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Race, Class, and Gender: A Snapshot of African Nova Scotian School Experiences

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of Education
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.**

March 2001

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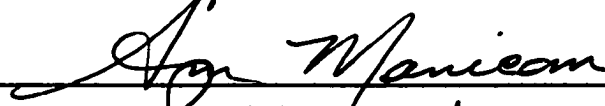

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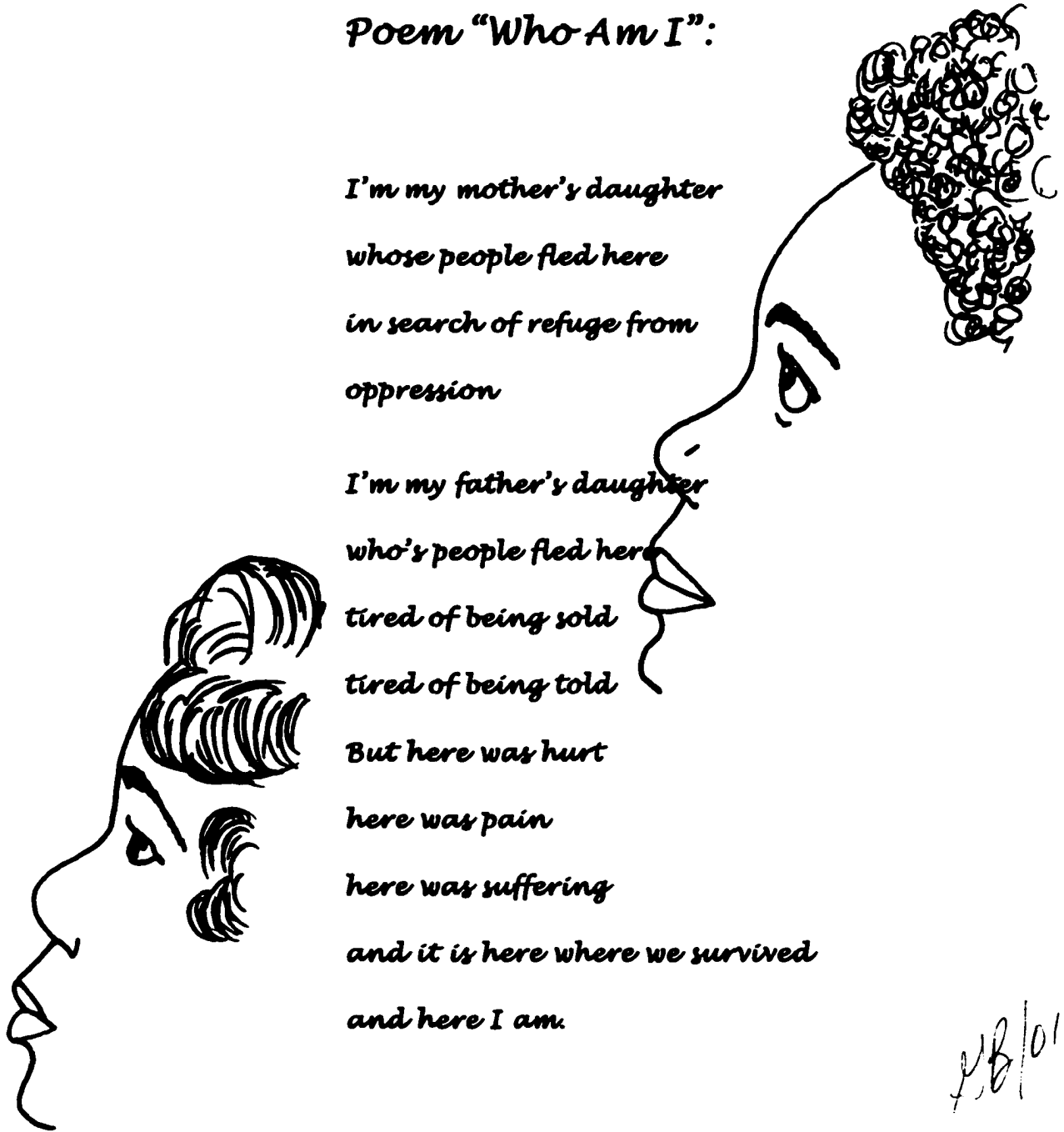
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Dedication

Poem "Who Am I":

*I'm my mother's daughter
whose people fled here
in search of refuge from
oppression*

*I'm my father's daughter
who's people fled here
tired of being sold
tired of being told
But here was hurt
here was pain
here was suffering
and it is here where we survived
and here I am.*



JB/01

This thesis and poem are dedicated to all my ancestors on whose back I have climbed to be here.

Abstract

This thesis explores multiple oppression based on race, class, and gender in relation to the school experiences of African Nova Scotians. An Africentric paradigm guides this exploratory, qualitative study. It attempts to extend a single foci analysis based on race to include a perspective that examines the school experiences of African Nova Scotians based on a multiaxial system of oppression. Twelve African Nova Scotians males and females between ages 18-35 were interviewed. They were all educated in the Nova Scotian public school system. Participants were asked to reflect on their educational experiences, and answer specific questions about race, class, and gender oppression during individual interviews.

Many participants presented a clear analysis of how each form of oppression i.e., race, class, and gender frames their lives, in particular their educational experiences. However, race was the primary focus of the participants' narratives and it was a challenge to articulate the experience of multiple oppression. This thesis explores the complexities, which arise when the concept of multiple oppression is applied to an analysis of African Nova Scotian school experiences. It attempts to bring new insights into the current discourse on African Canadians and schooling.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to my creator for strength, health, spirituality and the ability to do this work.

To my parents: Mr. George C. Bernard Jr. and Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard, thank you for helping me reach my educational goals, investing in my education and leading me by example. I also give thanks to you for making my education a priority in your lives. Without you, this would not have been possible.

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I want to extend many thanks to each of the participants. I valued very much our interview time and appreciated you sharing your stories with me. Your voices have made this work possible and enjoyable.

To the members of my committee:

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Purpose and Significance of the Study

African Nova Scotians¹ have endured a long history of racism and systemic discrimination in Nova Scotian society since their arrival over three hundred years ago. One area where African Nova Scotians have faced inequality is the education system (Pachai, 1990). Although the African Nova Scotian community has placed value on education, their opportunities have been limited. Segregation in the education system was legally sanctioned prior to the 1950's because White Nova Scotians did not tolerate racial mixing. Under this segregated school system, African Nova Scotians did not receive equal access to resources and funding (Black Learners Advisory Committee [BLAC], 1994). African Nova Scotian students were educated in their own communities by teachers who were community members. When segregation ended and integration took place during the 1950's and 60's, African Nova Scotian students entered a hostile, racialized school system (BLAC, 1994). Since then, African Nova Scotian community members have advocated for a system that treats African Nova Scotian children as equals. The struggle for a system that validates and represents African Nova Scotian¹ students continues today.

¹ I use the term Black and African Canadian or Nova Scotian interchangeable throughout the paper. The term 'Black' is used frequently in the literature, which is drawn from Canada, the US, and Britain. As well, the term can succinctly refer to Africans living throughout the Diaspora. However, I prefer to use the term African Nova Scotian, or African Canadian, therefore, both terms are used.

The African Nova Scotian student experience generally has been analyzed by using race as the primary site of oppression. The purpose of this study is to extend that analysis and explore African Nova Scotian school experiences from the intersections of race, class, and gender oppression.

Centering Self

My interest in this topic was triggered by my own experiences in education, which were shaped by my race, class and gender. I am an African Nova Scotian woman who has experienced the public, private, and independent education systems in Nova Scotia. I experienced racism, classism, and sexism in each of these realms. My successful survival in education has been primarily shaped by my ability to analyze how the intersection of these forces has shaped my learning.

At the age of twelve I began private tutoring, thus beginning my interest in the role of educators in empowering learners. I have since worked for the Black Educators Association and for the Association of Black Social Workers with youth and adult learners. This research is rooted in my own experiences in education, as a learner and as an educator, and therefore will be an integral part of the work. Centering oneself is a key tenet in Africentric research. This will be explored in further detail in the methodology chapter of the thesis. My experiences as an educator in the African Nova Scotian

community have made me aware of the social issues that affect learning, particularly the intersection of race, class and gender.

Multiple Oppression

We live in a society that is plagued by oppression, which is described as “inhuman or degrading treatment of individuals or groups; hardship and injustice, brought about by the dominance of one group over another; the negative and demeaning exercise of power. Oppression often involves disregarding the rights of an individual or group, and thus a denial of citizenship” (Thompson, 1993, p. 31). Oppressed groups have not allowed themselves to be subject to such treatment without resistance. Resistance has taken many forms over different periods of time. For example, mass movements such as the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's and the Women's Movement that followed are examples of organized resistance. Grassroots, community based organizations have also resisted oppression on much smaller scales. However, disenfranchised groups and individuals can not critically examine how they are oppressed using a single site of analysis. Oppression occurs on many levels, and to varying degrees. I have developed the following chart, which describes the various characteristics of oppression.

Table 1

Characteristics of Oppression

Hidden	Certain forms of oppression are more visible than others and some may even be hidden. Oppression based on sexual orientation for instance, is a form that is not physically recognizable.
Multiple Layers	An individual's social location may result in oppression occurring in several different ways. For example, Black women are oppressed dually by race and gender oppression.
Unique to individuals yet simultaneously, a collective experience	Both the experiences of privilege and oppression are often shared among several individuals who belong to a particular cultural, racial or social group. Yet individuals can be oppressed in several ways as stated above, depending on where they fit in a multiaxal system of domination.
Varying degrees of severity	Various forms of oppression are manifested in different ways, depending on the type of oppression and how visible it is. Certain manifestations may be more or less severe than others.
Over Riding and underlying	Less severe forms of oppression may be underlying, and the manifestation may be subtler. Other forms, particularly those that are more visible may carry more severe penalties and therefore override the underlying oppression in an individual's life. However, various forms of oppression contribute to a total system of domination where there is no hierarchy.

African Nova Scotians are often oppressed in multiple ways, which extend from and contribute to racism. For example, class oppression is a reality for African Canadians who are over represented in the lower class and poor population and under represented in positions of power and influence. Furthermore, African Canadians do not fit traditional gender norms (Williams, 1998). These norms adversely affect African Nova Scotians boys and girls, “ therefore, [r]ace, class and gender must be recognized as the basis for according individuals and groups in society positions of respective power and prestige or marginality and subordination” (Dei et al., 1997, p. 104). The school system is a reflection of the larger society, therefore these intersections are important to include in exploring the African Nova Scotian education experience.

Race is often the salient site of analysis because it is the most visible site of oppression and one that all African Nova Scotian community members share. However, racism is compounded when it is intersected with class and/or gender oppression. Race, class and gender are three major sites of analysis, which are being used to unravel the complexity of multiple oppression. In this thesis, I will explore the concept of multiple oppression, and how it relates to African Nova Scotian school experiences.

Thesis Overview

Qualitative research was used to collect data for this thesis, while an Africentric paradigm guided the study. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology and

outlines how qualitative research and Africentric methodology can be used together.

Following the methodology, Chapter Four is a personal reflection on the research process. This chapter is a dialogue which resulted from this author being interviewed using the same interview guide that was developed for the participants.

The data analysis is presented in two chapters. Both of these chapters are divided into themes that emerged from individual interviews with the participants. The first data analysis chapter, follows Chapter Four, and is a reflection on the first half of the interview guide, which asked participants to reflect on their educational journeys.

Chapter Six, the second data analysis chapter presents the participants' responses to the second part of the interview guide. This section of the guide asked participants to respond to specific questions about race, class, gender and schooling.

The conclusion briefly discusses the data findings and includes a synopsis of the entire thesis. It also offers recommendations for community organizations, and further research.

The next chapter, which is a review of the relevant literature, examines the historical school experiences of African Nova Scotians. It also briefly reviews the concept of multiple oppression and the body of literature that has addressed race, class, gender and schooling.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review: African Nova Scotian Educational Experiences and the Impact of Multiple Oppression

In my experience as an educator in the African Nova Scotian community, I have seen children who have been streamed and pushed through the school system with low self-esteem and lacking basic academic skills required of their respective grade levels. They feel inadequate, place minimal value on education, and their academic performance suffers. Although many of Nova Scotia's schools are making an effort to teach cultural diversity, inequities still remain. Most curriculum still reflects dominant culture and values. Children from non dominant groups often continue to be stereotyped, streamed, labeled and have little desire to achieve in a Eurocentric system where they are not valued as individuals or as a group (BLAC, 1994).

In order to gain a full understanding of these current realities, we must look at the past events and experiences which have shaped the present. In this review of relevant literature, I begin with exploring the history of the segregated school system, the experiences in the integrated system, and the initiatives taken to address inequality issues in the Nova Scotia education system. The concept of multiple oppression and inequities based on race, class and gender oppression will also be examined in this literature review.

The Historical Context: African Nova Scotian Experiences in Education

Given the current state of the African Nova Scotian experience in the education system, one might ask: “Are African Nova Scotian students better off in segregated schools?” Asante (1992) postulates that “segregation was legally and morally wrong, but something was given to Black children in these schools that was just as important in some senses as the new books, better educated teachers, and improved buildings of this era. The children were centered in cultural ways that made learning interesting and intimate” (Asante, 1992, p. 29). After reflecting back on the past, it is clear that many students in the segregated school system had a very positive experience. Although denied adequate resources, the African Nova Scotian communities tried hard to provide the community children with quality education.

African Nova Scotian children were able to learn in an environment that was welcoming and culturally specific. They were educated in their own communities by teachers of African descent and racism was not an issue in the classroom. Many African Nova Scotians who had an opportunity to attend segregated school recall a drastic change when the system was integrated. The sense of community and friendly learning environment was lost. After a long history of inequality in the segregated school system in Nova Scotia, African Nova Scotian students were pushed from the margins to the mainstream education system (Evans and Tynes, 1995; Bernard, 1997). Currently, we feel the effects of that integration attempt, and seek to redress the many inequalities.

History of Segregation in Education

Nova Scotia has been known for its hostility towards African Nova Scotians, “since our arrival in the province almost three centuries ago, African Nova Scotian have been deprived of access to economic resources and educational opportunities” (BLAC report, Vol. 1, p. 63). A history of such hostility has served to marginalize African Nova Scotians from succeeding in Nova Scotia by placing barriers in the community, thus stopping them from receiving a proper education. Formal education was legally denied (Pachai, 1987). The White authority of the time did not want African Nova Scotians to succeed and wanted them to stay as cheap sources of labor. Because of the racist ideologies and institutions of the time, the aspirations of African descended people that settled in Nova Scotia could not be fulfilled (Clairmont and Magill, 1970). The foundation of the education system in Nova Scotia is based upon a history of racist legislative laws and unfair treatment by the government. Access to quality education is one of the best methods of social mobility, and African Nova Scotians were cognizant of this and wanted to provide opportunities for their communities (BLAC, 1994). However, with racist policies in place, this could not become a reality.

In the late 1700’s and early 1800’s, the Nova Scotia government left the education of African Nova Scotians to charity, volunteer organizations and philanthropic societies (Pachai, 1987). The schools were segregated, irregular with content and concerned more with the religious rather than academic components to education (Clairmont and Magill,

1970). White society set the education goals for the schools, which were based on racist, classist, and sexist principles, and decided what roles African Nova Scotians would play in society. African Nova Scotian boys and girls were taught gender specific labour skills that would prepare them to remain in subordinate positions in society (Pachai, 1987).

In 1811, the government enacted a law that would provide a subsidy to communities that could raise enough money to build a schoolhouse and hire a teacher (Clarke, 1989). This practice excluded many African Nova Scotian communities, as they were not able to provide such resources. The Education Act was amended in 1836, and with this came the development of a policy of segregation, which was financed by the government. This policy stated that the government would offer money to communities to build schools specifically for African Nova Scotian children, even in areas where schools already existed.

The African Nova Scotian community over time, fought against this legislation. They brought their message to the public and the government by using lawyers and favorable press coverage. Their argument was based on their position as citizens and ratepayers, and the fact that their children deserved a good education at the common schools (Fleming, 1980). Despite their protests and efforts, schools were still being built for African Nova Scotian children only.

In 1884, the Education Act had an amendment due to a debate sparked by a petition and challenge from the African Nova Scotian community (BLAC report, 1994). The new amendment stated the African Nova Scotian children must attend African Nova

Scotian schools, unless there were no African Nova Scotian schools within the community. This was a blow against the policy of segregated schools, but this would only occur in areas where the number of African Nova Scotian pupils was considered insufficient to justify the expense of having a separate African Nova Scotian school. The majority of African Nova Scotians lived in African Nova Scotian communities which tended to be isolated from the mainstream communities therefore this was a rare occurrence and integration did not occur.

By the end of the 19th century, most African Nova Scotian communities found it impossible to keep their schools open on a regular basis. In fact, there were many places in Nova Scotia where schools remained closed for years because no teacher could be found. Unfortunately, “without economic backing a shroud of uncertainty and inferiority enveloped [B]lack education” (Fleming, 1980).

The Integration Experience in Education

Into the 1940's, African Nova Scotian schools continued to receive considerably less funding, therefore, they were poorly maintained, had inadequate heating and were without running water. Teaching resources were limited and unless teachers provided their own, students often had to do without. These difficulties that African Nova Scotians faced in education reveal the oppressive nature of racism, and how it is manifested. Racist

policies created the necessary conditions that kept African Nova Scotians in the lowest class positions. In 1970, several years after integration, Clairmont and Magill documented that “although the Black community recognizes the value and importance of education, the socio-psychological consequences of their historical oppression obstruct current educational progress” (Clairmont and Magill, 1970, p. 26).

Because of their disadvantaged position in society, the education opportunities for African Nova Scotians throughout history were poor and inadequate. From the first School Act of 1811 to the Desegregation Act of 1954, the African Nova Scotian communities of Nova Scotia continued to petition government for equal access to education (Clarke, 1989). The government’s solution to segregation was assimilation, which further denied recognition of African Nova Scotian history and culture. African Nova Scotian students were forced to assimilate in an education system with which they could not identify. Systemic and institutional racism existed but was not addressed. The identity and self-esteem of each African Nova Scotian student suffered the effects of this reality.

During the 1960’s, the Department of Education acknowledged that there were problems in the education system that directly affected African Nova Scotian learners. In an effort to address the situation, they offered an incentive fund to help African Nova Scotian students with their secondary education. The incentive attempted to address financial needs, however it could have addressed a number of the other issues that needed

redress (BLAC Report, 1994). For example, incentives could have been centered on the content of studies to provide a curriculum that students could identify with. In 1974, the Black Educators Association petitioned the Department of Education to make amendments to the funding. As a result, the fund shifted its focus from secondary to post secondary education and became a “true incentive for Black students to enter university and enable the development of leadership ability” (BLAC report, 1994, p. 106).

It was during the 1970’s that African Nova Scotian parents decided to take legal action to initiate change through class action suits brought before the Nova Scotian Human Rights Commission (BLAC report, 1994). Around the same time an advocacy group was formed to help African Nova Scotian parents realize best education opportunities for their children. The group was called the Black Educators Association. The Association was a volunteer group comprised of educators and other concerned individuals who were determined to ensure that equal access and opportunities were realized for African Nova Scotian learners.

As a result of the perseverance of African Nova Scotians in the struggle for equality in education, a number of initiatives were taken to improve the quality and access to education for African Nova Scotians at the post secondary level. They include the following:

- In 1970, a transition year program was introduced at Dalhousie University as part of an affirmative action initiative. This program was initiated by African Canadian

graduate students at Dalhousie in the 1960's and was supported by local African Nova Scotian organizations including the African United Baptist Association, the Black United Front, the Negro Education Committee, and the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The program was designed to ease the entry of African Nova Scotians and First Nations students into university (BLAC, 1994).

