Educating rural African Americans in pre-brown decision America: one-room school education in Hardin county, Kentucky 1941-1954

Etta J. Hill
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This study investigated the impact of rural, one-room, African-American schools
on the educational experiences and racial consciousness of African-American children
and adults in two Hardin County, Kentucky communities during the period of
segregation. Objectives of the study were: (1) to identify one-room school educational
activities, (2) to identify expressions of African Consciousness and characteristics
(concept included characteristics of African Identity and Culture) that enabled African-
American children to develop survival skills required for life in America, and (3) to
identify the communal and cultural activities that supported the one-room school
children.

The researcher found evidence that African Consciousness and African identity
and culture were apparent in school and community activities. The rural citizens were
aware of their black identity and they shared information about the positive
accomplishments of black people with each other. Traditions, practices, and customs that affirmed worth, dignity and integrity were passed on in the communities; furthermore, they helped each other learn the traditions. Racial oppression was resisted in the communities. Cultural activities were provided by the schools and the communities in mutually beneficial endeavors.

Exploration of the education provided to rural African Americans before the *Brown decision* was significant for several reasons. First, it allowed an examination of an under-researched segment of the American educational system. Second, African Americans, including the researcher, who were part of the segregated educational system were able to give their own descriptions and interpretations of their educational experiences. Third, positive interactions and supports that promoted student survival in the segregated system were identified.
EDUCATING RURAL AFRICAN AMERICANS IN PRE-BROWN DECISION AMERICA: ONE-ROOM SCHOOL EDUCATION IN HARDIN COUNTY, KENTUCKY 1941-1954

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF ARTS IN HUMANITIES

BY

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA

MAY 2011
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I take this opportunity to thank my family (especially my daughter, Kenyetta, and my son and his wife, John and Heidi) and friends for encouraging me to stay focused and to complete this project. Additionally, I have to express my gratitude to the members of my committee for their guidance and assistance in this endeavor. Finally, I am appreciative of having had the opportunity to explore a segment of rural life that supported me and other African Americans during the period of segregation, and I truly thank God for directing me through the experience.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Education Supports African-American Dreams for the Future

This study investigated the impact of rural, one-room, African-American schools on the educational experiences and racial consciousness of African-American children and adults in selected Hardin County, Kentucky communities prior to the implementation of the 1954 Brown decision. Two county schools, Sonora Colored School and Glendale Colored School, were the major focus of the investigation. Furthermore, some relevant information about the educational activities in Colored Schools in two other communities (Upton in Hardin County and Siberia in Larue County) was noted. Rural, African-American, one-room schools of this period were underfunded and undervalued institutions in the American educational system, but they were foundational and inspirational institutions in the African-American educational system and community.

This research was significant because it informed about the African-American presence in America's rural educational system during the period of legal segregation. Exploring that presence in rural education was important for several reasons. The first reason was to examine an under-researched segment of the American educational system in an effort to expand coverage of the African-American experience in American public school history. The second reason was to identify positive interactions and supports that
enabled students to survive the segregated system which might be presently used to bring about an educational transformation. The third reason was to revisit and review the personal educational experiences of the researcher and other participants in a forum that gave them voice; they were able to describe their experiences in their own words. Three participants were only connected to Glendale Colored School as students or parents of students and three participants were former students at Sonora Colored School. However, seven participants were connected to both schools as students, parents of students, or the teacher. Objectives of this study were: (1) to identify expressions of African Consciousness that enabled rural, African-American, one-room school children to develop the survival skills needed in twentieth century American life, (2) to identify expressions of African Consciousness (concept included characteristics of African Identity and Culture) that enabled African-American children to develop survival skills required for life in America, and (3) to identify the communal and cultural activities that supported the children in those schools. In this research study, the following terms were used interchangeably to identify members of the same ethnic group: African-American, black, Negro, and Colored for Americans of African descent; European-American or white for Americans of European descent; Native-American or Indian for Americans who were native to the country.

**Context of the Problem**

When the twentieth century began, public education had been established in the South, but African Americans and European Americans had different educational viewpoints. African-American education was not a priority in the newly established
public education system. Southern European-American farmers opposed African-American children being in school because they were needed in the agricultural-based work force; consequently, in 1900, seventy-eight percent of southern African-American children were employed as agricultural laborers. Nevertheless, educating the children was a priority for African-American people, and after 1910, they began withdrawing their children from the work force. By 1914, large numbers of African Americans were moving from the South to the North in order to better their lives. However, that migration did not remove all African Americans from the South; for those remaining in the South education was still a goal, but obstacles impeded their efforts to establish schools. Those barriers included insufficient funding of African-American schools, diversions of African-American school funds to European-American schools, conspiracies by farmers to keep African-American children in the work force, shortages of qualified teachers, and lack of funds to build and maintain schools.

Black citizens in Hardin County were challenged by these barriers to education for their children. Segregation practices existed in the county. In the small communities that were the focus of this study, the churches, schools, and restaurants for black and white citizens were in separate facilities. Black children could not ride public school buses; they walked to school or rode with private drivers or the school teacher. In other instances, the same facilities were used by black and white citizens; all citizens used the same grocery stores, dry goods stores, hardware stores, post offices, filling stations, and funeral homes, but none of the businesses were owned and/or operated by black people.

Often businesses had different conditions of service for black citizens. One participant vividly recalled how hurtful it was to be told that she could not sit on the stool and eat her ice cream in the new drug store that opened in her community. Also, the Greyhound Bus Station in the largest city in the county, Elizabethtown, had a separate waiting area and bathroom for black customers. In their communities, black citizens were farm workers, domestic workers, teachers, preachers, and sometimes builders; they also worked outside their communities in laundries, in electrical power companies, on the railroads, and other jobs. Both the Glendale and Sonora communities provided elementary education for black and white children. All students adhered to the compulsory attendance requirements. The black schools were one-room buildings, but the white schools were multi-grade buildings. Black children’s books were frequently the used text from their white counterparts. The number of students attending the one-room schools ranged from sixteen to twenty-five or thirty. Pictures of one-room school students, along with information from respondents, supported the previously stated class sizes. The research did not reveal the student population at the multi-level schools. These obstacles negatively affected African-American education and supported the view that African-American education was inadequate.

Since there was inequitable public support of black education, supplemental support had to be acquired from nonpublic sources. Several important funding and advocacy sources for public education emerged after the Civil War. *Southern Education Foundation Records* noted the contributions of George Peabody (two million dollars to support southern education in 1867), Paul Slater (one million dollars to support public
Negro education in 1882), Anna T. Jeanes and Virginia Randolph (provided funds for the education of black teachers) as being instrumental in moving black education forward in the Post Civil War South. The Southern Education Foundation, an advocate of education for rural blacks, actually resulted from a combined initiative of Peabody, Slater, Jeanes, and Randolph funds. Members of the foundation were noted for several projects that directly benefitted African-American education: John F. Slater Fund—the first philanthropy in the United Stated devoted to the education of African Americans; Anna T. Jeanes—created the Negro Rural School Fund to support African-American teachers in southern schools; Virginia Randolph Fund—began in the name of the first “Jeanes Teacher” to assist Jeanes teachers in the South. Additionally, James D. Anderson’s text, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, identified the Rosenwald Fund as another source of financial support for black education. Julius Rosenwald, president of the Sears Catalog Sales Company, was so impressed by Booker T. Washington’s work in rural education that he established a matching school funds program for rural black communities in 1917. The Rosenwald Fund provided plans and matching funds to rural communities interested in building schools for black children. These funds were initially dispersed through Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee institute staff, but later Rosenwald established an office in Nashville to oversee the program. Both private sources

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(foundations and individuals) and public sources provided funding for rural one-room schools. Although these black citizens paid taxes to support the public education system, they had to make additional contributions to guarantee education for their children. Extra assistance included both monetary donations and in-kind donations of supplies, time, land, etc.

African-American one-room schools emerged in a number of southern communities despite the lack of equitable support from the dominant local, regional, or state educational and communal systems. These schools were under-financed and under-rated by the majority culture. However, they evolved to become motivational underpinnings in their African-American communities. How these rural schools were supported by their communities and subsequently became educational and cultural conduits for the communities was the focus of this research activity. This research project examined the activities of African Americans that enabled the schools to function until the implementation of the 1954 Brown decision. In reviewing these educational and communal efforts, the researcher sought to identify components of African Consciousness that may have enabled these rural citizens to educate their children. The premise for the project was: The isolation of segregation evoked a centeredness supported by African Consciousness that enabled rural, African Americans to educate their children.

**Conceptual Framework**

Several theories and ideas supported the premise for the research pertaining to the education of rural, African Americans in the United States in the 1940s and early 1950s.
Educating the children during this period was a challenging endeavor for African-American parents and community members. However, the formerly noted obstructions that challenged the process did not dissuade them from that goal. They exemplified a determination that did not evolve from the growing American public education system or from national and local American communities because hindrances to African-American education frequently came from those sources. Nevertheless, these rural citizens maintained committed to their goal. The question then became how did they remain persistent in their efforts to bring education to their communities in the face of such overwhelming obstacles? This research project explored the premise that these rural African-American citizens’ fight to educate their children was strongly assisted by African Consciousness. Support for the premise was found in the works of four African-American scholars: Joseph Baldwin, Molefi Asante, Carter G. Woodson, and W. E. B. Du Bois. Joseph Baldwin’s *Africentric Theory of Black Personality* provided definition for the term African Consciousness in this study. Information from the Critical Index of Baldwin’s theory defined the term. Thus, African Consciousness incorporated behaviors that reflected the following actions by people of African descent: pride in themselves and their heroes, active promotion of their survival, belief in the importance of and the respect of themselves and others, and opposition to behaviors that were disrespectful to themselves as people of African descent.5 Molefi Asante’s *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* clarified the importance of center as it related to African-American needs being met. Asante stated that African people needed to be at the center of human

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activities in order for them to make progress.\textsuperscript{6} In Carter G. Woodson's text, \textit{The Mis-education of the Negro}, the education African Americans received in early twentieth century America was described. W. E. B. Du Bois noted a very compelling reason to pursue education in the text, \textit{The Souls of Black Folk}, when he identified education as the only post Civil War event that supported the hopes of African Americans. The premise for this research project suggested that African Consciousness supported these rural citizens' pursuit of education, the achievement of which would lead to self-identity and survival.

Joseph Baldwin's theory used the interrelatedness of race and personality as its premise. This racial personality premise was not new for it had served as a basis of notions of European racial superiority by Western social scientists in the past.\textsuperscript{7} Yet, Baldwin's ideas differed from the European premise because his theory evolved from a framework of African Psychology. Assumptions for the theory were:

- The basic nature of the human universe is social.
- One's collective "biogenetic" definition (race) constitutes social definition.
- An individual's cosmology or worldview comes from the social definition.
- Culture evolves from social definition.
- Social definition, cosmology, and culture determine the survival thrust.\textsuperscript{8}


\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 134.
The premise initially emphasized the centrality of social interactions among human beings. Baldwin further identified race (social definition) as the primary determinant of cosmology or worldview and culture. These three determined the survival thrust. Despite the oppressed, isolated, segregated educational system, rural African Americans used various cultural, communal, and social activities to facilitate the education of their children. The biogenetically African racial identity of these citizens supported their cosmology, their culture, and their ability to survive. Survival for these citizens included education for their children.

Molefi Asante’s Afrocentricity Theory stated that black people or people of African descent people were de-centered because they had lost their culture and had become alienated from their cultural and political origins. The theory proposed that movement of the African person from the fringes of historic, economic, social, political, and philosophical thought to the center was essential for African progress. Therefore, black education needed to be at the center of historic, economic, social, political, and philosophical thought for it to be successful. Asante credited Carter G. Woodson for identifying fundamental problematic issues in African-American education. He specifically noted Woodson’s observation that education for African Americans alienated them from their own culture and traditions, was attached to the fringes of European culture, and was dislocated from their own culture. Thus, African-American teachers


educated in the American system were trained in a manner that distanced them from their students and their communities. Afrocentricity as proposed by Asante infused Afrocentric cultural, social, and educational experiences into the lives of African Americans to counter the decentering (displacement of people’s needs from the center of human interactions, needs are overlooked or ignored) environment of American education and American life. Major assumptions for this theory included:

- Afrocentricity is opposed to theories that dislocate Africans from the core of human thought and experience.

- Afrocentricity argues for pluralism in philosophical views without hierarchy. All cultural centers must be respected.

- Human beings cannot divest themselves of culture; they are either participating in their own or that of some other group.\(^{11}\)

In pre-Brown decision America, segregation enabled the placement of the rural children’s needs at the center, not on the periphery, of educational, social, cultural, and communal thought. Indeed, the schools were positioned on the margins of American educational planning and support, but the isolation actually facilitated the evolution of a centering within the communities. The distancing allowed an African-centered nurturing to take place and the result of that centeredness was one-room schools that were positive communal institutions.

