Tarboro	
Rosena Ricks	64	Female	Perry, Pattillo	East Tarboro	Father Herbert Ricks
Quincy Robinson	62	Male	Pattillo	East Tarboro	

Educational Experiences: "I Enjoyed School."

The participants from the Civil Rights Era proclaimed that they enjoyed attending school in Edgecombe County. Even though they recalled memories of difficult events that occurred during their school years, the overall sentiment was that being educated in Edgecombe County was challenging but enjoyable. The following four codes emerged related to their educational experiences: Socials, Sports, and Extra-Curricular Activities, Experiences Beyond Edgecombe County, Subjects, and Interaction with Whites.

Socials, sports, and extra-curricular activities. Memories of sports and extra-curricular activities were prevalent among the Civil Rights Era participants' stories. All four participants had vivid recollections of extra-curricular activities that were central to their years attending school in Edgecombe County. They discussed socials and sports at W. A. Pattillo High School and the impact that these activities had on their educational experiences.

Elzatia

> Oh when we had our games we didn't have our own football field. We would have to walk from Pattillo to its Martin Middle now but then it was Tarboro High…That's where we played our games at and I couldn't tell who was scoring the right team or the wrong team. All I know when they jump up I jump up. It was so good to get out of the house 'cause we couldn't go nowhere. Dad wouldn't let us go nowhere…We played against a lot of schools. Rocky Mount, different schools. Now we had a number one football team…The debutante ball was my fondest cause you had to make a certain average to be a debutant… I think it was 11th, 11th grade…I was scared to ask a guy cause I knew he wasn't gon' let us go

but he let him take me because you had to have a guy to go with you and that was held over in Rocky Mount. That was like a big event…White gowns. And my gown was the lady my mama worked for Ms. Carlisle's daughter. She and I were the same age but you know they had money they owned the funeral home so I wore her gown, her gloves and I knew it was pretty 'cause you know they had money didn't mean nothing to them

Rudolph

Oh my fondest memory of school was like I said going to school and just having other children to play with, just that interaction, and that's really the fondest…and I was always fascinated with the stage so I liked drama…reasons why I like live theatre now is because when I was in the seventh grade we went to over here in Tillery the stage was no taller than this, it was a Rosenwald school and they gave a play and it had three characters, the setting was Mexico and it was Carry Grant, not Carry Grant, what's his name? the Grant fella and his sister and another fella was in there and it was just like you were really reading that story or you were present when all this was going on that's how realistic it was…and the other I went to I was in high school and this fella, he was a musician and the class of '61 had a play called The Girl in the Rain, nice looking people playin' the characters, got clothes from W. S. Clark, this fella wrote a song for them and played it in the auditorium and the music to go along and I don't know just amazing to me that they could do that

Rosena

Graduation…1965…and I think we were the rowdiest class that W. A. Pattillo School ever had. We were that change you know the baby boomers were coming of age and we were the ones who protested. We were not going to be allowed to have a senior day and so I think it was thirteen of us stayed home. We were gonna have our senior day anyway and therefore we could not march for baccalaureate…Oh yeah it was a real big sting. R. H. Cherry was the principal then and nobody liked Mr. Cherry…because he was the one that said we couldn't have a senior day. Then let's see I sang in the choir, played in the band, loved to be in the choir, was still taking music lessons so we still had concerts too, I took music, piano up until I graduated from high school, and I enjoyed, I just enjoyed my classes.

Quincy

Sports were a great deal man…at Pattillo like I said, it was pre-integration, most of the years I spent in school, at Pattillo it was typical, segregated school, We played against Carver, Conetoe, Phillips and everybody that still had a segregated high school… Fondest memory was, believe it or not, I think it was fourth grade…so we dressed up as cowboys with little bandanas and the straw hats and the broom horses and performed…Yeah, (sings) Got a ten gallon hat, yeah that was one of the fondest memories. I don't know why I remember that song, I don't know if it's because we practiced so long, but it was just a fun time. I was a shy kinda guy and that was one of the first instances where somebody was able to draw me out of that shell that I was in and I enjoyed that, I enjoyed that.

It is apparent from the stories here that W. A. Pattillo School provided a variety of social, athletic, and creative opportunities for students to participate in, and the students enjoyed these activities. Considering they participated against other all-black schools in the county and surrounding areas, it appears that African American schools in the area wanted their students to be well-rounded and recognized their need for involvement in activities beyond the classroom. These activities helped to strengthen the bond between students and teachers and allowed students to take pride in their own abilities, as well as take pride in their school as they cheered on classmates at various sporting events.

Quincy also recalled memories of challenges he faced related to extra-curricular activities and sports. While some of his fondest memories of school were related to his years playing football, his least favorite memories were also associated with sports and extra-curricular activities. He recalled:

> It was when I resigned as president of the senior class. That's one that haunts me…That shyness and the inability to function in front of a group, conduct meetings, something I do quite well now was something I couldn't do then…in our junior year, we selected the senior class president…I just, one night I decided, I had already had a couple meetings and one night I decided I wasn't gonna be president, I couldn't handle it anymore. I didn't talk to anybody about it, they might've talked me out of it or tried to help me but I didn't…yeah that was probably one of the worst moments… And the other incident was back then we didn't have a lot of money and as an athlete you had to pay for your own insurance, wasn't but 'bout I think three, four dollars something like that, and we didn't have it and I never asked my grandmother for it and the coaches never

> pushed it. I got hurt one night playin' football, went to the doctor, and they didn't ever ask for any bill or anything so I figured I had insurance. Well on awards day, it had been rumored that I had been selected freshman of the year and that was a big deal man, you know even back then we hung out on the block so hangin' out with my boys, we going to awards day and after awards we gone go out here and chill and I'm a be the freshman of the year and everything and everybody gone think it's a big deal. Well the coach said that anybody who had any outstanding bills were not gonna get their awards that day. I ignored it and guess what? I didn't get my award that day, yeah, I came home and told Big Mama and Addie and they gave me the three dollars and I took it to Mr. Moss and he gave me my trophy but nobody ever saw it, nobody ever even knew…Yeah that was hurtful…Can you imagine though sittin' there waitin' for your name to be called…

Quincy's story not only provides insight into the difficulty he faced dealing with resigning as student body president and the disappointment he felt not being awarded an athletic trophy in front of his peers, but it illustrates the importance of extra-curricular activities and sports to the lives of students who attended school during the Civil Rights Era. Participation in these activities was significant, and retelling these painful stories emphasized the role that these events and activities had on the education of African American students.

Experiences beyond Edgecombe County. Two of the participants, Rudolph and Quincy, recalled experiences outside of Edgecombe County that impacted their educational experiences. Rudolph's father was in the military during his childhood and

was stationed at a military base in Kentucky. When Rudolph was in elementary school he moved with his family to Kentucky. As he remembered:

> When I was seven years old I left with my mother and we went to stay in Fort Campbell Kentucky on a military base, so I left a segregated setting and went to an all integrated setting. So when I left after the first semester of the third grade that second semester I was in there with all white children…There was never any overt discrimination, it might've been some sort of subtle things but I never forget I was in the fourth grade and there was a book, a history book that we were using and it talked about the little black pickaninnies and I brought it home and asked my mama what are they talking about but she was offended so from there my mother and my father immediately went to whomever was in charge of the school and they had that book removed from the school, and as I thought back, in that school if there were two hundred children in there maybe they had fifteen black children…Now, when we got ready to come back, see after you came off the military base, one through eighth was integrated…when you had to go in the city you went back to a segregated school…So she said well if you gon' have to go to school there you might as well go to Pattillo, so that's when we came on here.

Quincy had two memorable experiences that related to his education outside of Edgecombe County. He visited Greensboro with a friend whose mom was also his teacher and was confronted with the racial climate of the 1960s more than he had ever experienced at home. Another experience that he recalled was his participation in a summer program at Yale University when he was a high school junior. Both of these

experiences made him more aware of the world beyond Edgecombe County and had an impact on him academically and socially.

Quincy

During the time, Martin Luther King and the folks down in Alabama were doing their thing. I wasn't really aware of what was going on but they were. I heard them talking about it but didn't really understand it until I reached, it was either sixth or seventh grade…Mrs. Cherry, whose husband was the principal at the time, she befriended me because her son was in my class also and I went with them to Greensboro, I think it was right after the sit-ins, yeah, and we *sat-in*, and I didn't really understand the significance of it and I remember some little white lady trying to be nice offered me a piece of pie. I don't know whether she bought the pie or whether she gave it to me off of her plate and me…Yeah I wanted it! After the lady left Mrs. Cherry took the pie and looked at me sort of strangely and took it away…I thought about that for a long time and later as I got older I knew what the deal was on that, yeah.

When I was a junior in high school, I was selected to go to Yale University, Yale Summer High School. That was a big deal. Some of the kids in my class went to Upward Bound at UNC G and I think Central and some other schools. The guy who ended up being valedictorian he went to Governor's School and I went to YALE man. Yeah front page of the newspaper and all that, all that good stuff…You know after going to summer school at Yale I really wanted to go to Columbia University in New York. We had visited Columbia while I was at summer school. We went to Fordham University, Columbia, and a few other

> schools that I can't even remember. But I was impressed with Columbia. New York City.

Rudolph and Quincy's experiences outside of Edgecombe County allowed them to have a unique perspective on education and life within Edgecombe County. Because Rudolph had attended an integrated school he was able to make comparisons between the two types of schooling and ultimately concluded (as he discusses later in this chapter) that he was not missing out on anything by attending a segregated school. Quincy's experiences made him more aware of the racial dynamic of the time period because living in an all-black community he had not encountered the level of racism or activism that was prevalent in cities like Greensboro, North Carolina at the time. His experience attending Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut provided him with the motivation to do well in high school in order to be able to attend a university outside of North Carolina for college. He ultimately decided to attend Howard University in Washington, D. C.

Classes. The curriculum taught in their schools was also discussed by the Civil Rights Era participants. They all discussed their favorite and least favorite subject areas, and explained their reasons for liking or disliking specific subjects. Elzatia's recollection of her high school biology class exemplified her feelings about the extent to which she disliked dissecting animals:

> But I tell you this when we were in biology I didn't like biology. I didn't like dissecting frogs that wasn't me and we would never go to school on that day. No. We would go downtown to the post office and when we got right there by Mt. Zion church…we would see the bus going by…And we would go to the post

office and wait. So one morning when we went there I'll never forget it Mr. Alfred was the post master and we went in there and he said you girls yall late going to school and we said naw we going in but he didn't say anything but he had been seeing us in there mornings. So this particular morning this lady came in and she said to us why you all not in school we told her we on our way but the bus left us well she said well I'll take you. So she took us to school and when we got there she took us to the office, found out she was the truant officer. Mr. Cherry was the principal…we were in the office and he said ok yall been staying out for I don't know how long about a month or so…Everyday, everyday. We did not like biology. But anyway we went in the office that morning and he said well I'm gonna have to suspend you girls and I knew I was gon' get a whoopin' so when we got from the front of that school, he said you got to get off the campus and get off now. When we got to that arch Gloria looked at him and said 'you might suspend us but I guarantee you will not have a job next week' and he told us turn around and come back and go to your class. God knows she did it. Yes she did. So the teacher flunked me for the whole semester…I was in 9th going to the 10th but she flunked me for the whole semester and if you didn't pass biology you had to be repeated but when I was four I got hit by a Thurston truck it broke my hip, yes I did. And the company was sued and this company put up a trust fund and I couldn't get it until I was grown or either if I had gone to college, a four year college my tuition would have been paid…So what I'm trying to say when they said I couldn't get it unless I was going to school so when my mama and daddy said well you flunked biology you cannot go to school, you gone' have to sit

> there. So I said to my mama well if I got this money in this trust fund they said it's for school why not try and get it so that's how she got it and they paid for my whole semester cause back then you had to pay to go to summer school.

Elzatia's detailed recollection of having to attend summer school as a recourse for not attending biology class for an entire month reveals that even though students claimed to enjoy school overall, they still had teachers and subjects that they were not fond of. However, Elzatia's decision to use money from a trust fund in order to attend summer school and be able to continue her education proves that she was serious about continuing her education.