- In 1975, Dalhousie University established a Center for African Studies which coordinated teaching, seminars, research and community publication programs in African Studies through the university. Unfortunately, this program no longer exists.
- In 1989, another program was offered to African Nova Scotian and First Nations students through the Dalhousie University Law School. The Indigenous Black and Mi'kmaq program was established to increase the number of African Nova Scotian and Aboriginal lawyers in the province.
- A significant accomplishment in the advancement of African Nova Scotian education was the establishment of the first Chair in African Canadian Studies at Dalhousie University. The African Canadian Studies Chair was announced in 1991. The reason for this national Chair being housed in Nova Scotia is two fold.

Nova Scotia is home to the earliest African Canadian settlers and also maintains the largest per capita indigenous African Canadian population in the country. The Chair is named in honor of the first African Nova Scotian to graduate from Dalhousie Law School in 1898, James Robinson Johnson.

Legal action in the 1970's resulted in a few gains, but it was not until a racial incident between students at the Cole Harbor High School in Dartmouth in the winter of 1989 that serious steps were taken toward improvements in the Nova Scotia education system (Clarke, 1989). Following that incident in 1990, the Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) was set up to improve the quality of education for African Nova Scotians. The objectives of the committee were to increase access to educational opportunities, promote a better learning environment, raise educators' awareness of racism within the educational system, adapt anti racist policies and teaching approaches, and to provide student support mechanisms. Another role of the BLAC has been able provide support to parents and educate them on how to work with the education system for positive change (Kakembo and Upshaw, 1998).

BLAC published a report that documented the African Nova Scotian experience in the education system and made several recommendations to address the systemic inequality in the system. The BLAC report focuses on how racism is manifested in the education system and how it has impacted on African Nova Scotian learners and the African Nova Scotian community (BLAC, 1994). It also addressed the impact of poverty

on African Nova Scotian learners and the intersection of race and class. It documented a number of current struggles including low teacher expectations, streaming, high drop out rates, lack of an appropriate curriculum and the importance of anti racism each of which are described below:

- **Low teacher expectations**

The attitudes held by teachers often reflect those of the wider society. The negative images of African Canadian people can be expressed through classroom interaction. As a result, teachers often do not expect African Nova Scotian students to excel far beyond stereotypical images. Students are acutely aware of low teacher expectations and struggle to succeed in school without the appropriate supports (Kelly, 1998; Mirza, 1992; Sewell, 1997).

- **Streaming**

Streaming involves encouraging or pushing students into special education, general or vocational programs as opposed to academic or university preparatory programs. African Nova Scotian students are disproportionately placed in these programs and this has had adverse effects as general programs steer students towards subordinate positions in the workforce (Thomas, 1979).

- **Drop out Rates**

African Canadians are over represented in the school drop out population. The BLAC report noted students not relating to the school system and boredom as the top reasons for high drop out rates. Employment, personal reasons, racism and being 'pushed out' were respectively the other reasons given for leaving school early.

- **Curriculum:**

School curriculum does not adequately reflect the diverse Canadian population (BLAC Report, 1994; Kelly 1998; Kunjufu, 1986). The experiences of African Canadians are often delivered with racist overtones and the contributions of people of African descent are not recognized. This experience is coupled with the fact that African Nova Scotian learners lack role models and have access to few African Nova Scotian educators in the system (BLAC Report, 1994). Brittan and Maynard (1984) state that even in cases where Black culture and courses have been included in educational institutions, they have been integrated at a marginal, subordinate level and "are victims of the 'ghetto effect' " (Brittan and Maynard, 1984, p. 160). Only celebrating African Canadians during African Heritage month, or offering culturally specific courses only at the elective level at sporadic times are examples of how the African Nova Scotian experience in the school curriculum and culture are ghettoized.

In the fall of 1995, through the passage of Bill No. 39, the Black Learners Advisory Committee was elevated to the Council on African Canadian Education. For the first time in history, African Canadian Education was part of the Nova Scotia Education Act. The Council on African Canadian Education provides guidance to the Minister of Education and Culture on programs and services in public schools and on adult education (Kakembo and Upshaw, 1998).

The advancement of the Black Learners Advisory Committee to the Council on African Canadian Education is only one of the recommendations made by the committee and accepted by the Nova Scotia government. Another significant change, is the transfer of the Regional Educators Program to the management of the Black Educators Association of Nova Scotia in 1995.

A third major change initiated by the work of the Black Learners Advisory Committee has been the establishment of the African Canadian Services Division within the Provincial Department of Education and Culture. The African Canadian Services Division was established in 1996 as part of the program branch of the Department of Education and Culture. The purpose of the Division is to implement the Department's response to the forty-six recommendations made through the Black Learners Advisory Committee's Report on Education. The scope of their service covers the public school system, adult education programs, and courses and services for African Nova Scotian learners. Cross-cultural and race relations training and information is also provided through this Division for students and teachers.

In sum, racist laws and policies have shaped many historical experiences of African Nova Scotians in education. As a result, the opportunities for social mobility in the African Nova Scotian community have been limited. The contemporary initiatives reflect the African Nova Scotian community resistance to the inequities they face. The African Nova Scotian community presented a united front as they fought against the oppression they faced with the education system. Their tenacity has resulted in more opportunities for today's African Nova Scotian school population.

The struggle was based on the collective experience of racism. Nevertheless the African Nova Scotian community faced other forms of oppression based on class and gender. The experience of multiple oppression in the African Nova Scotian community has not been explored in depth as race remains the salient site of action and resistance in the community. The second part of the literature review explores the concept of multiple oppression and how it relates to school experiences and people of African descent.

The Connections between Race, Class, and Gender

Oppression can be specific in that it is manifested in one form or another, such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, disablism, ageism and so on. But these forms also interconnect. While it is not possible in the context of this thesis to explore in detail the complexity of conceptualizing the intersection of multiple forms of oppression, this section attempts to illustrate the importance of a shift away from a simple focus on race to

understanding the way race interconnects with gender, class, sexual orientation, and other forms of oppression.

The important point is that one aspect of ourselves should not be used to define the whole of us, as this is ‘destructive and fragmenting’ (Dalrymple and Burke, 1995 quoting Lorde, 1984). For example, when race is used as the point of definition, other experiences of oppression and/or privilege are not addressed. Oliver (1992) describes this as it relates to persons with disabilities. He states that, “the process of identity formation in respect to disabled people cannot be understood without reference to the historical process leading to the formation of cultural images of disabled people...These images fail to take account of the ways in which other factors like race or gender may structure the process of identity formation” (Oliver, 1992, p. 76). People who are dually oppressed are often forced to seek allegiance with only one of the groups they identify with.

For African Nova Scotians, most often it is race, because it is typically the most visible characteristic and therefore the first factor by which they are prejudged. It is also the only form of oppression that all members of the community share. When all community members share the same experience of racism it becomes easier to form a collective voice. Yet when other forms of oppression are included, which are not shared with the entire community, it can become more challenging to form a collective and it can create divisions. This is illustrated in Table 1, which highlights the complexities of interlocking oppressions.

When race is the primary site of oppression, it is difficult to see how we are oppressed in multiple ways and participate in the oppression of others. For instance, Black men may not always be cognizant of the ways that they participate in patriarchy and sexism, or the ways in which they are oppressed themselves through patriarchal norms. The historical and contemporary experiences of Black women provide critical insights regarding multiple oppression. Black women have “worked for over three hundred years...discriminated against both as Black and as female, they are the most disadvantaged race-sex group. For three centuries, they have been consistently undereducated, underemployed and underpaid” (Scott, 1991, p.24).

Black feminists have attempted to raise issues of multiple oppression, and they have developed a model of feminism that includes the unique perspectives of Black women. Black feminists have also challenged mainstream feminism. At the beginning of the feminist movement, all women were assumed to be a heterogeneous group. The initial theorizing and practices excluded many women and ignored their differences. Bannerji (1995) and Collins (1990) discuss how racist thinking is a part of feminism, and how it is impossible for White women to escape racist thinking, when it is an integral part of our everyday lives, and is a part of our ‘common sense’ (Brown, 1991; Collins, 1990; Ng, 1991). Vijay (1996) and Bannerji (1995) discuss the difficulty of attempting to “add on” the oppression of women of color to feminism. Even in instances where mainstream feminists have begun to examine racism and rethink feminist frameworks, the approaches taken have been over simplistic and have not fully grasped the realities faced by women

of color. The work of Black feminists has enriched feminist theory and practice nevertheless, it remains a struggle for them to push their work from the margins to the mainstream.

Breaking the silence about sexism in the Black community has been a major goal for Black feminists. Hooks (1988, 1994) discusses the lack of a gender lens in Black communities, particularly amongst Black women and the need to confront differences. She questions why Black women are reluctant to use feminism to challenge sexism and other gender specific issues that affect them such as the feminization of poverty and single parenthood, both of which are more prevalent in Black communities (Davis, 1983). Gender and other forms of oppression such as ableism are not interrogated with the same critical lens as race. hooks contends that until all of the issues that affect the community are confronted, healing will not take place.

Gender roles and expectations are also prevalent in the Black community as well as other gender specific issues such as violence against women. Black women are expected to fill traditional female roles such as wife, mother and caregiver, providing primary care in the home. In addition, they are expected to work outside of the home to help financially sustain the family. Community activism is also expected, as Black women play a major role in the church and other organizations and groups. Black women are expected to be contemporary matriarchs and guardians of the generations following the tradition of their ancestors. Outside of the Black community, Black women must live

with the realities of both gender and race oppression. For instance, there is a lack of culturally specific services for Black women such as women's shelters, and counseling services.

Racism and sexism, as well as gender roles and expectations, place an enormous amount of stress and pressure on Black women (Scott, 1991). Moreover, Black women have become single parents at an alarming rate in the past thirty years (Collins, 1990). With a large number of African Nova Scotian households headed by women the boundaries between male and female roles are shifted. Black women as single parents must often play traditional female and male roles (Collins, 1990). This places a strain on male-female relationships in the Black community as Black women often feel resentment, hurt and anger towards Black men who can feel inadequate.

Both Black men and women are also subject to several race and gender specific stereotypes. Table 2, on the next page, compares the stereotypes that Black men and women are subject to. These stereotypes which are rooted in history², illustrate how Black people are portrayed in the media, and how they are perceived by mainstream society.

²For instance, the maid and nanny stereotype of Black women are reflections of the roles that Black women played in slavery and following slavery up until the later half of this century when those were the only occupations open to Black women. Present day systemic racism and sexism accounts for Black women being over represented in those occupations, which results in over generalizations, stereotypes and the expectation that Black women are only fit for this type of work.

Table 2**Black Male and Female Gender Stereotypes**

<u>BLACK MEN</u>	<u>BLACK WOMEN</u>
Lazy	Single, welfare mother
Sexually charged	Sexually experienced
Drug dealer	Maid
Pimp	Nanny
Violent	Aggressive
Robber, Thief	Over bearing
Rapist	Lazy, dependent
Stupid (Bernard, 1996; Sewell, 1997)	Loud (Collins, 1990; Scott, 1991)

As with Black women, stereotypes used to define Black men are externally imposed and impact on schooling, employment opportunities, social relations and other experiences. The stereotypes are extreme rigid constructions of gender roles, and the pressure to conform to stereotypes is present both within and outside of the community.

Models of masculinity are influenced by the internalization of Eurocentric models and values. This unyielding framework creates divisions among Black men. In his doctoral research, Sewell (1997) postulated that Black men are restricted to two models of masculinity: 'conformist', which is a male that conforms to Eurocentric definitions of masculinity; and the 'rebel' who emulates the negative stereotypes described above. These two models create no space for alternative forms of masculinity. The realities of Black masculinity are much more complex than this dualism allows. Sewell describes Black masculinity as a "subordinate masculinity shaped by many contradictions. The internalization and incorporation of the dominant definitions of masculinity have arisen in an attempt to contest conditions of dependency, racism and powerlessness" (Sewell, 1997, p. 178).

Williams (1998) and Thomas (1998) discuss how essentialist thinking is not effective in dismantling forms of race and gender oppression. Williams discusses how essentialist thinking around race involves the belief in one true African cultural system, and how this denies the diverse experiences of all Africans throughout the Diaspora. Thomas discusses how issues of race in the Black community are identified within rigid constructs around concepts of Blackness. He identifies this as the, "jargon of authenticity", which leaves no space for diversity, particularly the experiences of gay Black people. Thomas and Williams confront the contradictory nature of homophobia and heterosexism in the Black community. They assert that Black people, particularly those, who claim to have a collective consciousness about race, have adopted a framework

rooted in racist ideology, one that they resist. Thomas views this as a form of internalized racism.

Williams illustrates this point by analyzing the underlying reasons why gays and lesbians are chastised in the Black community. Many people in Black communities assume that gay and lesbians further stigmatize Blackness and the Black family, both of which have been pathologized by the dominant White culture. Black people may also be afraid of giving up unearned privilege gained from being heterosexual (Williams, 1998). Heterosexism is often the only form of privilege known to Black people.

Within the gay community, Mercer and Julien (1988) discuss the need to breakdown the essentialist thinking that takes place when only oppression based on sexual orientation is validated. The mainstream gay community must provide space to confront the multiple oppression of gay and lesbian people. Black gay people are in a difficult position when race is left out of the gay community and heterosexism/homophobia is not acknowledged in the Black community.

Fiona Williams (1998) notes that essentialism can be used proactively in some contexts, using a model called strategic essentialism, which was developed by Rhadha Jhappan (1997). This model views “ identity as a function of context. It allows us to stress one or several aspects of our identity according to the axis of oppression at issue in particular situations without tying individuals to a specific identity for all time and purposes. Strategic essentialism requires that essential notions of identity be employed

only for emancipatory use, not oppressive purposes” (Williams, 1998, p. 179, quotes Jhappan, 1997). This model presents a useful strategy that oppressed individuals and groups can use in the struggle for equality. However, Williams cautions that this model is not unproblematic. To begin with, how can we be sure of emancipatory use? In addition, there are issues with asserting a shared identity that must be addressed. For instance, even if asserting a shared identity is used for emancipatory purposes, individuals who experience multiple oppression can still get caught at the intersections. As demonstrated in Table 1 on, hidden forms, and multiple layers of oppression have an impact on the way people experience oppression in their daily lives.

While race and gender have been addressed primarily through Black feminism, there is a paucity of literature that deals with issues of race and class. American literature documents that post civil rights era advancements increased class divisions that “...not only threatened racial unity, but also seemed to stand in contradiction to the principles of equality which was the announced goal of the movement” (Kunjufu, 1988, quotes Steele, 1988, p. 44). Multiple class levels in the Black community have resulted in varying perspectives on race and class. However, the literature does not document any class warfare in the Black community. There is evidence that both supports and disproves the notion that the Black middle class has abandoned lower class Black people (Durant and Sparrow, 1997).

The literature also reveals that the position of the Black middle class is relative in comparison to their White and Black counterparts (Pinkney, 1985). Within the Black

community, there is a rising group of middle class professionals, who may be considered upper middle class in comparison to other Black people in their community living in poverty. However, the Black middle class may also be considered lower middle class or even working class when compared to White middle class people. Individual and systemic racism in education, employment, housing etc., accounts for the gap. The fact that Black families lack the experience of generational economic well being also accounts for this gap. Although the Black middle class continues to grow, many inequities still remain, as an underclass of poor and working class Black people continues to grow at an even faster rate. Poverty continues to plague Black communities at alarming rates (Pinkney, 1985).

Class privilege has allowed Black middle class people to experience luxuries not afforded to Black people in the past such as increased education opportunities, better housing, etc. However, class privilege does not eliminate or diminish racial oppression. Black people are still subject to racism and other forms of discrimination, regardless of their economic status. In fact, Pinkney (1985), postulates that the Black middle class may even face more discrimination, as they are more exposed to White people and environments, through employment, housing and social connections. Others may argue that lower class Black people may face more discrimination, as they live with the dual oppression of classism and racism.

Do these experiences of class differences threaten racial unity? The Black community is at the beginning stages of examining class relations, therefore the extent to

which class relations affect the Black community has not been thoroughly researched. 'Middle-classness' is a post 1950's phenomenon in the Black community that has not gained much prominence in either empirical study or grassroots awareness. Does the underclass envy or resent the upper class? Does class create divisions in the community? Do the middle class support or reject the lower class? These are questions that should be explored in the community and in research. However, hooks (1990) states that "so much of Black life and underclass Black life is determined by race that race is very much talked about...[p]art of race, class and gender oppression is that we have not been given a discursive practice that is oppositional" (hooks and Childers, 1990, pp. 64-67). It is difficult to get to these questions when race continues to take prominence in everyday realities and community activism.

There have been attempts to theorize about race and class. However, the literature discusses how these theories, particularly Marxism, cannot grasp the complexity of race and class oppression by using a purely economic framework. There is a danger in reducing racism to economic forces, as "racism becomes just another aspect of an ideology conceived as a mere reflection of economic forces. The specific characteristics of racism and its consequence are lost" (Brittan and Maynard, 1984, p. 43). Brittan and Maynard also argue that the "history and culture of racial groups will remain in a classless society" (1984, p. 43). They also question how a purely capitalist framework can explain hatred and violence. Finally, they note the fact that "Black Nationalist movements have transcended class-lines" (1984 p. 49).

Class relations have always been racialized. They are accentuated for women and ethnic groups because “gender and race merely emphasize the impact of disadvantages experienced by the working class as a whole” (Brittan and Maynard, 1984, p. 36). How class experiences are played out is dependent on other factors such as race, gender, ability etc. For instance, the fact that African Canadians are over represented in the working class and poor population is directly related to the effects of racism and a historical system of domination. Slavery for instance was created to satisfy the economic needs of Europeans. Racist ideologies, theories, law, and practices were created to sustain the system. After emancipation, the racism continued, as Black people were denied access to employment, quality housing and education. Thus race and class relations work together in the total system of domination, as “there was a consistent underlying principle. Blacks were acceptable in circumstances of economic necessity when they could provide a needed service” (Walker, 1985, p. 12).

Race, Class, Gender, and Schooling

Although the historical experiences of domination have been shaped by race, class and gender oppression, racism was the issue that the African Nova Scotian community members publicly fought against. Recent literature documenting the African Canadian school experience reveals a need to address race, class and gender as school experiences continue to be shaped by these intersections, and “...are inextricably linked to how social

realities are experienced and negotiated” (Dei et al., 1997, p. 85). Literature that addresses multiple oppression in schooling, particularly the African Canadian experience is scarce. I have examined the following issues that reflect the intersecting nature of oppression and the impact on the schooling of African Canadian students: race and class; and race and gender. These are each briefly explored below.

Race and Class

The education initiatives aimed at addressing systemic racism have had a significant impact for African Nova Scotian learners. There has been an increase in the number of African Nova Scotians who have accessed higher education. Nevertheless, African Nova Scotians continue to be represented in disproportionate levels in Nova Scotia’s poorest population (Bernard and Bernard, 1999). Therefore, “...[t]he issue of poverty must [be] seen to have a significant impact on the educational success of students...” (Dei et al., 1997, p. 97). Narratives in an ethnographic study by Dei et al., reflect the marginality that African Canadian students feel when they face both race and class oppression. Their experiences reflect a school culture that privileges White, middle class students. Thus, “...[R]ace and class... provide the basis for differential treatment of Black students in both school and society” (Dei et al., 1997, p. 94).