Hence information from the Africentric Black Personality and Afrocentricity theories defined and explained the African Consciousness that supported the evolution of centeredness that resulted in elementary education being provided for the children via

one-room schools during the period of legal segregation. Both Asante and Baldwin agreed on the importance of socialization as a natural human phenomenon. The first premise of Baldwin’s Black Personality theory assumed the basic nature of the human phenomenal universe to be social.12 Asante emphasized the importance of socialization in Afrocentric education and stated that education was basically a social phenomenon designed to socialize the learner; thus, sending a child to school prepared him or her to be part of a social group because schools reflected the societies that developed them.13 Since socialization was basic to Afrocentric thought and action, expressions of African Consciousness should have been evident in the social interactions of these rural citizens whether the activities were educational, cultural, or communal.

Carter G. Woodson argued that African Americans were educated away from their own culture and traditions, and he suggested that they would benefit from learning about the culture and traditions of Africa and of America.14 Woodson’s ideas were not incorporated into the American educational system and African Americans continued to be taught away from their heritage. W. E. B. Du Bois noted that because the racial divide between blacks and whites was so great, it was reasonable to expect the foundation of support for black people to come from within their culture, and blacks should not expect

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whites to provide the foundation they need to survive.\textsuperscript{15} In another text, Du Bois identified a benefit of education in post-Civil War America; he admitted that education was difficult and time-consuming, but it did encourage reflection which could lead to respect for self without the need to try to be someone else.\textsuperscript{16} Woodson and Du Bois’s ideas supported respect for the person of African descent.

This research project sought to identify those expressions of African Consciousness in the social interactions of African-American citizens in two rural communities in Hardin County, Kentucky. Three factors were noted in the deconstruction of the influence of African Consciousness for these rural citizens:

- Value of Education to Black People
- Effects of Being Positioned Away from Mainstream Education
- Influence of African Consciousness

\textbf{Value of Education to Black People}

References to the great emphasis African Americans have historically placed on attaining an education were found in the writings of nineteenth and twentieth century authors such as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and W. E. B. Du Bois. Douglass was determined to become literate. He described how he learned to read in his autobiography, \textit{Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass}. After the wife of his enslaver stopped teaching him to read, he bartered with a group of poor, hungry,


neighborhood white boys to exchange food for reading lessons. In Washington's autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, a description of African Americans' obsession with obtaining an education after the Civil War was noted. He wrote that "In every part of the south, the during Reconstruction period, schools, both day and night were filled to overflowing with people of all ages and conditions, some being as far along in age as sixty and seventy years." In the text *Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. Du Bois noted that after the Civil War blacks placed their hopes for better lives in three events: emancipation, political power, and education. Of the three, "book-learning" or education was perceived to be the longer and more difficult process, but also, the more direct process to a better life. When Du Bois reviewed the black quest for education, he observed it to be tedious, unending, and uncertain; it did not universally grant the better life his people sought, but it did provide a period of introspection that enabled one to develop a better understanding of self. Du Bois wrote that the vistas to education:


disclosed as yet no goal, no resting-place, little but flattery and criticism, the journey gave leisure for reflection and self-examination, self-respect. It changed the child of Emancipation to the youth with dawning self-consciousness, self-realization, self-respect. In those somber forests of his strivings his own soul rose before him, and he saw himself, darkly as through a veil; and yet he saw in himself some faint revelation of his power, of his mission. He began to have a dim feeling that to attain his place in the world, he must be himself, and not another.

17. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (repr PDF ebook created by Jose Menendez), 33.


In Du Bois' view, education did not grant African-Americans the power, prestige or equal placement they sought; indeed, it proffered no objective or respite, only sycophancy and criticism. Yet, despite the difficulties in acquiring an education and the disappointments that accompanied its acquisition, there was an inherently redeeming virtue associated with it. Ultimately, education enabled one to be himself/herself and not someone else. This statement by Du Bois suggested that education would be the path that could lead African-Americans not only to improve their lives but also to appreciate who they were, people of African descent. Undeniably, education in pre-Brown decision America was viewed by some as the means by which African Americans could improve their socio-economic levels and fulfill their goals in life as a people who were proud of their heritage. When enslavement ended, the formerly enslaved who had learned to read and write were able to assume more leadership positions in the ministry, government, and education. These were professional positions as opposed to the manual-labor positions of field work, house cleaning, factory work, etc. that was available to the newly freed individuals. Given this expectation of the empowerment that could be derived from becoming educated, it was no wonder that African-Americans in the twentieth century sought to educate themselves and their children.

Effects of Being Positioned Away from Mainstream Education

Racism and discrimination facilitated the positioning of rural, southern, one-room, African-American schools on the periphery of America's public education system. That positioning promoted the neglect, the under-funding, and the devaluation of black education. In fact, undermining black education not only occurred outside the educational
system, it was embedded in the system. In the text *The Mis-education of the Negro*, Carter G. Woodson described teacher training programs for African-American educators. He argued that the programs actually contributed to the depreciation of African-American education because the "education of the Negroes, then, the most important thing in the uplift of the Negroes is almost entirely in the hands of those who have enslaved them and now segregate them." The training the educated Negro received removed him from his own people and taught him to despise himself. Accordingly, he was positioned on the fringes of his own community, and on the fringes of the majority community. In Woodson’s view, educated, rural, African-American, one-room schoolteachers were doubly isolated in American culture. They were on the margins of the American education system and they were outsiders in their own African-American communities. Consequently, education for these rural citizens seemed positioned to fail miserably. Yet, the negative effects of segregation on black education were lessened by the African Americans’ reaction to the decentered American educational placement. In the decentered position, these rural citizens recentered (replacement of people’s needs at the center of their ethnic group interactions) and united their efforts to bring education to their communities and support their youth.

The first component of Joseph Baldwin’s Africentric Black Personality Theory, African Self-Extension Orientation, was described as a deep-seated, innate, and unconscious process often expressed as a “felt experience,” “total involvement” in

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experience, or a “spiritualistic transcendence” in experience. In this component, social
definition, cosmology, and culture (all determined biogenetically or by race), established
the individual’s survival thrust. In these communities, African-Americans felt or believed
education was essential for their survival. Accordingly, these biogenetically similar rural
citizens who shared a common worldview and culture built schools to educate their
children and increased their survival skills. Another development that resulted from the
segregated system was the placement of black children at the center of social, cultural,
and communal thought. Asante’s theory of Afrocentricity emphasized the importance of
African people being at the core of human thought and experience for that was where he
believed black people would be able to develop to their fullest potential. Black education
was not a priority for the publicly-funded American education system, and it was funded
in a manner that reflected its importance to the system. As a result, African-American
education had to be supplemented by private and community sources, and African-
American citizens provided a large amount of the additional support the schools required.
The children and their educational needs were placed at the core of human interactions in
these rural communities and that “centering” assisted the African-American goal of
educating their children. This theory further suggested that the children’s self-esteem
increased as obstacles that could have prevented their education were overcome.
Furthermore, they came to see the value of education as a life-long process, as well as a
survival strategy for life in America.

Cultural Perspective, 136.
Influence of African Consciousness

The second component of Baldwin’ Africentric Black Personality Theory, African Self-Consciousness, evolved from and worked in conjunction with the African Self-Extension Orientation, under normal conditions. African Self-Consciousness was the conscious level process that could be observed in the following behaviors among people of African descent:

- The recognition of oneself as “African” (biologically, psychologically, culturally, and so forth), and of what being African means as defined by African cosmology.

- The recognition of African survival and pro-active development as one’s first priority value.

- Respect for and active perpetuation of all things African, including African life and African institutions.

- A standard of conduct toward all things “non-African” and toward those things, peoples and so forth, that are “anti-African” (that is active opposition against all things that are anti-African).22

Baldwin’s theory suggested that the pro-active actions of rural, African-Americans in Hardin County, Kentucky to build and support one-room schools for their children would be an observable reflection of their African Self-Consciousness. They would think and act in ways that respected their biogenetically African traditions.

Education was highly valued by these rural citizens, and they worked diligently to make it accessible in their communities. The community schools were a result of conscious level expressions of African Consciousness and they were a valuable tool in sustaining the survival of people of African descent. Furthermore, the schools added

22. Ibid., 137.
another measure of respect to the communities because they indicated communal readiness to educate their youth and increase their opportunities for societal mobility. Moreover, educated African-Americans were greatly respected and teachers received high regard in the communities. This theory emphasized the importance of black role models who were culturally sensitive and related to other African-Americans in the community. Thus, African Consciousness was imparted at a high level and promoted survival.

Henry Bullock’s text, *A History of Negro Education in the South from 1619 to the Present*, examined the growth of southern black literacy from the seventeenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. The book’s major premise was that educational and social reforms of that period were not planned; they were unintentional and rural southern, African Americans inadvertently benefitted from the establishment of the segregated public educational system. This text informed about the low level of support black education received in the early twentieth century and that helped explain the low status of African-American education in America’s early public educational system.

**Methodology**

The methodology for this research project was narrative research that focused on an extensive discussion of one-room school educational and communal activities. Qualitative interviewing/oral histories were selected for data collection for three reasons: (1) it enabled the researcher to obtain a description of the social and educational processes related to the one-room schools; (2) it provided historical information that might help young people understand events of the period better and recognize how those
events affected the people’s lives; and (3) it allowed the researcher to reconstruct past events that occurred in the one-room school communities. Participants responded to questions developed by the researcher; the conversations were taped. These interviews were with people who were connected to African-American one-room schools (a teacher, former students, and parents of former students) in four Hardin County, Kentucky cities before the 1954 Brown decision declared segregation unlawful. African Americans who participated in this project shared information about neighboring Hardin County, Kentucky communities of Sonora, Glendale, Siberia, and Upton. These rural citizens sought to provide education for their children. To accomplish that goal, they shared educational and communal experiences that ranged from identifying buildings for the schools to sending their children to school and participating in school fundraisers. Depictions of these experiences were shared in the interviews. On two occasions, two participants were interviewed together—one couple and two of the female participants. The range of ages for the interviewees was from the mid-fifties to the late eighties. All but two interviewees were residents of Kentucky when they were interviewed; 62 percent still lived in Hardin County, 23 percent resided in nearby Jefferson or Oldham Counties and 15 percent were residents of Atlanta, Georgia. Interviews were conducted in the participants’ homes, in a local shopping mall, and by telephone. All but one interview was conducted by the researcher; the interview of the researcher was conducted by her daughter, a Dekalb County, Georgia elementary school teacher. The length of time for interview sessions ranged from thirty minutes to sixty minutes
The primary participants in this research activity were connected to the schools during the period of 1941 to the implementation of the 1954 *Brown decision* which desegregated Hardin County Schools. Also, they had contact either as a student, parent, or community member with one teacher who began teaching at Sonora Colored School in 1941 after earning a Bachelor's of Arts Degree from Kentucky State College in 1939. That teacher had connected to the county earlier when she attended and received a diploma from the Bond-Washington High School in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Her Hardin County teaching career ended at Glendale Colored School in 1956 when the county desegregation plan was fully implemented. Their responses allowed them to share their memories of the activities of the period, and gave voice to a segment of the American population that may have been overlooked in the past.

**Research Respondents**

Participants in this study were twelve African Americans who were former one-room school students and/or parents of former students. Also, one former one-room schoolteacher's April, 1999 interview was included in this study. That teacher taught at Sonora Colored School and Glendale Colored School. With the teacher's interview, a total of the thirteen interviews were part of this project. Ten interviewees had either attended one of the schools or both schools. Four interviewees were parents of children who attended one school or both schools. One of these parents informed about her children's attendance at Glendale Colored School and about her earlier education at another colored school in the county; the other parent talked about her children's attendance at both schools, but did not inform about her education. The researcher was
one of the ten interviewees who had attended one school or both schools. Eighty-five percent of the interviewees were residents of Kentucky when they were interviewed and 15 percent of the interviewees lived in Atlanta, Georgia when they were interviewed. Forty-six percent of the interviewees resided in the cities of Sonora or Glendale, Kentucky and 15 percent lived in Elizabethtown, another Hardin County city. Twenty-four percent of the study participants lived in Jefferson County (Louisville, Kentucky) or nearby Oldham County, Kentucky. The interviews of four males and nine females were part of this research project. Ages of the interviewees ranged from the middle fifties to the middle and late eighties.

Research Questionnaire

Research data for this study were obtained primarily through oral history interviews. The interviews explored the traditions, values, rules, rituals, and history of rural, African-American one-room schools and communities in Hardin County. The research instrument, a questionnaire, consisted of three sections: Demographics, History and School/Community Activities, and African Consciousness. Questions on the research instrument were developed by the researcher and were derived from the Critical Indices of the African Self Consciousness component of Baldwin’s Africentric Black Personality Theory. Items on the questionnaire that relate to Baldwin’s Critical Indices are found in Appendix A.

Demographic Section: In this section, data were collected that informed on the gender, age, residence, religious affiliation, education, occupation, and income (optional)
of the participants. The data were obtained in self-reporting interviews. See the Demographic Information Sheet in Appendix B.

*History and School/Community Activities:* A question was asked to obtain historical information about the schools and to identify African-American citizens who had instrumental roles in building the schools. Former one-room school students, parents, and the teacher were asked to respond to questions that focused on classroom activities and school teachers. Both groups were queried about activities that occurred before, during, and after the school day ended, about the teachers, and about reactions to the schools closing.