The participants also had fond memories of school subjects and explained their reasons for enjoying certain courses and aspects of the curriculum. Rosena noted that her history teacher was able to bring history to life. She also recalled that even though her teacher worked hard to ensure that the subject was interesting, it was disheartening to her that there were no African Americans in her history books. She stated:

> I loved history but what I did not love about North Carolina history, there were no blacks, no blacks in the book, like you know we just disappeared…black people were never in the book, never. The American Indian was something to be scorned, and I aint never read nothing about no Hispanics except the one Spaniard of course who discovered you know Vasco de Gama and all them but you know, other than that no…

Rosena appreciated the effort that her history teacher made to connect students to the history lessons, even though African Americans were not in the book. Her teacher was so inspirational that Rosena later majored in History at Fayetteville State University

in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Rosena's story also hints at the lack of cultural knowledge in the curriculum, but she credits her segregated education with instilling in her racial pride and racial consciousness despite the elimination of African Americans from the curriculum. Schools such as Pattillo recognized that the curriculum disadvantaged the history and contributions of African Americans and therefore made a conscious effort to teach students racial pride.

Little interaction with Whites. The participants also remembered having minimal interaction with white students during the Civil Rights Era. They also noted that their educational and social experiences were completely separate from those of white students and as a result they claimed to be completely unaware of how their schooling compared to that of white students. The extent of their interaction with Whites was the relationship that they had with the people that their families were employed by. As Elzatia recalled, her debutant dress was previously worn by the daughter of her mother's employer. Similarly Quincy remembered his grandmother's employer's son Bill bringing him clothes. He also remembers Bill playing basketball with some of the older black boys in the neighborhood. Quincy was too young to play with them but he remembers witnessing them play. Quincy stated:

> I can only imagine what it was like in white schools 'cause, I don't really know. Didn't know that many white kids. Only white kids I knew that were in high school were the ones that my grandmothers worked for. You know those families that they worked for who sent me there hand-me-down clothes and stuff that I wore to school, so I didn't know much about how they lived except that they had stuff that they could give away and I didn't really have a lot of animosity toward

them. I remember one time a friend of mine was here one day in this same house and one of the guys, white guy who was older Bill, Henderson Lumber Company, his father Cliff, Big Mama used to work for him, and Bill came up here. Bill might've been five or six years older than me…But anyway, Bill came by one day and brought some clothes, you know that they no longer needed, wanted, or whatever, and a friend of mine was sitting here, and me being the polite and thankful person that I was, I said 'Thank you Bill' and I think I might've been in the tenth grade, tenth or eleventh grade then, and you know from that day to the day I graduated the guy that was sitting here said "thank ya Bill, thank ya Bill, thank ya Bill" (laughs). I think about that sometimes. But I never felt any animosity towards Bill…

Rosena also recalled that she had little interaction with whites. As she remembered:

'Cause it was like East Tarboro had their own community. That's right, their own community and I couldn't have cared less what was going on at the white schools…You know I'm serious. I had my friends and they just didn't come across my mind. I could care less…

Rudolph also commented on his feelings about white education. He remembered that the county implemented the Freedom of Choice Plan during his last few years of high school and that he and most Blacks chose not to attend the previously all-white school. Because he had previous experiences in a white school he believe that there were no differences between the two schools and he had no interest in going.

The educational experiences of this generation, from sports and debutant balls to the absence of blacks in the history books and non-existent knowledge of white school culture, highlight what school culture was like for African American students during the Civil Rights Era. The participants clearly articulated less than pleasant memories of their school years, but they were clear about truly enjoying school despite the difficulties. They were also adamant about the clear separation of their lives from those of Whites, and appreciated their segregated communities and segregated schools.

Purpose of Education: "Something They Can't Take Away From You"

The participants all explained the importance of education to their generation. Based on their stories, three main codes emerged related to the purpose of education: College, Better Life, and the Ability to Compete.

College. The Civil Rights participants stated that their generation was expected to complete high school and attend college. They remembered that most of their classmates graduated from high school and they could not recall many classmates who did not finish. Elzatia and Quincy both stated that as students they were unsure of what the purpose of education really was, but they still knew that it was important and that they were expected to take school seriously. As Quincy noted:

> For a lot of us we didn't know what the hell education was gonna do, you know you heard constantly throughout the years education is something they can't take away from you so I wanted something they couldn't take away from me. There were other things that I thought were taken away from people before who weren't as well educated. I didn't want them taking anything away from me. I wanted

> something I could hold on to, and something I could pass on to somebody else if I chose to do so

Rudolph and Rosena were second generation college students (both had one parent who attended college) and as a result college was also discussed as the next step for them after high school. Rudolph and Rosena, who both graduated in 1965 from W. A. Pattillo High School, remembered that the majority of their classmates went to college. They both also said that even though monetarily it was a struggle for some families, students were expected to go to college after graduation. According to Rudolph:

> The majority and I'm speaking just for my class, the class of '65, I would say…went to college…And the others stayed and got jobs such as they were and the other ones migrated, they really went north, so yeah we had a high percentage of students that went to college…but that was a going thing in the sixties starting really in the late fifties up until the end of the sixties that was the expectation, you had to get a college education and different things were happening for that to be provided you know even if you didn't have all the money they started the national loans. They had the means for you to have that as a possibility now some children's parents always could send them but not across the board for everybody and a lot of them went but it was a struggle.

Rosena, Rudolph and Quincy all said that the black teachers in the community influenced students' college choices. Most students heard their teachers talk about their alma maters and many chose to attend the same schools based on information they received from their teachers. For those students who did not have family members who

had attended college, their teachers were their primary means of information about post-secondary institutions. For this generation, college seemed within reach. They heard their teachers discuss it and they had relatives and neighbors who had attended even if they did not graduate. More importantly, the political climate of 1960s consisted of Civil Rights marches, protests, and even government legislation and court decisions that appeared to be changing the dynamic of race relations across the South. As a result, this generation believed that their education would allow them to flourish and prosper in this new era of rights and opportunity for African Americans.

Better life. The participants also revealed that education was a way to a better life, more choices and self-sufficiency. Both Quincy and Rosena stated that the purpose of their education was to go to college, better themselves and come back to their community and impart that knowledge on those who were unable to get an education. For Quincy education was a chance to change his family's situation. He explained:

> To be able to live a better life and create a better life economically and socially for myself and my kids than my grandparents had and so that I wouldn't have to do a lot of the things that they did to survive, that really tore at their souls, you know

Rudolph saw education as a way to become self-sufficient because he realized that his parents were not always going to be able to provide for him. He also explained that with an education "…you have choices, you have options." Rosena also said that the purpose of education was "…to make sure that I could take care of myself."

Able to compete. Participants also stated that having an education would allow them the chance to compete with educated Blacks, but more significantly with Whites.

Rudolph noted that after college he got a job at Edgecombe Community College, and having an education allowed him to be able to compete within his position. He recalled:

> They were preparing you and sent you to school because you were expected to take care of yourself at a certain point, see I didn't have that luxury of saying oh I'm gone travel around the United States. I finished North Carolina Central the end of May…See when I got my job at Edgecombe Community College first of all they needed a black person on the professional staff, I knew that, they knew that, and because by being known in town by both sides of my family, because when I went to the interview my daddy went with me, why in the devil you go on an interview your daddy got to go up there with you…but anyway, got the job because of them needing a black person and knowing me, 'cause I was the first African American to work on that professional staff at Edgecombe Community College. The second thing was this, I had to have a little bit up here to be able to stay there 28 years. So if you get it up here you can compete any place.

Quincy stated that without an education it is impossible to compete locally and globally. He was taught this lesson as a student and passed it on to his own children. Rosena also believed that an education would allow you to compete stating

> you had to be better four times better than a white kid going to school and so therefore you studied harder, you learned more

The Civil Rights generation believed that education would allow them the opportunity to leave Edgecombe County and go to college in order to create a better life for themselves. They also stated that without an education they would not be able to compete with whites for jobs and other opportunities. The Civil Rights Movement across

the country created a sense of hope for these participants, and they were sure that along with the changes that were occurring nationally, an education would be all they needed to thrive economically and socially.

Attitudes about Education: "Education was the Expectation."

The participants also shared similar attitudes and perceptions about education in Edgecombe County. Their attitudes are explored through the following codes: Neighborhood Factors, Teachers, the Expectation and Desegregation.

Neighborhood differences. The participants shared similar memories surrounding the impact of where they lived on their educational experiences. Elzatia, who grew up in Princeville, recalled that the East Tarboro students referred to the Princeville students as river rats. As discussed in the previous chapter, this term referred to the constant flooding of the Tar River that the Princeville residents were subjected to. Elzatia also had vivid memories of walking to elementary school and riding a crowded school bus to high school that was characteristic of students living in Princeville and the rural areas during the Civil Rights Era. She remembered:

> We used to have to walk from our house 'cause we didn't have buses like we did now to pick you up on the corner or come to your house. We had to walk from our house down to what we call now the town hall to get the bus…to Pattillo and we had to walk from our house to Princeville School…we would have so many children on that bus you had to stand up we would be pushing to get on the bus…they didn't allow us but one bus for all the children in Princeville and I mean it was some of us too, so we would be racin' pushin' trying to get on that bus to get a seat…Like I said if you had to stay after school or anything you had

> to walk and I'll never forget it…You had to walk and you know your parents by them working they couldn't take you, the white children would come by on the buses and they would be throwin' paper spitballs out the window at you, I'll never forget I was on the river bridge and you would get on top of the bridge and you know that you can't duck em on the bridge. So we would wait til we see and make sure that the bus was not coming and we would run to get off the bridge so that if they throw these spitballs and stuff at you they wouldn't hit you and I was coming home one day and I said Lord if I ever get grown or if I ever get old enough one day I'm a drive the school bus. And my children will not have to walk. And I did it. For seventeen years. Not knowing that I would really do it…It was just you know rough you had to be walking out there and they on the buses they had two and three buses. And they won't going nowhere but to Bridgers School…

These experiences were the norm for children who did not live in close proximity to black schools. Those like Rudolph, Rosena, and Quincy that lived in East Tarboro, just blocks away from Pattillo did not have to endure the name-calling and ridicule even though they agreed that there were perceived differences in treatment. Rudolph, for example, remembered that even though he never used terms such as river rats or personally believed there to be differences, some East Tarboro students did use derogatory terms to identify Princeville students. Quincy and Rosena, both from East Tarboro also admitted that many people from East Tarboro believed that they were superior to students from Princeville and the rural areas of the county simply because they lived in the city. Rudolph, Quincy and Rosena all said that there was absolutely no difference in ability between any of the students and believed that the difference in

treatment was mostly just the result of students teasing each other. Rosena stated that this teasing was senseless considering most East Tarboro people were either from Princeville originally or had relatives that resided in Princeville. Quincy even noted that he envied the "country boys" because they worked on farms and therefore had cars which impressed the girls. Rosena commented on the Princeville boys, admitting that she thought they were the most attractive.

These neighborhood differences highlight that within the African American community there were still differences in experiences and perceptions based on factors such as class and neighborhood. The participants spoke more specifically about neighborhood differences but did note that there were some African American families that had more monetary resources, but overall they still lived in the same communities with everyone else. Furthermore, those who were considered the middle-class Blacks were the preachers and teachers whom everyone else admired, and class differences as related to education did not become as pronounced in the county until the next generation (as discussed in the next chapter).

Teachers. Most of the participants recalled that their teachers were caring and supportive overall, and dedicated to ensuring that black children received an adequate education. Rudolph and Rosena believed that black teachers were influential in the African American community, and even though there were some who were disliked for a variety of reasons, the general attitudes toward teachers was one of respect and admiration. Elzatia remembered the importance of teachers and did not remember them being from Princeville. Quincy explained that his teachers lived in his neighborhood and

were considered part of his extended family. He elaborated on the impact that black teachers leaving the black neighborhood had on the black community. He stated:

> Today most of those teachers who taught at Pattillo live on McMillan Drive. They left the community and that had an adverse effect I believe on the community 'cause there wasn't that continuity from school to home…Back then teachers lived right next door and were from here…or when they came they came to live here after they graduated from college and some of those who were recruited to come here to Tarboro moved to East Tarboro because this was where we all lived at the time. And, so when they built McMillan Drive man it was a rush to get out to something different. I don't hold any animosity toward them but I do recognize the impact that it had. The typical brain drain but on a much smaller scale and they didn't go as far. Right across the bypass.