African Canadian students who are not affected by class oppression face a different set of issues. Middle class African Canadian students are often the minority

within their peer groups, which can also lead to marginalization and alienation from the group with whom there should be identification and support. They are more likely to share similar class experiences with White peers, where they also experience isolation. The experience of dual isolation based on race and class can occur regardless of class position. This experience has not been well documented in the literature.

Both African Canadian and lower class students are more likely to be represented in the lower school achievement groups. Class affects the extent to which issues such as streaming and drop out rates affect African Canadian students, “social class accounts for much of the variation in educational achievement by race and ethnicity” (Ornstein and Levine, 1989, p. 19). Dei et al., note a “high percentage of the drop out sample discussed an intersection of economic factors related to dropping out” (Dei et al., 1997, p. 96). Socio- economic factors were also listed among the categories that emerged in researching the state of African Nova Scotian learners (BLAC Report, 1994, Vol. 1). It was stated that “low incomes limit the ability of families to acquire the best possible education for their children, and access to post secondary education is difficult, if not impossible” (BLAC report, 1994, Vol. 1, p. 37).

A lack of financial resources poses a threat to the upward mobility that education can provide as, “Black enrollment in post secondary education is one of the areas in which the greatest advances have been made in recent decades” (Pinkney, 1985, p. 136). However, “economic pressures are forcing more Black students to terminate their formal

education with the completion of high school” (Pinkney, 1985, p. 158). Dei et al., document that economic pressure also helps African Canadian students to clearly see the advances of a post secondary education. The “understanding of the economics of schooling seemed to be the single motivation that kept students in school” (Dei et al., 1997, p. 92). This can also cause an extreme amount of pressure to excel in academics in the face of systemic racism.

Race and Gender

The Dei et al. study of African Canadian students’ perspectives on inclusiveness found that “there are incidents of poorly veiled racism and sexism, particularly in the comments and actions which carry implicit and subtle messages of racial, gender, and sexual differentiation. These actions only reinforce students’ feeling of alienation” (Dei et al., 1997, p. 68). Gender provides another diverse experience for African Canadian students. “Male and female students of varying racial groups [have a]...differential experience based on race in the acquisition of gender identities via schooling” (Grant, 1992, p. 92).

African Canadian girls face sexism from the mainstream population as well as within their peer group, as “[b]lack female students feel a deep sense of disrespect from Black male students” (Dei et al., 1997, p. 100). The Dei et al. study also revealed that

“[M]ale and female students noted that there is heavier surveillance of Black males . . . some female students could not respond to gender differences in their own experiences but spoke about the treatment of Black males” (Dei et al., 1997, p. 98). The research reveals that African Canadian girls could identify with the gendered nature of their male counterpart experiences yet could not articulate their own experiences of gender oppression. This is reflective of typical gender stereotypes and characteristics, where females are expected to be caregivers, thus putting others before themselves. This affects Black females’ ability to analyze their own oppression.

In a comparative study of African American and White elementary school girls, Grant (1992) found that “African American girls became emotional caretakers for other students” (Grant, 1992, p. 98). The perception Grant received from teachers who were also interviewed in the study was that “African American girl’s social deeds rather than their intellectual ones, appeared to be central in their evaluations” (Grant, 1992, p. 106). This lack of attention directed to intellectual capabilities position African girls to be in subordinate positions by encouraging them to pursue employment in the service sector, where they are over represented, and reinforce certain stereotypes related to Black women. African American girls “receive less encouragement to strive toward high paying, high prestige occupations where women of color are grossly under represented” (Grant, 1992, p. 109).

African American girls were also found to be on the margins of peer subgroups and less central in the minds of teachers, in comparison to other students (Grant, 1992, p. 107). African girls have also been invisible to researchers, according to Mirza (1992) who describes a lack of research in this area. In her study of Black British girls, Mirza notes that when research has been done on African girls, it has focused on under achievement, which is also the case for African boys (Mirza, 1992). Despite these circumstances and the research that would suggest otherwise, Mirza (1992) and Coultas (1989) document that:

Black female pupils reproduce their own ideology in the face of racism and have high self esteem because they have the support of family, friends, and community as counter culture to the dominant culture. This leads them to resist, negotiate and sometimes overcome the obstacles to their intellectual development... it proves that many Black females in schools are highly motivated to learn, despite outward manifestations of disinterest (Mirza, 1992, quoting Coultas, 1989, p. 292).

Mirza (1992) also noted that “[w]hen studies that actually considered the issue of [B]lack females in schools... they were characterized by a distant underlying ideological premise...the central role of the Black mother” (Mirza, 1992, p. 15). How have gender expectations, which are transferred from generation-to-generation, impacted on the educational experiences of African girls? African mothers equip their daughters with a

strong sense of pride in their identity as well as tools to become self sufficient and not dependent. However, African boys do not always appreciate this independence. Kelly (1998) notes that for young African Canadian women, “showing an ‘attitude’ was viewed as a positive form of assertion... showing attitude can be seen as a form of resistance to potential male dominance, it is a way for the young women to demand respect” (Kelly, 1998, p. 108). Kelly postulated that African Canadian male perceptions of female identity have come to be affected by a dominant image in White society. Nevertheless, “young Black women showed a concern for the social and academic welfare of the young men and saw women and men as suffering the same problem of racism” (Kelly, 1998, p. 108). The collective experience of racism bonded the genders.

Teen pregnancy was documented in the BLAC report (1994) as a major issue relating to African Canadian girls and schooling. Pregnancy affects the drop out rates, as many African Canadian girls who become pregnant are forced to leave school and find it difficult to return afterwards. The pressures of teenage parenting, past experiences as well as the lure of public assistance, make a return to the education system unlikely for most teen parents (BLAC report, 1994, p. 67). How teen pregnancy affects the school experience of African males is not well documented. This may be related to the fact that women are often left with the primary or full responsibility for child rearing. Thus the research that is done on teen pregnancy is focused on female experience.

An examination of race and gender experiences with African youth must include a perspective that examines the contours of gender oppression on both females and males,

because of the negative impact of patriarchy on Black men. Bernard (1996) argues that Black men have been locked outside typical masculine identity constructs, and therefore they create their own definitions. This process likely begins in the early educational experiences.

Outside the research on Black underachievement, “little has been written on the ‘total’ range of Black male experience in school and particularly the role of their subcultures in school” (Sewell, 1997, p. xi). However, there have been studies done on the interaction between Black boys and their teachers in elementary schools, with the conclusion that there is a conspiracy to exclude them, beginning as early as grade three (Kunjufu, 1986). Black boys may be the first Black males White teachers will have contact with. Kunjufu describes a frequent scenario when “a Black boy looks at the female teacher with a look of defiance...the ‘showdown’ between female teachers and Black boys... the showdown will not always match strength against strength. Some female teachers are *afraid* of Black boys” (Kunjufu, 1986, pp. 18-19). Kunjufu believes that “you can not teach a child while afraid. This may be the reason why only 45 percent of all secondary teachers are women. Male teachers can be found in the high schools and possibly in upper elementary grades. The problem is we are losing large numbers of Black boys before they reach grade eight through twelve” (Kunjufu, 1986, pp. 18-19). Kunjufu questions the ability of these teachers (who are afraid of Black boys) to teach a child whom they do not understand. He suggests that in order to save Black boys, teachers must become aware of the cultural ethos of the Black community, and the cultural

strengths of the Black community must be transferred into the classroom experience (Kunjufu, 1986, p. 16).

The BLAC report attributes the fear of Black men to media images, and the problem escalates for Black boys who are “physically massive” (BLAC report, 1994, Vol. 3, p. 22). There is a serious lack of positive male role models and mentors for young Black boys. They end up feeling rejected and frustrated and at best they channel their anger through positive outlets such as sports and at worst they devalue education and are lured into participating in the illegal economy (BLAC report, 1994, Vol. 3, p. 75).

In his British study, Sewell (1997) describes the issues that African Caribbean boys face once they reach high school. He found that more than twice as many African Caribbean boys were “suspended than what would have been predicated on the basis of their representation in the school population” (Sewell, 1997, p. xiv). The BLAC report also documents that African Nova Scotian students were more likely to be suspended than other students (BLAC, Vol. 2, p. 20). Other issues that African Caribbean boys faced in Sewell’s study included greater scrutiny from their teachers compared to other ethnic groups and a disproportionate amount of disciplinary power. The stereotypical images relating to adolescent African youth “informs a particular image in school. Any expression of ‘Black culture’ could be perceived as a threat” (Sewell, 1997, p. 176). There is pressure from both school authorities and peers to conform to the stereotypes and Sewell notes that “African Caribbean boys are not passive subjects in the face of

racialized and gendered stereotyping. They are active agents in the discourses which appear to be seductively positive but are in essence racist” (Sewell, 1997, p. 177). Kelly (1998) found that stereotypes relating to African Canadian youth, males in particular included an aptitude towards sports. This stereotype “tends to reinforce the idea that physical prowess is divorced from intellectual ability” (Kelly, 1998, p. 71).

The literature has begun to address how students of African descent throughout the Diaspora are affected by race, class and gender oppression. However, in conclusion, I have found that there is scant attention paid to the interlocking nature of race, class and gender. While some authors have written on race and class, and on race and gender, the interlocking nature of the three oppressions has not been a site for analysis. It is my contention that race is the most salient form of oppression for African Nova Scotian students; gender and class oppression, particularly the latter are not viewed or analyzed with the same critical lens. It is hoped that the research reported in this thesis will help to fill that gap and contribute to the goal of equality of opportunity and experience for African Nova Scotian learners.

The next chapter outlines Africentricity, the framework guiding this study as well as qualitative research which is the method that was used to collect and analyze the data.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology: An Africentric Approach to Qualitative Research

This was an exploratory study, which examined African Nova Scotian student experiences, and the intersections of race, class, and gender oppression. This chapter examines the methodology and research tools used to collect and analyze data. An African centered paradigm was used to guide this research, while qualitative methods were used to collect and analyze data, each of which are described below. The first part of the chapter discusses Africentricity. In the second part I outline qualitative research, the research sample, data collection and data analysis.

Origins of Africentricity

African centered ideas, thoughts and beliefs can be traced back to community activists who emerged as early as the late 17th century through to the civil rights era. It is argued that these activists who included Sojourner Truth, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. DuBois, and Malcolm X were the first group of Africentric thinkers (Okafor, 1996). These thinkers did not identify themselves as Africentrists however, their beliefs and actions mirror the current Africentric model. It was not until the post civil rights era that a growing body of scholars and professionals began to emerge who pushed Africentric thought into the academy and larger community. Notable events during this era include

the introduction of Kwanzaa, a cultural and spiritual holiday created by Dr. Maulana Karenga, and the development of the first Ph.D. granting program in African Centered Studies at Temple University, Philadelphia that is headed by Dr. Molefi K. Asante. Asante coined the term 'Afrocentric' and has been one of the foremost scholars who has written and presented extensively on Africentric theory and practice.

Africentricity

Afrocentricity is a term that is often used in the African centered literature, particularly the earlier works. However, for the purpose of this project, the term Africentricity or African centered is being used. The term Afrocentricity is linked, not purposely, to the term Afro, which is an African hairstyle or texture. Therefore, I feel that the alternative terms are most appropriate. I use the term Africentricity that is linked to Africa.

Purpose and Tenets of Africentricity

Africentricity can be described as a theoretical framework for theory and practice, in a variety of disciplines, which is grounded in the reality of African people (Johnson, 1994). Africentricity "places African people at the center of analysis rather than at the margin as incidentals, sidekicks, and afterthoughts" (Johnson, 1994, p. 234). Africentric theory promotes an African centered worldview, and more importantly a way of life.

Africentric theory is one that is solely committed to the following:

- demystifying the myths, negative attitudes and stereotypes about African people;
- understanding their oppression, way of life and promoting personal, structural, cultural, political, social, and economic change and equality;
- promoting an alternative method of evaluation of Africans that is most reflective of their cultural and political reality (Schiele, 1996, p. 286).

Several theoretical approaches in Eurocentric discourse have attempted to explain and come to terms with the human behaviors of African people. Some attempts are in fact premised on racist, sexist, imperialist, and colonialist values and beliefs (Stark, 1993; Williams, 1998). By using the fundamentals of Africentric theory, the various forms of oppression that Africans have faced can be analyzed as the root of the human problems that affect African people (Schiele, 1996). Africentric theory challenges Eurocentric ethnocentrism, which refers to the European thoughts, ideas, behaviors, and attitudes, which have dominated our laws and all major decision making in Western society. Under this hegemony, all other experiences are subordinate, on the fringes of the European experience (Schiele, 1994; Swigonski, 1996). African people throughout history have been colonized, enslaved and continue to be severely oppressed under these laws and discriminatory practices (Schiele, 1994). Therefore, Africentrists argue that an European analysis of African people is not accurate because Africans are placed in the margins, not the center of analysis. For instance, when African history and culture is analyzed from an European ethnocentric perspective it is pathologized as primitive, uncivilized and

unimportant. Africentric theory calls for an analysis that would view the history and culture of Africans from a first voice perspective³. Africentricity challenges African descended people to decolonize our minds, create our own accounts, record our own history, and live our lives according to our own traditional African values and beliefs.

Africentric World View/Way of Life

An Africentric worldview refers to the patterns of living that are unique to many African people. These patterns have survived colonialism, slavery, imperialism, and migration and remain as a cultural way of life for Africans in the Diaspora. These patterns are based on traditional African philosophical assumptions (Warfield, 1990). They focus on the following:

- **Interdependence:** a belief that all elements of the universe are considered to be dependent upon one another;
- **Collectivity:** detecting similar characteristics among people, creating inclusiveness. A collective concept of human beings which is key to survival;
- **Spirituality:** the non-material or invisible substance that connects all elements to the universe;
- **Adaptability:** the ability to change or modify based on environmental requirements;

³ In this context, a first voice perspective refers to members of oppressed groups speaking from their own experience. This perspective is often necessary, as oppressed groups have been silenced, ignored and misrepresented.

- **Appropriateness:** to behave, speak and act in a way that is expected and required by the social group of a particular age, position or station;
- **Cooperativeness:** the ability to share and work harmoniously with others;
- **Excellence:** the concept of acting or performing to the best of one's ability;
- **Inclusiveness:** the concept where persons are included or drawn into a group as opposed to excluded;
- **Mutual Aid:** a support system based on interdependence where members take care of each others basic family and community needs;
- **Natural Goodness:** belief that all people are good by nature;
- **Respect:** to give deference to others, particularly persons older than oneself;
- **Unconditional Love:** the concept that a person is loved without artificial or materialistic limitations;
- **Individual and Collective Consciousness:** "a clear sense of oneself and the African community at large" (Warfield, 1990, pp. 24-25).

Many of these Africentric traditions have been used as survival mechanisms.

When faced with the adversity of slavery and colonialism, holding on to these values helped Africans to survive. The origins of these traditions are rooted in Africa, however, they have always been present in our communities here in Nova Scotia. The African United Baptist Association (AUBA) which was formed in 1854 (Pachai, 1990) is an example of this. The AUBA recognized the need for Africans to be united in their

spiritual and community needs. However, it has only been in recent times that these traditional values have been documented and validated in academic circles.

Africalogy

The actual Africentric study of African concepts, issues and behaviors is referred to as “Africalogy” (Asante, 1990). Africalogy is research that is framed from an Africentric perspective. Principles of Africentricity such as those described on the previous two pages guide this research study. Schiele describes that epistemologically, Africalogy places value on emotion or feeling; and ontologically, all elements of the universe, including people are spiritual (Schiele, 1994, p. 31). According to Asante (1990) an Africalogist serves three primary functions:

- “to provide logical explanations of African people’s experiences from the origin of civilization to the present;
- to develop a holistic approach to the role of African world culture;
- to explain the behavior of African people by interpretations and analysis derived from an “Afrocentric perspective” (p. 37).

The perspectives of non-dominant groups have been excluded from both the constructing and conducting of research. Research influences public policy, individual beliefs and assumptions. Therefore, research that has been conducted on non-dominant

groups has distorted and misrepresented their experiences and has been used to further marginalize them. It continues to be a struggle for marginalized groups to resist this form of oppression as they are unequally represented and not adequately supported in the academy. We must create new ways of doing research on and for ourselves as African people. It is important that Africentric research continues to move from the margins, to the center to provide new and innovative frameworks for doing research. Africentric principles do not have to be kept within the African communities. Many of the principles are ones that can benefit the larger society. Furthermore, Asante states that Africology can be done collaboratively with African and non-African researchers (Asante, 1990).

In her doctoral research, Ruth Reviere (1996) set out five canons of Africentric research based on the principles of Africentricity and guidelines for Africology described above. Below, after a brief description I discuss how this research applies to the five canons set out by Reviere (1996).

Kujitoa (commitment).

This canon requires that “the researcher emphasize considerations of how knowledge is structured and used over the need for dispassion and objectivity” (Reviere, 1996, p. 100).

In this research I was able to apply Kujitoa by making a commitment to having the participants voices heard. I tried to accomplish this by having the participants involved in the research process by sharing the transcriptions with them, and giving them a chance to participate in the analysis.

Ujamaa (community).

Ujamaa requires that “the researcher reject the researcher/subject separation and not presume it. Theory and practice should be informed by the actual and aspired interests of the community” (Reviere, 1996, pp. 100-101).

Subjectivity is named and is central to this research. My educational experiences have been woven into this work. In addition, my own connection and work in the community was instrumental in deciding on the topic for this research. I was able to complete this research with knowledge of the African Nova Scotian community’s commitment and interest in the educational experiences of Black youth.

Utuliva (harmony).

Utuliva “[r]equires that the researcher actively avoid creating, exaggerating or sustaining divisions between or within communities, but strive for harmony between and within these groups” (Reviere, 1996, p. 101).

This work has an emphasis on creating harmony between gender and class lines within the African Nova Scotian community. The work seeks to bring about greater harmony instead of further perpetuating artificial class and gender divisions.

Uhaki (justice).

This canon “requires a research procedure that is fair and just to all participants, especially those being researched. It mandates all aspects of the research exercise fit with and contribute to the researched community’s search for social action and that its applications be mindful of the welfare of all the participants” (Reviere, 1996, p. 101).

The goals of this study have been to develop further understanding of the issues that impact on the educational experiences of African Nova Scotians. I plan to share the findings of this research with the community as a means of assisting the community with the ongoing goal of equality for African Nova Scotian learners.

Ukweli (truth).

This final canon “requires groundedness of research in the experiences of the community being researched. Experiences of community members become ultimate authority in determining what is true and therefore are the final arbiter of the validity of research about their lives” (Reviere, 1996, p. 101).

The validity of this research is grounded in the experiences of the participants, who are members of the African Nova Scotian community. The participants’ responses have been accepted as the truth and have not been altered to fit any pre-conceived theories or ideas. The subjective nature of Africology and the fact that it is grounded in the reality of the community being researched fits with qualitative research principles. What follows, is a discussion of qualitative research and its comparability with Africology.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is subjective, and is conducted with human subjects. The lived experiences of subjects are paramount to qualitative research. Researchers attempt to capture the interpretations of others experiences. Qualitative research is aimed at re-telling the experiences of people as a means of exploring or explaining various

phenomenon. Qualitative researchers strive to “learn about some aspect of the social world and to generate new understandings that can be used by that social world” (Rallis and Rossman, 1998, p. 5). Usefulness is a fundamental feature of qualitative research.

Qualitative research is complex, as it uses a wide variety of tools to collect data and is not specific to any one discipline (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research has also played a key role in the dismantling of dominant models ⁴ and re framing taken for granted ways of knowing. Researchers use findings to help build on existing knowledge and contribute to knowledge production. This knowledge often guides the practice of professionals in various fields, as well as public policy and decision making.