Research participants were asked about communal activities that supported the schools. Descriptions of activities, traditions, and values that operated in the schools and communities resulted from those questions. Also, interviewees were asked a question about strategies for surviving in a racially segregated society. All respondents were given the opportunity to share additional information they would like to have known about their one-room experiences. These questions can be found in Appendix C.

*African Consciousness:* Former one-room students, parents and a teacher were asked questions that assisted in explaining the extent to which African Consciousness operated in the schools and the communities. Participants responded to questions that evolved from the Critical Indices of Baldwin's Africentric Black Personality Theory:

- They were asked what was taught about black heroes and black pride.
- They were asked to recall information about black traditions, values and practices that may have been taught in the schools or in the communities.
• They were asked about African-American community members who encouraged students to better themselves.

• They were asked what they were taught about racial oppression and to share an overall reflection of their one-room school experience.

(See Appendix A for the Critical Indices Construct and the questions)

Procedure: The researcher contacted former one-room school students and parents of one-room school students who had been connected with the one-room schools in Sonora, Kentucky and Glendale, Kentucky. She asked them to participate in a project that focused on one-room school education. Interviews were conducted either in the participants' homes or by telephone. Respondents were told that she would interview them and the interviews would be taped. Before the home interviews began, participants signed a Consent Form and completed a Demographic Information Form. For telephone interviews, the participants gave the researcher permission to use the telephone interview to collect project information and demographic information. The former one-room school teacher was deceased when the research project began, but her daughter, the researcher, was in legal possession of the taped conversation. The researcher was interviewed by her daughter, a DeKalb County, Georgia elementary school teacher.

Research Questions

This research project sought answers to the following questions:

RQ1: What was it like to be educated in the southern, rural, African-American one-room school?

RQ2: What Afrocentric ideas were reflected in the schools and communities?

RQ3: What cultural and communal activities supported the schools?
Chapter Organization

Becoming educated was a goal for many African Americans before and after the civil war. When the war ended, formerly enslaved people joined the southern crusade for state common schools in the American South. At the beginning of the twentieth century, public education was established to educate the children of small European-American farmers in the South; conversely, African-American education was a taxing proposition that demanded vigilance and determination on the part of those who supported it. Obstacles to African-American education in the rural south included racism, discrimination, and the inherent challenges of rural life—isolated communities, poor transportation, and poor communication. In spite of these hindrances, schools were built and they became sources of pride and inspiration in their communities.

Definition of Terms

African Culture: Ideas, customs, skills, arts, etc. of people of African descent.

African Survival Thrust: The ability to survive that evolved from African genetics, African worldview, and African culture.\(^{23}\)

Afrocentric: Descriptive of actions, events, or behaviors that evolve from an African cosmology and culture. Africentric may be used to describe those same activities.

Biogenetic Commonality: Race.\(^{24}\)

Centeredness: The effects of educational and cultural nurturing in an environment where individual or group needs are the focus of human interactions.


\(^{24}\) Ibid.
Common Colored School: The term used to identify the elementary schools for black children before desegregation. The schools were also called Colored Schools.

Decentered: Happens when people's needs are not at the center of human interactions, their needs are overlooked or ignored. Those people can lose focus and purpose.

Desegregation: The abolition of the segregation of races in public schools and other public facilities.

In-Kind Donations: Donations of personal time, supplies, land, etc. by citizens to prepare a building to be used as a school.

Integration: A process that evolved after the Brown decision to ensure that black people and white people received equal service in public facilities and have equal access to publicly supported areas.

Mis-education: The systematic way in which blacks in the American educational system were taught to despise themselves, and the repercussions of those lessons.

One-Room School: A school where the elementary grades 1-8 were taught in one room by one teacher.

Recentered: The positive results of people putting their needs at the center of their ethnic group interactions, despite isolation from human interaction of the controlling majority group.

Re-segregation: A movement back to segregation by fact that has occurred since the Dowell Decision in 1991.

Rural: An open-spaced area or land, often isolated from more developed areas because of poor transportation and communication. Sometimes rural areas are referred to as "the country."

Segregation: A process prior to the Brown Decision to ensure that black people and white people did not receive service in public facilities or used publicly supported areas at the same time. They were to have separate, but equal services and access to public facilities.

Subliminal: Existing or functioning below the threshold of consciousness.

Survival Skills: The various strategies used to make adjustments to social, emotional, physical, psychological, education, etc. changes in their lives.

Transition: The process of moving from segregated schools to desegregated schools.
Ubuntu: Humanity or the best qualities of mankind such as kindness, mercy, tenderness, and sympathy.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rural African-American Education Reviewed

Literature reviewed on this topic included information relevant to the education of rural African Americans in the 1940s and 1950s in Hardin County, Kentucky. The following categories were identified: the evolution of Southern public education, definition of African Consciousness, training teachers for African-American one-room schools, research on rural European-American and African-American one-room school activities. Limited, but significant, literature about the education available to rural African Americans during the period of focus was reviewed.

Education for African Americans did exist before the Civil War. In the article “The Origin and Development of the Negro Separate School,” Ellis O Knox identified an organized school in Goose Creek Parish, South Carolina in 1695. Carter G. Woodson noted this effort to educate blacks headed by the Reverend Samuel Thomas who was a member of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. This group had been organized by members of the Established Church in London to do missionary

work among Indians and Negroes. Reverend Thomas was a minister and a schoolmaster who taught the children to read scriptures, poems and other books.

Knox’s research on the development of the Negro Separate Schools showed schools being established for African Americans by individuals and organizations. Founders and the founding dates of some northern schools were: Elias Neau in New York City in 1704, Thomas Bacon in Maryland in 1750, Anthony Benezet in Philadelphia in 1750, and The Abolitionist Society of Philadelphia (a Quaker Organization) in 1750; separate schools were also in other northern and eastern locations (Washington, D.C.; Baltimore, Maryland; Cincinnati, Ohio; Cheyney, Pennsylvania; Zenia, Ohio) during the period from 1790 to 1860. That was not the case in the South. By 1835, every slave-holding state had passed laws that made it illegal to educate African Americans. However, Bullock’s text argued that during the period of enslavement foundational practices supporting the education of African Americans emerged; those practices included rational business practices, interracial permissiveness and informal training, as in play schools. Those practices assisted blacks by giving them access to education despite the formal and informal regulations that prohibiting it.


3. Ibid.


However, after the Civil War ended, a publicly funded educational system evolved in the United States of America. The new system was to provide education to students from the first grade through high school. Southern European Americans embraced the new system for their children, but not for African-American children who were needed to support the southern agricultural system. Their unwillingness to support African-American education was sanctioned by the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court ruling that legitimized a separate but equal educational system in the country. R.B. Atwood noted in the article, "Financing Schools for Negro Children from State School Funds in Kentucky," that Kentucky provided little formal education for children until 1838 when the legislature established a common school system; however, it was not until after the Civil War that consideration was given to educating Negro children. An 1874 law set up a school fund that established a common school system for colored children, and in 1876, the State Association of Colored Teachers was organized to improve the schools for colored children. By 1938, Kentucky had enacted laws that required independent school districts to have schools for African-American and European-American children, and to pay tuition and provide transportation for African-American children to attend high school. Additionally, Atwood identified areas of equalities and inequalities in Kentucky’s education system. The length of the school term was the same for all children and there was little difference in the amount of training African-American and European-American teachers obtained, but the housing facilities, equipment, salaries,


7. Ibid., 663.
and training facilities for African-American teachers were not equal to those of European-American teachers.\(^8\)

Walter R. Chivers looked at southern race relations during the 1940s in “Trend of Race Relations in the South During War Times.” He noted these developments during this period: the growth of African-American race consciousness, rising racial tension between African Americans and European Americans, the ideology of “Keep the Negro in His Place,” and an environment that promoted gradualism or explosion for African Americans as trends; these trends were apparent in the southern, northern, northeastern, and mid-western sections of the country.\(^9\) The trends did not support the educational goals of black citizens. Actually, they under-minded black economic, social, and educational stability and growth. The riots that broke out in the summer of 1943 in Detroit, New York, Los Angeles, Mobile, Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Baltimore, St. Louis, Washington, D.C., and Beaumont were evidence of the unrest and division that existed in American society. Chivers further stated that the majority of southerners were residents of rural areas and the political leaders and plantations owners in those areas worked to preserve local mores and folkways that did not favor African Americans.\(^10\) However, despite the racial unrest and limited support for African-American education, one-room schools were established in African-American communities and those schools became centers for educational, cultural, and communal activities. The educational

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8. Ibid., 665.


10. Ibid., 110.
process generally began with students receiving primary or elementary instruction; consequently, that education merited some attention.

**Defining African Consciousness**

The connection of race and personality was a crucial component of Joseph Baldwin’s *Africentric Theory of Black Personality* which gave definition to African Consciousness as it was used in this research project. The attitudes and behaviors that were identified in the Critical Indices of the theory’s African Self Consciousness Construct defined African Consciousness for this project. Baldwin’s theory incorporated characteristics of African Identity and Culture as identified by M. W. Makgobe in the text Mokoko, *The Makgobe Affair: A Reflection on Transformation* and quoted in the article “African Culture and Personality: Bad Social Science, Effective Activism, Or A Call to Reinvent Ethnology?” by James A. Lassiter. In the quote, the following basic characteristics were noted: hospitality, friendliness, the consensus and common framework-seeking principle, ubuntu (humanity), and emphasis on community rather than on the individual. The definition of African Consciousness the characteristics of African Identity, and Culture it incorporated follow:

- The person possesses an awareness of his/her Black identity and African cultural heritage, and sees value in the pursuit of knowledge of self (consensus and common framework-seeking, hospitality).

- The person recognizes Black survival priorities and the necessity for institutions which affirm Black life (ubuntu, consensus and common framework-seeking).

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• The person actively participates in the survival, liberation and pro-active development of Black people and defends their dignity, worth and integrity (friendliness, community emphasis).

• The person recognizes the opposition of racial oppression to the development and survival of Black people, and actively resists it by any appropriate means (ubuntu). \(^{12}\)

Teacher Training

After the Civil War, African Americans, particularly those in the South, were highly motivated to obtain an education. Therefore, they actively pursued the goals of gaining an education and providing the resources for the education for their children. In this pursuit of education, one problem that became immediately evident was the need for trained African-American teachers. Booker T. Washington noted in his autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, that during Reconstruction having received a little education granted one the status of becoming a teacher or a preacher. In many instances, these teachers were hard-working, capable men and women. However, he wrote that some teachers could do little more than write their names, or they were teaching because it was an easy way to make a living. \(^{13}\) Washington’s observations underscored the necessity for training for the people serving as teachers in the schools. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. Du Bois recalled a late nineteenth century training procedure for summer teaching positions in rural Tennessee communities when he was a student at Fisk University. He described a two-step process for obtaining a teaching position. The first step was to

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attend a Teachers Institute at the county seat. At this conference, distinguished guests of
the superintendent taught fractions, spelling and other subjects to the prospective
teachers. The second step occurred after the training institute and required prospective
teachers to go into the hills of Tennessee and find a school that needed a teacher.

Normal schools provided training for African Americans. The term normal school came
from the French term ecole normale or model school. The schools trained teachers for
the primary or elementary grades. In the online article “History of Cheyney University,”
the university, located in Pennsylvania, was listed as the oldest institution of higher
education for African-Americans in the United States. Besides being the first college or
university founded for African Americans, it was a teacher training college. Normal
schools were established in southern states to provide formal normal school training for
Phillips noted the following activities that influenced early southern, normal school or
teacher training schools:

- Rev. Samuel Hill published the first pedagogy book, Lectures On School Keeping
  in 1829. The text was used extensively in Kentucky.

- George Peabody contributed one million dollars to establish the Peabody Fund
  which promoted teacher training in the South.

- Johann Pestalozzi introduced a teaching technique that emphasized moving from
  the easiest to the more difficult.


15. “History of Cheyney University,” http://www.chaney.edu/about-cheyney-university/chayney-
history.cfm (accessed June 30, 2010).
Johann Herbart advanced a teaching method that stressed the importance of the relevance of information to the learner.16 Phillips' research on the history of southern teaching also revealed that African-American teacher training benefitted from Peabody Fund contributions; the funds promoted teacher training and southern public education by providing scholarships to students who were training to become teachers.17 John H. Butler's study, "An Historical Account of the John F. Slater Fund and the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation" noted that support from the two funds assisted African-American teacher training in the South; in the first three decades of the twentieth century, both county training schools and normal schools benefitted from these funds.18 The literature revealed that teacher preparation for African-Americans was minimal, at times. As public education grew in the United States, training activities were also provided by individuals and organizations. In the article "Services in Summer School for Negroes for Special Teachers employed in Helping Teachers in Small Rural Schools," Leo Favrot described a summer activity for black teachers in small rural schools sponsored by the Southern Education Foundation in 1933 in the following manner:

A special summer Program for black, rural, Common Colored Schoolteachers was set up in 1933. The program, sponsored by the Southern Education Foundation, addressed the needs of the Colored Schools in an attempt to continue their viability as educational entities in their communities. Information provided in the summer program included descriptions of general


17. Ibid., 316-317.

school populations, classroom expectation and challenges, and community expectation for school teachers. In the Winter 1944 edition of the *Journal of Negro Education*, Maurice Lee described a program for rural black teachers in Georgia in the article, “Improving the Reading of the Negro Rural Teacher in the South.” The project a Reading Clinic conducted in the Summer of 1942, was designed to “diagnose and remove teachers’ reading deficiencies” and Lee reported the training results as positive with the expectation that more training would produce even better results. These studies provided documentation of some rural teaching initiatives that were designed to assist black teachers before the *Brown decision*.