Black teachers during the Civil Rights Era were highly regarded by the community and had a significant influence on the African American community. Quincy believed that when they left the neighborhood it changed the dynamic of the relationship between school and home. Their leaving was also symbolic of the way that their role changed once they were no longer teaching at segregated schools within the black community. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The expectation. The participants stated that their becoming educated was the expectation of their communities and their parents. Though Quincy remembered that his family did not push him academically, he knew that they expected him to be successful. He recalled that his mother and grandmothers thought that he was going to be "the one," meaning he was going to be the child to become educated and help his whole family and

community advance. Rudolph stated that children during the Civil Rights Era were expected to attend school and college. He recalled:

> Well the expectations were very high it wasn't that you were gon' have a choice to do it, you were gon' do it, and you were gon' do your best, and if you didn't then that word was gon' get to your parents and they were gon' make sure that you did what you were supposed to do. And the question was never are you going to school, talking about college. The question was where are you going to school? There wasn't any question about whether you were going or not, you were going, even if they didn't have a penny they were gone find it from someplace and you were going. The teachers were very dedicated I would say across the board…

As a result of the dedication of their teachers and the insistence of their parents, this generation believed that education was mandatory and not a choice. They knew that they were expected to do well academically and they were determined to not let the hard work of their teachers, parents, and Civil Rights activists across the country be in vain.

Desegregation. All four participants commented on their feelings related to school desegregation, and the impact that it had on African American education in Edgecombe County.

Elzatia

> But this day and time it may be better by them integrating the schools, well it is because they put them all on the same level but still there's something missing because it was like then it was one on one now these kids get away with too much

Quincy

Well some of our students had already moved over to Tarboro High. There wasn't any forced integration then so they didn't shut anything down it was by choice and a lot of families chose to send their kid because…I think they probably thought, like a lot of people thought that integration was gonna take us to the promised land…I'm not sure whether it did or not. A lot of the care and nurturing that we got prior to integration wasn't there anymore. The black teachers who had migrated to those schools, I believe didn't want to give the appearance of giving special treatment to the black kids and the white teachers didn't know how to relate to the black kids 'cause they weren't familiar and a lot of those kids weren't much older than us, in high school anyway. They didn't know.

Rudolph

I say that my education was unique because I went to integrated schools and that gave me some comparisons that I could internalize and see in my mind right here today, I'll say they don't know nothing, they might know a lil bit, but they aint the only ones that know something, they can't learn nothing that I can't learn, given the opportunity I can learn it, and you always have to be positive about any situation…I think that's the key, don't you think that you're inferior at all because nobody in that room is gon know everything…

Rosena

I feel that integration was the worst thing in the world that could've happened for blacks. Because, one thing it just changed the whole dichotomy of things. There was a closeness and a caring within the black community for kids and some of

> what they have taught the kids now has totally replaced all of that upbringing. I mean teachers were role models and they worked very closely with the parents… You knew you had to be better, not one time, but you had to be better four times better than a white kid going to school and so therefore you studied harder, you learned more…When I went to college I knew who I was I knew I was an African American woman and I was damned proud of my race…Integration wasn't even a thing we discussed…I think we were still in the bubble of our own making. I mean now you know that during the time when I grew up, we had our own stores, we had our own grocery stores we had our own department stores, you didn't have to go uptown unless you wanted to. We had our own movie theaters, and so like East Tarboro was really like a little town within a town and so what they did, really we didn't care. Just didn't dawn on me. You know, I don't think it would've mattered to me as long as I had my teachers, but I wasn't impressed by those white teachers. I mean sometimes I feel that I was a little bit too secluded because I used to think what do they know about education? I'm serious, I'm serious…teachers lived in the neighborhood, if you did something it got home before you did…Cause if they would have given us the same thing that each school had, right the same books, and be able to talk about African Americans even if it wasn't in the book…

All four participants articulated that desegregation did not achieve what the African American community hoped that it would. Instead, after schools were desegregated, the close relationships and care between teachers and students at schools such as W. A. Pattillo were lost. Their sentiments about the failures of desegregation are

a testament to their feelings about their segregated schools. They believed that they were adequately educated in their schools and they were not hoping for desegregated schools in Edgecombe County. What they were hoping for was an inclusive curriculum and better resources for their already great teachers to have at their disposal. They stated that they were so disconnected from white schools that they did not even consider wanting to be a part of them, and felt that with desegregation came the distance between black teachers and black students and their parents.

Civil Rights: Our Own Community, Our Own Schools, Our Own Culture

Schools fostered relationships and community. The Civil Rights generation had similar educational experiences that focused on the pride they felt in their schools and the expectation that the community had for them to attend school and become educated. The main differences within the generation surfaced based on where they lived in the county. Elzatia, for example, grew up in Princeville and had very clear memories of walking to school and riding overcrowded school busses, something not experienced by the other three participants who lived in East Tarboro. While the others recalled that students who were not from East Tarboro were ridiculed because of where they lived, Elzatia experienced this first hand because she was one of the students who lived in Princeville and went to school in East Tarboro.

Aside from these differences most of the memories across this generation were similar and characterized by an intense love of their school and community. They admired and appreciated the majority of their teachers and their school was at the heart of their lives in Edgecombe County. They had very little interaction with the white community and aside from their parents having to work for Whites, claimed to be

unconcerned that they were living in two different worlds within the same county. They were secure in their schools and believed that their teachers were supportive and prepared them for life beyond Edgecombe County. Furthermore, they were determined to return to Edgecombe County after college to make positive contributions to their families and communities. The Civil Rights participants also firmly expressed that going to school and getting an education was the expectation for African Americans in the community at that time.

Education was valued and expected. This generation attended school during the height of the Civil Rights Movement and the sentiment of the time seems to be reflected in their stories. As students, and even as adults retelling their experiences, they were extremely proud of being Black, being from East Tarboro or Princeville, and being graduates of W. A. Pattillo High School. Interestingly, they all questioned if school desegregation achieved its intended results for the African Americans in Edgecombe County. Because they were satisfied with and felt so much pride in their segregated schools, they believed that desegregated schools did not provide the same communal environment for African Americans. As noted by Morris (2008), and Siddle-Walker (2009) many African Americans who were concerned with adequate education during the Civil Rights Era were not advocating for integrated schools because they were content with the culture and education that they were receiving in their segregated schools. What they were demanding, however, was access to the same physical resources and monetary support that white schools had access to.

This generation's stories are filled with joyous memories of the years they attended school, while still recognizing that there were struggles and sacrifices related to

their education. Overall they had some regrets about their education and life paths, but these regrets were more related to personal choices than their actual schooling. Based on the education that they received during the Civil Rights Era, these four participants believed strongly in who they were as African Americans and they continue to be proud of the legacy of their schools.

CHAPTER 6: DESEGREGATION ERA

Like the Jim Crow and Civil Rights chapters, this chapter provides the story of the educational experiences and perceptions about education of four participants who attended desegregated schools in Edgecombe County: Bobbie Jones, Alvania Knight, Gloria Morning, and Derrick Spellman. First an overview of African American education in Edgecombe County during the Desegregation Era is presented, followed by the participants' memories about their experiences being educated in Edgecombe County. The chapter concludes with the overall themes of education in Edgecombe County during the Desegregation Era based on the archival data and memories of the participants.

In 1954 the United States Supreme Court issued a ruling in the *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* case. The court ruled that separating students by race was unconstitutional. That year, Edgecombe County and Tarboro City School Systems adopted a "wait and see" attitude on the court's ruling (Court Rules, 1954). For the next sixteen years Edgecombe County Schools continued to have separate schools for black and white students, as did most Southern counties. Because the justices in the *Brown* case ruled that schools should be desegregated "with all deliberate speed," and did not mandate immediate integration, schools did not move quickly to desegregate (Court Rules, 1954; Ogletree, 2004) .

In 1962, W. A. Pattillo School and Princeville School remained the only black schools in the Tarboro City Schools District (Edgecombe County Board of Education,

May 22, 1962). In the Edgecombe County Schools District significant changes had been made to the African American schools with a number of new buildings being constructed. The rural schools included Carver, Bullock, Living Hope, Phillips, Coker-Wimberly, Willow Grove, Conetoe, Mayo, and Roberson School (Edgecombe County Board of Education Minutes, May 22, 1962). All of these schools were larger consolidated buildings except Living Hope, Willow Grove, and Mayo. Living Hope and Willow Grove were the last of the county's rural Rosenwald school buildings (Edgecombe County Board of Education, May 22, 1962).

After consolidation, and with the addition of school busses school enrollment increased significantly. The number of black children enrolled in school in rural Edgecombe County more than doubled that of white children (Edgecombe County Board of Education, October 12, 1964). There were four white schools in the county compared to nine black schools (Edgecombe County Board of Education, October 12, 1964). The two remaining Rosenwald schools, Living Hope and Willow Grove, had a student population of 369 and 584 students, respectively (Edgecombe County Board of Education, October 12, 1964). Eventually both of these schools were closed and the students were absorbed into the populations of the other schools in the county ((Edgecombe County Board of Education, October 12, 1964).

After the *Brown* decision, Edgecombe County and Tarboro City Schools implemented a Freedom of Choice Plan, which allowed parents to choose which schools their children attended (Map Shows, 1970). Most parents continued to send their children to the segregated schools that they were accustomed to attending. It was not

until 1970 that Edgecombe County and Tarboro City Schools finally implemented mandatory school desegregation plans (School Plan, 1970; Edgecombe County, 1970).

In 1970 the county proposed maps indicating how students would be reassigned in order to desegregate schools (Map Shows, 1970). Tarboro City Schools first proposed that there would be one high school and one junior high school for all students (Map Shows, 1970). The Board stated that they would maintain the elementary schools at Princeville, North Tarboro (now Stocks Elementary), Bridgers, and Pattillo, assigning students based on where they lived (Map Shows, 1970). The Department of Health Education and Welfare and the Justice Department approved the high school plan but did not initially approve the elementary school plan because it left Pattillo an all black school because the majority of the people in the eastern section of Tarboro where the school was located were Black (School Plan, 1970). The school board redid their school assignment plan to also desegregate Pattillo and the plan was approved (School Plan, 1970; Edgecombe County, 1970).

Edgecombe County Schools' plan included combining schools in different parts of the county (Edgecombe County, 1970). Living Hope School and South Edgecombe School combined in the southern section of the county (Edgecombe County, 1970). In the northern section, North Edgecombe School and Coker-Wimberly were consolidated, and in western Edgecombe County, West Edgecombe and Bullock were combined (Edgecombe County, 1970). In 1970, Edgecombe County also began providing kindergarten at all of the elementary schools (Edgecombe County, 1970).

The last segregated classes graduated from Edgecombe County and Tarboro City Schools in 1970 (Class of 1970, 1970). The following school year students from Pattillo,

Phillips, Carver, and Conetoe began attending desegregated schools in Edgecombe County. Pattillo, Carver and Phillips remained opened as desegregated schools (although due to the population in the rural areas Carver and Phillips still were majority African American). Conetoe School was closed due to the buildings size, and its students were sent to other schools in the county (School Plan, 1970).

According to news reports, the transition from segregated schools to integrated ones happened with few complaints or disturbances, yet those who experienced it reveal that it was a tense time in Edgecombe County (Edgecombe County Genealogical Society, 2002). A few parents in the county tried to keep the integration of the elementary schools in Tarboro from occurring, but other parents pleaded with them to let the changes occur peacefully, going as far as signing a petition and printing it in the towns newspaper in support of the changes (Concerned Parents, 1970). Bullock School was the only school that was physically damaged during the integration process, by two small dynamite blasts (Bullock School, 1970; Edgecombe County Genealogical Society, 2002). Other schools received bomb threats in the first few days that were made by the same person (Bullock School, 1970). The schools made an effort to be proactive, creating rules of conduct for school students, even printing them in the local paper (Rules of Conduct, 1970).

Edgecombe County Schools have experienced tremendous changes over the course of their history, with the most significant changes occurring to African American schools. From Reconstruction to 1930 black school facilities were for the most part overcrowded and in poor conditions, especially in the county's rural areas. In the 1920s with the help of the of African American citizens and the Rosenwald Fund, Edgecombe

County began building better school buildings for its black children, allowing rural Blacks the opportunity to have better, larger schools, as well as the opportunity to help in providing money, labor, and resources for the schools. During the 1930s and 1940s many of the Rosenwald Schools were consolidated into larger schools, and high school instruction for black students was implemented. Significant changes to the schools did not occur again until the late 1960s when the school board was mandated to make changes to integrate the schools. The 1970s were the first decade of desegregated schooling in Edgecombe County. The table below gives information for the participants who attended school between 1970 and 1980.