Another primary feature of qualitative research is the fact that the researcher is “the means through which the study is conducted” (Rallis and Rossman, 1998, p. 6). Researchers propose to study the research topics that they are engaged with, and should remain engaged throughout the project. To this I would add that the research subjects are also the means through which studies are conducted. The subjects’ willingness and ability to articulate their experiences and interpretations are crucial elements of qualitative research. Furthermore, research participants are often engaged with the principal researcher in the framing of initial research questions and topics, and throughout the research process, particularly in participatory and emancipatory research designs.

⁴ Two models in particular I am referring to are positivism, and Eurocentrism.

The Difference between Qualitative and Quantitative Studies

Qualitative research is conducted in natural settings, which are used as “the direct source of data” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p. 29). In addition to being interested in lived experiences, qualitative researchers are also intrigued by the context in which those realities take place. This differs from a quantitative research setting, which is typically a controlled environment.

Quantitative researchers assume that phenomenon are predictable and measurable (Guba, 1990). While these methods operate from two distinct sets of assumptions, they can be used collaboratively (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992).

A second major difference between quantitative and qualitative methods is the role of the researcher. Qualitative researchers are expected to be fully engaged with the topic under study, while quantitative researchers are expected to be removed, and unbiased. Quantitative “inquiry is purported to be within a value free framework...while qualitative researchers emphasize the value laden nature of inquiry” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 4).

My theoretical position mirrors qualitative assumptions. As a researcher, I doubt that research is ever objective and without bias. Research, whether quantitative or qualitative is a human act. People conduct it, therefore it must be influenced by human thoughts, beliefs, actions, assumptions and the social environment in which we live. Understanding those multi facets of the underpinnings of research helps us to both conduct and interpret research from a more critical lens.

The Role of the Researcher

Unlike quantitative researchers who tend to be removed from people involved in research, qualitative researchers often form some type of relationship with participants and are personally engaged in the research. Rallis and Rossman note that “reflecting on who you are and how that affects your research is important.” (Rallis and Rossman, 1998, p. 9). Research questions are often prompted by the individual researcher’s interests, social identity, personal experiences and beliefs. Thus, during the research process, researchers often learn a lot about themselves. Research is a process of learning for the researcher, participants and larger community.

Qualitative researchers are also encouraged to be reflexive throughout the research process, and cognizant of how their personal biographies shape their work. Furthermore, Usher asserts that “reflexivity does not simply direct our attention to the problematics of the researchers’ identity but also to the ‘identity’ of the research” (Scott and Usher, 1996, p. 37). For example, researchers should place their research within a social and political context. Usher suggests researchers ask critical questions such as, “what kind of world or ‘reality’ and what kind of knowledge is being constructed by the questions I am asking and the method I am using?” (Usher, 1996, p. 37).

My Location and Choice of Methodology

My experiences in education as a student from the location of an African Nova Scotian woman propelled me to do this research. Therefore centering myself in the

research is paramount to its success. My educational journey has been shaped by the intersections of race, class and gender, the topic under study. The fact that I intend to be reflexive, is a major reason for choosing qualitative research. My own experiences have shaped my initial interest and engagement with my research topic. An important feature of this work has been recognizing how my experiences and social location have informed this work. For instance, the researcher and participants in this project shared the same racial background. This factor meant that at one level participants may have felt more comfortable and willing to share and engage in dialogue. However, I also recognize that differences (i.e., gender and class) between myself and participants may set up potential barriers to communication. It is important to be aware of these issues and how they impact on the entire research process.

The fact that qualitative research is concerned with lived experiences also compelled me to choose this method. I value first voice accounts, and want to use my own experience, along with the experience of other African Nova Scotians, as a means of exploring the intersections of race, class, and gender in schooling. One of the aims of this research is to contribute to the goal of educational equality and opportunity and experience for African Nova Scotian learners.

Limitations in Using Qualitative Research

One limitation in qualitative research is that researchers cannot claim to know the true depth of another's perception. They must be cognizant of the limitation of not being

able to fully grasp others' experiences (Shutz, 1967). When researchers attempt to understand others' perceptions it is important to view them from a larger social and political context. We can learn and broaden our awareness about social conditions and issues by listening to the voices of others. It becomes the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the voices of those being researched are not further marginalized.

Historically, research done on marginalized people has perpetuated cycles of oppression and social injustice. Researchers have used the power and influence of their position to promote racism, sexism, classism and other forms of oppression. For example, culturally biased test results (such as IQ tests) have been used to perpetuate stereotypes of Black people as lazy and inferior (Barnes, 1972). Findings from this type of research have been used to deny rights to oppressed groups. Qualitative, Africentric and other cultural forms of research have responded to misrepresentations by conducting studies that are grounded in the reality of people, by placing them at the center of analysis, rather than at the margins (Johnston, 1994). Striving to present the voices of others as clearly as possible should be the goal of research. New paradigms such as Africentricity have been developed in contemporary times as a means of re-telling the stories of disadvantaged groups by giving rise to first voice. This process is a difficult one. Researchers must be engaged in a continual process of rethinking the dominant ways of doing and evaluating research (Henry, 1993).

A second limitation in doing qualitative research is giving rise to first voice.

Qualitative researchers attempt to bring the stories of participants to the forefront as a means of challenging existing social conditions. However, researchers work within a privileged institution (the academy) where there are barriers (such as language, dominance of Eurocentric ideology and the power given to researchers) to working collectively with larger community members. This structure supports the status quo, where research participants and community members can become further marginalized by the research process (Gordon, Miller & Rollock, 1990).

Researchers should treat subjects as real stakeholders in the entire research process and final product. As a strategy to overcome this limitation, I have used language that is accessible in this body of work to those outside the academy and have attempted to engage the research participants in both the analysis and the fieldwork.

Combining Africentricity and Qualitative Research

Africentric theory and research is rooted in assumptions that mirror qualitative research. A paucity of information on data collection and interpretation exists in the Africentric literature. However, "it appears that the primary direction is focused toward qualitative, idiographic methods" (Benton, 1997, p. 83, quotes Milam, 1992, p. 16). There are many parallels between qualitative research and an Africentric research paradigm, which are listed in the table on the next page:

Table 3:**Similarities Between Africology and Qualitative Research**

Qualitative Research	Africology
Research is conducted in natural settings. Researchers go to particular settings under study... they are concerned with context. (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p. 30)	Researchers must have familiarity with the ethos of the participants (Asante, 1990).
Researchers reflect on how their personal biographies inform their work (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 9).	Researchers must be reflexive and center themselves throughout the project, (Asante, 1990).
Researchers generate new understandings that can be used by the social world under study (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 5).	Africology is committed to the advancement of knowledge and understanding about the African World (Asante, 1990).
Views social phenomenon holistically (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 9).	Studies the African world as an organic whole (Okafor, 1996)
Offers ways to take action to transform structures and practices for the better (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 12).	Harmonizing mission i.e., research should both involve and benefit the larger community (Asante, 1990; Okafor, 1996).
Researchers work in the field face to face with real people...they do not extricate the people from their everyday worlds (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 29-32).	Everyday experiences are empirically valid (Asante, 1990).
Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 36).	Africentric knowledge is considered to be a valid source of proof and represents our feelings about and/or emotional responses to a situation or the way we conceptualize the world (Benton, 1997, p. 85-86).
Emergent, rather than prefigured (Rossman & Rallis 1998, p. 9).	Functioning from an Africentric consciousness is a continuous educational development (Benton, 1997, p. 88).

Research Sample

Twelve African Nova Scotian males and females between 18 and 35 years of age, who represented various class backgrounds and positions, participated in the study. The rationale for choosing this age group was two fold. First, I wanted to collect retrospective narratives from people who have been through the secondary system. Secondly, I wanted to hear the educational experiences of the generation of students who have had the benefit of targeted education initiatives for African Nova Scotian students such as the Black Incentive Fund, the Dalhousie Transition Year and Indigenous Black and Mi'kmaq Programs, and other affirmative action initiatives in education. More details on the demographics of the participants can be found in Table 4.

Representatives from various community organizations were asked to post invitations to participate in the study. These included the African Canadian Employment Clinic, the Black Educators Association, the Black Community Work Group, Nelson Wynder Elementary School, the Dalhousie University Black Brotherhood Association and the Association of Black Social Workers Support Worker Program. Emails were also sent to several African Nova Scotian university students throughout the province.

Although invitations to participate reached a wide audience, nobody responded. This necessitated the use of the snowball sampling method to recruit participants. I approached people I knew fit my profile (African Nova Scotian 18-35, educated in Nova Scotia) and discussed the research project and extended personal invitations to

participate. Other people, who did not fit the profile, assisted in helping to recruit others. Initially I did not anticipate having problems recruiting people from an advertisement. However, after reflecting on this experience, I realized that while the process of engaging in research as a participant can be rewarding, it is time consuming and difficult, particularly if one is not familiar with the research process.

The process of explaining the project to each participant before the interview and making personal contact proved to be more successful than waiting for potential participants to respond to a posted invitation. However, the snowball sampling method limited the scope of the research sample to a particular group of individuals who were known to the researcher and those who offered assistance with recruiting.

Data Collection

Individual interviews were used to collect data for this research. Participants were given an opportunity to review the questions prior to the interview. The interview was divided into two parts. The first part asked participants to map and reflect on their educational journey using an analogy of a Tree of Life. Participants were asked to draw or visualize a tree to use as a tool to help map their educational journey (see Appendix B). The second part asked participants specific questions about race, class, gender and schooling. Two pilot interviews were conducted first, to test the interview guide for appropriateness. Both the pilot interviews were successful and are included in the

research sample. Each individual interview was tape recorded and transcribed.

Participants were also given consent forms that outlined the following:

- **Voluntary Participation:**

All participation was voluntary. Potential participants were chosen on a first come basis.

- **Informed Consent:**

Participants were given information on the purpose of the study, and the right to withdraw participation. Participants were also aware of the method of recording information (i.e., tape recording, and transcribing) shared in the interviews (see Appendix B & C).

- **Confidentiality:**

Participants were assured of confidentiality in the interviews. Tape recordings were kept in a locked cabinet and destroyed after they were transcribed. No identifying information was used in the transcriptions, the theme analysis, or this document.

Data Analysis

Firestone and Dawson assert that engaging participants in data analysis is becoming more common, particularly as a means to ensure validity (1988, p. 217). This process may involve flexibility and shifting the original goals and aims of the work. For

instance, a focus group was initially a part of the data collection for this research. I felt it was imperative that participants be involved at this stage of the research, to provide useful and critical insights. I planned to engage collectively with the participants in an analysis of our experiences. Preliminary findings and common themes from the individual interviews were to be shared with the participants in the focus group. However, due to other commitments and varying levels of comfort, participants in this research were not able to form a focus group. As a strategy to engage participants in this part of the research, each interviewee was given a copy of his/her interview transcript and asked to share their reflections. This allowed me the opportunity to engage with the participants individually, for analysis of the findings.

Additionally, I engaged in an ongoing thematic analysis of the retrospective narratives. Each interview was reviewed immediately after the process. After all the interviews and reflections were completed, the data was coded, then organized into the following two sections based on the two parts of the interview: Reflections on the Education System; Reflections on Race, Class and Gender. Once the data was organized into the categories, they were analyzed for emergent themes, using the constant comparative method (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

In the next chapter, I describe my own educational journey using the same interview guide that was used with the participants to collect data. This chapter sets the tone for the data analysis themes and places the author in the center of the research as suggested by the Africentric framework for doing research.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reflecting on Experiencing Race, Class and Gender Oppression in Education

As I stated in the methodology chapter, centering my own experiences in this research is a canon of Africentricity and offers the possibility of making an important contribution to this project. Asante (1990) describes introspection and retrospection as two methods for reflexivity, each of which should be completed by the researcher. The former method requires that researchers question themselves prior to the study, and the latter requires questioning after the project is completed. As a method of questioning myself in relation to this research, and to refine the data collection process, I was interviewed using the interview guide I developed. This chapter will be in dialogue format as my responses to the interview questions are presented here.

Introspection

The following dialogue contains excerpts from the self-interview. This process was completed before the data was collected. In this chapter, each of the interview questions is listed and the *italics* represent my voice as I respond to the questions.

Part A: Educational Journey

1. The roots represent: the first educational experience.

Think about your first learning experience.

Can we discuss who or what was a major influence in your life? Can we discuss what experiences were memorable?

One of the first things that comes to mind is the fact that school was where I first discovered racism, where I first experienced being discriminated against because of my color. I remember going to school in the neighborhood, which was an all White community, and being called nigger by some of the students in the school and being teased about the color of my skin. Those experiences were very overt forms of racism, however there were more subtle forms as well. For instance, a teacher and the principal at the school were intent on holding me back a grade, despite the fact that I was working at grade level. The school authorities used the fact that I withdrew socially (which was a result of the racism) as a rationale for the decision.

These memories stand out very clear in my mind because it was the first time I learned that being an African Nova Scotian was used as a basis for name calling and bad treatment. I also remember that the teachers, the principal and everybody in the school system refused to do anything about it. I remember action being taken only when my parents decided to do something about it. I recently discovered that my parents took the case to the Human Rights Commission and won. This experience illustrates the varying levels and manifestations of racism, particularly how it operates in schooling.

2. The trunk represents: your formal education.

Think about your formal education

Can we discuss who or what was a major influence in your life? Can we discuss what experiences were memorable?

When I think about my formal education, I remember being the target of various stereotypes about Black youth and Black women. The majority of African Nova Scotian students traveled together in gender specific groups. The fact that we were African Nova Scotian, traveled in a group, and represented completely different ethos from the norm, made us stand out from the mainstream school population. The peer group structure provided a safe place for African Nova Scotian students to be themselves without being stereotyped, ridiculed, or facing ignorance from those unfamiliar with the culture.

Stereotypes would come from everyone in the system, however it is particularly frustrating when you are stereotyped by a teacher, as it can put a strain on teacher/student relationships and classroom interaction. I remember a teacher in the public system, with whom the majority of African Nova Scotian students had major problems with. We tried to get to the root of what the problems were and arranged a private meeting. During this meeting, he admitted to my mother and I that his fears around African Nova Scotian students were rooted in the fact that he was robbed by a Black man several years ago. He was obviously afraid of Black people, particularly the

Black people who dressed or acted in non-conformist, non middle class ways. Those were the students who had the most difficult time with him⁵.

3. The leaves represent: informal education.

Think about your informal education

Can we discuss who or what was a major influence in your life? Can we discuss what experiences were memorable?

In the public school system I recall seeing the lowered expectations for African Nova Scotian students. There were expectations that African Nova Scotian students would not succeed, at least not to the same degree as their White counterparts. This is what I faced when educators attempted to hold me back when I first entered the school system. The difference for me in high school was that with peer group support, I began to challenge these stereotypes and engaged in social action in the school. I spent most of my time in high school challenging the types of things that were going on. I challenged teachers who I thought were racist. Examples of the types of action taken include the following: our peer group started chapters of both the Cultural Awareness Youth Group, and the Parents of Black Children

⁵ An African American student describes a similar experience: “Black and Hispanic students who retain strong cultural characteristics ... are most negatively affected by teachers’ emphasis on appearance and respect for authority...[they] have less of a chance of building strong relationships with any teachers” (Perry, 1993, p. 6-7).

I arranged for my mother to facilitate cultural sensitivity training for teachers and staff; when we discovered the school had not done anything for African Heritage Month, we took around the video "Speak It!" to show people during different classes; I remember occasionally wearing Africentric clothing to school. I started my own Africentric clothing company so I could have access to wear those clothes because many stores would not sell them.

One particular issue that was important for me to address was lobbying to remove "classic" literature from the curriculum that we thought was racist. We won, and instead of reading racist literature, I read work by Black women writers such as Alice Walker. This type of literature helped me to understand how race and gender oppression shaped my experiences and I began to identify with Black feminist writers. Being able to identify with various forms of culture that related to my experience was paramount to identity formation. Books, movies, clothing; all those things were very important and facilitated positive esteem and racial pride. Unfortunately, social action had to be taken in order to make space within the school system for cultural expression. The social action activities we engaged in were part of my informal education and I learned useful skills such as organization, effective means of protest, non violent confrontation, and assertiveness. These skills are important to have when dealing with racism and other forms of oppression on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, the school is an environment that should be providing supports for, and making space for the entire student body, including the minority⁶ group of students.

4. The fruits represent: education achievements.

Think about your education achievements.

Can we discuss who or what was a major influence in your life? Can we discuss what experiences were memorable?

I never viewed finishing high school as a major accomplishment because I was taught at a very a young age, that if you do not have your education then you are going to have a very hard time in life, particularly as a Black woman. So I did not really see it as a big accomplishment to finish high school, I saw it as a stepping stone i.e., something I had to do to get to where I was going. In retrospect however, it was indeed an accomplishment as too many African Nova Scotian students have not survived the system.

⁶ I use the term minority here only to reflect that as a student group, African Nova Scotian students made up a small percent of the overall student body. I do not use the term minority to refer to African Nova Scotians as a racial group. From a global perspective, African and African descended people are not a minority population.

Black parents must prepare their children for the realities of racism, sexism, classism and other forms of oppression to help them mediate through the school system ⁷.

5. The buds represent: your hopes for the future.

Think about your hopes for the future

Can we discuss who or what is a major influence in your life? Can we discuss what you hope to accomplish?

In terms of my educational hopes for the future, I have goals which relate to both myself and the larger African Nova Scotian community. For myself, I hope to further my education at the post graduate level. I hope to do this, to become a role model for other African Canadians. I think it is important for African Nova Scotian students to see themselves reflected throughout both the secondary and post secondary systems. Right now I see efforts aimed at creating opportunities for African Nova Scotians to become teachers in the P-12 system and I think such initiatives are necessary. However, what I do not see with the same enthusiasm is efforts to increase the numbers of African Nova Scotians in graduate and post graduate programs. This is necessary, as our representation should extend beyond the classrooms to administration and at the post secondary level as well in various disciplines. My goal is to encourage others to enter

⁷ This method of parenting has been described as the 'politics of Black Motherhood' (Bernard & Bernard, 1998; P.H. Collins, 1990; Scott, 1991). It can be described as a "necessary dualism (that Black mothers face) preparing their daughters for a life of other- imposed disempowerment and the vision and courage to resist and overcome such oppression" (Bernard & Bernard, 1998, p.47).

graduate school and to consider doing post graduate work as well to increase representation in higher education.

Part B: Questions about race, class, and gender

1. You have described to me your educational experience. You have described instances where race has affected you. Can you reflect on yourself as a [male] [female] in intersection with yourself as African Nova Scotian?

The stereotypes that I experienced at school were gender specific.⁸ In the school for instance, young Black women are stereotyped as being loud. Black women being very vocal is a cultural act however, Black cultural expressions were not understood by many in the mainstream.

Peer groups in school were gender specific. However the collective experience of racism at school often transcended gender lines. As well, our Parents of Black Children Group that we started consisted primarily of mothers. I do not recall fathers being involved, at least not to the same degree as our mothers. This may be linked to the fact that insuring a quality education for children is viewed as part of the nurturing, care taking role that women are expected to play.

⁸ Collins (1990) sets out four major stereotypes, related to Black women: Mammy, Matriarch, Welfare Mother and Jezebel.

Fathers are not often seen in these roles, and therefore are not cognizant of the implications of not being involved. Our mothers were subject to various prevailing stereotypes about Black women, when dealing with the school authorities. For example, single mothers were grouped into the welfare mother stereotype, and were not treated with respect by school authorities. This was one of many reasons why the Parents of Black Children group was necessary.