Moreover, World War II was the motivation for a number of educational initiatives. Individuals, organizations, commissions, and councils published works to assist with peacetime adjustments. Alethea H. Washington's article “Rural Education: War Time 1944-1945” reviewed publications that resulted from World War II. Those publications included:

- A publication, “The Elementary School in Wartime,” by Edwin H. Reeder that showed the fundamentals of education for peace at the elementary level.


- Two yearbooks, *The Educational Implications of War Activities in Rural Schools* and *Rural Education in the Postwar Era* published by the


Department of Rural Education, a division of the National Education Association.\textsuperscript{21}

Washington identified these materials as examples of what was being done and what could be done to better educate American children. One noticeable criticism of the education African Americans received in the early twentieth century came from Carter G. Woodson. In the text, \textit{The Mis-education of the Negro}, Woodson described the educational system as one that caused African Americans to be mis-educated. Woodson argued that the "education of the Negroes . . . was entirely in the hands of those who had enslaved them and now segregate them."\textsuperscript{22} Educational training for African-American, one-room school teachers changed from requiring an individual only to be able to read or write his/her name to requiring an individual to complete an organized, state-sponsored program.

\textbf{Rural School Research}

In the early twentieth century, rural education was not held in high regard in the American education system. This trend emerged as an assault on rural education in the late nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth century. In the article, "The Statue of American Rural Research: An Integrated Review and Commentary," Alan DeYoung described the trend as focusing on urban education and viewing rural education as provincial and old-fashioned; thus, rural education was viewed as ineffective in preparing students for the workplaces and scientific advances of the twentieth century.


\textsuperscript{22} Carter G. Woodson, \textit{The Mis-Education of the Negro}, 10\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1998), 22.
Moreover, school surveys were the research tools used to investigate rural schools. Despite the fact that small schools were reported to be administratively or financially undesirable, they were not shown to be academically deficient.\(^\text{23}\) In the foreword of D. M. Chalker’s text, *Leadership for Rural Schools: Lessons for all Educators*, Alan DeYoung stated that as rural schools became the twentieth century problem to educational progress and development, a concerted effort to improve them took place. The corrective solution many educators suggested was to standardize education based on urban models and consolidate rural schools into larger units.\(^\text{24}\) However, information in Diane Manning’s text, *Hill Country Teachers*, reported on a 1924 Texas school reform effort that was designed to eliminate small rural schools. Manning stated that The Great Texas Education Survey actually showed small rural school students performing better that their urban counterparts.\(^\text{25}\) Ineffective financial and/or administrative organizations may have been shown to be part of rural school systems, but not intellectual ineffectiveness. In Frances Marburg’s article, “Studying the Child’s Social World,” a research project that focused on one-room school activities in the 1940s was reviewed. The project was based on learning about children through their writings. The findings were to be used to assist teachers in identifying what was important to children and to


give children an opportunity to interpret their actions through written activities. Results of the writing project were to be used to assist children in constructively approaching their world.26 Research activities engendered an exploration of rural educational systems. Both DeYoung and Manning mentioned survey findings that identified problem areas of rural schools, but the problems were not academic. Finally, Frances Marburg’s description of the children’s writing project, was an example of the academic research conducted during this period.

**African-American School Days During Segregation**

Noticeably, there was more information available about African-American high schools in pre- *Brown decision* America than about rural African-American one-room schools. These high schools were generally located in larger cities, but they served students who had attended one-room schools in small country towns, as well. Students from rural areas often attended the high schools as boarding students. They boarded with community members if a residential building or dormitory was not available. These schools frequently served as both high schools and elementary schools, at some point in their existence. Anthony Edwards noted in the article, “Booker T. Washington High School (1916-1974): Voices of Remembrance–Portraits of Excellence–African American Teacher in an Urban Segregated High School–Columbia, South Carolina” that the school opened as elementary school in 1916 and became a high school two years later. Edwards quoted from the recollections of Maude Robinson, the daughter of the school’s first principal, “I entered Booker Washington High School when I was six years old. It was

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both an elementary and high school 1920. It was a very, very exciting day for me.\textsuperscript{27} Lottie Offett Robinson’s text, The Bond-Washington Story chronicled the history of a school in Hardin County that began as an elementary school in 1888 and later became a high school. The text included the information that follows: the names of eighth-grade graduates between the years 1907 and 1923, the 1924 listing of high school graduates (the first graduating class), and the statement, “There was no high school until 1920.”\textsuperscript{28} Information in the works about Booker T. Washington High School and Bond–Washington High School focused primarily on high school activities. The references to elementary schools activities were limited. There were discussions of rural, one-room school activities in the works of other African-American educators and former students. In Souls of Black Folk, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois described the classroom activities when he taught in a rural Tennessee school in the late 1800s. He wrote:

\begin{quote}
There they sat, nearly thirty of them, on the rough benches . . . the little feet bare and swinging, the eyes full of expectation, with here and there a twinkle of mischief, and the hands grasping Webster’s blue-back spelling-book. I loved my school, and the fine faith the children had in the wisdom of their teacher was truly marvelous. We read and spelled together, wrote a little, picked flowers, sang, and listened to stories of the world beyond the hill.\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

His description of that experience showed the enthusiasm to learn that existed among the children who had few material possessions, but had “eyes full of expectation” and hands

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{29} W. E. B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk, 40.
\end{itemize}
that were “grasping Webster’s blue back spelling-book” in a school room which offered only rough benches for seats. Du Bois’ statement identified positive components of African-American one-room school education: the children’s desire to learn, their respect for the teacher’s knowledge, and the teacher’s love for the school and teaching.

Also, Clifton Taulbert’s autobiography, *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored*, informed about the one-room school he attended with his mother who was a teacher in the school. Taulbert’s education began in the early 1950s. He wrote about eighth-grade graduations that were anticipated by the whole community and he remembered teachers who encouraged them to let nothing keep them from their goals.30 Narvie Harris, on the other hand, recalled her days as a teacher, a Jeanes Supervisor, and a county supervisor in the book *African American Education in Dekalb County, Georgia*. Harris was a Jeanes Supervisor from 1944 until 1969 when she became a staff member of the DeKalb County School System. In the text, she identified problems that existed in the county and her participation in eradicating some of those problems. As a Jeanes Supervisor, she observed poor health habits among the adults and children in the county. So, she develop a health program curriculum and worked on a community health council that helped get running water lines installed in African-American sections of the county.31 Information about school activities at McClintock Rosenwald School and Newell Rosenwald School was found in a report published by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg


Historic Landmarks Commission. Former students recalled classroom and recreational activities in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. Shelby Foust a pupil in the 1920s remembered morning opening activities at McClintock and stated, “The devotion started about 8:30. We sang songs, and we said the Lord’s Prayer and the 23rd Psalm was always said.” A student from the 1930s, George Reid, recalled school activities in the following manner, “The teacher would have a few pupils in the second grade and a few in the third grade. While she’d be teaching the second grade, the third grade would be studying.” Christine Luster attended the school in the 1940s and remembered school lunches. She stated, “Lunch period was a treat because the county would send big buckets of peanut butter and the students would bring biscuits from home. The biggest treat was you could have a carton of milk—cost three cents.”

Summary

Literature related to the study of rural, African-American, elementary education in pre-Brown decision America gave a general overview of what was involved in preparing to teach, teaching in schools, and working in school communities. The literature informed about the rural, educational activities of African Americans in the first half of the twentieth century, but to a limited degree.


33. Ibid., 15.

34. Ibid., 16.
CHAPTER III

EDUCATION FOR RURAL AFRICAN AMERICANS

Education in colonial America was highly influenced by religion with churches establishing schools to ensure the continuation of their doctrines. After 1700, the impact of religion lessened and advocates of realism encouraged the establishment of academies and secular education. Evidence of European ideas of separate schools based on social class and structure was apparent in the organization of the educational institutions that were provided for the people in the colonies. Education for the lower classes followed an apprenticeship pattern. However there were separate facilities for training whites, Negroes or African Americans, and Indians. The Virginia Act of 1620, the earliest educational law in the new world, proposed that schools that would be built for Indians and Negroes; these institutions were to be established to prepare the students for manual labor or to prepare them to be better Christians, and thus better workers. The education Negroes or blacks received during the colonial period was intended to increase their abilities for labor in order to make enslavement more profitable.¹

Compulsory Education in America

Until the 1820s, compulsory education was not generally available to American children. The wealthy sent their children to private schools and poor people relied on charity or "pauper" schools (schools often partially financed by the local government) to educate their children. Publicly-supported education was more readily available in the New England states than in the Southern states. In the 1820s and the 1830s, public education expanded and legislation was enacted that supported free education for children in the eastern states. The common school evolved from this movement.

Massachusetts was the state closely identified with this common school movement and Horace Mann most effectively articulated the vision of this institution. This lawyer and Massachusetts state legislator was the most ardent supporter of the common school. In 1837, Mann’s proposal to establish a state board of education was adopted and he resigned his legislative position to become the first secretary of the new board. In his Twelfth Annual Report as Secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education, Mann expressed his vision of the common school when he wrote:

The Massachusetts system of common schools knows no distinction of rich and poor, of bond and free, or between those how, in the imperfect light of this world, are seeking, through different avenues, to reach the gate of heaven. Without money and without price, it throws open its doors, and spreads the table of its bounty, for all the children of the State. Like the sun, it shines, not only upon the good, but upon the evil, that they may become good; and, like the rain, its blessings descend, not only upon the just, but upon the unjust, that their injustice may depart from them and be known no more.²

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His concept of public education was a reformatory one where middle-class morality and respect for order was taught to youth. Ideally, the common school was a shared space where children of varying backgrounds would learn together creating fewer problems and hostilities among social and political groups. Actually, it alienated working-class people from their families because the highly moral, uniform presentation of education discounted how the culture valued differing traditions. Nevertheless, the common school flourished in the North and East but not in the South until after the Civil War.

**Education for African Americans in the South**

Before the Civil War ended, various philanthropic, religious, and Federal agencies assisted in establishing schools for Negroes in the South. In 1861, the American Missionary Association opened a day school for freedmen at Fortress Monroe, Virginia. This established the first general program of education for African Americans in the South. During the war, missionaries who accompanied the Union soldiers into the South helped start schools. As early as 1862, there were four schools in Virginia, two in North Carolina, and one in South Carolina. Henry Allen Bullock noted several practices that were foundational for supporting literacy among blacks before the Civil War in his text, *A History of Negro Education in the South*. Those practices included:

- Rational business practices (buying liability insurance, providing healthcare, and efficient use of slave labor) superseded the intended symbiotic relationship where blacks were treated as tools.

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• Interracial permissiveness that occurred between the slaves and the planters resulting in the formation of emotional ties between the two. Consequences of the permissiveness were literacy for some slaves, intelligent slaves being placed in personal service to the planter, slaves being trained for skilled labor (Booker T. Washington referred to the plantation as an “industrial school”).

• Informal ("play schools" a game that slave and planter children often took seriously) and formal (schools established by religious groups) educational activities were part of the pre-Civil War South.  

After the Civil War, formerly enslaved people participated in a crusade for state common schools in the American South, and their actions helped promote the institution of a public school system. Separate state school systems were established for African-Americans in the South between 1863 and 1875. The order of establishment of separate state systems for African Americans follows:

West Virginia, 1863; the District of Columbia, Maryland and Louisiana, 1864; Missouri, 1865; Florida, 1866; Alabama and Tennessee, 1867; Arkansas, Florida and South Carolina, 1869; North Carolina and Virginia, 1869; Georgia, Mississippi and Texas, 1870; Kentucky 1874; Delaware, 1875.  