Table 6

Desegregation Era Participants' Demographic Information

Name	Age	Gender	Schools Attended	Residence While in School	Relatives in Study
Bobbie Jones	50	Male	Roberson, Carver, S. Edgecombe, Martin, Tarboro High	Rural Edgecombe County/Princeville/ Tarboro	
Alvania Knight	56	Female	Roberson, Conetoe, Tarboro High	Rural Edgecombe County/ Princeville	
Gloria Morning	48	Female	Roberson, Conetoe, N. Edgecombe	Rural Edgecombe County	
Derrick Spellman	45	Male	Princeville, Pattillo, Martin, Tarboro High	Princeville	

Educational Experiences: Varied and Diverse

The Desegregation Era participants were members of the first generation to attend desegregated schools in Edgecombe County. Based on the stories of these four participants, four codes emerged as central to their educational experiences: Sports, Socials and Extra-Curricular Activities, Teachers, Peers, and Subjects and Classes.

Sports, socials and extra-curricular activities. The Desegregation Era participants had fond memories of sports, social events, and extra-curricular activities related to their schooling. Alvania, for example, exclaimed, "I was a tap dancer! When I was in the sixth grade." She explained that being a school tap dancer was one of her fondest schooling experiences. Derrick recalled that he was active in a variety of activities in middle and high school, including being a member of the band and participating in school musical productions. His favorite memory of high school was playing football on the state championship team. Derrick admitted that it was so much going on in high school that he never wanted to miss school for fear that he would miss out on the excitement. As noted with the Jim Crow and Civil Rights Era participants, extra-curricular activities and sports were just as important to these students as the classes they took and the teachers who instructed them. These activities were a way to keep students engaged in school beyond the classroom, and they were just as important to the Desegregation generation as they were to previous generations.

Teachers. The Desegregation Era participants also shared their memories of teachers. Alvania could remember all of her teachers through middle school and some of her high school teachers. She also noted, "you know I never had a teacher I didn't like" and both Alvania and Gloria stated that all of their teachers, both black and white, treated

all students the same. Derrick and Bobbie also remembered having both black and white teachers. Derrick said that throughout school he had about an even mix of black and white female teachers but can only remember two content area teachers throughout his schooling being black males. Derrick also recalled that his teachers treated the African American students who excelled academically better than the African American students who did not. He stated that "it was sort of a schizophrenic relationship with some of those black female teachers." He believed that while they practiced tough love sometimes to a fault, they were also nurturing. It left students confused about how the teachers felt about educating them.

Gloria and Derrick both named their favorite teachers and why they considered these teachers to be their favorites. Gloria noted that her favorite teacher Ms. Taylor was like a mother to her students. Derrick on the other hand liked his favorite teacher Ms. Parker because she was the first teacher to actually treat students in her high school class like adults. Because of this Derrick said it made him want to learn. He also stated that his football coach Mr. Miller was one of his favorites even though he never took a class with him. He identified Mr. Miller as being influential because for the first time he had a black male who he knew was genuinely concerned about his success.

Bobbie admitted that he could not remember the names of most of his teachers and does not remember the majority of them having a significant impact on his life. As Bobbie noted:

> A lot of people can remember a lot of things about elementary but it's a daze to me…I don't know, I talk to a lot of my fellow students during that time now and they tell me that I was always studious, I remember that… I remember going to

> Roberson, but I can only remember one teacher…I can't remember her name. (laughs)…I wanna say Cowen…and the only thing I can remember about that teacher was I always got in trouble in her class for some reason….I'm not sure why, and I remember two incidences vividly, I think I had smacked one of my friends and she grabbed me by the arm and she said what has gotten into you lately, you did something last week and now you doing this this week, and everything else is blank. That's all I can remember.

All four participants had memories of teachers who taught them in Edgecombe County and while Gloria and Derrick noted specific teacher that were influential, Bobbie could not remember the majority of his teachers. This generation overall did not express the same level of admiration and respect for their teachers as the previous two generations. Though they may have had teachers that they admired, they did not refer to teachers overall in the same regard as the Jim Crow or Civil Rights generations. Derrick even explained that African American students did not always feel a connection to African American teachers because the teachers' approach to educating the students left students confused about the relationship. As a result, Derrick's favorite teachers were his black male football coach who was not his classroom teacher and his white female history teacher.

Peers. This generation was the first to attend school with both black and white students and all four participants recalled different experiences related to their interaction with white classmates. Interestingly, although schools were officially desegregated in Edgecombe County in 1970, all of these participants at some point during their schooling attended schools that were overwhelmingly African American, primarily due to the areas

of Edgecombe County where they lived having large African American populations. Gloria for example noted that while she had white teachers she had very few white students in her classes. Bobbie and Derrick, though, recalled memories of their interaction with peers of different races.

Bobbie

Well I know I had white teachers all along…At Roberson I did. That's the one that grabbed me by the arm. But I'm trying to think did we have any white kids there and I don't think we did…Now when I went to Carver I don't think there were any whites there either. I didn't, and that's strange because you know I never paid attention to that stuff… In high school I had white friends, yeah I did. But we never hung out together outside of school or anything. You see 'em at the games and stuff like this, you talk. My black friends would go out to Pinetops and hang out at the clubs and all this kind of stuff. But nobody ever disrespected me until I became an adult and realized what was going on, but I look back on it I didn't have a problem

Derrick

And I remember the white kids treated me differently than they treated a lot of the other black kids. Well I think, not that I assimilated into their world, I felt like I was in everybody's world. I could go in their world and function and I was curious and interested about what was going on in their world. I wanted to know what they talked about and what they ate and what they listened to. But I also felt like it was very important that they understood where I came from too. I got sent to the office one day in high school cause I wore a t-shirt that said 'I Love Being

> Black' and they made me take it off. This was the 80s. One teacher didn't know, she just wasn't sure if it was offensive or not; this is a white teacher. She just kind of was like well what are you trying to say? So she sent me to the office but I remember sort of saying to Mr. Spencer or Mr. Daughtry whoever they sent me to saying to them look I'm not saying I hate anybody. I'm not saying I hate white people, I'm just saying I like being black. I like what I eat, I like the way we talk I like it. So I remember reading this poem, and it was a very very intense poem, it was in 10th grade, it was about that whole black white dynamic of oppression and slavery, about overcoming oppression and all that stuff and I just remember when I finished all the white kids and the white teachers were like, and even the black kids seemed amazed that I would read that cause it was a very provocative poem. I can't remember the name of that poem… I do remember not wanting and this is so ridiculous now, I do remember not wanting my white friends to know that I lived in Princeville. And it was weird because of that stigma attached to Princeville I never wanted them to know I lived in Princeville…

Derrick and Bobbie expressed their memories of relationships with white classmates. Both stated that they had white friends in school, but that the relationship did not extend to their homes and neighborhoods. Derrick even remembered not wanting his white classmates to know that he lived in Princeville, which stems from the inferiority that African Americans who lived there felt for generations in comparison to other African Americans. Derrick's story shows that during his generation black students were still worried about how they would be perceived because of where they lived, but now it was not just Blacks that they had to deal with, but Whites as well. Their stories also

revealed different levels of racial consciousness. While Bobbie stated that he did not pay attention to issues of race at the time, Derrick recalled wearing a t-shirt that expressed his pride in being black. Based on these stories, experiences varied by individual and all participants did not react to desegregation in the same way. However, it seemed that they all attempted to embrace their white peers during the time they spent in school.

Classes. The four participants listed a variety of subjects as their favorites and least favorite subjects, ranging from French to Business, which demonstrates the variety of courses offered at schools across the county in comparison to the courses offered during the Jim Crow and Civil Rights Eras. Students also remembered specific incidences from their classes. One of Bobbie's favorite memories for example was of an applause he received from his classmates and teacher for correctly using a legal term in a debate in Civic's class. Derrick also had vivid recollections of his school classes. He described a picture in an elementary school book that he believed made him aware of the differences between Blacks and Whites for the first time. As he recalled:

> I remember one day looking through the reading book and I saw this picture and I was maybe in the second or third grade then. I saw this picture, and I remember seeing this white lady in a boat and these two black guys standing in a boat, one was rowing the boat and one was holding an umbrella or something to shade her from the sun or something. In hindsight it sort of reminded me of like they were rowing down the Mississippi or something and she was some southern bell with her two black slaves or servants or whatever but that picture still is very vivid I mean you know I don't even know if I could even read then so it could've been kindergarten I just remember looking at the picture.

Derrick recalled that no one ever explained the picture to him, nor did any of his teachers ever discuss events such as southern slavery or race relations in his early school years. He said he remembered later asking his mother what slavery was, and after she explained, wondered why he had not learned about it in school. Derrick's experiences express the lack of information being provided by his teachers on subjects that he later realized were important to his identity.

Bobbie remembered not being prepared in high school to go directly to college. His experiences as explained below emphasize his belief that teachers and counselors during his high school years did not adequately prepare him for higher education.

Bobbie

> I was preparing for graduation had no clue what I wanted to do, well I wanted to go to school but I knew I couldn't afford it, so I applied to take the SAT and I got my papers back telling me that they had scheduled me to take the SAT in South Carolina. So I called them, I wrote them and asked if I could take it in North Carolina somewhere and they told me no, so instead of going to South Carolina to take the SAT I ended up in South Carolina in Marine Corp boot camp…I have no idea how. I have no idea. I guess I might have filled the wrong code in or something? I don't know. Yep, and they wouldn't change it. I guess that was the downfall of the system as well because I never recall going into a counselors office didn't know what the counselors were for, but I think that's the job of the counselors to make sure that the kids understand, their job is to help them prepare for the future, whether they want to go to the military, whether they want to go to college or whether they want to go to work. The counselors should be there to

> guide them…The way I ended up in the military was well they dashed my dreams about taking the SAT, I had two buddies going to the marine corps so I just followed them to the marine corps and I'm glad I did

Bobbie expressed how his high school counselors did not inform him of what he needed to do in order to enroll in college after high school. As a result Bobbie enlisted in the military because he had friends that were doing the same. Based on Bobbie's recollection, teachers and counselors did not ensure that students were prepared for life after high school. As discussed in the next section, the purpose of education appeared to be to graduate from high school but there were limited expectations beyond that.

Purpose of Education: "I don't remember anybody dropping out"

The four participants had similar recollections about the purpose of education and three codes emerged from their stories: Graduate, Job or Military, and A Better Life.

Graduate. All four participants stated that the majority of their classmates graduated from high school. Their recollections of the purpose of education varied amongst them, but they all admitted that graduating from high school was the immediate goal of education. Bobbie said that discontinuing his high school education never entered his mind and that he does not recall any of his classmates dropping out. Alvania estimated that the majority of the students she began school with graduated. And Gloria like Bobbie and Alvania stated that she remembered almost everybody in her class graduating. She said:

> I really can't think of anyone who didn't graduate. Seems like back then if you didn't graduate you went back the next year but you know kids now if they don't graduate they just quit

Derrick also stated that the majority of students in his class graduated. He said it was shocking and definitely not the norm during that time if someone dropped out of school. Based on these students' memories, students during the Desegregation Era went to school with the intention of graduating from high school regardless of what they did beyond that point.

Better life. The participants also stated that the purpose of education was to afford you a better life. They believed that having a high school diploma could improve their standard of living. As Alvania recalled:

> I wanted to go to school…'cause I lived on the farm, and if you didn't go to school you had to be out there on the farm and work…So either go to school or go to work…Well during back when we was going to school if you got a high school education it was just like a college degree right now, honestly, and to get a decent job you had to have a high school education. Getting an education meant to better myself

Alvania's comment hinted at what a better life meant for her. Her family, as well as Gloria's and Bobbie's, were still either living or working on the farm in their early school years. To them, like the previous generations, education was a way to have a life that did not include farm labor. Alvania also highlighted that for her generation getting a high school diploma was the same as getting a college degree for later generations. Based on her statements, the Desegregation generation believed that their life opportunities and level of employability would increase if they had a high school diploma. Alvania also mentioned another theme related to the purpose of education, getting a job.

Job or military. Both Bobbie and Gloria noted that members of their graduating classes went to the military after high school. As Bobbie stated in the previous section, he enlisted in the military after high school when he was unable to take the SAT. It was while he was in the military that he made the decision to further his education which ultimately led him to become a school principal.

Alvania, Gloria, and Derrick all stated that getting a job was the purpose of education. Gloria and Alvania believed that an education, specifically a high school diploma, allowed you to get a "good" job. They recalled that the majority of people who attended school with them did not go to college, but joined the workforce after graduation. Derrick stated that the majority of his classmates also got jobs after high school and that those who went to college were considered the exception because college was not the expectation for his generation. This is striking considering this generation had the most access to higher education as a result of laws ending desegregation in all schools including institutions of higher education. They also had access to school counselors and resources that white students had access to that should have prepared them for college. Instead these participants believed that while their parents and teachers might have wanted them to go, they did not force the issue. The goal was to graduate from high school and get a job in order live a better life, and if you happened to go to college that was a bonus.