2. Now I'd like to add another layer- 'class'. Before we talk about class, perhaps we should define it. What do you mean when you talk about class?

I define class in economic terms. I usually organize class in categories such as lower class, people living in poverty, working class, middle class and upper middle class. Individuals fit into these categories based on their economic resources. These categories represent economic inequality. Too many people live in poverty, while economic growth occurs for a small segment of the population. I see African Nova Scotians over represented in working class, lower class and those living in poverty.

Racism perpetuates economic inequality. For instance, the racism that is experienced at school and in the workforce contributes to keeping African Nova Scotians locked into poverty and this cycle is repeated over generations. In my own family, we have been able to break the cycle of poverty through educational attainment in my parent's generation. I am the second generation from my family to achieve in higher education. I have seen first hand how education offers a way out of poverty and economic oppression. But, I also

recognize that education and entering the middle class won't protect African people from racism and certain forms of class oppression. Banks and financial institutions for example have the power to deny middle class African loans, and African professionals can be passed over for promotions. So I definitely see a connection between race and class. I find it difficult to discuss race without discussing class and vice versa.

3. Could you describe now how you see yourself in relation to social class? What about the educational experiences you've described? How has social class affected your educational experiences?

I began this interview with a discussion of how my parents ended up going to the Human Rights Commission to fight against the schools decision to hold me back in grade one. After we won the Human Rights case against the School Board, and finally received an apology, my parents refused to put me back into the same system that created these problems. They were able to use their economic resources to place me back into a private school where I began my formal education. My parents were forced to use this recourse as every accessible authority in the public system failed to acknowledge and address racism. That was an awful experience, which could have been more detrimental if my parents did not have the ability and the resilience to fight the system and the resources to put me in a different environment .It was in the private system where I discovered major class differences. Paying for an education meant that the school authorities could not ignore you. When I faced racism in this environment (for example hearing racist jokes,

comments etc.) they were dealt with promptly and appropriately. I discovered years later that my mother requested culturally appropriate materials for the school library.

However, during my years at the school I never knew these materials were available, as I was never presented with an opportunity to access them. Thus inclusiveness in schooling must occur on many levels to have a significant impact on student experiences. For instance, I had my first Black teacher while attending this school which was an affirming experience. However, the curriculum, and overall ethnocentric attitude underpinning the school culture needed to be challenged. The varying societal class levels and how they operated became clear to me at private school. For instance, class was the primary reason why I was (at many times) the only African Nova Scotian attending the P-12 school.

This reality made the experience extremely isolating, therefore, I decided to request a return to the public system to complete high school. I felt in order for me to survive socially I had to go into an environment where I would have access to more students of color that were my age. Although the education at the private school was superior to that offered in the public system, I felt that it was more important for me at the time to be able to attend school with other African Nova Scotians. I mentioned earlier, that peer support is extremely important for African Nova Scotian learners.

4. Now, can you make some links with all three pieces? How do you see the three strands, race, class, and gender weaving through your educational experiences?

Race, class, and gender are all inter-related and connected. When I am stereotyped as an African Nova Scotian female, I am grouped into race, class, and gender specific stereotypes. My gender experiences are directly linked to my race. In terms of class it was no coincidence that the majority of the Black students at the public school came from lower social economic backgrounds, and there is also no coincidence that I was one of less than ten students of African descent over a ten year span that attended the private school I went to.

Race, class and gender inform my analysis of the issues and this research is coming from my perspective. My reason for wanting to do this work is rooted in my own experience, and realizing that the reasons for school success and school failure in the African Nova Scotian community are not limited to racism.

Using the race, class and gender multi-axial framework is a beginning analysis of the complexity of the issues that face African Nova Scotian students. Even though there have been some great initiatives, many disparities remain. African Nova Scotians are still not entering university and post secondary education at the same rate as our White counterparts, we are still over represented in the number of people on income assistance, the number of people living on and below the poverty line, we are still earning less money, still underemployed, still unemployed at alarming rates. Why? The community has realized that since their arrival in Nova Scotia, that education is what will make the community upwardly mobile. We need to critically examine the things that will continue to make the community stronger. We need to continue to look at the barriers that we face

in trying to move forward. Education is but one area that we need to look into. A lot of the literature deals with race, class and gender as separate. We need to begin to look at these social factors as being connected and examine how they affect individuals as they go through the educational system.

Retrospection

Okafor (1996) quotes Asante as noting that during retrospection, researchers must question how their personal biographies will affect fair interpretation of the data. My experiences have been shared in order to fully engage with both the participants, and the process of using an Africentric paradigm. Having been through the interview process myself, I can relate to the participants during the interviews. This process has been useful, as it has also sharpened my ability to analyze the data, as well as contextualize the experiences of the participants.

As suggested by Asante (1990), the process of retrospection must come after the research is completed, therefore the retrospection will be presented in the Chapter Seven, the conclusion. Following both qualitative and Africalogy principles, as a means of continuing to be reflexive throughout this piece of work (in addition to this chapter), my voice will be woven into the data analysis chapters.

The next chapter is the first of two data analysis chapters. The first data analysis chapter shares the experiences of participants as they reflected on their educational journey.

CHAPTER FIVE

Data Analysis Part One: Reflections on Educational Experiences

The individual interviews with the participants were divided in two parts. This chapter will discuss the themes from the data collected during the first half of the interview, while the second data analysis chapter, will present themes from the latter half of the interview. During the first half of the interview, the Tree of life (see Appendix B) was used to help participants articulate their narratives about their educational life histories. The exercise was also a symbolic means of engaging the participants in a non-traditional interview. Participants were asked to discuss their memorable experiences and major influences in the following areas: the first learning experience, formal education, informal education, educational achievements, and educational hopes for the future. The following themes emerged from the participant narratives:

- 1. The role of mothers**
- 2. Role models**
- 3. Racial awareness in the school system**
- 4. Negative impact of streaming**
- 5. Peer relationships**
- 6. Popular culture**
- 7. Post secondary experiences**

8. The role of community and church

The table on the following page is a characteristic profile of the participants in the study. All of the participants were educated in the Nova Scotia public school system. The participants present an urban perspective, as they all reside in the Halifax metro area, although a few of the participants were raised in other parts of the province. Several of the participants are post-secondary students enrolled in both full time and part time studies. Of those who are employed, most work in service industry related jobs. A few of the participants are trained professionals in the human and social service industry, while others are employed in clerical positions. Only three out of the twelve participants have no post secondary education, and only two participants did not complete high school. Although the participants as a group are fairly educated, they represent various class backgrounds.

Table 4**Profile of Participants**

Characteristics	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Male	x			x	x			x				x
Female		x	x			x	x		x	x	x	
Upper Middle Class		x										
Middle Class						x	x					x
Working class	x		x		x			x	x	x	x	
Poor				x								
Rec'd High school Dip or GED	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Did not complete high school				x						x		
Some Post secondary ed.									x	x	x	
Attending University	x						x	x	x			x
Undergrad. Degree		x				x	x					x
Employed	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Unemployed		x		x								
18-25		x	x	x				x				x
26-35	x				x	x	x		x	x	x	

As noted in the previous chapter, I will be weaving my own voice throughout the data analysis. Throughout this chapter, and the next I will distinguish my own voice by *italics* and by placing a bracket with my name after each paragraph. Each of the themes is discussed below.

The Role of Mothers

The role of mothers was important to a number of participants, as they discussed their first educational experience. Mothers and parents were instrumental in preparing them for school. Many Black women have politicized the role of mother as they prepare their children for the harsh realities of multiple oppression. Collins (2000) states that “Black women’s support for education illustrates this important dimension of Black women’s political activism. Education has long served as a powerful symbol for the important connections among self, change and empowerment in African American communities” (Collins 2000, p. 210).

Black mothers and grandmothers are considered the “ ‘guardians of the generations’ ... charged with the responsibility of providing education, social and political awareness, in addition to unconditional love, nurturance, socialization and values to their children, and the children in their communities” (Bernard and Bernard, 1998, p. 47). As

stated in the literature review, African Nova Scotians have historically recognized the role of education as a tool for social mobility.

The following quotes illustrate how African Nova Scotian mothers have fostered the legacy of placing value on education:

My mother was a single parent and she raised us on social assistance. But she managed to go back to school to earn a university degree and she taught me the value and importance of getting an education.

My mother was a schoolteacher, and she read to me and provided me with a strong educational foundation before I started school.

Another participant recalls being encouraged by her mother despite the realities of multiple oppression:

My mother placed a very high value on education. She was always involved with the school and made me believe that I could accomplish anything I put my mind to. However, she also prepared me for the racism and sexism that she knew I would experience.

School is often a place where race relations are played out, and dominant attitudes about race, class, and gender become apparent. Therefore, it is necessary for African Nova Scotian parents to be aware of this and help their children successfully mediate their way through these experiences.

One participant discusses the importance of African Nova Scotian parents preparing their children for the realities of racism:

Black parents I think have to, it's not only teaching your kids about reading writing, how to get in with your friends, and sex and drugs and everything else. You have to somehow teach your kids about racism. [B]ut it's a lesson they also have to learn themselves. You keep learning it regardless. That it's a rotten thing and we keep saying were going to end it and yes it's wrong but it's still out there. Yes everybody deserves an equal chance but on the other hand I think that we have to be realistic and say this is what might happen to you somewhere in the future. I think we're rather naïve if we don't teach our kids that.

It is difficult for African Nova Scotian mothers to prepare their children for racism, unable to protect them. Nevertheless, African Nova Scotian learners should be

prepared for this as they enter the school system. As discussed throughout this chapter, racism continues to adversely affect the school experiences of African Nova Scotians.

My mother taught me how to fight against racism and sexism by doing. She was an activist who fought oppression on many levels. She was actively involved with organizations such as the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Black United Front, the National Black Coalitions, Congress of Black Women, the Black Professional Women and she was a founding member of the Association of Black Social Workers. Both of my parents gave me the tools of analysis to fight against oppressions. The ability to analyze oppression is a first step towards creating change. Black families for generations have been faced with the challenge of preparing the youth of the community for the harsh reality of racism. However African Nova Scotians face oppressions that extend beyond racism. Youth must be prepared to face multiple oppression. (Candace)

Role models were a source of support for many participants along their educational journeys. The next theme examines the importance of Black role models to the development of Black learners.

Role Models

Teachers, social workers and other role models in the home and community, were identified as playing a significant role in the education experiences of the participants.

The following participant reflects on the impact of having a positive role model:

I would say the person who was a major influence in my life was my social worker who was a Black female. She always pushed me to achieve the goals that she felt I was capable of achieving. When I always wanted to quit educational wise and felt I couldn't do the work, she insured I received the extra help that I needed to achieve that goal and continue my education.

Another participant articulates the need for Black role models in the school system, and reflects on having a role model in his family:

I just wanted to get through high school and call it quits there, that was my goal. And the only reason why I did that is because out of the large family that I do have. [M]y brother who's two years older than me graduated from high school and watching him continue to go to school, is why I continued to go. But I didn't want much more and I didn't see it [a Black presence] in the school system.

I didn't hear about Blacks in the books. I didn't hear about them being doctors,lawyers.didn't see them in my community.

One participant remembers the positive impact of having a teacher who took an interest in her:

I actually had a teacher that I thought was very supportive. She took an interest in me and she recognized the talents and you know my abilities. She always left a mark in my mind. I'll never forget her. You know, that was the first teacher I ever had, where I felt my color didn't matter. As a matter of fact she took a special interest in me, and she really encouraged me. I never really had a teacher that took me serious or really noticed me. That was important, because it's still with me.

Another participant recalls her first experience with a teacher of African descent:

I had my first Black teacher and he was not that much older than I was. He had a doctorate and he was one of us: a Black Canadian. The first time I saw him outside the class I thought he was a student and we sat there and talked for a long time. Then we walked in the first day of class. He walked in, went to the front of the class and said hello I'm doctor so and so and

I'm going to be teaching this class this year. My mouth dropped. It made me angry that it took all this long to get my first Black teacher in Nova Scotia.

The participant below, suggests that having a role model may have helped her:

When I got into junior high and high school it became a very negative for me. And there wasn't anybody in the school system that was reaching out to me that's for sure. But certainly nobody in the school system seemed to really care whether I was at school or when I wasn't. That is probably one of the reasons why I didn't do as well as I probably should have. I'm not blaming anybody I'm just saying that sometimes [it makes a difference] when you have some of that encouragement.

The value of role models expressed by participants in this study echoes what has been found in other research. For example, Dei (1996), found in his study of African Canadian students in Ontario that "[m]any Black youths...make a direct connection between the problem of student disengagement and the lack of representation of Black role models in the school. Students want to see more Black and minority teachers in the Canadian school system" (Dei, 1996, p. 56). The BLAC report also found that "Black students have been unable to see Black role models and have also failed to see any real

valuing of themselves or the race to which they belong in the school system” (BLAC Report, 1994 Vol. 3, p. 35).

When I look back at the role models along my educational journey, I think of my parents and other figures in my family. For instance, my mother, aunt and another woman from their community were the first from the community to go to university (at Mount Saint Vincent University). My mother was one of the first African Nova Scotian women to complete a PHD and the first be hired in a tenure track position at Dalhousie University. My father was the first African Nova Scotian male from his community and family to go to university. Therefore, I always thought higher education was within my reach and that it was accessible. If I had to rely on seeing such images reflected outside my family I wonder how might my view of higher education differ? Role models are extremely important to youth and must be within their reach in order to make a positive difference in their lives. (Candace)

The participants have clearly outlined how role models can and have been a positive force in their educational journeys. Role models are particularly important for African Nova Scotians in the school system as they deal with racism. Participants go into further detail about racial incidents in the school system in the following theme.

Racial Awareness in the School System

The narratives in this section describe participants' experiences of racism at school. Some experiences described are covert, such as feeling uninvited by the lack of a Black presence around certain activities. Other experiences are more overt, for instance name-calling. For many participants school was a place where racial differences were heightened, and often was also a place where racism was experienced for the first time. Racism played a major role in shaping the educational experiences for the participants.

The following participants discuss subtle forms of racism at school. They discuss how Black students feel excluded from mainstream activities and how they are made aware of the prevailing stereotypes about Black youth:

You were definitely always reminded that you were Black. Just perception, how you were treated, where you felt comfortable in going. Some places were predominantly White where no Black people at all went there.

Well it was an achievement to graduate from grade twelve as a Black person because a lot of Black people that I went to high school with did not graduate or they were like on the five, six or seven year plan where they weren't graduating in the basic three years. So some [White students] were surprised that I made it through. I didn't see it as a big deal as I was always raised to expect to go on beyond high school. I wanted to graduate

and I wanted to get it over with and just prove to people that because I was Black it doesn't affect whether or not people can graduate.

One participant below, discuss subtle forms of racism in the school system, and a lack of inclusiveness:

The graduation ceremony wasn't for me. The whole scene wasn't for me, the dance or any of it so I didn't participate in it. I just graduated and got my diploma and that was it. I didn't go to the prom or anything like that, I just finished and that was it that was the way I saw it, I didn't feel that it was anything for me. When I look back on it now I just think that I wish more was done to have the Black students included in some of the events that were going on. There were a lot of events at that time different parties and things. Not that we were excluded but they just didn't seem inviting. Sometimes it's hard to identify [racism at school]. You hear people wanting to talk about racism. But it's not always easy to pinpoint because it's so hidden and so deep.

One participant recalls her first blatant experience with racism at school:

I didn't suspect for a long time there was this terrible world called racism out there. Or there were some people who wouldn't like me because of the color of my skin. It wasn't until grade three, there was a nasty girl.

Everybody has one of those in the class. Another friend of mine and I were just playing one day and she said, "you know that nasty person, she calls you mud face". And I said, "how come she called me that?" Again it didn't occur to me. I remember going home and saying "mommy so and so called me mud." And my mother said "that's cause you're considered colored or Black." And I said, "that doesn't make any difference," and my mother said, "of course it doesn't." This is a girl who learned it from someplace and it never occurred to me to confront her over it.

Another participant describes an experience with racial name-calling and low teacher expectations:

When I got on the school bus a lot of children in the community were referring to me as the 'nigger girl', getting onto the bus. Then when I arrived at the school, I can remember being placed in a classroom, which wasn't the grade level I was supposed to be in. It was a lower grade level,

grade three I think. My assumption looking back on things now is that the school probably thought I wasn't able to do the work at the grade four level at the time. That's just my understanding of it and the way I interpreted it. They had placed me in a lower grade level and I was in that class for about a week before I was actually put into the grade four class where I belonged. So that made me see for the first time that Black children were perceived as possibly having a lower level of intellect compared to White students.

Two participants below, discuss changes that should be made to the education system:

I've noticed here living in Halifax and, well working in Halifax and Dartmouth that there's been a lot of change to the educational system which I think have been positive but there's a lot more work that has to be done. I don't think there's a lot of assistance available for children in the Black community and there still is some streaming, by putting Black children into general classes and not encouraging them to take academic [courses] in some schools. There also needs to be more Black teachers in the school system.

There's inequality that exists around the world and for some reason Black people are at the bottom of the equality stick. So I realize there's something that's holding us back. I also think that a lot of these things [the experiences of Black people] could be taught in the formal classroom. I think that, many people not just Blacks [should be taught this]. Everyone who goes through the formal education system is being deprived because they're not being taught some of the real issues that are facing [Black] people in life.

It has been noted that "Black youths are concerned about the school's ability (in the sense of social discourse, texts, and classroom pedagogy) to misrepresent, negate and devalue some experiences, while at the same time recognizing others. Our current public school system is a long way from dealing comprehensively with the qualitative value of justice and representation in education" (Dei, 1996, p. 57). The school system has attempted to address this issue, however "[d]espite some moderate successes...the educational system [has] continued to perpetuate and reproduce Blacks' subordinate status in economic, political and ideological relations" (Calliste, 1994, p. 27). BLAC documented that "racial name calling in school has been and still is a major concern of the Black community...[m]ost of the respondents felt that the education system is

ineffective in handling racial incidents such as name calling and racial slurs” (BLAC, 1994 Vol. 3, p. 14).

I noticed as participants were dialoguing about various racial incidents, that often they took place without any action afterwards. As I have discussed in Chapter Four, (which outlines my own educational journey), the racial incidents, which took place, were challenged. When incidents of racism go unchallenged, they give the oppressor the ability to continue the cycle. However I recognize that youth in the school system are particularly vulnerable, as perpetrators are often in positions of authority. In addition, their parents also feel vulnerable, especially when parents have experienced school failure. Therefore, it is crucial for youth to have a support system in place through peers, structured support groups within and outside the school as well as support at home. (Candace)

The experience of racism in the school system has created painful memories for nearly all of the participants in this study. Participants were able to give many examples of various forms of racism. One example is streaming, which was a major theme throughout the participant narratives, and is described below.

Negative Impact of Streaming

Many participants identified streaming as an issue that had a negative impact on their education and as a result limited their choices and hopes for their educational future. Guidance counsellors in particular were identified as unhelpful school personnel who pushed students towards general as opposed to academic classes, or pushed students out of the system. This finding is supported by BLAC, who noted that "... Black learners have been disproportionately subjected to the social injustice of streaming. [BLAC found that guidance counsellors] showed little interest in Black learners, teachers automatically placed students in general programs, and that teachers try to manipulate vulnerable Black parents" (BLAC Report, 1994, Vol. 3, pp. 26-25).