However after 1870, African Americans began more substantially supporting their own educational needs. In 1876, southern planters were returned to power and they limited the access of common schools to black children. By the end of the nineteenth century European-American small farmers were advocating a public system that would educate their children. The European-American planters were accommodated and in the relatively new system racist policies evolved. Public school funds for African-American children were diverted to European-American children’s school funds; planters and small


European-American farmers increased their opposition to education for these children.\(^6\)

The children of African Americans were needed in the agricultural-based labor force in the South. Consequently, planters did not support schools for African-American children. In 1900, more than 45 percent of southern African-American boys and more than 30 percent of southern African-American girls between the ages of ten and fifteen were employed compared to more that 22 percent and 7 percent of their European-American counterparts; consequently, the number of African-American children working as agricultural laborers was more that 75 percent of the African-American population.\(^7\)

Furthermore, there were neither public nor private schools available to these children, at this time. After 1910, two developments influenced the education of African-American children in the South. African Americans began withdrawing their children from the work force and they started migrating to the North. By 1914, there was substantial emigration of African Americans from the South. In fact, the migration was so extensive that in 1917 the U.S. Department of Labor investigated the activity and suggested increased support for an African-American school system to keep African Americans satisfied in the South.\(^8\)

Further funding education for rural African-Americans citizens was a problematic venture. Therefore, philanthropic contributions were a definite asset in the quest for black education. In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, several

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7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.
philanthropic programs were developed by wealthy northerners to assist southern African-American education. In 1867, the George Peabody Fund donated one million dollars to educate poor children in southern and southwestern states. One million dollars was contributed by the John F. Slater Fund to provide vocational and what amounted to high school education for African-American children in 1882. Teacher training for African Americans was aided when the General Education Fund was established by John D. Rockefeller in 1903. A million dollar donation from the Negro Rural School Fund, also known as the Anna T. Jeannes Foundation, assisted public school authorities in employing supervisors for industrial schoolteachers, and raising funds for new schoolhouses. Jeannes teachers and Negro state agents coordinated school activities. In 1907, Jeannes gave a million dollars to support the education of colored children in the South. The Rosenwald Fund, a matching grant program initiated by Sears, Roebuck and Company president Julius Rosenwald, began in 1914 and was incorporated in 1917. Rural African-American citizens were able to receive grants to build schools if they contributed to the building process. Rosenwald spent 4.2 million dollars building primary and secondary schools, but African Americans gave more. Along with paying taxes, they made private contributions, and made in-kind contributions of time, supplies, property, etc. Their contributions totaled 4.7 million for school buildings.9 African Americans made substantial contributions to educate their children.

Black Enslavement and Black Education in Kentucky

The non-natives who entered Kentucky during the frontier period were both African Americans and European Americans, and they existed in an atmosphere of interdependence. The Commonwealth of Kentucky was originally known as Kentucky County, Virginia. In 1780, the area was divided into the counties of Fayette, Jefferson and Lincoln. Kentucky, a Native-American name which originally referred to the Kentucky River, became the name of the region. The word Kentucky was referenced in several Native-American languages with various meanings that ranged from “land of tomorrow,” and “corn and turkey lands” to “meadow lands.”

Kentucky became the fifteenth state in the United States in 1792. Marion B. Lucas recounted the following events in the early history of African Americans in Kentucky in his text, A History of Blacks in Kentucky: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891:

When Christopher Gist went into the area in 1751 he was accompanied by an African-American “servant”; furthermore, they found another African-American slave at a town on the Scioto River.

A young enslaved African-American man assisted Daniel Boone in 1773 when he crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains, and African Americans accompanied Daniel Boone, Squire Boone and their families when they began to settle in Kentucky.

Armed enslaved African Americans defended Boonesborough against attacks by natives.

Although some African Americans lived with the natives on the frontier, they mainly lived among the European Americans.

Despite the fact that the natives may have exhibited less hostility towards African-Americans, their homesteads were attacked just as European-American homesteads were attacked.

When the first Federal census was taken in 1790, it listed 1,830 slaves and 114 freemen on the Kentucky frontier. Thus, 16 percent of the Kentucky population was African American. The decade of 1790 to 1800 was a period of growth for the African-American population on the Kentucky frontier, and by 1800, one of every five of the inhabitants was African American.11

The institution of slavery that began the coastal area of Virginia came into the Kentucky frontier and negatively affected any interdependence that may have evolved during early frontier days. Most European-American Kentuckians saw African Americans as enslaved people. When the Kentucky constitution was drawn up in 1792, it incorporated Virginia laws that reinforced slavery and Kentucky entered the union as a state where African-American enslavement was legal. Furthermore, the 1798 Kentucky legislature adopted a slave code that gave all African Americans, whether enslaved or free, an inferior position in the state. Enslavement in Kentucky was similar to the institution of slavery in other states. However, Marion B. Lucas indicated in his text, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760–1891*, that some African Americans and European Americans involved in the institution of slavery felt that it was less harsh in Kentucky than in other southern states. Reasons for perceptions of less harsh enslavement in Kentucky included:

- White Kentuckians generally enslaved fewer blacks and mainly worked side-by-side with them.

- Side-by-side interaction appeared to be more personal than the large gang system.

- The closeness of the free soil along the Ohio River may have discouraged the unreasonable treatment of the enslaved.\textsuperscript{12}

Even though some local or regional differences in the enforcement of enslavement existed, it was mainly a harsh and demeaning institution for blacks. They were subjected to the same limited mobility, psychological and physical controls, and punishments that other southern enslaved blacks endured. For example, Kentucky enslavers developed two kinds of passes to restrict the movements of blacks: the specific act pass that gave a description of the person and his or her assignment and the general pass that was open-ended and allowed the enslaved person to travel inside and outside the state.\textsuperscript{13} Enslaved blacks in Kentucky operated under the controls of another race and one former enslaved person from the city of Tompkinville, Kentucky stated that the key to good treatment was for “slaves to do what their master told them to do.” On the other hand, those who violated the controllers’ rules were subject to being whipped regardless of sex.\textsuperscript{14}

In the nineteenth century, blacks in Kentucky were not prohibited from becoming educated. During that time period in Kentucky, blacks could be openly educated, and as early as 1827, they sought to open colored schools. Instruction was provided through various agencies. However, the education was primarily “religious, unorganized, unsystematic, fragmentary, elementary, haphazard, and sporadic; it was administered by masters and mistresses, by southern ministers, by northern abolitionists and sympathizers,

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 42.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 29.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. 30 , 42.
by zealous church missionaries, and by Negro individual efforts." One early educational endeavor in Kentucky occurred in Berea, Kentucky. In 1855, the Reverend John G. Fee, with initial assistance from antislavery politician Cassius M. Clay and the American Missionary Association, opened a one-room church/school that later became Berea College. Fee advocated Christian principles that were anti-rum, anti-sectarianism, and anti-caste prejudice. His anti-caste principles prompted an armed proslavery opposition that forced Fee and the Berea activity out of Kentucky in the winter of 1859. When the Civil War ended in 1865, John Fee began building an interracial college and church, and African-Americans families began to settle in the town of Berea to attend Berea College. As many as two hundred African-American families may have settled in the Berea area. The college operated as a non-denominational, interracial, co-educational institution until it was forced by the Kentucky legislature to stop educating African Americans; Berea was the only integrated college in the South for almost forty years, providing training for black teachers from the end of the Civil into the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the segregation that was so pervasive in the South finally arrived at Berea. In 1904, State Representative Carl Day persuaded the Kentucky Legislature that integrated education should be outlawed. Thus, Berea College became an all-white institution. Berea fought the decision all the way to the Supreme Court.


17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.
where the State ruling was upheld in 1908. After the forced segregation of the school, the
president and board members raised funds to build a school for black students in
Simpsonville, Kentucky. The black boarding school, Lincoln Institute, provided
education to numerous students when segregation was legally enforced. Among the
students who are trained at Lincoln Institute was Whitney Young Jr. whose father served
as one of the school’s principals.

Following the Civil War, black Kentucky educators petitioned to establish
schools. Their request was granted in 1874 when a Legislative Act established the first
system of public Colored Common Schools in the state. Support for the schools came
from taxes paid by the African-American citizens: property taxes; poll taxes paid by all
males; taxes paid for dog ownership; state taxes on deeds, suits, and licenses. These
funds went into a separate fund for African-American schools, but African Americans
owned little property and the funds were insufficient. The Negro capitation tax was
repealed and replaced by a state per capita tax that equalized taxes paid by white and
colored property-owners in 1882. The new legislation increased the funds available for
black schools but it did not provide for building and maintaining schools. Consequently,
other sources were needed to supply building funds. The contributions of foundations
such as Rosenwald and Jeanes, along with the cooperation and private contributions of
African-American and European-American citizens became essential components of
black common school education. As the number of common schools grew, the shortage
of qualified teachers presented another challenge for black education. Establishment of

19. Ibid.
this Colored School System and the growing number of schools for black citizens validated the idea of black education in the state, and encouraged black people to become more vigilant in their efforts to train their youth.

The issue of qualified teachers did not go unnoticed by state educators. In 1877, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, H.A. Henderson, met with forty-five African-American educators and trustees, and the State Association of Colored Teachers was formed. Henderson became the head of this African-American Association and of the European-American Association, as well. The association worked ten years to build support for the State Normal School for Colored in Frankfort, Kentucky. The school opened in 1887. Kentucky’s normal school was one of a number of normal schools that emerged in the South to address the need to train black teachers.

Lottie Robinson’s text, *The Bond-Washington Story*, identified the first settlement in Hardin County, Kentucky as Severns Valley Station, named for John Severns who built his first cabin in 1779. The state of Virginia issued land grants in the area until 1792 when the Commonwealth of Kentucky was established. At that time, the Kentucky legislature began issuing land grants and did so until 1856. Hardin County, Kentucky was established in 1793 and small communities developed after 1794.20 By 1800, the population of the county was 3,653; the county was populated by settlers, businessmen, doctors, lawyers, teachers and preachers. Education was important to these early settlers and in 1798 the Kentucky General Assembly supported the establishment of schools for European-American children by setting aside six thousand acres of land in each county

for a "seminary of learning." In Hardin County, the trustees met on April 3, 1799 to discuss building a school in Elizabethtown, Hardin County. The log house school was built in 1806 became one of the many academies that were established all over the county. These institutions offered education to European-American students who could afford to pay for the classes, books, board and tuition.

Hence, public education was instituted in Hardin County Kentucky in 1908, the same year as the first state compulsory attendance law was passed. Prior to that date, county towns provided for their own independent schools, and some towns continued to provide for their own educational needs after the public system was put in place. Consequently, as late as 1930, nine schools in the Hardin County retained their independent white schools. The target schools for this study, Sonora Colored School and Glendale Colored School were located in towns that retained their independent schools despite the enactment of public education in the state. Establishment dates for the Colored Schools was not available.

Moreover, limited information about how or when the colored schools in Sonora, Kentucky and Glendale, Kentucky were built was available. The early Hardin County School District, like other early Kentucky school districts, was independent and kept its own records; unfortunately, most school records of the early period were missing.

21. Ibid., 19.
22. Ibid., 21.
None of the interviewees for this project (former students or parents of former students) were able to provide historical information about the construction of the schools.

This research focused on the one-room education provided to rural African-American children in Hardin County, Kentucky during a period in American history that was fraught with upheaval and change. National and international events and activities from the 1940s to the mid 1950s had a major impact on the lives of African-American and European-American citizens of the United States during this period. In the decades of the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s, various events and activities occurred that influenced American life. A number of organizations such as the Fair Employment Practices Committee and the Core of Racial Equality that supported integration and equality were formed. Wars of international magnitude erupted; Japan bombed Pearl Harbor precipitating the United States’ entry into World War II. The Korean War began during this period. The Supreme Court made several rulings that supported desegregation and other “firsts” for blacks. Important among those events were: William H. Hastie became the first African American to govern an American state or territory since Reconstruction, Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in the major baseball league, and black soldiers fought in segregated units for the first time since the War of 1812. See Appendix D for a listing of activities that influenced the lives of African Americans during the 1940s and the early 1950s. Black citizens in these Hardin County communities joined the armed forces, fought in the wars that engulfed the world, and cheerfully supported the blacks who become the “first” in various areas of American life. For instance, Carl M. Brashear whose life was chronicled in the movie “Men of Honor” attended the Sonora Colored School from 1937 to 1946; Brashear joined the U.S. Navy in
1948 and became the first African-American Navy Master Diver. Another former student recalled the excitement in the community when Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier and became member of a major league baseball team. Rural, black citizens in Hardin County were aware of the national and international events that influenced their lives and the lives of all Americans. They responded to the challenges of the period by working to be good citizens and to build good lives for their families.

Summary

The Virginia Act of 1620 was one of the earliest provisions for educating African-Americans in the United States. Information in this chapter reviewed historic events in the development of African-American education in the United States, Kentucky, and Hardin County, Kentucky. The 1940s and the early 1950s was a tumultuous period filled with both violent and peaceful changes in the United States and other parts of the world. The rural citizens of Hardin County Kentucky worked to fully participate in American society and to educate their children.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

One-Room School Educational Experiences and
Racial Consciousness

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of rural, African-American, one-room schools on the educational experiences and racial consciousness of African-American children and adults in two Hardin County, Kentucky communities (Sonora, Kentucky and Glendale, Kentucky) before the 1954 Brown decision was implemented. Nevertheless, it must be noted that information about similar schools in two other African-American communities (Upton in Hardin County and Siberia in neighboring Larue County) was revealed in this project. The research was based on a premise that African Consciousness supported the “centeredness” that enabled these rural citizens to educate their children.

Research questions were designed to gather information that would describe the educational experiences of rural, African American one-room school students, determine the Afrocentric ideas that were reflected in the schools and communities, and identify the cultural communal activities that supported the schools. The research questions were:

RQ1: What was it like to be educated in the southern, rural, African-American one-room school?

RQ2: What Afrocentric ideas were reflected in the schools and communities?
RQ3:  What cultural and communal activities supported the schools?