Attitudes about Education: The Unspoken Words

Three codes emerged related to African American attitudes about education during the Desegregation Era: Neighborhood Factors, Parental Expectations, and Role of Race. The participants noted that they enjoyed going to school but there were

neighborhood factors, parental expectations, and racial implications that defined their attitudes and experiences related to education. To some of them, the importance of education was the unspoken sentiment of parents and relatives and not articulated in the same manner that it was during the Civil Rights generation.

Neighborhood differences. The participants had memories related to class or neighborhood factors that impacted education in Edgecombe County. Alvania, Gloria, and Bobbie all lived in different parts of Edgecombe County on farms for some part of their childhoods. Alvania noted that in the county everyone was more like a family, which was also the case in county schools. She said when she moved to Tarboro and went to Tarboro High post-desegregation it was different because everyone seemed much more separated. Gloria also discussed how the schools in the county had less students and more one on one interaction between teachers and students. She stated:

> It was more like a home environment for me. You know we had few students and everybody was right there in the neighborhood and knew everybody, so I enjoyed that (at Roberson and Conetoe)…well North Edgecombe was the same I mean you know it wasn't a whole lot of students there at the time so you basically went from elementary to high school knowing some people and then you also met new people… I think the county students seem like they were more pushed for like work related stuff you know like farm work and that type of stuff. A lot of students had to stay out and help on the farm which I'm fortunate we were not because my father owned the farm and so we always went. But through the years we've known kids to stay out because they had to work on the farm. As far as the city kids, most of them was like, you know they aint have anything to do during

> the summertime you know, no more than just play or whatever, you know. That's probably about the biggest, and then also as related to the schools, I'm thinkin' that North Edgecombe versus Tarboro High, you got more of a population at Tarboro High than you do North, which seems to me like students at North get a better like hands on hand type thing, one on one

Gloria expressed differences between rural students who attended schools in the county and city students who attended Tarboro schools. She related the differences to the number of students, noting that there were less students at North Edgecombe so the environment was more of a family atmosphere. Alvania who attended county schools until she enrolled at desegregated Tarboro High School in 1970 also believed that county schools had more of a familial feel in comparison to the larger Tarboro schools.

Bobbie recalled that there was no difference between East Tarboro and Princeville students when he attended Tarboro High School. He said that depending on where you lived you had "gangs" but these gangs were just the people you were friends with and together you would play basketball against people from other parts of town. Derrick did remember neighborhood differences but he said he chose not to get involved with the negativity between Princeville and East Tarboro. He recalled that even though he lived in Princeville he had friends from East Tarboro as well. He also stated that by the time he was in school many middle class African Americans lived on McMillan Drive. He said that he thought those students had it better economically and socially but recently discovered from classmates who used to live there that they had the same economic and social struggles.

Derrick and Bobbie revealed that the tension between Princeville and East Tarboro continued into their generation, but each participant analyzed the situation differently. Bobbie considered it to be more of a friendly rivalry whereas Derrick recognized the severity of the dislike between the two groups but chose not to get involved. Derrick also believed that even though there were deep-seeded issues between Princeville and East Tarboro, students from both areas were essentially viewed the same in school by teachers and peers. It was the African American students who lived on the middle-class McMillan Drive however that he believed were perceived differently by everyone because they were more affluent, thus beginning a more pronounced social-class rift between African Americans in Edgecombe County.

Parental expectations. All of the participants recalled that their parents valued education. Alvania recalled that her father had a 10th grade education and her mother had graduated from high school. She said that they expected her to graduate from high school and they would have liked for her to go to college but she did not express that they pushed her to go to college; the decision was left to her. As a result she enrolled at the community college for a while, but decided to stop going and work full time instead. Gloria commented on her parents' influence:

> Yeah my parents wanted you to go to school and exceed and do the best that you could, you know. They didn't like pressure you to go to college. You know, you made up your mind whether you wanted to go or not, but you had to graduate from high school…they stopped maybe like sixth grade something like that

Bobbie said that he did not remember ever receiving pressure to go to school but that he knew that if he decided not to go his mother would not have approved. He explained that education was the unspoken expectation. As he remembered:

> They never told me about it, I don't think they saw farther than the next year because all the time you work, slave all day long, sun up to sun down all year long and then you're told that you broke even or in the negative, and you're paying for this house that's substandard, no running water, wind blowing through, freezing all night long, so they said if they could take care of their family, then, but by the same token now they would never allow us to miss school…I don't think she would have allowed that, I think for her it was taking care of the kids, but for me it was a little bit better, everybody else, all her children had to do better and education was the means to an end. She didn't want us to be sharecroppers, she didn't want us to stay on the farm the rest of our lives and she understood that the way out was education, the unspoken words…You know my mom had a sixth grade education, my father had a sixth grade education, we were sharecroppers. My mom couldn't help me with homework, older brothers and sisters three had already moved up north I didn't need much assistance, again I guess just blessed to know, to pick up things when the teachers teachin' enough that I could go home and finish the homework and keep up in class. College was never talked about…I think my older brother did go, he was drafted in the army and this was, I can't remember if this was before his two year or after his two years 'cause he got a scholarship to play basketball from Conetoe…Yep, so he played basketball, if I'm not mistaken this was before he was drafted to the military and then he went

> to the military, got out the military, went to Washington DC, became a police officer, retired, yep, but he never talked about college, and I had very little knowledge about college. I just heard people talk about the SAT, taking the SAT

Derrick explained that his mother graduated from college while he was in elementary school and therefore he always knew the importance of education. He felt like he was exposed to much more at home than the average African American child because of his mother's education. Still, he believed that as a high school student he did not feel pressure from his mother to do well academically even though he knew that she wanted him to graduate and go to college. As Derrick recalled:

> The odd thing though is that, and this may contradict a lot of the things I said earlier but you know for some reason I think my mom kind of gave up a little bit and that sounds weird but when I was in elementary school and even middle school she was on it. But I could tell her I don't have any homework in high school and that would be the end of it. I don't know if it was because of my terrible academic performance in middle school so she was like well there goes Harvard or you know…It was I remember from maybe third grade, remember my mom graduated from college when I was in the second or third grade, so it was always we were gone go to college and we were gone graduate from college. Our reasons for attending school were about the same. Just wanted a better life than you had growing up. I think my mom's generation felt more like pioneers. Like if you lived in bigger cities you might have had four or five generations that went to college but growing up in Edgecombe County in Princeville you were sort of a pioneer if you went off to college and I think they sort of felt like that. The

> tone of the 60s. For them they probably felt like this whole new world had opened up. Reality though, in a very idealistic way they thought the world had opened up, we've overcome and now we can go where we wanna go and do what we wanna do and we are gonna be able to have the jobs that they have. So I imagine it was much more of an exciting time for them.

The Desegregation Era participants believed that their parents wanted them to attend school but did not necessarily push them to be academically successful or pursue higher education. Unlike the Civil Rights participants who stated that parents, community, and teachers expected students to do well academically and attend college, this group believed that parental and communal expectations were more unspoken. As Derrick revealed, his generation was not expected to be pioneers, rather they were expected to maintain what their parents had started by at least graduating from high school and creating a better life for themselves.

Role of race. While Alvania and Gloria do not recall race playing a major role in their educational experiences post-desegregated schooling, Derrick recalled that because of the struggle of past generations, he remembered his generation being very defensive when it came to being educated in a desegregated school. He said that black parents did not trust white teachers or the system and this was transferred to their children. He even remembered referring to one of his own teachers as racist. Bobbie stated that integration might have been the worst thing to happen to black people in terms of education because it allowed people who might not have wanted to teach black children to teach them. Furthermore it removed the closeness and connectedness from the African American community. Bobbie stated:

> I think integration might've been almost the worst thing that has happened to us as a people…Because when we, look at my school, right, this is called a neighborhood school, our kids, most of our kids walk to school…We have 99.5 percent African American but when you look at the teachers and you can see the love, the desire, you can see the effort that they put into these children on a daily basis now these kids they wouldn't survive many other places because nobody's gonna take the time out to spend with them to show them how much they're important to show that they're loved to show 'em that they care. That's what we had in our black schools. Now when you bring in people that don't wanna be there to teach you, you can't get the same results…Boy, we were a proud people when we had Conetoe and Phillips and Pattillo and Carver. Proud people, and I always compare that generation of people to our, to this generation of people and I always say now what did integration get us? Because the people that graduated from Conetoe, I know a general that graduated from Conetoe, I know some other well to do individuals that graduated from Conetoe, even with the substandard books, even with the substandard building, everything substandard but still they thrived but now...Big differences. Because now you don't see any pride because you know that this is not us. We are trying to, I guess we are trying to assimilate into a culture that may or may not want us to be a part of them, but back at Conetoe and Bricks, parents, teachers, would not settle for mediocre.

Desegregation: Individualized Experiences

Differences in environments and experiences. While these four participants have some similarities in their stories, their experiences are more varied and

individualized than the Jim Crow and Civil Rights Era participants' stories. One reason for this is that there was little uniformity in the school environments across the county after desegregation, whereas during segregation most African American's attended the same few schools, shared a common Parent Teacher Organization, and participated with and against each other in sporting events and extra-curricular activities. As a result, there was semblance in the recollections of the participants during those eras. The Desegregation Era participants on the other hand attended more schools over the course of their education individually, and collectively attended schools in all different sections of the county.

The amount of time spent in a desegregated school also varied within this generation and caused differences in experiences. Alvania for example only spent two of her high school years in desegregated schools while Derrick attended mandated desegregated schools throughout his years in Edgecombe County Schools. These differences shaped how they viewed their education during desegregation. While Derrick felt that his generation was defensive when it came to white teachers and the new structure, Alvania's sentiments were that everything was fine and felt normal being in a desegregated school, but added that the desegregated school lacked the familial feel of previous segregated schools. She attributed these differences though to the number of students at the desegregated school and not to the integrated population. Gloria's experience was different because she attended school in the town of Leggett where the majority of the people were black, so while white teachers taught at the schools she attended most of the students were African American and she remembered that all of her schools felt very much like a home environment. Bobbie also remembered having white

teachers, but started school in rural areas near Pinetops where most of the children were black. His middle and high schools though were in Tarboro and included about an even mix of black and white students. Because they all attended different types of schools within Edgecombe County their stories are unique to their environments, and less uniformed than the schooling experiences of the Jim Crow and Civil Rights Era participants.

There were differences within the generation related to the prevalence of memories about race as they told their stories. For example, Gloria's earliest memory of school was of taking naps in kindergarten, while one of Derrick's earliest memories was seeing a picture in a school book in elementary school that made him question racial dynamics. There were clear differences in the types of events that became imprinted in their memories. These differences were based on the impact that school desegregation had on them personally as a result of their school environment.

Unspoken value of education. The purpose of education for this generation was to graduate from high school. Attending college was not the overall expectation based on the stories of these four participants. Instead they identified getting a good job or going to the military in order to have a better life as the goal of education for their generation. These participants remembered almost no one in their generation dropping out of high school. So, for them, to be educated meant to finish high school and get a good job, and even though some students went to college their generation as a whole was not expected to, and those who did go were considered the exception.

These participants all had different attitudes and perceptions about education as well. While they noted that their parents thought education was important, their parents

did not push them to further their education. Only Derrick's mother had a college degree and even though she expected him to go to college she did not push him to overachieve in high school. Derrick felt that his mother's generation believed that they were pioneers and they expected their children's generation to simply maintain what their parents started. Bobbie did not recall anyone in school or at home really discussing the importance of education. He referred to the importance of education in his household as an unspoken rule because though it was not always talked about, he knew his mother valued it and expected him to be academically successful.

While their school years were characterized by mandated desegregated schools, all four participants still had segregated schooling experiences as well. The diversity of their school environments coupled with their different attitudes about attending segregated schools created a collective story that made their differences more apparent than the previous two generations. The next chapter will discuss similarities and differences across the three generations and draw conclusions about African American education in Edgecombe County based on the oral histories of these twelve participants.

CHAPTER 7: INTERGENERATIONAL ANALYSIS

*In this chapter the era of school attendance follows the participants' names; for example: Carrie (Jim Crow).