One participant remembers how years of streaming affected her self confidence and was a major factor in her decision to leave school early:

The gentlemen, the guidance counsellor sat me down and said "you can not get into university with these courses. You need to drop these courses and take up something that you like academically." I said, "huh, buddy I'm, I am dumb, I'm stupid. Do I really want to [go to university]? I don't even care." All I wanted to do was get out of the school, I just wanted to get out of the system. That guidance counsellor scared me out of school. I

quit school. I could not take it. I was just thinking, why would he even care [about me going to university] after I had been pushed through the system for thirteen years? It's amazing, I mean wow I'm crying. I was so scared, oh my god I was afraid and I said "no, no, not this year." I thought [I won't be able to go to university]...it's too late.

The participant below describes the experience of being streamed into general programs in high school:

I went to the guidance counsellor and I said that I wanted to take another [less difficult] math course and she told me that if I took one general course I had to take all general courses. I found out in grade twelve this wasn't true. So I had changed all my [academic] courses to general courses which may of had quite a bit of influence on my education if it wasn't for the Dalhousie Transition Year Program that I took after I graduated from grade twelve. But I saw that as her setting me up for failure instead of her saying you know there's services in the community that you can use to help you with the math or you can go to the teacher for extra help. She just said to me if you want to quit [an academic program] then you quit and you'll have to take all general courses. That's something that will always

be a negative experience for me which could of influenced my life now if it wasn't for the Transition Year Program.

Another participant recalls being advised against taking an academic high school program:

When I graduated from grade nine one of the experiences was my guidance counsellor, who told me I should take general courses when I go into high school and I didn't know why at that time and I didn't know what bearing that would have on my education, but I did say okay. She said I wouldn't be able to go to university if I did that but she still advised that I take general courses. So now that I've been through high school, I realize the importance of not going through general courses and how I may not have been unable to attend university.

One participant remembers being encouraged to leave high school early:

When I was in high school, I was flunking several of my courses and my attendance wasn't great. When my marks started to drop I went to one of

my teachers, my biology teacher. [H]e said, “you really should go see the guidance counsellor cause you seem very confused about what you want to do and you really should finish high school, but at the same time you’re probably not going to pass this year. And you’ll have to repeat you know and if you’re thinking of quitting maybe that would be a good idea.” I was also told by the guidance counsellor, “well you know if you’re not really applying yourself, it’s going to be really hard for you to pull up your boot straps for the rest of this year, so you might as well just leave. And perhaps next year you can apply to one of the vocational colleges. You don’t really need grade twelve to get in and you can be a CNA [certified nursing assistant] or something like that. So that’s best for you.” That’s probably the only thing I can remember that stuck in my mind that she said “you don’t need grade twelve to be a CNA why don’t you try that? A lot of girls are quitting and going to vocational school.” That’s what she said.

Support for this finding can be found in Dei, (1996) where it was stated that “[t]he existence of vocational, technical and commercial school...was often considered and named as an example of color-coded streaming. This was how students described the process of streaming and the fact that many Black students were ghettoized within the basic level streams. They perceived this to be the result of teacher’s low expectations of

Black students, rather than their actual ability...their educational choices are laid out for them with little opportunity to negotiate options” (Dei, 1996, p. 118).

Streaming has adversely affected several of the participants in this study. It has resulted in many African Nova Scotians being misinformed and mislead. Participants who gave examples of their experiences vividly recalled how they were misguided. For many it has taken several years of confidence building to regain control of their educational path. Fortunately, several participants who experienced streaming were able to benefit from external supports such as the Transition Year Program at Dalhousie University. Many of these participants have received or are working on university degrees and could have completed academic programs in high school and applied directly to university. However due to lowered expectations for African Nova Scotian students, access programs may be necessary for entry into post secondary education. Unfortunately, not every student with the potential to go on to higher education is able to utilize access programs. Thus streaming has a detrimental effect on the African Nova Scotian community. (Candace)

Peers have proven to be a valuable means of support for African Nova Scotian students who must survive streaming and other forms of racism. The role of peers is the next theme discussed below.

Peer Relationships

Having peer support was an important factor, particularly as participants discussed their junior and senior high school experiences. Peer networks provided necessary supports for students who were often the only person of color or African Nova Scotian in individual classes. However, participants who were in enriched academic programs, French immersion, and involved in extra curricular activities such as debating and music (all of which are places where African Nova Scotian students have been marginalized) noted that they felt a particularly strong sense of isolation. African Canadian students were more likely to be alone and isolated in these settings, and felt alienated often by both their Black peers and White counterparts.

One participant recalls leaving his peer group to attend university:

I didn't know a lot of people that were going to university. Most of my friends didn't, most of my friends didn't go through high school. I come from a large family and no one in my family graduated from university. So I never saw other people doing it and graduating so I never thought it was something that had to be done or was necessary. Now I put the experience into perspective and I think that it is a good thing [going to university] just

because of what you learn and also because it just enhances your chance of being employed in jobs that pay more.

The following participants reflect on positive peer relations at school:

I definitely noticed that status all through like primary to high school was definitely something that involved more White students. They wanted to make sure they were with the right people. Whereas Black students you were just friends and you stuck together because you knew you were Black.

I took typing and cooking and different courses that I don't know if I really would of taken but I just wanted to get other Black people in my classes with me and you know it was good at that time for us to get together.

Another participant discusses peer relationships:

Black students tend to be in pockets you know, that don't mix with the general population of the school, there's something there that allows us to communicate better with one another.

Kelly (1998) found in her research with African Canadian students in Alberta that “[t]he strength of raced bonds is maintained because they serve a purpose. Students are maintaining a link with knowledge of their past, they are getting affective feedback from discussing familiar aspects of their socialization process. There is also an element of protection in being with a group rather than being an isolated individual.” (1998, p. 87)

Not all peer experiences have been positive for African Nova Scotian students, particularly those who do not fit stereotypical images. Kelly (1998) stated that “[a]lthough there was a great deal of cohesiveness among Black students there were sometimes splits within the Black group...some of the students saw Blackness as being represented by specific ways of acting and by particular attitudes...the use of racial symbols affects inter-racial relations” (Kelly, 1998 pp. 98-99).

I always felt concerned about the fact that Black students who not only live in White neighborhoods but get good grades, and participate in mainstream academic and social activities are isolated and ridiculed as described below by participants in this section. African Nova Scotian students will not feel comfortable excelling in academics or other mainstream activities if they are ridiculed by their peers. This is one reason why there are so few African Nova Scotian students involved in such activities. In order for the status quo to change,

African Nova Scotian students must shift their attitudes about what is acceptable and normal. This must also be encouraged and supported by their parents and by the school system. (Candace)

Two participants below describe being ridiculed by their African Nova Scotian peers:

It was my first or second week in high school. I was coming from an all White school. I was always in an extended achievement program and I was into music and was doing other [extra curricular] things. So I got to this high school, which is very distinctive, in that there's the South End doors [for predominantly White students] and the North End doors [for predominantly Black students]. But they have the main entrance. And that's where me and my friends who didn't fit in either group went. I think it had to be the second week of school and you know you're trying to blend in. A Black girl came up to me. I was talking about doing the debating club or something, [and she said] "we don't do the debating club, we do dis".... And I said "well I don't do that, I want to do the debating club. And she called me Oreo [Black on the outside, White on the inside].

I remember standing in the cafeteria, when one Black girl started to humiliate this other Black girl who hung out with mostly with White girls. She looked at this girl and started screaming ‘look at the White girl painted Black.’ She repeated that several times, while her friends roared in laughter.

As so many African Nova Scotian learners are isolated in the school setting, peers provide support and encouragement. When African Nova Scotian students must learn in an environment, which is often unwelcoming, peers become increasingly important. Nevertheless, issues such as academic achievement impact on these relationships. Peer relationships can be difficult to mediate under such conditions. Another major source of identity for the participants is popular culture, which is discussed below.

Popular Culture

Having access to popular culture that represents the Black experience was important to many participants. The identification and connection with other people of African descent through various sources played an important role in the informal educational experiences of the participants. This was particularly important in fostering positive racial identity and self esteem as the school system often marginalized African culture and history.

African Nova Scotian students often don't find their culture reflected at school or in mainstream society. For example, music played at school dances is not always reflective of the interests of the entire student body. In mainstream society, many films featuring African artists don't make it to local theaters, and when they do they only stay for a very short period of time and radio stations rarely play music featuring artists of African descent. African Nova Scotian youth are buying into the African American cultural symbols partly because these are so visible and available through the media. Participants in this section discuss music and history that reflects African American culture as that is most available to them.

(Candace)

The following participants discuss the role music and Black history have played in their informal education:

I think if just relied on what I was taught in school I wouldn't be at the level of education that I'm at now and I say that because there wasn't a lot of positive influence...being the only Black male in my high school. I started listening to like Public Enemy [a consciousness raising rap group].

I started, you know, saying "Fight the Power" [a song from popular rap group Public Enemy] and all this kind of stuff I never really knew what it

meant but I was saying it because somehow that related to me and my Black self that I wasn't able to identify with in my academic learning. I started learning about Malcolm X and so forth and that really became my true academic education. There should be something within the [school] curriculum that allows you to keep motivated. If I didn't have that identification I would have been lost because I wouldn't of been able to identify with myself. If you're going through school and you're learning about somebody else's environment then it's not really doing much good for your self-esteem. For me it was the outside influence that affected my educational experiences.

The participants who discussed music spoke about rap and hip-hop music, genres, which were created and are dominated by artists of African descent. This type of music is often laden with social messages and provides an outlet for African Nova Scotian youth to work through issues such as identity and culture. Kelly, who, in her study found that music "provided meanings and themes with which the students could identify and indicated adherence to their racial origins," has supported this finding (Kelly, 1998, p. 62).

In addition to music, learning about African history was also identified as an integral part of participants' informal learning.

Another participant discusses the importance of Black history below:

When I hit my teens and started to learn more about Black history then I started to get more self-respect. I started to get more motivated to do more. It wasn't until I started to read more about myself and my people that I started to become more motivated. That's where I realized the school system was failing me in a way because they weren't educating me about Black people.

Dei has documented that “[s]tudents feel Black unity, respect and understanding of Black culture and history are essential if the community is to deal effectively with the problems of social racism” (1996, p. 49). African Nova Scotian history has been introduced to the Nova Scotian school system, although it is often in a marginalized format. For example, when African history is only learned and celebrated during African heritage month and not integrated into the entire curriculum, or when the focus is on only African American figures.

This was my experience in high school. I had an opportunity to take the one elective course in the entire course selection that addressed cultural diversity. The course attempted to address issues affecting almost all people of color, and therefore was reductionist. Only a minimal amount of time was devoted to each

culture and the module on African Nova Scotians focussed exclusively on African American figures. It was only in university where I had an opportunity to take an elective course, which focussed exclusively on African Nova Scotian history and culture. Diversity in the school system needs to be fully integrated into the total curriculum, otherwise students do not truly feel as if their culture is being reflected. (Candace)

African Nova Scotian students have been forced to look at alternative sources of belonging outside the school and other mainstream institutions. This is often a difficult task for African Nova Scotians as materials such as music, books, and movies that are reflective of Black culture are not readily available as they are in larger Canadian cities or in the United States. As the dialogue shifts to post secondary education in the next section, similar issues around inclusion arise for participants.

Post Secondary Experiences

Overall, the post-secondary educational experience was described as not being as difficult as high school. However, participants shared a number of notable experiences, which occurred at local universities. Dalhousie University in particular (where many

participants have studied) was viewed as an environment that was not welcoming to African Canadian students. For instance, participants discussed the lack of an African/Black presence, and the labelling they faced at Dalhousie, as many White professors assumed that all African Canadian student come from the Transition Year Program. This made people feel as though the professors had lower expectations of them, mirroring their high school experiences.

One participant recalls being labeled by a Dalhousie professor:

There were kids from Ontario, and B.C., and the [United] States and the professor looked at me and said ‘what country in Africa are you from?’ And I said ‘I’m from here’ and he said, ‘you mean your parents came from Africa.’ “No” I replied, “I’m from here, my parents, grandparents, great grandparents, great great grandparents are Nova Scotians from here. “Oh, okay” he said. Then the other assumption was that I came from the Transition Year Program. I am not saying it’s a bad or good thing that’s not what this conversation is about. I was insulted that he assumed I came from the Transition Year Program. It was like hold on you’re assuming that I am not educated enough, good enough to come straight from an honors level high school [program] into a university level program without

having a year in between to help me bring up my skills. There was a girl [in the class] who was from the Transition Year Program. I was thinking how insulted she must be to know that the professor thinks she is never going to attain what we think she's going to attain because look where she's coming from. I was getting mad at this point at all this stuff that was coming at me. I was like hold it I don't have to take this anymore.

She elaborates, by discussing another experience with classroom racism at Dalhousie:

I had this class called American English and of course, reading American English books, and you have to come across Huckleberry Fin and Mark Twain. The professor stood up and said, "the last time I taught this book two years ago there was a great uprising. Students didn't like me using it because there was anti Black in the words that were used." He said, "does anybody here in this class have a problem with it." I felt thirty-three pairs of eyes zoom in on me. I just sat there and didn't open my mouth and he said this at the end of the class. The next class I stood up in front of the class and I said, "I want to say something to you guys. We're here taking a course in American English, we're here to study Mark Twain and Huckleberry Fin. I don't mind studying this book, I kind of expected it. I

read it before but the book is not about using those words. The book is about a young White boy and a Black slave. Let's read that for what it is." And the class went dead quiet but I was angry because part of me was thinking it's not my place anymore to educate you guys on how to treat me. I'm tired of that. It's not my place. We have to make a point not to be the so-called Black experts of the class, because of the color of our skin. Yes we can relate to some of the things that are in the book. But we're not the Black experts. If you're going to be a student studying this book, then you're going to have to be able to figure that out.

One participant recalls feeling excluded from Dalhousie:

Most of the frosh week entertainment which is the first entrance week in Dalhousie was not geared at all to any person of color. I basically didn't go. I didn't feel included. I wasn't impressed with that. It was just geared to White people you felt you weren't being included. You felt you were being completely, and totally overlooked. The majority of students at Dal are White students. I wasn't really surprised but they also offer a wholesome multi-cultural environment and they don't reflect it at all, once you actually get on campus.

Some of the participants had the opportunity to go through the Transition Year Program (TYP) at Dalhousie, and found this experience to be a rewarding, positive experience. This access program provided motivation, encouragement, and support. Foyn has argued that “African Canadians ...would do well to remember that...[TYP and other access programs at Dalhousie]...are innovations in Black education. Proponents of these programs have been on the cutting edge of educational reform” (Foyn, 1998, p. 95) .

One participant describes her experience in the TYP program:

I wasn't taught a lot about my culture and my identity and about other cultures in society until I went to university in the Transition Year Program, in an environment where there's a lot more Blacks and Natives and people from other ethnic backgrounds. It was a real good experience to be in school with them and have a support system. I think if it wasn't for the program I would not be where I am today because having left high school with general courses it would have been very difficult.

In a recent Dalhousie Gazette article, it was noted that “[t]he Dalhousie majority has a tendency to forget about its minorities [and get]...lost in the shuffle when events are organized for the student body” (Bardouille, 1999, p. 9). The article also argued that student experiences are “coloured by their identity as Black Nova Scotians...the lack of

representation for local Blacks at Dalhousie is disheartening” (Bardouille, 1999, p. 9).

Most participants in the study have managed to successfully mediate their way through Nova Scotia’s universities and other post secondary institutions. Experiencing racism in the secondary school system has sharpened their analysis and prepared them for the realities of similar forms of racism in higher education.

Lack of representation was an issue raised both the secondary and post secondary experiences. In my experience, lack of representation was worse in post-secondary institutions. As a graduate student, I saw fewer African students than as an undergraduate. African Nova Scotian students are not being actively encouraged to do graduate or postgraduate work, which is needed to break into the academy. The few professors of African descent that I had as an undergraduate and graduate student did not have doctorates and were sessional instructors only teaching part time. I only recall having one professor who was a full time faculty member who held a doctorate degree. I have seen very few professors of African descent across disciplines, across different universities across the country. As I have stated in Chapter Four, African Canadians need adequate representation in higher education as professors, who are able to teach, supervise thesis students, and conduct research and publish work about African experiences bringing much needed diversity into the academy. (Candace)

The church has often acted as an agent of social change against such forms of racism and has been a source of strength in African Nova Scotian communities. What follows in the final section in this chapter, is a discussion about the role of the church and the African Nova Scotian community in the lives of the participants.

The Role of Community and Church

Many of the participants identified giving back to the community, racial uplift and reciprocity as a future goal. For example, although one participant had a negative school experience, she plans to obtain a teaching degree as a means of making a positive contribution to her community.

The following participants discuss how they plan to contribute to the African Nova Scotian community:

If I do go back to school ... I want to put something back into the Black community through my research.

I just want to do what I can to assist people in making everyone's lives better around the world, not just here but wherever I go.

What I'd like to be able to do with my degree is develop a program or something that will help encourage community growth.

Below participants describe the meaning church has had in their lives:

I grew up in the church, and attended Sunday school and was heavily involved in the church. That spiritual education provided me with a foundation, and it has helped me to cope with the racism I experienced in my formal education.

Church was... very important. Growing up in an all White neighborhood and going to an all White school, going to church was often my only opportunity to be around so many other African Nova Scotians. That link to my community was necessary to my development... I find I have a lot more to offer through my experience I have gained through life, not just through school, but through, community and church.

More participants reflect on the role of church below:

I would have to say church and community involvement were very, very influential in my informal education.

I remember the church playing so many roles in the community. Not only was it a place where we worshiped and received spiritual guidance but

church was where we took action on social issues in the community, including issues with the school system. I actually remember the church having a huge forum to discuss a fight that happened at my school between the parents and the teachers. The church was there to advocate for us. Because of that...today I am a community advocate for Black children's right to a good education.

“The church is a source of strength and provided a sense of belonging and feeling of connectedness. Church has been a traditional source of support for Black parents and children”(Tatum, 1997, p. 217). Churches in African Canadian communities “often act as sources of knowledge and places where a degree of autonomy from White society and freedom to exercise control over their own lives can be achieved” (Kelly, 1998, p. 66).

The African Nova Scotian church and community act as buffers against oppression and are tools that can be used to fight against multiple oppression. There is work to be done in the community regarding multiple oppression. Sexism in the church for example goes unnoticed and unchallenged. Black women do traditional female work in the churches such as preparing meals and decorating, while the men hold the majority of leadership positions. However the church is

beginning to recognize and deal with sexism. One example is the release of the video No More Secrets (Hamilton, 1999) which examines violence against African Nova Scotian women. The African United Baptist Association took part in producing this educational video. (Candace)

As the participants discussed their educational journeys during this first part of the interview, racism was the major theme that was woven throughout their stories. Examples of which, have included streaming, feeling excluded and name calling. Family, peers, the church and the larger African Nova Scotian community have been sources of support for African Nova Scotian students as they attempt to survive and thrive in both the secondary and post secondary education systems.

In addition to racism, class and gender relations play a major role in the lives of African Nova Scotian learners. In the second part of the interview, participants were asked specific questions about the intersection of race, class and gender oppression and the impact it has had on their education. It is an analysis of this data that we turn to in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Data Analysis Part Two: Reflections on the Intersection of Race, Class and Gender Oppression

This second data analysis chapter presents themes from the second part of the participant interviews. The flow of this chapter follows chapter Five as the researchers voice is weaved into the analysis and is presented in *italics* format. During this phase, participants were asked the following:

- to reflect on the intersection of race and gender
- to define class and discuss how it affects schooling
- to describe how race has affected educational experiences
- to discuss the interlocking nature of race, class and gender oppression and the impact on educational experiences

Each of the following themes that emerged from this part of the interview will be discussed throughout the chapter:

- 1. Black men and stereotyping**
- 2. Black feminism**
- 3. Class relations**
- 4. The impact of multiple oppression**

Black Men and Stereotyping

Many of the women interviewed mentioned that African Nova Scotian men have a more difficult time, in comparison to them, when dealing with society at large. They noted how difficult it is for Black men to live with the stereotypes held about them.