**Hardin County, Kentucky One-Room Schools**

**Description of Schools**

Research participants’ recollections included descriptive information about their one-room school buildings. Specific information about the schools was noted:

- All eight grades were taught in the schools.
- One teacher taught at each school.
- A section of the schoolrooms was used as a coatroom to store coats and lunches.
- The schools were furnished with a black board, desks, and chairs.
- The school at Sonora had a coatroom and a raised stage area; the Glendale school had a coatroom near the door. As one entered the Glendale school, desks for lower grade students were on the right in the front of the room; fourth, fifth and sixth grade desks were farther back to the left and seventh and eighth graders desks were near the windows on the right side of the building.
- Pot-bellied stoves heated the schools.
- Twenty to thirty children attended the schools.
- Water was provided by a pump or cistern outside the buildings or off the properties.
- Toilets for the children (one for boys and one for girls) were outside the building.
- Pictures of the buildings showed white wooden structures with an entry door; windows were shown in the picture of the Sonora school and mentioned in an interview about the Glendale school.

A floor plan of the school in the Glendale community was constructed from interview information and the researcher’s personal recollections. The floor plan is shown in Figure 1.
Figure 1. One-Room School Floor Plan
Schedule of School Activities

Research participants recalled a number of activities that took place during the school day. On winter mornings, the teacher or older boys would build the fire to heat the school room. The school day began with morning activities or devotion which included some or all of the following activities: a song, prayer, Bible reading, Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. After devotion, the school day consisted of the activities listed below:

- Morning Classes (math, reading, geography, history, spelling, and English)
- Morning Recess
- Classes (math, reading, geography, history, spelling, and English)
- Lunch Break and Recess.
- Classes (math, reading, geography, history, spelling, and English)
- End of Day Activities (clean up and tidy up the room)
- Classes Dismissed

The research questions and findings for the project follow. Several themes were noted in the responses to the research questions. Those themes were:

- Transportation
- Beginning School Days
- School Subjects and Favorite Subjects
- Recreational Activities and End-of the Day Activities
- African Consciousness
- Cultural and Communal Support to Schools
Findings

RQ1: What was it like to be educated in the southern, rural, African-American one-room school?

Exploring the education provided to rural African-American children in communities located in Hardin County, Kentucky revealed both strengths and weaknesses of the system. Positive and negative elements of the system were noted in the areas of transportation, beginnings of school days, school teachers, school subjects and favorite subjects, and recreational activities and end-of-the day activities.

Transportation

Getting children to school or providing transportation to school for the children was a weakness in the rural educational system. Transportation was frequently limited in rural areas, and the racism exacerbated the problem for African Americans. Their children could not ride county school buses as the European-American children did. Consequently, other methods of getting African-American children to their schools had to be identified. Parents and other community members worked together to develop and implement the procedures that would make sure the children were able to get to school. Various modes of transportation were used in the communities. They ranged from walking to school to riding with a paid driver. Nine of the thirteen participants shared information about how they got to school. In Table 1, School Transportation, their recollections about getting to school were noted. Walking was the most frequently remembered way these former one-room school students got to school.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Transport</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid Driver</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid Driver &amp; Teacher’s Car</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Car</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walked</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paying someone to drive black children to school was one method of solving the transportation problem for these rural citizens. Lottie Robinson described how students from the cities of Upton, and Glendale were transported to Bond-Washington High School in Elizabethtown in her book *The Bond-Washington Story*. She stated they rode with a driver who had been secured by the Superintendent of the Upton Independent School District or with a driver paid by their parents.\(^1\) In the article “Getting It Straight: Southern Black School Patrons and the Struggle for Equal Education in Pre- and Post Civil rights Eras,” Kara Miles Turner noted the struggles of black parents in Prince Edward County, Virginia in the 1930s to get the district to provide transportation for their high school. Parents had paid $3.00 to $5.00 per child, per month for private transportation. When the school district began assisting with transportation, it only paid $1.60 per child, per month and parents more than likely had to provide the remaining funds.\(^2\) Paid drivers were used to transport elementary students. Three research participants recalled being driven to school by paid drivers, but they did not indicate who paid the drivers, their parents, the district, or both.

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Three participants said they rode to school with the teacher. Having the teacher provide transportation for the children to school may have been an additional non-teaching duty for teachers in the early twentieth century. Diane Manning noted the transportation duty of European-American, one-room school teacher Sibyl Sutherland in 1935 in the text *Hill Country Teacher: Oral Histories from the One-Room School and Beyond*. It was stated that Ms. Sutherland had to be able to drive to get the job because she was supposed to take some of the children with her in her car.3 The former one-room students who recalled riding with their teacher shared the following remembrances of their transportation to school:

- “At the school in the early grades through a car. Our aunt was the school teacher and she picked up everyone that went to her school in her vehicle.”4

- “...Miss *** started driving the children to school. At any rate, we went in a car, a lot of us in the automobile.”5

- “What I do remember is apparently when the school closed, my mother had to learn to drive ... She was kinda’ the bus driver/school teacher because on our way to school, she would stop and pick up children in the other little city and who lived along the highway or even in some instances driving back to farm land where the farm land began to take children to their property line so they could walk home ... Course the cars were kinda’ large then and we were small, but that was actually fun, riding to school.”6

One traditional way for many rural children to get to their one-room school was for them to walk. Du Bois’s text *The Souls of Black Folk* contained an essay, “Of the


5. Fifth Participants, interview by researcher, tape recording, Louisville, KY, 24 November 2006.

Meaning of Progress,” in which he described how children got to the school where he was teaching in the mountains of Tennessee in the late 1800s. He wrote about hearing “the patter of little feet down the dusty road” as the children came to his one-room classroom. In a recounting of events during the period of desegregation, Clifton L. Taulbert described events associated with his early school years in the 1950s and 1960s in Mississippi where he attended a colored plantation schoolhouse with his mother who was the teacher. He wrote that he saw “students walking to the one-room plantation church schoolhouse.” Some of the respondents who participated in this project also walked to school and remembered seeing other children walking to school. One respondent who lived in the city where one of the schools was located stated that she “was able to walk to school and we had some kids that came from all the way down in the country. And the sad part is the school bus would pass those kids and we had to walk.” Two respondents just stated they walked to school. However, another respondent described his grueling walk to school in the wintertime in the following manner: “I drug through it (snow) and it looked like a bull dozer had been where I had dragged through that snow; walked up through that snow. Walked, I guess from where we lived up there was something like what two to three miles.”


Generally, transportation was a problematic endeavor in rural areas, but it was often a huge obstacle for African Americans living in rural areas. However, the rural citizens in this study and in other communities handled the transport of students to and from one-room schools in various ways that did not involve the use of publicly-funded bus transportation. Education was important to Hardin County, Kentucky parents and other community members, and they encouraged children to attend school. Parents sent their children to school. The distance some children walked to school was much farther than it was for other children. Parents paid for private transportation to school in some instances. At other times, the teacher drove to school, picking up the children who lived long distances from the school. Teacher and students rode to school together. The children were generally eager to attend school and did so with marked regularity, despite transportation difficulties. A positive outcome of facing and solving this issue was that it strengthened the community’s determination to set goals and to complete them.

**Beginning School Days**

Beginning school day activities enabled students to participate in a daily routine. Performing habitual activities was a positive feature of the schools because the children benefitted from adherence to established routines. Their morning routines supported adherence to religious principles and encouraged good citizenship. However, those activities were sources of controversy in some areas of the American education system, but the research respondents did not indicate any disagreement with the activities. The respondents identified several activities that took place at the beginning of the school day.
Those activities were:

- Prayer
- Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag
- Singing a song
- Reading from the Bible

Recollections of the research respondents were similar to those of an African-American one-room school student in Delaware. Reverend Allen Oliver Smith attended Iron Hill School (a rural, African-American, one-room school) near Newark, Delaware between 1919 and 1928. He recalled the following activities at the beginning of the school day:

- The teacher rang the bell for students to enter the building.
- Students sang an appropriate song.
- A scripture was read.
- Allegiance to the flag was pledged.
- The teacher prayed.
- Classes began. 11

Opening or beginning school activities were similar in African-American and European-American schools during this period, but often they were controversial. One negative consequence of opening activities was the division it caused in school communities nationwide. In some school communities there were objections to stating the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag or the Loyalty Oath, reading from the Bible, and

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reciting the Lord's Prayer. The controversies were settled by Supreme Court rulings. In 1940, the Supreme Court ruling in the *Minersville School District v. Gobitis* Case (Appendix E) supported the school district’s interest in creating national unity by upholding saluting the flag over students’ rights; that ruling was overturned in 1943 by the Supreme Court ruling in the case of *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette* (Appendix F). Despite the 1943 ruling, saluting the flag remained a questionable, but seemingly acceptable morning tradition in rural schools. Religion was the basis of the controversy surrounding two other morning activities. Prayer and Bible readings were regularly mentioned morning events by research participants and other students who attended one-room schools. A number of Supreme Court rulings from the 1940s into the 1960s (*McCollum v. the Board of Education* in 1948, *Engel v. Vitale* in 1962 and *Murray v. Curlett* in 1963) focused on the issue of schools and religion (Appendices G, H, I, and J). Prayer and Bible readings were daily activities for many American school children until they were removed them from American public schools with the 1963 ruling.

Although some morning activities were controversial, they did produce some positive outcomes for the children. Having students repeat the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag each day assisted in teaching children about American citizenship for it aided the formation of a bond with their country. One research respondent remembered standing and placing her hand over her heart when the pledge was repeated.12

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12. Participant Three, interview.
Adherence to religious principles was an important tradition for many members of the rural communities. Prayer and Bible readings in school supported their religious traditions. One respondent expressed what may have been another attitude towards religious activities in schools. She believed saying the Lord’s Prayer in school might awaken the curiosity of some students who had no exposure to religious teachings. Research participants who remembered morning activities recalled both reciting the Lord’s Prayer and having Bible readings. When saluting the flag, praying, and reading the Bible were recalled as part of the morning activities there was no indication of displeasure from the respondents. The respondents viewed the opening activities as accepted routines that benefitted them, and the Hardin County community members supported the activities. Consequently, they were believed to strengthen the schools.

School Teachers

One weakness in the southern education system after the Civil War was the lack of trained African-American teachers to teach black children. Booker T. Washington observed during the period of Reconstruction that most African Americans who had received a little education became teachers or preachers, and many who “became teachers who could do little more than write their names.” Marion B. Lucas noted that teachers in the freedmen schools were predominantly black, and that was a community preference; a few teachers had been trained in the North or at Berea Literary Institute in Kentucky.


but most were prewar freemen or formerly enslaved persons who were literate and often many were preachers or their wives.\textsuperscript{15} Furthermore in the South, it was not until after 1910 that rural, eighth-grade public schools for black children came into existence, and the schools that did exist were run by teachers whose average training was an eighth-grade education.\textsuperscript{16} Teacher training was definitely a critical issue for southern black educators.

One positive development that came out of the need for trained African-American teachers and that was the growth of African-American normal schools. Educational leaders in Louisville, Kentucky with the assistance of the American Missionary Association, the Western Freedmen’s Aid Commission, and the Freedmen’s Bureau opened the Ely Normal School in 1868.\textsuperscript{17} Berea College, established in 1869 as a private, multiracial college in Berea, Kentucky, provided formal normal school training; the college was responsible for training a significant number of teachers for Kentucky’s schools.\textsuperscript{18} Teacher training in Kentucky was further assisted in 1887 when the State Normal School opened in Frankfort, Kentucky. State Normal School’s first president, John H. Jackson, was a graduate of Berea College. In these training institutions, teachers learned new classroom techniques, attended speeches by faculty, attended week-end or summer institutes, and presented papers or gave demonstrations on how to teach various

\textsuperscript{15} Marion B. Lucas, \textit{A History of Blacks in Kentucky: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891} (Frankfort: The Kentucky Historical Society, 2003), 234-235.

\textsuperscript{16} Henry Allen Bullock, \textit{A History of Negro Education in the South From 1619 to the Present} (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 123.

\textsuperscript{17} Lucas, 238.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 254.
subjects. The teacher interviewed in this research project was a graduate of Kentucky State College, formerly State Normal School and now Kentucky State University. The researcher had earned a Bachelor or Arts degree in Elementary Education from Kentucky State College.

Encouraging, supportive teachers were an asset to the schools because they were positive role models. Twelve of the thirteen participants shared recollections of their one-room school teacher or teachers. Seven participants indicated they had only one teacher when they attended a one-room school, but four participants shared information about more than one teacher during their elementary school years. Participants informed about the teaching styles, interactions with students, and personalities of their teachers. Their responses are listed in tables.

Table 2. Pleasant Recollections of Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;The teacher took time even if she had to give you one-on-one; she was willing to do that. even if she had to stay after school.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot;A wonderful teacher a great teacher . . . we (students) enjoyed her.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. Ibid., 263.
20. Participant Four, interview.
21. Participant Seven, interview.
22. First Participants, interview by researcher, tape recording, Glendale, KY, 4 May 2007.
23. Fifth Participants, interview.
Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Females|     | “She was a sweet, sweet person. I always kept in contact with her.”
|        |     | “She was always trying to help me to learn.”  |

Respondents who maintained pleasant memories of their one-room school teacher(s) often gave flattering and appreciative comments about the teacher(s) and the manner in which school subjects were presented. Their descriptions included the terms and phrases such as a wonderful teacher ... we enjoyed her, and took time even if she had to give you one-on-one.