This chapter makes connections between the Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and Desegregation Era participants by discussing themes that crossed generations and explaining how each generation understood the purpose of education in comparison to the other two generations. The following sections address the major findings related to the relationship between all three generations in the major categories of Educational Experiences, Purpose of Education, and Attitudes about Education.

Educational Experiences: Schools Were Academic and Social Environments

Sports, socials and extra-curricular activities. Across generations participants remembered sports, extra-curricular activities and social events as significant aspects of their educational experiences. Jim Crow Era participants remembered playing on the school's basketball team just as Desegregation Era participants remembered playing football, and members of all three generations identified witnessing or participating in theatrical productions as their fondest memory of attending school in Edgecombe County.

Participants also mentioned their friends consistently throughout their interviews. Ed (Jim Crow), for example, stated that he enjoyed recess at school because it was the time when the girls and boys could sit outside and socialize, while Rudolph (Civil Rights) explained that he enjoyed attending school because it allowed him to be around other

children. Likewise, Bobbie (Desegregation Era) recalled his memories of attending parties and conversing with school friends outside of school.

All three generations had common social experiences related to school which shows that across generations sports and social events were significant to the schooling experiences of students in Edgecombe County. Like these generations, Siddle-Walker (2000) found in her examination of successful schools during de jure segregation that extra-curricular activities were significant to the schooling experiences of black students. This underscores that in many ways these events help define what attending segregated schools was like in Edgecombe County, and likely across the South.

It appeared that during the Jim Crow and Civil Rights Eras sports and social events provided an alternative for these participants to the difficulties of attending school. These events were possibly an escape from the long walks, overcrowded busses, and used books that African American students faced daily. Extra-curricular activities allowed them to be children and immerse themselves into activities that they found enjoyable. Social activities also provided opportunities for these students to engage in the arts, something that most might not have been exposed to otherwise. The significance of these events also demonstrated that African American schools were not one-dimensional. These school environments were more than just classrooms where the core academic subjects were taught. On the contrary, Jim Crow and Civil Rights participants were exposed to musical instruments, theatrical productions, organized sports, and a host of other activities. The prominence of these activities within segregated schools appears to be minimized and even excluded from the dominant narrative. These participants' oral histories emphasize the importance of including them in the counter-narrative. Without

recognizing the role of sports and social activities, the picture of daily life in segregated schools would be incomplete and inaccurate.

Post-segregated schooling extra-curricular activities provided a way for these students who felt culturally and academically marginalized to not only connect to their school environments, but to excel. Students used their athletic and creative abilities to carve out a space for themselves in their desegregated environments. Sports were possibly something that African American students realized they could do well in, and as a result they began to rely more on sports and less on academics as a way to not only be noticed but to also provide for themselves in the short and long term.

Classes and books. Participants from all three generations recalled memories related to school subjects and classes in Edgecombe County. They remembered a variety of classes, but history and civics were identified across all three generations as favorite subjects. Participants expressed their excitement at learning about past events, even though African American history and culture was usually not discussed in textbooks. Preston-Grimes's (2010) research on the role of social studies and civic education during Jim Crow explains how African American teachers used their classrooms to make their students racially conscious. According to Preston-Grimes's (2010), African American teachers "...applied…politically relevant teaching in their classrooms to model how African American educators could make sense of the contradictions in a racially discriminatory society, yet prepare students for a better day" (pp. 37-38). Du Bois's (1903) and Woodson's (1933) early critical race frameworks emphasize that historical and sociological knowledge about African Americans is important to their understanding of self and liberation of self. African American teachers that recognized this used their

classrooms as ways to pass on knowledge that would lead students to cultural awareness and potential liberation.

All three generations also mentioned their textbooks. Jim Crow and Civil Rights participants recalled using books that had previously been used by white students. According to the participants this was one of the most difficult aspects of attending segregated schools. Both Jim Crow and Civil Rights participants shared the same sentiments about the difficulty of seeing white children's names, which were often in poor condition. In addition, Civil Rights participants regretted that there was no mention of African Americans in textbooks. Desegregation Era participants also recalled the racial biases in their books. Derrick vividly remembered a picture in an elementary school textbook of a white woman on a boat with two black boys that looked like her servants. What bothered him more than the picture was the fact that no teacher ever explained it. These comments underscore the lasting impacts that classes and books had on students across generations. Whether it was the names of white students in their books or pictures that went unexplained by teachers, textbooks left students with more than just content. The issues surrounding textbooks made students aware of their positions of inferiority in the Jim Crow and Civil Rights Eras, and they reminded the Desegregation Era participants of the country's racial past and caused them to question why such issues were not discussed in their desegregated classrooms.

The mention of textbooks also provides evidence that one of the primary concerns of African American schools was equal resources. Having been given used books, and finding their culture excluded from these books seems to have been the one area where students recognized their inferiority more than any other aspect of the schooling

experience. The books and curriculum made students aware of the differences between white students and them, no matter how successful African American schools were at affirming their culture and providing adequate academic and social experiences.

Purpose of Education: Education was Valued

Better life. Participants across generations believed that education would provide them with a better life. Jim Crow participants stated that teachers really insisted that students learn the material in order to leave behind the sharecropping and subservience of the segregated South. Civil Rights participants believed that education extended beyond high school. Their generation was concerned with attending college and becoming self-sufficient in order to better themselves and their community. Desegregation Era participants thought that being educated meant graduating from high school. They also believed that whether you went to college, to the military or entered the workforce after high school, having that diploma provided you with more opportunities to be successful.

Based on the recollections of these participants the purpose of education evolved significantly from Jim Crow to Desegregation. Anderson (1988) found that the purpose of education for African Americans historically was to elevate themselves from positions of subordination and oppression in order to advance socially and economically. Participants in this study, especially the Jim Crow and Civil Rights generations, confirmed Anderson's argument. They recalled that the purpose of education during their school years was to get out of poverty. The Jim Crow participants also seemed to value education because of the intrinsic reward of knowledge that it provided them with, or as Perry (2003) phrased it, knowledge for knowledge's sake. This generation was interested in learning regardless of the outcomes.

The Civil Rights Era participants also connected education with economic and social advancement. They believed that getting an education included leaving Edgecombe County and attending college. This attitude seemed prevalent across the country as African American student enrollment at HBCUs increased during the 1960s (Williams & Ashleigh, 2004). Further, the generation felt that it was important to return to Edgecombe County in order to uplift the entire African American community. This was the sentiment of many African Americans throughout the South who came back to their communities or went to similar communities after college to become teachers (Du Bois, 1903; Fairclough, 2007). This attitude supported Du Bois's (1903) talented tenth concept, which charged those African Americans, who were the most intellectually equipped, to lead the rest out of academic, economic, and social oppression.

Theresa Perry (2003) argued that there is a philosophy of education that transcends generations for African Americans, and that African Americans have a cultural connection to and value of education for education's sake. Similarly, the participants reported that education was indeed something that was valued and made you "somebody" in the African American community. It appeared that this value was strongest within the Jim Crow Era and though still present, was not as strong within the Desegregation Era. This is consistent with Perry's (2003) argument that the narrative must continue to be passed from one generation to the next so as not to be lost. The Civil Rights generation clearly understood that education was the expectation during their generation because this value of education had been passed to them from their Jim Crow parents and grandparents. The Desegregation Era participants remembered that their parents' generation had a strong value of education and even though the Desegregation

participants also valued education, this sentiment was not as strong generationally. Participants in the Jim Crow and Civil Rights generations admitted that their teachers were instrumental in ensuring that they were properly educated and understood the importance of education. To the contrary, the Desegregation Era participants believed that they were not prepared for higher education by some of their teachers and that their parents did not insist that they further their education.

The purpose of education appeared to change as the educational environment did. The Jim Crow generation was only two generations removed from slavery, a time period characterized by punishing African Americans for attempting to learn. Therefore the opportunity to become literate was extremely important for the Jim Crow generation. They recognized that being allowed to attend school was a privilege and not a right. This generation also witnessed their parents' generation build 26 Rosenwald Schools in Edgecombe County, again understanding the sacrifices associated with becoming educated.

During the Civil Rights Era, these students began to feel more entitled to an education and saw potential for academic success beyond Edgecombe County through historically black colleges and universities across North Carolina and even other states. In addition to a college education, their desire to contribute to their own community after graduation was probably the result of their understanding of the Civil Rights Movement and the work of Civil Rights leaders to galvanize communities to work together to end racial oppression.

The Desegregation Era participants then were at least four generations removed from being forbidden to pursue an education. They were also less aware of the level of

poverty that existed at the height of sharecropping throughout the South, so they might not have understood the significance of education for the sake of learning and as the only hope of economic advancement, like the Jim Crow and Civil Rights generations did. Furthermore, the Desegregation generation saw the Civil Rights generation still struggling socially and economically, even after they had subscribed to the idea of education as the solution to poverty and social subservience. They also had teachers who were inconsistent and not insistent on them being academically successful. These participants, then, seemed unclear about the value of education; therefore, since many new manufacturing industries were brought into Edgecombe County during the 1970s and 1980s, some participants decided to graduate and get a "good" job in order to earn a living, while others chose the military rather than focus on an education that may have provided better long-term economic outcomes.

Attitudes about Education: Community and Relationships

Neighborhood differences. The majority of African Americans in Edgecombe County from 1930 to 1980 lived in rural areas, or the town of Princeville and East Tarboro. The differences that existed between students based on where they lived was significant for all three generations. Students attended schools across the county wherever buildings existed, but most Princeville and East Tarboro students during Jim Crow and Civil Rights attended school together at Princeville School and Pattillo School. Herbert (Jim Crow) felt that East Tarboro people in general thought they were superior to those who lived in Princeville and rural areas. Civil Rights participants agreed with the Jim Crow generation but added that there was no academic difference between students based on where they were from. Desegregation participants who lived in rural Edgecombe County also recalled that it was different for rural students, but at this time

they were attending schools in the county and not in Tarboro. They only attended school with other rural students and believed that their school environment was more family oriented. They might have felt more connected because their schools still consisted almost entirely of African American students, and though they had white teachers, these teachers were coming into previously all-black environments in many cases. So, the climate in rural schools post-segregation was somewhat different than schools in Tarboro, as students who attended schools there had different experiences during desegregation. Derrick (Desegregation) recalled that rivalries still existed between Princeville and East Tarboro students, but like the Civil Rights participants he thought that there were no differences academically. Derrick also stated that by the 1970s and 1980s there was a solid black middle-class that lived on McMillan Drive in Tarboro and these students were the ones who were viewed differently because of their economic positions. He believed that teachers and peers held students from McMillan Drive in higher regard than other African American students.

Across generations people from the same neighborhood have similar perceptions. Those from East Tarboro such as Mary (Jim Crow) and Rosena (Civil Rights) remembered enjoying the fun times they had going to parties with students from Princeville, and the "cute" boys that lived there. Similarly, Quincy (Civil Rights – East Tarboro) noted that he was envious of the "country" boys because they worked and had cars that impressed the girls. Therefore, those from East Tarboro seemed to admire students from Princeville and the rural areas, while those from the rural areas and Princeville remembered being looked down on by the East Tarboro students.

These recollections reveal that the primary differences within the African American community educationally were neighborhood. Though on the surface the differences were usually based on where one lived, there were class implications even before the exodus of black educators to McMillan Drive. For example, most people living in rural areas were perceived as sharecroppers, while those in Princeville were considered sharecroppers, day laborers, small farmers, business owners, and artisans. East Tarboro consisted of day laborers as well, but it also included educators, business owners, and professionals. Therefore, though different classes were intertwined by area of the county, those who lived in rural areas and Princeville were assumed to be less affluent. These differences impacted schooling experiences of African Americans because they felt labeled by other students and possibly teachers. These students then were apparently very committed to being educated to still attend school in spite of the neighborhood differences.

Parental expectations. All three generations had parents who shaped their attitudes about education based on their own educational experiences. The Jim Crow generation's parents attended school when they could but did not graduate. Even though they had economic challenges and it would have benefitted many parents to keep their children at home to work, they still allowed their children to attend school whenever possible. The Civil Rights generation had similar experiences. Many of their parents, who were a part of the Jim Crow generation, did not graduate so they wanted their children to not only graduate from high school but to attend college. Herbert (Jim Crow) and Rosena (Civil Rights), father and daughter, are a perfect example. Herbert did not graduate and could only attend school when weather kept him from farm work. As a

result he insisted that Rosena graduate from high school and attend college. Rosena, then, recognized the value of education and not only graduated from college, but also received a master's degree.