Two participants felt that Black women are accepted easier by White society, than Black men:

I think being a Black woman in Nova Scotia is a lot different than being a Black male. Woman are quote unquote easier to get along with, wanting to make things work, willing to work within a certain amount of give and take. Therefore I think we're seen as more accepting [and are], more easily accepted. We don't have to worry so much about stereotypes to a certain extent. They're more likely to be picked up by the police. They're more likely to be thought of as rude and ignorant and everything else.

I can honestly say as a Black woman I do have it a bit easier in the professional field than my brother. My brother has it a lot harder. Being a Black male, socially he has to be really careful that he's not offensive and

that's not fair. White people are somehow afraid of him and he can not understand why... He experiences it everyday. He has to make sure that he's well dressed all the time or people will suspect him of being some type of a hoodlum, that's the way that he feels. It's very frustrating for him. I can't imagine what it's like to live in his body, to walk around as a Black male in this place. It's a lot tougher than what I experience. I'm not threatening. I'm well dressed, well groomed, well spoken... If he's not smiling, he feels that people are looking at him like he might attack them or something. And obviously it must be valid, he's getting it from somewhere.

The African Nova Scotian male participants also discussed stereotypes about Black masculinity. For Black men it is difficult to find positive, affirming images of themselves. The negative stereotypes that exist (see Table 2) affect how teachers and school officials interact with young Black men. The term "endangered species has been used to refer to Black men, partly because of their negative statistics in various social ills, such as substance abuse, crime rates and unemployment. External factors such as: the high unemployment rate, low educational achievement, high crime rate, racist police practices and inadequate health care...give some indication of the types of issues and barriers which Black men encounter" (Bernard, 1996, p. 12). Many of the men in the study talked about the difficulty in challenging the prevailing stereotypes held

about them, and noted that being a Black man makes you more aware of racial domination and forces you to be resilient, and to challenge the stereotypes.

The following African Nova Scotian men recall never seeing any positive images of themselves, and how they challenged stereotypes about Black men:

As a Black man I learned some of the negative things that came from being Black. As life progressed I realized that it seems that we were being told that we were not great achievers you know through the school system. I didn't hear about the achievements of local Black people so I never desired or aspired I guess to be something positive because I never saw what we did or that we were supposed to achieve greatness.

When I look at myself now there isn't a lot of Black males in my position, i.e., Black males who are going to university or going to Dalhousie. There's got to be factors that contribute to that, there's got to be reasons why that is. I remember in high school ...the Black guys I use to hang out with never used to do anything. I was the brother who wrote for the school newspaper and on the debating team.

He elaborates, discussing his experience with challenging stereotypes:

I was always identified because I was a Black male doing things that typically we aren't seen doing. A lot of people didn't even know how to treat me. Teachers didn't know if they should treat me according to stereotypes because I did listen to hip-hop, I did wear baggy jeans; or treat me like one of their typical White students. There is a difference in the way they treat you [Black men] and the other students. If you're a Black male who has little self-esteem, and you're thinking about being a thug or, just being on the block and you're seeing brothers such as myself you might be ignorant enough to categorize me as an uppity person, or someone who's trying to be White.

Although positive images of Black men in the media are scarce, “[w]e do have many examples of Black men in both the past as well as the present, who have managed to overcome these oppressive stereotypes, and to develop alternative images of themselves as Black men to use as positive role models” (Bernard, 1996, pp. 12-15). Unfortunately, these positive images are often not found in the school system, as noted by Sewell in Chapter Two. Participants also highlighted this in Chapter Five, as they discussed the lack of positive role models in the school system and the negative impact of not seeing themselves reflected.

It remains a difficult task for Black men to create positive and affirming images of themselves as there are so many negative stereotypes. Black men who do not fit traditional stereotypes are often ridiculed by their peers, while also being isolated by their White counterparts. Thus it is difficult not to succumb to the pressure to conform to stereotypes.

This section highlighted narratives from both male and female participants about Black men and stereotyping. The following section however, on the experiences of Black women only includes their voices. Unlike their female counterparts, Black men were not able to articulate the struggles of the opposite sex. Moreover, they did not see themselves as having male privilege.

As I read through the narratives of the men I asked: Why don't Black men recognize themselves as perpetrators of sexism? They were unable to leave the role of victim in regards to gender oppression unlike Black women who had empathy and could articulate Black male experiences. After reflecting on this I realized that men are taught not to see sexism, why would Black men be considered differently? Black men are stuck in their own oppression and experiences at the hands of White men. However it is important that Black men address sexism as Black male/female relationships are becoming strained by Black men's lack of attention to this and Black women are getting frustrated.
(Candace)

In the following theme, Black women share their experiences with gender and race oppression.

Black Feminism

Oppression based on the experiences of living as an African Nova Scotian woman was difficult for many participants to articulate. However several participants were able to identify specific forms of gender oppression.

One participant voices her frustrations with Black male/female relationships and experiencing sexism from her male counterparts:

It drives me crazy here in Nova Scotia that Black women are not appreciated by their own Black men. It drives me crazy that we have to go away to realize that we have qualities that make us good mates, mothers, that make us good partners in any kind of endeavor. We have to go away to be appreciated for that by other men. We don't get it here and I don't know how much of that is our own fault and how much of that is the fault of the Black male. It's a combination of the two, but I think a generational thing. I think our generation has had it. We're not going to stand by and let the Black Nova Scotian male tell us what we're going to be anymore. We know this and quite frankly we don't need it anymore and we can go away and can be more prosperous.

Brand has documented that “[m]ale dominance also exists in Black women’s lives and exists despite the reality of the overall economic independence of Black women” (Brand, 1993, p. 285). As stated above, Black men in this study were silent on the issue of whether they had the potential to oppress Black women. Yet clearly Black women have felt oppressed by their male counterparts. Therefore it is difficult for African Nova Scotian women to fight against sexism when it often goes unacknowledged. This is illustrative of the multiple layers of oppression, as noted in Table 1 .

Two participants below discuss the intersection of sexism and poverty:

I think most women within the lower economic scale, are women who I know with the children, who are single parents. It’s a toss between can you afford a job that will pay for daycare, transportation and your kids needs, pay rent and have a little for saving. Or, is it cheaper for you to go on social assistance?

Too many girls are allowing themselves to be victims to men, to life in general, not getting up and doing for themselves and being able to rely on yourself. You got to be independent. It’s just sad and you see them getting married at early ages for the sake of feeling they have to be taken care of.

African Nova Scotian women have a long history of activism in the community as one participant below notes in her narrative. However, African Nova Scotian women have

not been visible in leadership positions, which is a form of sexism in the African Nova Scotian community.

The Black women are held responsible for a lot of maintenance, whether it's our history, whether it's maintaining family ties. How many daughters-in-law are taking care of their mother in laws and their own mothers? In the Black community we are seen as the nurturers. If there's a social issue either through the church or the community Black women are expected to stand up and fight, some of that we take on ourselves, some of that is put upon us. We have a very strong church background here in Nova Scotia among the Black communities. It's very rare to see a Black woman in a position of authority in a Black church even today.

Participants identified specific examples about how the intersection of race and gender oppression affected their education. Streaming into lower tier pink-collar occupations, and lack of choices in school curriculum are two specific ways in which gender affected educational opportunities for many participants.

The following two participants recall how sexism played a role in their education:

Looking at gender and race in the high school that I went to, a lot of the Black females that graduated around the same time I did were pushed into secretarial programs or nursing assistant jobs as our careers, not university.

My first experience with sexism on a personal level in school began when one year I think it was in grade seven or eight, I wanted to take wood shop because there were things I wanted to make my mother and they wouldn't allow it.

They said you have to take cooking or sewing, you have only two choices. I said no and it was a big fight. Finally I got what I wanted and I was the only girl and I continued to take it and I also took drafting. I thought why would you have to be a guy to take drafting? Why would they even separate the two.

Then you had guys who wanted to get into cooking and everybody use to make fun of them, [and say that] he's gay and all this stuff.

Several participants felt that gender results in additional stereotypes about being Black in this society and that people expect Black women to fail. Some also believed that being a Black female means that regardless of educational attainment, opportunities will be limited. This finding is consistent with Brand's claim that "[t]here is an historical characterization of Black women as fit for any kind of work- except for the jobs that White men want" (Brand,1993 p.275).

As noted in the beginning of Chapter Five, the participants in this study are well educated, however the occupational status of the participants does not reflect this. The women, in particular were underemployed or unable to find permanent employment. When comparing themselves to their White counterparts, the females in the study were certain that racism coupled with sexism has adversely affected their career opportunities.

The following African Nova Scotian women discuss racism, and how they feel their opportunities are limited by race and gender oppression:

People would rather stand up than sit beside me on the bus. I'm a well-dressed professional Black woman, what are you afraid of? I'm not going to attack you. They'll wait till it's the last possible seat. That's ridiculous. It doesn't happen everyday but I notice when it does. Little things like that people aren't aware of.

Those are the type of things that go unnoticed. It happens everywhere, including the workplace.

Being a female in general automatically has, what I'm going to refer to as repercussions because as a female you're automatically assumed to not have particular skills or to not be able to do certain types of work, or not be fit for a

certain type of position, because they think you're not strong enough or you're not smart enough or you don't understand things, only men understand.

Two participants elaborate on this point:

As a Black female regardless of my social economic class, racism is alive and well. I'm referring to the Maritimes because this is where I presently reside. It might not be somebody walking beside you and calling you nigger on the street which would definitely be more welcome than having the little things that most people don't even realize like being offered bad jobs and being offered shitty pay.

As a Black female I don't think that with the education I have today I'm going to go very far in my career. As for myself I think if I do not further my education I'm going to be a child protection worker for the next fifteen years of my life or longer. I don't see any chance for promotion in the near future in my job and it doesn't matter how hard you work in the career. I am the type of person who stays in the office till seven or eight o'clock at night but that's not noticed. You don't receive a lot of thanks for that. I also find as a Black female you have to work harder to prove yourself and if you don't people will be talking and saying you can't do this and you can't do that. So I feel you

have to put your best into it, you have to be meticulous with everything you do or they're going to scrutinize things and say negative things about you. I mean I've seen it done with other people, so I'm sure the same thing would happen to me as well.

Instilling racial pride and empowerment in her daughter as a buffer against racism and sexism was a goal for this participant:

I want to teach my daughter a sense of Black African pride in all that she is and all that she can do and will. I find that a lot of young ladies around my age do not even want to affiliate themselves with their Black heritage within Africa which is a shame and so I try to instill that in my daughter. It wasn't given to me I went out and got mine on my own. If I had it from the beginning I probably would have gotten through things a lot easier. That sense of pride is something that can carry you a long way. If you look back at what our woman went through, how can you not be proud of such strong heritage? I find that a big issue for young Black woman is a lack of respect for themselves, a lack of pride, a lack of self-esteem. When I see young girls doing better things for themselves, I do anything I can to help and encourage them. With regards to my daughter I think a strong sense of church, a strong sense of family, and a strong support mechanism are things [needed] to help get through anything.

And, that's what it all just comes down to: support, pride and self-esteem. I feel powerful, I feel empowered, I feel strong, I feel resilient. Yes of course there's going to be times we feel down because the struggle for a Black woman is so, so hard. But when I reflect on where I came from I know we can get through anything, I can get through anything.

Collins notes that “[t]he power of Black women was the power to make culture, to transmit folk ways, norms and customs as well as to build shared ways of seeing the world that insured our survival” (Collins, 2000, quotes Radford-Hill, 1986). African Nova Scotian women are particularly vulnerable as victims of poverty, domestic abuse and other women's issues as sufferers of multiple oppression. African Nova Scotian women are disproportionately represented in groups of poor women, single parent families, and they are underemployed. While simultaneously, there are few specific resources in the community to address their needs. This trend is slowly beginning to change as groups such as the Black Women's Health group in Halifax begin to address the many needs of African Nova Scotian women.

Interestingly, none of the female participants labeled themselves as feminists or discussed feminism at all, although they clearly have an analysis of the sexism that frames their lives. Black women have been activists for both women's rights and the dismantling of racial oppression for several generations, yet they don't

identify with the feminist movement which came on the heels of the civil rights movement. When feminist theory was first introduced, Black women were excluded and as a result did not collectively become involved in the feminist movement. However towards the 1980's and 90's, strong examples of Black feminists emerged who challenged mainstream feminists and created a Black feminist standpoint. Black feminists have also created space for Black women to acknowledge sexism both within and outside the Black community. Yet there is still resistance to the label 'feminist' even from women (such as the participants) who are able to articulate and understand gender oppression and the intersection of racism and sexism. This is interesting given that the younger women interviewed in this study have examples of Black women who identify as feminist such as Angela Davis, Alice Walker, bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins. Are they reaching today's Black women? (Candace)

The African Nova Scotian community has been plagued by poverty and the resulting lack of educational opportunity. This was a major theme as participants addressed the issue of class, which is discussed below.

Class Relations

Several participants were able to articulate how they were oppressed by poverty, and how it affected their school experiences. For instance, participants from lower socio-economic backgrounds recall teacher expectations being lowered based on their class position. These lowered expectations based on class, are often coupled with those based on race as discussed in Chapter Five, therefore many Africa Nova Scotian students are dually oppressed as they face prejudice in the school system based on race and class.

One participant recalls his experience growing up in public housing and not seeing any images of Black men achieving in higher education:

You could say I grew up in housing projects and I saw other people having other ways of living when I got to high school. I did get some White friends and I went to their homes and I saw them living in a different lifestyle. I like to call rather than projects where I was living, housing estates. We were put there so that people could to get ahead as former residents of Africville. The system was here to supposedly help people get ahead. But I always wondered: Why aren't we able to save money? We can't save money if as soon as I got a job my mother's rent went up quite a bit so the family could never get a chance to save money under that type of system...When I saw Black people come home, they came home from labor jobs. My father was a carpenter and carpenters are good people but I'm just saying that I didn't see any of the other high paying

jobs, being held by Black men in my community. What else can I say? As a Black man, I spent a lot of time in my life feeling as if, I wasn't important, and not going to amount to a whole lot.

Hooks states that an “[a]bsence of positive affirmation clearly diminishes the longing to excel in academic endeavours” (hooks, 1988, p. 82). As discussed in Chapter Five, and in the first theme of this chapter, mirroring and being reflected is an integral part of identity formation. When African Nova Scotian youth don't see themselves reflected in the school system or in positions of power and authority, they have no images or examples to emulate. Lack of representation also perpetuates the prevailing negative stereotypes about the roles of African Nova Scotians in mainstream society.

The following participants discuss how they were treated differently by teachers due to their social economic class:

My educators knew the neighborhood that I came from, [which was] low-income housing. They knew that I came from a single parent home as they got to know me. The guidance counsellor is asking you why aren't you doing so well in school, and they made assumptions because I came from a single parent home. I have to admit [coming from a single parent home] it does play a role in the choices that you make or what you expect from yourself. I lived in a neighborhood where [there was] a repetitive cycle, where by the time you're

sixteen or seventeen you want to have a baby so you can get an apartment and then your daughter will live off the system, that was in my neighborhood. Teachers are not going to go out of their way to even call your parents, because they figure your mother wouldn't care or she wouldn't have anything intelligent to say. My mother didn't know half of what was going on at school. You get up in the morning and you go to school, you missed third class or whatever. I don't think that they really noticed. I think that I could be a lot further if I was really more focused on who I was and what I was capable of with the right encouragement. I may not have wasted so many years of which I deserved, if I had that understanding early on that the possibilities were endless and things like that. My mother wasn't able to tell me cause she was a single parent who was just trying to keep things together. Just trying to keep a dinner hour, trying to keep a bedtime, trying to keep us fed. She never really realized her own possibilities either so she was limited in the advice that she could give. She did the best that she could.

The teacher would get annoyed with us, mostly Black kids, for not having any school supplies at the beginning of the year. But a lot of us when school started had to wait until our mother's next cheque to get supplies. When you're on welfare, you live cheque to cheque, there's no money in between that time frame. They really could never understand that.

One participant remembers an incident where privileges were given to a student according to social class:

We had an open competition for concertmaster, which is the main seat in the school orchestra. And the person they put in charge was a lovely thing who was very cute and pretty. And yes she was very talented, but she didn't have the skills to be the orchestra leader. I could play. I had talent. That was never in question. I auditioned for [concertmaster] and I thought I played damn well. But I knew what was going to happen. Five minutes after I left the room the conductor, who was also the teacher came out and said, "I'm going to tell you right now you're not going to be concertmaster. We already decided you're going to be second chair regardless. We need you in that position, because we also know that whoever is concertmaster, is not going to be able to do it all." And my response was, "you know I can do it all so why don't you just put me there?" And that's where I learned a little bit about politics. He said, "I'll be honest with you, her parents are very influential. They're in a position where if we don't give this to her things could happen." And my first response was to say they're White, they're South End and have money. And I was angry but then again it came back to well if I'm going to do a good job, do it well regardless. And I did.

It was noted in Chapter Five that the participants, who were involved in activities such as music where there are few African Nova Scotians, felt isolated by both Black and White peer groups. The participants stated that class created similar divisions. Some participants who identified as middle class noted that race affects membership in middle and upper class circles and creates divisions amongst both Black and White peer groups.

Participants recall the isolation experienced from not fitting in with either their White and Black peers:

I know people used to think that my family was higher up, but I never, ever did consider that. I think that's why I had problems with some Black kids because first of all they thought that my family was well to do which we weren't. And then that compounded with the fact that I was getting good grades.

Junior high was a little bit different because that's when you start to learn socio economic differences. My parents are well off, we are upper middle class but I was still a Black female so in that respect I had White friends but I was always the Black female. I was in the upper [economic] bracket but I was still Black. [S]o it still was a checkmark. There's nothing I can do about that

and I didn't want to be White, but there's definitely a lack of people to discuss things with.

Many middle class African Nova Scotian families have opted to move to predominantly White neighborhoods as a result of increased economic resources. As a result, their children must attend local schools, which can be particularly isolating. Moreover, these children find themselves geographically and sometimes socially isolated from their African Nova Scotian peers.

One participant recalls painful memories of not fitting in with her Black peers:

I grew up predominantly in the White areas going to school with the White kids. I had some problems with some kids but there wasn't really an over abundance of it. But then I found when I started going to school with the Black kids, that's when I started encountering a lot of problems. It was really, really bad, but I got through it, but what I went through, I wouldn't wish it upon anybody. To this day at times I see it's still there but it's not something I will let affect my life anymore like I did back in my younger days, so it's all been a learning experience big time.

She goes on to discuss how she was labeled:

I was a student doing well in school so I was ridiculed because of that.

Because I came from going to school with all Whites I was constantly labeled as a White girl. Lunch hour I was constantly trying to find areas to hide from being beat up or having my lunch taken from me. Any number of things... you name it I went through it there. It was very hard.

Another participant discusses the difficulty of feeling isolated in both Black and White communities:

I don't feel comfortable going out in the Black community because I don't know how they'll accept me. I don't feel comfortable going out in the White community because I think there's a certain amount of racism there. I am Black from both sides of my family but it's almost as if I am from a mixed heritage.

Growing up in a predominantly White neighborhood, I can relate to the participants who felt isolated within both Black and White peer groups. However, my parents made an effort to make connections with the Black community through church therefore while there may have been some isolation at particular times, I always felt at home with Black peers. For middle class African Nova Scotians who have chosen to live in White communities, it is important to maintain links

with the community. This is an issue that often goes unaddressed when middle class African Nova Scotian families move outside of Black communities.