Table 3. Mixed Recollections of Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“A bad teacher ... would walk around with a switch for each. You’d Think he was gone and he would turn around and get you . . . He came back a second time. That’s the ‘onliest’ time I learned anything cause he was rough, you know, and I was scared of him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“... He would use that tool excessively . . . That teacher was nuts, like I said. Now you learned something under him.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26 First Participants, interview.
27 Participant Ten, interview.
Table 3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;I had a poor, a very poor English teacher because he told me that he couldn’t teach English. I had a very poor setting in English, but otherwise he did very well.&quot;\textsuperscript{28}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Very good, very disciplined. I remember she used a ruler to hit you in the middle of your hand . . . if you didn’t do what you were supposed to do.&quot;\textsuperscript{29}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mixed recollections generally contained positive and negative aspects of the teachers and classroom activities. For instance, one respondent described her teacher as very good and very disciplined, but she would use a ruler on the hand of a disobedient student. Two other respondents remembered a male teacher whose disciplinary techniques evoked very definite unpleasant memories, but both said they learned when he was their teacher.

Table 4. Recollections of Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;Never will forget her. I can remember her. That was my first teacher.&quot;\textsuperscript{30}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;I remember my first teacher because she was my Mother.&quot;\textsuperscript{31}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Little information was obtained about teachers from respondents whose comments were in the recollections category because they did not share additional pleasant or unpleasant

\textsuperscript{28} Participant Eight, interview by researcher, tape recording, Atlanta, GA, 10 April 1999.

\textsuperscript{29} Fifth Participants, interview.


\textsuperscript{31} Participant Three, interview.
information about teachers. In fact, when comments from the pleasant recollections and
the mixed recollections were combined, they viewed teachers as strengths rather than
weaknesses in the schools.

Teachers who maintained good, fair disciplinary procedures in the schools were
respected and their schools were considered positive educational institutions. One-room
school teachers had to discipline and to teach students in grades one to eight whose ages
could range from five or six years into the teens and beyond. References to teachers'
disciplinary methods were found in five respondents' comments. Their responses
indicated agreement with some disciplinary measures and disagreement with others. Two
male respondents described their male teacher as having a penchant for using a switch to
correct disobedient children. One said the teacher "would use that tool (switch
excessively."\textsuperscript{32} The other described that teacher as one who "would walk around with a
switch . . . you'd think he was gone and he would turn around and get you."\textsuperscript{33} Two of
the female participants were interviewed together and shared recollections about the same
teacher, but their comments were classified in different categories. One participant’s
comments were placed in the Mixed Recollections category; she described the teacher as
a good disciplinarian who controlled her class by using a ruler on the hands of
disobedient children; that disciplinary action would be considered a form of corporal
punishment in twenty-first century elementary schools. The second female participant’s

\textsuperscript{32} Participant Ten, interview.

\textsuperscript{33} First Participants, interview.
comments about the teacher were placed the Pleasant Recollections category because of her positive recollections of the teacher’s appearance.

Another respondent who talked about control in the classroom remembered the teacher using a corrective procedure that could be considered an extreme measure, today. He recalled the teacher, a female, fighting a student who challenged her to fight him. He said the challenging student was “rough . . . And one day he challenged the teacher to a fight. And she took off her little jacket and when she got through with him she never had no more trouble the rest . . . of the year or any other time.”

The actuality of having to fight for control in a rural, one-room school was further supported in the autobiographical text, *The Thread That Runs So True* by Jesse Stuart, a European-American writer from Kentucky. Stuart wrote about his first teaching assignment in a one-room school that he intentionally selected because he had a grudge to settle. His sister had been the teacher at that school the year before and one of the pupils had beaten her in the classroom; Stuart wanted to repay that student and he eventually did fight that student. When the fight between Stuart and the student occurred, he won the fight and the respect of the community.

Furthermore, one of the male respondents who described his male teacher as one who “liked whippings” or liked giving children whippings to discipline his class described another aspect of discipline that existed on the schools; he mentioned that if a parent questioned the discipline, “the teacher may say well, yes I whipped your child and

34. Participant Four, interview.

you might get some of the same thing if you were dissatisfied with it."36 Correcting a student using this approach was not an accepted technique for late twentieth century and current twenty-first century classrooms. Nevertheless, these references to teachers literally fighting with students to maintain classroom discipline seemed to be a reality for rural teachers, in some instances. Rural, one-room school teachers in the first half of the twentieth century used various methods of discipline to control their classroom, and the maintenance of strong, fair discipline was a positive feature of the schools.

**School Subjects and Favorite Subjects**

One weakness of African-American, one-room school education was inequitable funding by the school districts. As a result, the teachers had to use second-hand materials or whatever materials were available to teach the required school subjects. Nevertheless, teachers did instruct students in the disciplines required by their districts. Research respondents had clear recollections of the subjects they were taught. Eleven of the thirteen participants recalled subjects that were taught in their one-room schools. Subjects most frequently mentioned and the subjects students liked are shown in the School Subjects and Favorite Subjects in Table 5.

Some respondents shared specific memories of activities related to the different subjects. One respondent remembered a song the children sang to learn the multiplication tables; he sang the multiplication song for the tables of five during the interview.

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36. Participant Ten, interview.
Table 5. School Subjects and Favorite Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Number of Times Mentioned</th>
<th>Favorite Subjects</th>
<th>Number of Times Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arithmetic/Math</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Arithmetic/Math</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and Spelling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>English and Spelling</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another respondent recalled spelling matches where the winner got a little stick of candy. Respondents remembered “basic subjects” (reading, writing, and arithmetic) and other subjects being taught at school. The fact that more than “basic subjects” were taught in the schools underscored the strength of the instructional activities. In other words, the “basics” were presented in a manner that resulted in enough mastery to incorporate subjects such as science, history, and health in the curriculum.

Besides identifying the school subjects, eleven of the twelve respondents who identified subjects in school also recalled their favorite subject or subjects. Arithmetic, English, geography, health, history and spelling were named as favorites more than once. Math, however, was remembered as both a liked and disliked subject. It should be noted that there was more mention of favorite subjects than of disliked subjects. Of the eleven research participants who recalled their favorite subject or subjects, only two identified a subject they did not like and gave a reason for not liking the subject. The participants both disliked math; one said math required “too much thinking”37 and the other one said

37. Participant Four, interview.
he "did not like fractions." 38 On a more positive note, one respondent noted being able to listen to other people's lessons and learn "stuff that you didn't even try to learn because you heard it and it just kinda' sunk in." 39

Hearing recollections of a variety of subjects being taught, as well as, statements from students who enjoyed their classroom interactions in southern, rural, African-American, one-room schools supported the existence of a highly academic environment in the schools. Engaging, enjoyable academic activities were definite assets of one-room school education.

Recreational Activities and End-of-the-Day Activities

Recreational activities in one-room schools were positive features of the curriculum that enriched the children's sociability. During this time period, many children engaged in substantial physical exercise when they walked to school because the distance from their homes to the school was a mile or more. Several respondents referred to the distance they walked to get to school. One said he walked "something like what two or three miles" to get to school, 40 the other said, "You had to walk a long way." 41 Still another respondent recalled that she "walked to and from school." 42 Whether the students walked long or short distances to school, they still looked forward to their recreational activities and recess.

38. First Participants, interview.
39. Fifth Participants, interview.
40. Participant Ten, interview.
41. First Participants, interview.
42. Participant Six, interview.
Five of the thirteen respondents recalled activities that could be categorized as recreational. These activities were noted in the interviews: playing ball, playing baseball, playing basketball, playing Hide and Go Seek, chasing each other with switches, running foot races, swinging on trees, going across a frozen pond in the winter. These games and activities took place before classes began, during recess, and after school. In three instances, the interviewees indicated that playing ball was enjoyed tremendously by the students. Their comments were: “Play ball, it was just so much fun;”43 and “... and we’d have baseball games together, just, just had a lot of fun together.”44 At times, the teacher would also join in recess games. One respondent described a memorable foot race that included the teacher. The race was between the teacher and a student who was so fast the other students called him Rabbit. Rabbit had challenged the teacher to a foot race. The respondent recalled “... he said he could outrun her and she said he couldn’t. And they (took) off down there and he got beat. She outran the Rabbit and that was the first and last time he ever challenged her to a foot race.”45 Recalling school recreational activities seemed to initiate joyful memories for the respondents. Recreational activities were important components of rural children’s school days. The games played during breaks or recess periods may have supported their feelings of group unity. Two respondents summed up the connection in the following manner: “All of us played together and ... we’d have baseball games together, just, just, had a lot of fun together.”46

43. Ibid.
44. Participant Six, interview.
45. Participant Four, interview.
46. Participant Six, interview.
just a camaraderie there, you know. We all played together and the older children looked after the younger children." In pre-Brown decision America, recreational activities were part of one-room school environments and they contributed significantly to the physical and social growth of rural school children, particularly African-American children.

End-of-the-day activities allowed the children to help support their schools by completing responsibilities assigned to them. The assignment process was a positive feature, a strong point of the educational institutions. Five participants responded to the inquiry about end-of-the-day activities. The responses ranged from "I don’t remember any special thing closing the day" to a listing of closing day activities. All of the respondents stated that they went home at the end of the day, and one remembered the time school ended, three o’clock. However, two interviewees remembered other activities taking place before they went home; one described a clean-up procedure that involved picking up paper, sweeping the floor straightening book shelves and getting belongings out of the coat room before dismissal, and the other said the children filed out, got in the car and went home. Another respondent’s statements on end-of-the-day activities were perceptive and may have summarized the feelings of other students, as well. He described the end of the day in the following manner:

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47. Participant Seven, interview.
48. Fifth Participants, interview.
49. Participant Three, interview.
50. Fifth Participants, interview.
“... very happy time. We always had a period of time we could enjoy each other and we was always glad that school was out because it was a time to socialize and play... and, at the end of the day, happy to go home, looking forward to getting back to school the next day.”

RQ2: What Afrocentric ideas were reflected in the schools and communities?

The premise for this project was that African Consciousness supported rural African Americans in their efforts to educate their children. The researcher developed a survey based on Baldwin’s Critical Indices of the African Self-Consciousness Construct to identify components of African Consciousness that operated in the communities.

Baldwin Indices incorporated characteristics of African Identity and Culture identified by M. W. Makgoba in the text, *Mokoko, The Makgoba Affair: A Reflection on Transformation* and quoted in the article “African Culture And Personality: Bad Social Science, Effective Social Activism, Or A Call to Reinvent Ethnology?” by James A. Lassiter. Basic characteristics of African Identity and Culture were noted as hospitality, friendliness, the consensus and common framework-seeking principle, ubuntu humanity), and emphasis on community rather than on the individual. Characteristics of African identity and culture operating in the communities were revealed by the survey, also.

**First Critical Index**

Two questions focused on the first Critical Index and one of the questions referred to an African Identity and Culture Characteristic:

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51. Participant Four, interview.

Critical Index—The person possesses an awareness of his/her black identity (a sense of collective consciousness and sees value in the pursuit of knowledge of self (i.e. African history and culture throughout the world-encompassing African American experiences).


Q1: What did you learn about African-American heroes in the community and/or at the school?

Eight of the thirteen respondents did not recall learning about black heroes in school or in the community. One of the two respondents who were interviewed together gave an insightful response to not learning about black heroes and answered the question by stating, “I think in those days, heroes were not black;” the co-respondent agreed with her and said, “That’s right.”

Three respondents did remember learning about black heroes in school or in the community. One respondent recalled learning about Booker T. Washington, Joe Louis, and Jackie Robinson. A second respondent remembered learning about George Washington Carver. The third respondent remembered having graduation speakers “who were considered leaders and models for us.” The question was not discussed in the interviews with two of the respondents.

Although the number of respondents who did not recall hearing about black heroes was larger than the number who did hear about black heroes, all of the respondents very likely attended an activity where a black role model, black hero or

53. Fifth Participants, interview.
54. Participant Seven, interview.
55. Participant Four, interview.
56. Participant Three, interview.
another inspirational person was present and may have been the featured speaker. The activity was an eighth grade graduation where the speaker was usually an African-American role model—an accomplished elementary teacher, a high school or college teacher, a minister, etc.). Five of the interviewees graduated from one-room schools and four attended one-room schools through the fifth or sixth grades; three interviewees said they attended one-room schools and one interviewee was a one-room school teacher. Since graduations were communal activities, all of the interviewees very likely had attended a ceremony as one of the following: a graduate, a graduate’s family member or friend, a graduation program participant, an interested community member, or the teacher. In graduation ceremonies Baldwin’s first Critical Index, having of an awareness of ones black identity gained by learning about African history and culture through African American experiences, was evident. Graduation allowed lower grade students, high school students, family members, friends, and other community members to celebrate and commend the graduates. Also, attendees got to hear a speaker who was considered a black role model applaud students for completing the elementary education program, share personal and/or professional educational and cultural experiences, and encourage the students’ pursuit of additional educational and professional goals. Graduations enabled communal support of the graduates and which exemplified the African identity and culture characteristic that emphasized community rather than individual. The group, not just an individual, supported the graduates. Education was valued in the African-American community and graduations were culminating activities in that valued tradition.
Q2: In what ways were you taught to be proud of African-American or black people?