The Desegregation generation also noted that their parents attended school and wanted them to be educated. For this generation, however, the meaning of education was different because students were now required by law to attend school regularly, and the barriers associated with that attendance were fewer. This generation believed that their parents wanted them to graduate from high school but found that any education beyond that was not pushed by parents or the community. Because receiving an education was so difficult during the Jim Crow generation they appreciated it and supported their own children's educational efforts. The Civil Rights generation then was influenced by the example of their parents, but also by the political and social climate of their generation, which featured civil rights leaders advocating for legislation that would afford African Americans equal educational opportunities. Based on the stories of the Desegregation Era, instead of valuing education even more, it appeared that the significance of education leveled off. Perhaps they believed they had achieved the highest level of educational advancement by being allowed to attend school with white students. It is also possible that the Civil Rights generation did not achieve the level of economic and social success that they believed an education would afford them. Therefore the African American community as a whole still valued education, but was unsure that it would be enough to eliminate decades of structural oppression and inferiority. As a result, they hoped that their children would continue to advance academically, but they did not pressure them to attend college. Instead they focused on making sure that their children

graduated from high school and hoped that they would make decisions that would benefit them in a white-dominated society.

Teachers. Memories of teachers were a major part of the stories of all three generations and many participants could recall all of their teachers from elementary through high school and had specific memories associated with most of them. Both Jim Crow and Civil Rights Era participants stressed the respect for and importance of African American teachers to the African American community. During Jim Crow teachers were revered, respected, and considered leaders among African Americans. This same sentiment rang true during the Civil Rights Era. Participants said that teachers were like preachers because they were the most respected members of society, and parents and students regarded them as part of their extended families. Foster (1997), Fairclough (2007), and Kelly (2010) agreed that African American teachers in segregated schools were instrumental in the academic and social lives of African Americans and were highly regarded by their communities.

The Desegregation Era participants, however, had different reactions regarding their teachers. Alvania and Gloria commented that their black and white teachers were generally well liked by students and were fair and consistent in the ways they treated black and white students. Bobbie, on the other hand, felt that many of his teachers and counselors did not sufficiently prepare him to be academically successful beyond high school, and he could not even remember the names of the majority of his teachers, black or white. Derrick recalled white teachers and black teachers that he admired, as well as white and black teachers that he felt did not genuinely care about black students. Derrick believed that some black teachers were inconsistent and detached in the way that they

educated and responded to black students on one hand; on the other hand he thought they attempted to implement tough love that often did not work because they had not built strong relationships with black students.

Derrick's (Desegregation) observation is a continuation of Quincy's (Civil Rights) observation of the impact of desegregated schools on black teachers and their relationships with black students. Quincy believed that black teachers were nurturing and supportive within black schools. However, when they became teachers in desegregated schools they did not want to appear as though they were giving preferential treatment to black students and consequently altered their relationships with black students. Quincy's observation is based on his relationship with black teachers as a segregated school's student. His explanation of the different relationship between later generations and black teachers is based on his observations as family members attended desegregated schools. Quincy, Derrick and other Civil Rights and Desegregation participants stated that many white teachers were unsure of how to approach educating black students because they had not formerly taught them. As a result they argued that not only did black students receive inadequate attention from their white teachers, but they also no longer received the nurturing and educational style that they were used to from black teachers. Consequently, many African American students became victims of an educational system that failed to address their academic and social needs.

From the Jim Crow and Civil Rights Eras to the Desegregation Era, the black community's perception of African American teachers changed immensely based on the stories of these participants. Siddle-Walker (2009) and Kluger (1975) found that desegregating schools cost many African American teachers their jobs, and those who

remained teachers became marginalized within new schools causing them to focus less on their relationships with students and more on how to navigate a new setting. This was one of the reasons that many black educators feared desegregating schools (Kluger, 1975; Siddle-Walker, 2009). The participants in this study echoed these sentiments and stressed the detriment that desegregation had on relationships between African American teachers and their students, from a student perspective. Whereas once they were the most respected members of the African American community and controlled the education of their black students, desegregation forced black teachers to become marginalized in new desegregated environments. As a result, they possibly struggled to assimilate into new methods of teaching that were void of the culturally relevant instruction that they were accustomed to.

Participants noted that the relationship between African American teachers' and their students changed during desegregation. It is possible that teachers were trying to help their African American students develop thick skin in order to adjust to white teachers who had different teaching styles than they might have been accustomed to. On the other hand, the African American community's perception of teachers might have changed and not the teachers themselves. Since many teachers left the African American neighborhood concurrently with school desegregation, other African Americans might have felt like they were now disconnected from black teachers who had previously been a part of their environment; or black teachers could have felt less connected themselves and started to disassociate with the majority of the black community. During the Desegregation generation, African American females also had more professional opportunities beyond the classroom which might have impacted the types of women who

were now becoming teachers, as well as the respect that the profession was given. Whatever the reason, it is apparent that these participants felt that the relationship between black teachers and the black community changed after school desegregation. Whether it was the result of teaching in a new environment, or it was related to black teachers' fears of losing their jobs if they failed to assimilate into the culture of previously all-white schools, African American teachers did not demand the same level of admiration and respect within the African American community post-desegregation.

Race and desegregation. The participants in the Civil Rights and Desegregation Eras had strong opinions related to their feelings about school desegregation. All four Civil Rights participants to some extent were not satisfied with desegregation because it did not serve its true purpose of integration. They explained that integration should have provided all students with the same educational opportunities and they were not convinced that this had occurred, especially in comparison to what they believed were successful segregated schools. Bobbie (Desegregation Era) agreed with the Civil Rights participants, and he and Rosena (Civil Rights Era) both believed that desegregating schools might have been the worst thing to happen to black education because it eliminated the since of care and togetherness that existed within black schools and the black community prior to desegregation. While Elzatia (Civil Rights) believed that desegregating schools was beneficial in order for all students to be on the same level academically, she felt that these schools lacked the one-on-one support of segregated schools. Derrick (Desegregation) noted that because of the feelings of his mother's generation (Civil Rights Era) about the benefits of all-black schools, many in his generation were defensive when dealing with white teachers and the school system.

Strong relationships and communal support of African American segregated schools emerged across generations. As argued by Siddle-Walker (1996) and Dingus (2006), participants valued their segregated schools and communities. Some participants also commented on the cultural value of their schools, and Desegregation Era participants noted that they witnessed the pride that their parents and members of the community had as they recalled their all-black schools; and they believed that they missed out on such connections by attending desegregated schools (Dempsey & Noblit, 1993; Siddle-Walker, 1996; Brown, 2006).

Attitudes about interaction with whites and school desegregation were mentioned by all participants. Each generation responded to it differently. The Jim Crow generation believed that segregation was "just the way things were and there was nothing we could do to change it," while the Civil Rights generation stated that they were content in their segregated schools, and desegregation removed the communal feel of segregated schools. The Desegregation Era participants' feelings ranged from not noticing a difference between segregated and desegregated schools to feeling that integration was the worst thing to happen to African American education. Likewise, Kluger (1975), Morris (2008), and Siddle-Walker (2009) argued that many African Americans were not advocating for integrated schools because they were content with the culture and education they received in their segregated schools. Rather, they were fighting for access to the same physical resources and monetary support that white schools had access to, or as the African American superintendents interviewed by Horsford (2010) stated, many of the educational problems for black students began with school desegregation because schools

never truly integrated the lives, cultures, and teachers of desegregated schools into completely integrated settings.

For the Jim Crow generation participants, segregation was a way of life and few people questioned the system outright. This appears to be because they recognized that white schools were superior economically to theirs, but they were accustomed to their inferior status and did not feel that they could change decades of systematic oppression. The Civil Rights generation participants, though, believed that they could make their schools better and worked to make changes within their segregated environments. To them their environments were the norm and provided them with the education that they needed. On the other hand it is possible that this generation was socialized to believe that "separate but equal" was actually attainable and beneficial and therefore they did not consider the potential advantages of attending truly integrated schools. Still, based on their stories they did not believe that desegregating schools would provide them with a better education. In fact, when they had an opportunity under the countywide school choice plan to attend white schools, most students remained in their segregated schools, and today these high schools have strong alumni associations that organize reunions and events annually that are heavily supported and attended. Furthermore, the legacies of these schools are very much a part of general conversation in Edgecombe County among the African American community.

The Desegregation Era participants did not express the same level of support and pride in their high schools when discussing their schooling experiences. While rivalries existed between local high schools, these rivalries were based on sports competitions so students often discussed their high school's athletic teams in comparison to others. It

seemed that the level of appreciation and connection that the Jim Crow and Civil Rights generations had for their schools was more similar to the affection that the Desegregation Era participants had for their neighborhoods (Princeville, East Tarboro, etc). For them, these all-black neighborhoods were central to their existence and they were proud of being from culturally rich neighborhoods. The same feelings that past generations had for their schools.

Examining education first within generations through the stories of the participants showed how similar the experiences of the participants within the Jim Crow and Civil Rights generations were, as well as highlighted some differences within the Desegregation generation. Then by comparing education across the three generations cross-generational similarities and differences were highlighted in order to formulate conclusions about the overall educational experiences, purposes and attitudes of these twelve participants across three generations in Edgecombe County, North Carolina. As apparent from their oral histories, their racial and cultural identities were central to their experiences and recollections about education in Edgecombe County. Understanding this significance from a critical race and Afrocentric perspective was the foundation for the analysis because their experiences and memories cannot be divorced from the role of race and culture in forming their identity and understanding of their educational experiences.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

As a child growing up in Edgecombe County I heard stories from my grandmother and other relatives about the challenges associated with attending school. More than the challenges, though, were the stories of the legacy of those schools and the deep commitment to education of many African Americans throughout the county during the Jim Crow and Civil Rights Eras. Because I attended schools that were desegregated, I often wondered how school for them must have been different from my experiences. Based on what I was learning in school myself about the over-crowded, poorly resourced segregated schools, I could not imagine them actually enjoying it. Why then, did my family love segregated W. A. Pattillo High School so much? Why did my grandfather and great aunts and uncles insist on driving from Washington D.C. to Edgecombe County to attend their Conetoe High School reunions every year? If these environments were so detrimental for black children, as I was led to believe in school, why did those who attended these schools speak of them in such high regard?

It was when I was a master's student of history at North Carolina Central University that I became aware of the counter-narrative of African American education, and I was able to understand why the dominant research presented the deficit model of historical African American education. I then connected what I had witnessed from my family to what I had now read in Anderson (1988), Siddle-Walker (1996), and Williams (2005), and I began to understand that there was an alternative view. This was often

presented from the African American perspective of segregated southern schooling that focused on the resiliency of African American students, the agency of African American communities, and the commitment to academic excellence of African American schools. Thus began my interest in further understanding the counter-narrative of African American education, and specifically education as it was woven into life in Edgecombe County.

As a doctoral student in Urban Education I began to connect the historical counter-narrative to the present narrative of African American schooling. As a teacher I further realized that the counter-narrative was still missing from the public school curriculum, just as it had been when I was a student. As a possible result, African American students were becoming increasingly disengaged in schools and disconnected from their educations. I had always worked to build relationships with my students and to help them understand the historical legacy of African American education, but I knew that my understanding was not the dominant narrative. Many teachers and students across the country still assumed that African Americans devalued education, and they viewed African American environments as academically inferior. When did this shift from valuing education to devaluing it occur? Or was it a shift? Did African Americans still value education? What did education mean for African Americans during Jim Crow? Civil Rights? One generation removed from segregation? These probing questions, my experiences as an educator, and my cultural, racial and geographic background led me to this study, and its guiding research questions:

1. What were the educational experiences of three generations of African Americans in Edgecombe County from 1930-1980?

2. How have African Americans in Edgecombe County generationally understood the purpose of education?

I found direction in Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Siddle-Walker (1996), Perry (2003), Baszille (2008) and others who contended that the counter-narrative of African American education needed to be told in order for mainstream America to understand the significance of African American education, as African Americans historically understood it. This counter-narrative focused less on the disparities that existed in segregated schools and more on the positive aspects from the perspectives of those who experienced segregated schools. I began this study with the research base and theoretical perspectives of these scholars so as to explore Perry's notion of an African American philosophy of education and its existence (or non-existence) across three generations. I also wanted to provide an account of historical African American education in Edgecombe County through the voices of those who experienced it in order to preserve their stories as well as to understand how and why changes occurred within and across generations. I hoped that there would be educational implications for current and future generations of African American students, and I believe that there are.