(Candace)

The participants who identified as middle class had difficulty in doing so. Many of them are first generation middle class, and face a lack of entry into traditional middle class lifestyles. Going from one class position to another i.e., lower to middle is a difficult transition. Several participants were the first generation in their family to be university educated and to break the cycle of poverty. Thus, they face the burdens that come along with this, and the responsibility to carry other extended family and community members along. These experiences transpire into paying off huge student loans, not having any money saved or invested, and not owning a home, for example. As a result, many who identified as middle class due to educational attainment or occupational status still felt class oppression and a lack of economic security.

Many had never looked at themselves in relation to class, however it was recognized that class creates financial barriers to educational achievement. A lack of financial resources was the main reason given for many participants as a barrier to achieving their educational goals. Many wish to complete their degrees, have the opportunity to study full time, or return to graduate school for instance, however, these choices are financially impossible.

The following participant notes how class affected her educational goals:

Well it took a long time before I decided to further my education. I worked for a few years and, I think that was a great experience for someone like me who wasn't where I wanted to go. I started to really value education because then I realized well if I didn't want to end up with dead end jobs, there really wasn't any way out. I came to realize that you can not support a family on minimum wage, it's just impossible to do that. I knew from the influences around me and just living in the neighborhood where I lived a lot of girls my age were starting families without husbands and living on social assistance and I knew that certainly wasn't a way out. A lot of people at that time thought it was a way of being independent...to have a baby and get an apartment and, I knew that wasn't the way either. I wanted a second chance. I applied and was accepted to college and that was really encouraging for me. I think the reason why I didn't succeed was because I was trying to support myself at the same time, working and going to school. In order to be accepted as a mature student I had to take a full course load, a minimum of five. It was really too difficult so I ended up dropping out of school and working full time again because work was easier to do. It took several attempts before I really was able to succeed in education.

Two participants discuss the financial difficulties involved in pursuing higher education:

I'm uncertain if I plan to do a masters degree, because I think a barrier for me will be financial. I'm on my own and don't have the family network that a lot of people have, [because] I grew up in foster care. So for me it would be the thing of having enough money to go back and support myself while attending school. So that will be the difficulty.

I find that people who come from the upper class have it easier in obtaining their goals, and what they want in life. Financially you're looking at going to university and it costs a lot of money for people. But that's not to say people like myself (I grew up in a lower class environment) can't do it. But you have to work harder because you're paying for it yourself. You have to get a student loan, and you're the one who has to pay that back. You don't have someone paying it back for you like some people who come from upper class families.

Class oppression and financial barriers can be a deterrent to fulfilling educational aspirations. Fortunately for several participants this has not occurred. While they are acutely aware of the financial difficulties, they have succeeded in obtaining post-secondary education and are able to set future goals.

Educational attainment is often the only means through which cycles of poverty be broken. Yet even with obtaining degrees, and access to higher paying occupations

the African Nova Scotian middle class is still 'catching hell'. I noted in Chapter Four for instance, that we are still being denied bank loans, and face glass ceilings in the workforce. In addition, participants who identified as middle class are still facing financial barriers. The African Nova Scotian community as a whole, must look at fostering economic growth. Class warfare is one issue that must be examined when addressing economic growth. Some of the participants who grew up in White neighbourhoods touched on this issue when they discussed how they felt isolated or were ridiculed by Black peers. One area where I see class warfare is the African Nova Scotian community is in the area of Black business. I think it is necessary to support Black businesses as a means of fostering economic growth. Yet this is one area where I see class warfare present in the community, not in a blatant form, but often it is more insidious. Over the years businesses in the African Nova Scotian community have been lost. Why? Are lower class African Nova Scotians distrusting of Black businesses? Are middle class business owners afraid to put business in the communities, and are they giving back to the community? Are there gender differences among business owners and consumers? With the creation of the Black Business Initiative the African Nova Scotian community is certainly trying to create a business culture and raise the profile of local entrepreneurs. But have we addressed the issues of retention of Black businesses and the class warfare that happens? These discussions must take place in order for the community to address how

intersections of race, class and gender affect economic growth and other issues affecting the well being of the community. (Candace)

The final section of this chapter will discuss the links between race, class, and gender oppression.

Race, Class, and Gender: The Impact of Multiple Oppression

Ng argues that “Race, gender and class are relations that have to do with how people define themselves and how they participate in social life. They are not mere categories...relations of race, gender and class converge, diverge...these are real and concrete relations, not just abstract and imaginary categories” (Ng, 1993, p. 50). As I reached this final stage of the interview with the participants, I sensed hopelessness and despair, as we reflected on the intersections of race, class and gender oppression. The glass ceiling became even higher than many first realized as they pieced the three factors together in relation to their own lives. Many talked about the difficulty in breaking the cycle of oppression as we are oppressed in many ways.

Several participants reflected on how all three axes of oppression decide someone’s fate, or life chances. For instance, one participant below stated that all three are the reasons why Black women are affected by the feminization of poverty, more so than White women are.

I think they're all inter-related because being a woman of color, regardless of social economic class. I think they are three strikes against you. Certain people definitely have expectations of people of color. A lot of people I think expect Black women to fail...I drew a perception of this because I graduated and have a degree from Dalhousie, and I have my TEFL certificate allowing me to teach a second language and make a decent salary. But, as a 23 year old Black woman, within the Maritimes I'm still being offered shitty jobs. I mean [at places such as] Tim Horton's and Mailboxes Etc. These are not good jobs. I have no intention of working in these jobs the rest of my life.

Another participant discusses multiple oppression and employment:

I say they're all connected, race, class and gender. Even in the work force today applying for jobs. An example I can give you is in a place of employment where, a White female secretary worked her way up, without formal education. Then you have a Black male who has a master's degree, and several years experience supervising but the White female gets the job over the Black male who has more qualifications. That fits into the race, class and gender issue, because a Black male has less chance of getting the job verses the White female, with less education. And that's how I see things in society today. I was going to apply for a job at head office about six months ago and I

thought that I didn't have enough education and it was something I really wanted to do. A White female who comes from an upper class family who's very politically connected got the job and she has a Bachelor of Arts. They require you have a Bachelor of Social Work, and she got it with a BA. So as a Black female from, I hate to say this but middle class, I see myself having to struggle really, really struggle to make ends meet.

Other participants discussed how they perceive race, class and gender oppression:

When I think about race, class and gender I get depressed. As a Black person I am discriminated against in more ways than just race alone. I often don't think about that, as racism is something I can pinpoint easier than being discriminated against based on gender and class. But I have defiantly experienced discrimination on all three levels and it's hard to even think about that, let alone fight against it.

You have to be able to understand them all [race, class, and gender] and to a certain extent you have to know how they are tied into one another or you can be doomed.

Race, class, and gender, well yeah I would have to say that they're very much connected if you look at the social structure and the political structure. If you look at whom is in power, and who has money. It's a particular race, class and gender.

Very connected, race, class, and gender. Your Black, you're poor, and if you're a Black woman you can forget it. You will be considered to be at the bottom. If you're Black, you're poor you're male you'll be a little bit of a step up. Still down there but you're given [a little] more respect.

This category did not create the same narrative thread as the others during the second part of the interview. Some participants were not able to recognize any connections at all. This finding is supported by hooks who notes that "[w]hen we talk about race and class in convergence and conjunction with gender, we really struggle for a new language" (hooks & Childers, 1990, p. 67). The majority of discussion occurred when each form of oppression was discussed separately i.e., gender oppression and sexism, class oppression and classism. It became difficult for participants to discuss the ways in which all of the oppressions fit together in a system of domination, however, this is not an easy task.

My analysis of multiple oppression stems from my own experiences as an African Nova Scotian woman. Analysis is a powerful tool to use as coping mechanism to deal with the realities of multiple oppression. By analysis, I mean the ability to place isolated incidents of racism, sexism and classism within a complex system of societal inequality. The ability to recognize concepts of power and privilege where groups of people are marginalized based on membership in various groups.

The impact is different depending where you are in each group. Understanding systemic inequality and not internalizing experiences of oppression is crucial to survival. We must be able to critically analyze the impact of oppression both hidden and additive forms. Lack of economic power, plus racism and gender oppression can have a devastating impact on one's life chances, which are significantly affected by education. (Candace)

The conclusion chapter will pull together themes from the data to make recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

Synopsis

This thesis explored the concept of multiple oppression in relation to African Nova Scotian educational experiences. Chapter One set the tone of this study, by briefly discussing African Nova Scotians in the context of multiple oppression. The characteristics of oppression were also outlined in Table 1.

The literature review, in Chapter Two outlined the historical experiences in African Nova Scotian education, dating back to segregation. Current literature exploring race, class and gender both as separate issues, as well as literature that made connections between the three oppressions was also examined.

Chapter Three discussed the methodology used in this study, which was an exploratory, qualitative piece of work with an Africentric framework. The tenets of qualitative research, and an Africentric paradigm were examined in Chapter Three. In addition, this chapter included a table, which explores similarities between qualitative and Africentric work. The chapter concluded with an outline of the data sample, data collection and data analysis.

As part of using an Africentric paradigm, I centered myself in this research by devoting a chapter to my own experiences. I was interviewed using the same interview

guide developed for the participants. Chapter Four was in dialogue format, presenting my response to the interview questions.

The data was presented in two chapters, based on the two parts of the interview guide found on in Appendix B. Chapter Five, the first of these two chapters, highlighted participant narratives about their educational journeys. This part of the data analysis presented themes that focused on oppression based on race.

Chapter Six presented participant responses to specific questions about race, class and gender. The themes from this chapter focus on how participants articulated their experiences with multiple oppression.

In this final chapter, I will provide a summary of the results and discuss the limitations of the research and recommendations for further study.

The participant narratives revealed that racism was clearly present in a number of areas including school, post secondary, work and community. The most significant aspect of the participants' analysis was around issues of race and the impact of racism on their lives. However participants were clearly able to articulate how oppression based on class and gender frames their lives as well. For instance, gender oppression was named from both locations. Black men struggle to create alternative images of themselves which are affirming. Black women participants had a sharp analysis of the role sexism plays in their lives as well how gender norms affect the lives of Black men. However, Black men did not articulate an understanding of the role gender oppression as it affects Black women.

Furthermore, they did not consider themselves in the role of oppressor in a male/female context, or as having unearned privilege as men in this society.

Participants also expressed how financial barriers limit their educational opportunities. Class is major factor that impacted on the school experiences of the participants. Female participants experienced gender and race related streaming. Middle class participants found themselves isolated by both White and Black peers while attending school. Participants from lower class backgrounds struggled to deal with low teacher expectations based on the intersection of their race and class.

Participants reflected on their experiences based on race, class and gender as separate entities but failed to articulate (with the same passion) an understanding of how these intersect, interlock and frame their lives. The fact that there is no everyday discussion of the intersection of race, class and gender, makes it difficult to dialogue about multiple oppression. However, it is important to create spaces to be able to address this issue.

Limitations of the Research and Suggestions for Further Research

This was a small research sample, therefore a limited number of voices were heard. In addition, it was not possible to get a focus group together for this study which may have provided further insights. I initially proposed to do a focus group to heighten

similarities and differences in participant experiences by providing a forum for them to dialogue about the individual interviews. A focus group may have also brought out more narrative material through the sharing of experiences and the process of going through the data from the individual interviews.

As noted in Chapter Five, the participants represented an urban perspective. Only a few participants spend part of their formative years in rural Nova Scotia, and none of the participants currently reside in rural areas. Furthermore the participants were an educated group with only two participants not completing high school and almost all have entered some form of post secondary education. The profile of participants as a group of educated African Nova Scotians bringing an urban perspective, limits the scope of perspectives offered here. The topic of race, class and gender in education could be studied further with larger groups of African Nova Scotians, who represent a broader range of perspectives. For instance, youth who are currently in the school system could be studied. The participants in this study offered insights as adults who have been through the Nova Scotian school system. The findings of this study can be expanded by exploring the voices of students who are currently in school, to gain an understanding of how they perceive multiple oppression, and how they deal with this issue.

Older African Nova Scotians would also provide interesting perspectives particularly those who were involved in the civil rights era and other major social movements. The participants in this study were able to benefit from programs such as the Black Incentive Fund through the Department of Education and the Transition Year

Program at Dalhousie University and other such access programs. African Nova Scotians from the previous generation experienced a harsher climate of race, class and gender oppression. Therefore, a question that could be explored is whether older African Nova Scotians are able to make more connections between the interlocking nature of oppression. Or are younger African Nova Scotians able to easily see the connections (in comparison to their elder counterparts) due to their increased exposure to higher education? Furthermore, what has been the outcome of programs built to support African Nova Scotian learners? Is there an impact across generations?

In addition, a wider range of class perspectives could bring additional insights to research on this topic. It would be interesting to compare the results of this study with one that examines the position of African Nova Scotians who have not benefited from higher education and do not identify as middle class. How do the voices of African Nova Scotians from lower socio-economic backgrounds differ from the perspectives offered in this research?

Moreover, research in this area could be broadened to include the perspectives of African Canadians from different provinces. Results from this research could be compared to research done in other provinces. For example, how do experiences of race, class and gender compare in different provinces? Do African Nova Scotians fare better or worse than African Canadians in other provinces?

Recommendations

It was noted in Chapter Four, that Asante (1990) outlines two means of reflexivity for researchers. The first is the process of introspection which comes before the research is conducted and retrospection comes after the research is completed. Introspection is discussed in further detail in Chapter Four. The process of retrospection involves researchers questioning themselves once the research has been conducted.

After the data was collected and analyzed I asked myself the following questions: how will those in the education sector as well as community members be able to use this work? How can this work help others in the struggle to fight race, class and gender oppression? There are no concrete answers to these questions. The issues raised in this study are complex, and some answers may lie in our ability to dialogue about them. Expanding a race based analysis to include multiple realities will involve creating spaces to have more voices heard. After reflection on the findings I have outlined the following strategies that can be utilized to further the goals of equality in the education of African Nova Scotians and to help dismantle multiple forms of oppression.

- Educational sessions be held in the African Nova Scotian community to discuss and analyze the intersections of race, class and gender.

The findings from this study illustrate a need to broaden the focus of a race-based analysis of the issues affecting the African Nova Scotian community. The community needs a forum to discuss issues of multiple oppression and how they impact on the community. Engaging in discussions about multiple oppression may also ease the feelings of depression that some participants felt as they articulated their understanding of race, class and gender. Moreover, the community may feel empowered to take action against multi layers of oppression and extend initiatives that target the experience of racism. Educational sessions on multiple oppression may take many forms in the school and community. For instance, existing programs for youth could include content on raising awareness about multiple oppression, how it impacts on their lives and how to fight effectively against it. After school tutoring programs, extra curricular and cultural enrichment programs for example, could use popular culture such as music, movies to get youth to analyze how social messages about race, class and gender are reproduced. Discussion can be generated by asking important questions such as: How does the media perpetuate stereotypes about Black men and women? How do we as a community internalize those images? What can we do about it?

- **Teacher training at the post secondary level and post degree programs should include training in understanding and dealing with the everyday realities of people living with multiple oppression so they do not perpetuate the stereotypes.**

Participants in this study spoke clearly about the effects of streaming and low expectations, which are two examples of how stereotypes inform educator's relationships with learners. It is important for educators at all levels to have cultural competency for working with learners who are multiply oppressed.

Teachers need to be trained in examining how their interactions with students may perpetuate race, class and gender oppression. Teachers can also be effective in assisting students in understanding and developing an analysis of multiple oppression. For example, lessons on multiple oppression can be incorporated into the curriculum through discussions in various subjects such as English and history, using tools like popular theatre. Moreover, administrators in education could use the ideas and information generated from this to help guide policy decisions and curriculum development.

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Appendix A

Invitation To Participate

Have you been educated in the Nova Scotia School System?

Are you an African Nova Scotian between the ages of 18 and 30?

My name is Candace Bernard. I am a graduate student in the Research Master of Arts (education) program at Mount Saint Vincent University. 10 volunteers are being recruited to participate in my thesis study of **the Connections between Race, Class and Gender, and African Nova Scotian School Experiences**. The purpose of the study is to explore how the intersections of race, class and gender impact on African Nova Scotian school experiences. Participation will require one to two hours of your time and will involve an individual interview and possibly, a focus group discussion. To ensure accuracy, a tape recorder will be used to record the interview and focus group. In the transcriptions, no identifying information will be recorded. Participants will be selected on a first come basis.

For more information contact Candace Bernard at either 494-2969 or
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Appendix B

Interview Guide

The individual interviews will be divided into the following two sections; the first is a general educational life story, and the second a reflection on race, class and gender.

Part A-Tree of Education:

This exercise is adapted from an Africentric education workshop technique, that is used to help people analyze their experiences of racism and oppression. The Tree of Education will be used in individual interviews to help participants analyze their education experiences. Each person is to reflect on their educational experiences, using a tree as an analogy. Each part of the tree will represent different points in participants' education experiences.

1. The roots represent: the first educational experience

Think about your first learning experience.

Can we discuss who or what was a major influence in your life? Can we discuss what experiences were memorable?

2. The trunk represents: your formal education.

Think about your formal education

Can we discuss who or what was a major influence in your life? Can we discuss what experiences were memorable?

3. The leaves represent: informal education.

Think about your Informal education

Can we discuss who or what was a major influence in your life? Can we discuss what experiences were memorable?

4. The fruits represent: education achievements.

Think about your Education Achievements.

Can we discuss who or what was a major influence in your life? Can we discuss what experiences were memorable?

5. The buds represent: your hopes for the future.

Think about your hopes for the future

Can we discuss who or what is a major influence in your life? Can we discuss what you hope to accomplish?

Part B: Questions about race, class and gender

1. You have described to me your educational experience. You have described instances where race has affected you. Can you reflect on yourself as a [male] [female] in intersection with yourself as African Nova Scotian?

2. Now I'd like to add another layer- 'class'. Before we talk about class, perhaps we should define it. What do you mean when you talk about class?

3. Could you describe now how you see yourself in relation to social class? What about the educational experiences you've described? How has social class affected your educational experiences?

4. Now, can you make some links with all three pieces? How do you see the three strands, race, class and gender weaving through your educational experiences?

Appendix C

Interview Consent Form

My name is Candace Bernard. I am a graduate student in the Research Master of Arts (education) program at Mount Saint Vincent University. My research topic will examine the connections between race, class, gender and African Nova Scotian school experiences. The purpose of the study is to explore how race, class, and gender impact on the school experiences African Nova Scotians.

The interview should take approximately 1 to 2 hours. You may choose not to answer any particular question. To ensure accuracy, a tape recorder will be used to record the interview. You may ask to stop the tape at any time during the interview. The tapes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet, and will be destroyed after they are transcribed. In the transcriptions, no identifying information will be recorded.

Everything said in the interview will be kept confidential. A person who will transcribe, or type what you say in the interview, will also be listening to your interview. Information from the interview will be included in my thesis, however, no names or other identifying information will be used. This means that you may be quoted, unidentified, in my thesis.

After the interview is completed, you may be asked to participate in a focus group.

I have been told about the research study and I agree to participate. During the interview, I may choose to skip any question I do not feel comfortable answering. I also understand that I may stop participation in the study at any time. I am at least 18 years of age.

Signature of Participant _____.

Signature of Researcher _____.

Date: _____

You may receive a copy of the results of the study. Please indicate here if you would like to have a copy.

Yes, I would like to have a copy of the results _____

No, I would not like a copy of the results _____

Researcher's Copy _____ Participant's Copy _____