My findings support Siddle-Walker's (2000) argument that segregated schools were valued by African American students. Like Siddle-Walker's (2000) research, my participants also identified excellent teachers, parental support, and curriculum and extra-curricular activities as reasons that segregated schools were valued by African American students. Likewise, Siddle-Walker (1996) found that segregated schools were places where students, teachers, and community relationships were fostered and maintained. My findings go a step further and compare segregated schools to the first generation of

desegregated schools. Based on the stories of the four participants in the Desegregation Era, those who still attended predominantly black schools also noted the familial/communal environment that they benefitted from, while those who attended truly desegregated schools believed that relationships were not as strong, and consequently did not value and connect to their educational environments as much.

There is growing research in the education field on both sides of the school desegregation argument. Some scholars present the benefits of desegregated schools as essential to the academic and social advancement of students (Orfield, 1996; Kozol, 2005), while others contend that segregated environments embraced the cultural capital of African American students and provided nurture and care that was lost post-segregation (Dempsey & Noblit, 1993). My research supports the arguments for the benefits of the elements of segregated schools that African Americans valued. These valued aspects must be incorporated into desegregated settings in order for African American students to be as academically successful as possible.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Afrocentric Critical Race Theory guided the methodology for this study, and it informed the framework for understanding and interpreting the data. Providing a counter-narrative from an Afrocentric Critical Race perspective meant that the voices of the participants were the most important aspect of the research. Because this was their story, I included their own words often and at length. The voices of the participants are essential in Afrocentric and critical race research. Through their own stories, the participants exercised their agency by allowing the reader to re-imagine the phenomenon of education through the participants' experiences (Asante, 1988; Baszille, 2008).

The culture (Afrocentricity) and race (Critical Race Theory) of the participants were at the core of this research. I needed to understand their culture as African Americans from the segregated South first, in order to appreciate the uniqueness of this culture as it related to the participants' schooling experiences. I did not attempt to make sense of their stories through the lens of white schooling experiences because the aspects of education that these participants valued and acknowledged might have been viewed differently through another lens. Furthermore, this was not an attempt to compare white and black education; rather it was an attempt to fully understand African American education alone. As explained through critical race theory, African American experiences are defined by and a result of their race, so race is significant to their stories and memories, and therefore significant to my analysis. Specifically, "Critical race theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society" (Matsuda, et al, 1993).

The notion of an African American philosophy of education as explained by Perry (2003) as well as the concept of education being central to African American identity as expressed in the stories of the participants, might not make sense from a Eurocentric perspective. Since Eurocentrism explains the history of Africans and African Americans from a Eurocentric center, the history of people of African descent as highly intellectual is often not explored (Asante, 1988). On the contrary the Eurocentric perspective often focuses on the educational deficiency of African Americans, or with Eurocentric ways of learning and understanding as the benchmark. When African American educational history is viewed from an Afrocentric lens, then the philosophy of African American education and African American educational identity is more fully understood. From the

ancient African civilizations of Egypt and Nubia, to Africa before European colonialism and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Africans maintained civilizations that valued education (Asante, 1988). When Europeans arrived on the continent, the Africans already had an established educational system. Education existed among ethnic groups, teaching members how to survive and be productive in their villages and communities. Where Europeans support education that promotes individuality, African education encourages conformity and communal unity (Anderson, 1970; Barnes, 2002), hence social activities and relationships with teachers are important aspects of the educational experience as noted by the participants in this study. Through the Afrocentric tenet of the communal the value of socialization and relationships as necessary elements of their experiences makes sense. Pre-colonial Africans received an education that enforced the maintenance of unity within the community while preparing individuals for their rights and responsibilities within the family and ethnic group. This was a socio-economic and cultural institution that enhanced the group while leaving room for individual talents (Anderson, 1970; Barnes, 2002). African Americans during the Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and Desegregation Eras maintained this cultural reverence for the communal and therefore the participants in this study identified community, relationships, and social activities as significant, and expressed the impact that a lack of these communal aspects had on them. Further, they recalled that their segregated communities and schools were supportive and necessary for the betterment of the community and for their individual growth within the community. Desegregated schools, in their opinion, removed this communal element that was essential to their educational success.

Perry's argument of an African American philosophy of education as central to identity can be explained best from an Afrocentric perspective. When Africans came to America as slaves, they did not lose their educational identity, only the right to formally learn. Therefore, it is understandable that once they were emancipated they would immediately seek education, because it was a part of their identity that had been passed down for generations, and they understood the power of education. As newly freed slaves they were determined to use education to gain access to the freedoms that they had been denied during slavery. As a result, the Jim Crow generation across the South and in Edgecombe County insisted on being educated because historically education was central to their identity.

The use of critical race theory as a framework for this study privileged the voices of African Americans in order to challenge mainstream literature that claims to be colorblind, or attempts to explain the educational experiences of African Americans through lenses that ignore the central role of race. The participants in this study demonstrated that issues of race transcend time periods, and even though civil rights legislation legally abolished policies that privileged whites, African Americans even in the Desegregation generation consistently reported on their experiences based on their race. Since, as Bell (1995) argued, racism has been normalized and legitimized and embedded in our experiences, other frameworks often overlook racial implications in their research in favor of the concept of colorblindness that allows researchers to continuously ignore the historical impact of race on society and therefore further marginalize African Americans. As with the participants in this study, only through the counter-narrative can African American education truly be understood, and then fixed.

Therefore, when participants discuss the use of textbooks previously used by Whites, and the content of books that either are subtly racist or overtly exclude African Americans altogether, they are becoming change agents by virtue of being allowed to tell their stories, which might otherwise go unheard. Furthermore, readers are made aware of the implications of embedded racism in the schooling experiences of African Americans, even in desegregated academic environments.

Limitations

As with most research, there are aspects of this study that should be strengthened when conducting similar research in the future. From an Afrocentric perspective, I think that assembling intergenerational focus groups would have enriched the findings, as they would have discussed their experiences within and across generations. This would have allowed participants to share more in the analysis process, as well as react to the experiences of other participants. It also would have allowed us as a community to create a collective history of African American education in Edgecombe County together, rather than through my individual attempt.

Although I believe that twelve participants are sufficient when conducting qualitative oral history research, including more participants would present a broader variety of perspectives. While I made interpretations based on the transcripts of the participants (and I do believe that someone else viewing the transcripts would have come to similar conclusions) I do recognize that it is possible to interview twelve different people from Edgecombe County and end up with a different overall picture of African American education from 1930-1980.

Implications for Future Research

This study stops with the generation that was first to attend court-mandated desegregated schools in Edgecombe County. A future study should include current generations in order to present a fuller picture of educational experiences across generations there. Including current generations will also add to the understanding of how and why changes in attitudes about the purposes of education have occurred across generations, and potentially lead solutions that strengthen academic experiences and outcomes for all African American students.

Neighborhood and class differences emerged across all three generations. Future studies of African American education in the South should consider how these differences impacted education for African Americans, not just as they compared to whites economically, but as they compared to other African Americans. Also, sociological and historical studies of African Americans that focus specifically on the differences between those from "city" and "rural" areas within the same county might be useful in understanding any differences in educational and professional trends.

Recommendations

This study examined the educational experiences, purposes and attitudes of three generations of African Americans from Edgecombe County and presented a counter-narrative of Southern African American education from the perspectives of the participants. Understanding this is beneficial for those who suggest that African Americans do not value education. This research explained that generations of African Americans have strong feelings about the value of education and have specific positive memories tied to their schooling experiences in segregated schools. The participants in

this study were from Edgecombe County, which consists of rural areas and small towns. Still, lessons can be learned from this place's history that might impact urban areas as well. After all, African Americans share a common history of segregated education and racial and social oppression that in many ways transcends time and location. Furthermore, I know from personal experiences that there are not many differences between the educational outcomes and levels of engagement of African American students who attend rural schools and urban schools. Therefore, this research has implications for educators and policymakers concerned with African American education regardless of the educational environment.

Researchers and school reformers must examine current generations in order to evaluate whether or not they have these same sentiments about education, and if not uncover where the sentiments changed. Mickelson (1990) found that African American students often value education in the abstract, but that value is not transferred to their academic performances because they have not always seen education benefit their parents and other adults. The Jim Crow and Civil Rights participants in this study appeared to value education, and worked to achieve positive academic outcomes. Likewise, they credited their teachers and parents with instilling in them the importance of education. School reformers must explore the gaps between attitudes and performance of current generations in order to increase academic outcomes for African American students. One way to do so is by looking at the stories of these participants and others in order to understand what made Jim Crow and Civil Rights generations continue to value education and to academically achieve in spite of their circumstances. We must use that information to foster educational resilience in current generations.

Theresa Perry (2003) charged African Americans to pass on their educational narratives to current and future generations in order to preserve the African American philosophy of education – that education is important for knowledge, as well as for social and economic mobility and has been valued by people of African descent since before the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. More focus should be placed on narrative and oral history projects as instructional methods for engaging and educating African American students. Students should read and explore narratives of famous African Americans as well as narratives of those from their own communities and families. These stories are rarely told and therefore current generations never learn about the contributions of past generations to education and other fields; therefore students do not associate education and academic success with African Americans historically. Teachers can also allow students to collect oral histories themselves and even write their own narratives of education. Similarly, educational researchers should employ oral history methods more frequently in order to capture the voices of marginalized groups of students.

Siddle-Walker (2009) discussed the notion of real integration versus second-class integration. Real integration means that African Americans would not be subjected to academic and social margins in desegregated school systems; as long as they continue to be marginalized within schools, then second-class integration is occurring, at best. Mickelson (2001) also noted that schools are currently re-segregated due to tracking policies that segregate students within desegregated environments. Therefore, while desegregation policies place blacks and whites in the same buildings, policies such as tracking keep the goal of real integration from being realized. Policymakers must examine these researchers' arguments concerning in-school disparities that exist between

black and white students, as well as listen to the voices of African Americans like the participants in this study. Many of the participants felt that integration was the worst thing to happen to black education for a variety of reasons. These participants were not arguing that desegregating schools was a bad idea; instead they were asserting that desegregation policies never achieved true integration, and as a result African Americans became marginalized within desegregated schools. Compared to the commitment, support, and education they believed they received in segregated schools, desegregation fell short. As Dempsey and Noblit (1993) explained, "Desegregationalists were equally ignorant of the culture of African Americans; in fact, school desegregation in many ways ignored the possibility that there could be desirable elements in African-American culture worthy of maintenance and celebration" (p. 319). School reformers and policymakers have to explore the aspects of segregated schools that African Americans benefitted from in order to create integrated school environments that embrace African American culture and increase academic achievement for African American students. Without recognizing the cultural value of segregated schools for many African American students, current and future generations might continue to be subjected to educational policies and environments that force them to value education less and disengage in school more.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Participant Profile

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Date of Birth:

Gender:

Schools Attended in Edgecombe County:

Schools Attended not in Edgecombe County:

Education Level: High School graduation year?

Flexible Interview Questions with Potential Probes

1. **Begin with your earliest memory and tell me about your years attending Edgecombe County/Tarboro City Schools?**
   Probes:
   - What is your fondest memory of school? Least favorite?
   - What teachers stand out? Why?
   - What classes did you take? What were the materials?
   - What were the differences between your experiences and the experiences of your peers of the same race? Different race?

2. **Why did you attend school initially? Why did you continue to attend/stop attending?**
   Probes:
   - Was it your decision? Your parents?
   - Did you attend regularly?
   - Did your parents want you to attend school? To graduate high school? To attend college?

3. **Do you think this was the same for other people your age/your classmates?**
   - What made students come to school?

- What made students stop coming to school?
- Do you think the reasons were the same for black and white students?
- Do you think the reasons were the same for all blacks?

4. **Were there class or neighborhood factors that impacted people's attitudes about education?**
   - Were there differences between those in Tarboro and those in the rural areas of the county?
   - Were there differences between Princeville and East Tarboro?
   - Why do you think those that went on to college went? Why do you think others did not go?

5. **What did getting an education mean to you?**
   Probes:
   - What was the purpose of education for you? For other African Americans that you know?
   - What did graduating from high school mean for you? For other African Americans? For whites?

6. **Were your reasons for attending the same as your parents/grandparents? Were your children/grandchildren's reasons the same as yours?**
   Probes:
   - How did your parents feel about education? Was it different from your generation?
   - What if anything did you instill in your children about education? Your grandchildren?

7. **How would you describe African Americans feelings about education in Edgecombe County historically and today?**