Five interviewees did not recall direct teachings about pride in being black or African American. However five interviewees did remember learning about pride; four of the five recollections were supportive of African Americans, but one memory was descriptive of the negatives in their environment. Black pride was not part of the discussion with three participants. The recollections of six respondents are noted in Table 6.

Table 6. Teaching Black Pride

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Pride</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Were “taught pride as an individual . . . of your accomplishments . . . not necessarily as a black person.”&lt;sup&gt;57&lt;/sup&gt; Taught to be “proud of what we had attained, and given examples of black people who started with a little, attained more. . . and tried to help others.”&lt;sup&gt;58&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Being “proud of who you were.”&lt;sup&gt;59&lt;/sup&gt; Being “taught by Mom to have good manners . . . and be the best you can be.”&lt;sup&gt;60&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Pride</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>They (European Americans) made you not be proud of your . . . of what you were.”&lt;sup&gt;61&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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57. Fifth Participants, interview.
58. Participant Three, interview.
59. Participant Four, telephone interview.
60. Participant Six, interview.
61. First Participants, interview.
The comment of being made to not feel proud of who you were came from a respondent in her late eighties. Respondents who recalled being taught pride said they were taught to be proud of individual accomplishments, proud of who you were, proud to be the best you could be, and proud of attainments. However, one respondent added they were told about black people who achieved even though they had started with very little, black people who were good community and church members, and black people who tried to help others. These former one-room school students reflected on being taught about pride during a turbulent period for African Americans in the United States of America. At this time, they faced lynching, legal segregation, discrimination, and other injustices in American society. Although they did not specifically identify the information they were given to be about black pride, it should be noted that encouragement and admonishments to do well came from people who were ethnically similar. Consequently, these black students were taught to be proud of themselves, proud of their accomplishments, proud of being good citizens, and proud to be respectable church members. Despite the obstacles in their environments, African-Americans adults worked diligently to instill pride in their youth. Although it was not directly stated or announced, pride was taught in their homes, schools, and communities of these African-American citizens.

Second Critical Index

Three questions addressed the second Critical Index; one of the questions referred to African Identity and Culture Characteristics:
Critical Index—The person recognizes black survival priorities and the necessity for institutions (practices, customs, values, etc.) which affirm worth and integrity.

African Identity and Culture Characteristics—Ubuntu (Humanity) and Consensus and Common Framework-Seeking

Q1: What African-American or black traditions, values, or practices were taught at school or in your community?

Three interviewees did not recall traditions, values, practices or customs being taught at school or in the community. The question was not part of the interview for four respondents and one interviewee did not respond to the question. However, five interviewees recalled African-American traditions, values or practices being taught in school or in the community; they mentioned practices in African-American culture that ranged from recreational activities to descriptions of lifestyle. Recollections are noted in the Traditions Chart (Table 7).

Table 7. Traditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Males  | 1 | “We were taught by black teachers; we were able to sing and speak about Negro spirituals. We had time for songs; we had a time in the school year when we'd have little social events where we were introduced to certain culture that the African Negro had that we were able to be involved in.”

62. Participant Four, interview. |
The responses of those who shared their memories of early school and community traditions included information that identified communal and educational activities that took place in their African-American communities. In one interviewee’s response a recreational game, religious beliefs, and citizenship expectations of the community were identified. The game, Hambone, was popular in rural southern areas; it exemplified the passing of an African tradition to African-American children. The game was a body percussion game where the child drummed on himself or herself. Ernest Brown in the article Black Perspective in Music stated “... drumming was feared and suppressed in the United States. If the African could no longer beat his drum, however, no laws

63. Participant Three, interview.
64. First Participants, interview.
65. Participants Five, interview.
66. Ibid.
stopped him from drumming on himself, and children’s game songs were not suppressed.”67 Children used thigh and chest slapping body percussions in this game song; thus, a rudiment of a cultural expression that was forbidden to adults (drumming) was retained in African-American communities. A partial text to a version of Hambone follows:

Hambone, Hambone, pat him on the shoulder.
If you get a pretty girl, I’ll show you how to hold her.
Hambone, Hambone, where have you been?
All round the world and back again.
Hambone, Hambone, what did you do?
I got a train and I fairly flew.68

The second part of this response gave some insight into the communal expectations of the period. The respondent mentioned two other traditions that were valued in the communities; they focused on religion and work. Children were expected to adhere to the religious mores of the community and to become adults who worked to provide for themselves and their families. Based on the respondent’s statements, the children perceived the expectations to be communal desires, not just family or individual wishes. These African-American citizens worked to help their children understand and adhere to traditions that were important aspects of their communal lives; in essence, they taught the children their respected traditions, values, and practices which they believed were characteristic of good citizens. A second interviewee remembered traditions that encompassed music, school and community activities, and learning from a person of the


68. Ibid., 142.
same ethnic group. From this interviewee’s account, one-room school children learned about the music of their ancestors from a teacher who was ethnically similar and they were able to sing and enjoy the music. Furthermore, he talked about planned social events at school where students were able to learn African-American cultural traditions. Usually, these social events were attended by students and community members; often, community members or a community member would be prominently featured in the activity. The third interviewee’s response focused on the importance of religion and family. She remembered positive church activities that were attended by community members. Her statement continued to emphasize the importance “older people” or adults placed on caring for their children. This response emphasized the importance of religion and good citizenship in these communities. A fourth statement regarding traditions, values, or practices focused on being educated by an ethnically similar person and the children’s view of their communities. This reference to black students having black teachers and attending black schools simply outlined a tradition of education in black communities. The interviewee’s next statements revealed a view of segregated life; she recalled the children not thinking about European-American schools, the European-American world, or European-American traditions. She stated, “We never even thought about the white folks or the white schools or how they did it. It’s like we were in another world and they didn’t even exist.” Comments from the fifth interviewee supported the viewpoint shared by the fourth interviewee. This response emphasized being taught the African-American “way of life” in their communities. She said, ”We just stayed focused on what we were doing and how it was and I think that helped us to come out without scars . . . we were just taught our way of life.” Interviewees reflected on how traditions,
values, and practices were taught and implemented by African-American community members and attributed the positive development of the youth to their actions. The traditions, values, and practices of their African-American communities made their world very comfortable and fulfilling.

**Q2: Were they (traditions, values, or practices) taught most often at school or in the community?**

A respondent who did not recall being taught traditions informed about a communal tradition when asked if she would like to share anything else about her one-room experience. She said, "... we had a good time. ... there was just a camaraderie there. ... We all played together and the older children looked after the younger children. They would always help us with whatever we were doing ... In fact, the whole community was close knit." These comments by the respondent suggested a tradition of caring for each other and helping each other existed in the school communities. Teachers and community members (parents and others) made sure older children knew how to assist and care for younger children. Those actions revealed how the concept of humanity was fostered and operated in the communities. The Africanisms, care for younger children and communal expectations, were part of the lives of these rural citizens. The communal teaching process was also a reflection of the traditional African view of an educated person. Oladele Balogun described the concept of education in the African culture as a system where education was not "separate and distinct from the system of socialization and of living in an indigenous African society. ... To be ideal, cultured or educated is thus a function of an aggregate of processes in which a person

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69. Participant Seven, interview.
acquires community cultural knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, norms and habits for the survival of society.” Thus, the educated person in the traditional African sense had mastered academics according to his or her abilities, along with valued and required informal information provided through societal sources. Teachers and community members worked together to provide students with an education that would inform them of their communal culture and support their survival in the larger culture. This consensus resulted in a common framework of support for the children. It appears that children were taught African-American traditions in the schools and in the communities.

Q3: How did you and your parents feel when the school(s) closed?

Of the thirteen interviewees, eleven shared their feelings regarding schools closings. One person did not respond to the question and the question was not asked of another interviewee. Three of the eleven respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the closings, but two respondents said they were glad the schools closed. The highest number of responses was identified as neither sad nor glad. Five respondents’ reactions were expressed as Indifferent, Nervous, Matter of Fact, and Glad and Sad; they revealed feelings of uncertainty and resignation. Responses to school closings which ranged from upset to glad and sad are shown in the School Closings Table (Table 8).

Table 8. School Closings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reaction(s)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upset/Didn’t Like</td>
<td>Two respondents were upset by changes when the school closed.\textsuperscript{71} One respondent stated “I didn’t like it.”\textsuperscript{72}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>One interviewee remembered the school closing as “very sad.”\textsuperscript{73}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>One respondent said she was “probably nervous but didn’t remember it being a bad experience.”\textsuperscript{74}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matter of Fact</td>
<td>Another respondent didn’t recall her parents’ reaction but was told, “You’re going to the white school.” She further stated there were “no questions asked, no debate.”\textsuperscript{75}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>One respondent said he “didn’t think much of the schools closing” (He was already in high school.).\textsuperscript{76}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glad</td>
<td>Two interviewees were glad they felt “it was a blessing to move up from one-room schools for they (integrated schools) had more to offer.”\textsuperscript{77}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad and Glad</td>
<td>Two respondents expressed mixed reactions; they were “sad but glad because they felt the students would get a better education or it would be a greater opportunity for the children.”\textsuperscript{78}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{71} Participant Three, interview and Participant Four, interview.

\textsuperscript{72} Participant Two interview by researcher, Sonora, KY, November 25, 2006.

\textsuperscript{73} Participant Six, interview.

\textsuperscript{74} Fifth Participants, interview.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{76} Participant Nine interview by researcher, Sonora, KY, May 4, 2007.

\textsuperscript{77} Participant Ten, interview and Participant Eleven, interview.

\textsuperscript{78} First Participants, interview.
Responses from these interviewees very likely reflected the feelings of the African-American community members for they were proud of their schools and worked hard to maintain them. However, adults were aware of disparities between their schools and the European-American schools. The interviewees who were happy about the school closings along with those who expressed happiness and sadness about the decisions were parents of children when the Supreme Court handed down the Brown decision. They shared a belief that their children would have better educational opportunities in desegregated schools.

When the one-room schools closed respondents remembered experiencing a range of emotions that went from sadness to happiness, but the prevailing reflections were of loss, resignation and uncertainty. Valued traditions, practices, and customs were passed on to children and adults in the schools and the communities. Mastery and use of the traditions were affirmations of the worth and integrity of their communal culture.

Third Critical Index

Two questions referred to the third Critical Index and one of the questions referred to an African Identity and Culture Characteristic:

Critical Index—The person actively participated in the survival, liberation, and pro-active development of black people and defends their dignity, worth and integrity.

African Identity and Culture Characteristic—Friendliness

Q1: Tell me what you know about when the school was built and about any African-American community members that were involved in building the school(s)?
Ten interviewees responded to the school history question. The question was not part of three respondents' interviews. Eight of the ten interviewees who responded to the question were unable to share any information about the histories of the schools at Sonora and Glendale. However, two respondents did share some surprising information about early African-American education in Hardin County, Kentucky. The first unexpected information came from a respondent who completed the eighth grade at Sonora Colored School. She stated that she had actually begun school in the neighboring city of Upton. When the school in Upton closed, students were transported by paid drivers to and from the school in Sonora. This disclosure was a remarkable revelation for the researcher who had been a resident of Upton from early childhood until she completed college; she did not know a colored school had existed in the city. The second respondent shared information about the school in the Glendale community. He stated that the Glendale school may have been built around 1950, at least that what he remembered being on the steps of the church which occupied the former school building at the time of the interview.

Earlier in the interview, the second respondent referred to an activity that pointed to the importance of education in the African-American community. He responded to a query about any black people who were involved in building the school in the following manner; "... When we come out here of course, we had the Sunday School up here. I heard them talking about ... my mother ... a Sunday School here. I was too small for

79. Participant Eleven, interview.
80. First Participants, interview.
Sunday School. I was too small."\textsuperscript{81} His mention of Sunday School in response to a question about school history was a reference to an educational institution of British origin; Robert Raikes started a charitable institution that provided religious and secular instruction to poor factory children in the Gloucester, England in the 1880s. In 1786 Methodist Minister Francis Asbury established a school using Raikes' plan in Hanover, Virginia. Since Kentucky was originally part of Virginia, it was conceivable that Raikes' Sunday School concept would appear in the state. Some enslaved African Americans were educated in Sunday Schools.

Historian Henry Allen Bullock noted one of the reasons the enslavement did not evolve as a system where "two races live in a system of economic interdependency devoid of personal sentiment and emotions" was interracial permissiveness; Bullock further believed the permissiveness on the part of some tolerant planters and the desire of planters to make enslaved people more obedient enabled those who supported African-American education to establish schools.\textsuperscript{82} A result was that some large planters built Sunday Schools that provided religion education and promoted literacy among the enslaved people. Thus, Sunday Schools became viable educational conduits for African Americans during enslavement and into the early twentieth century. During the interview, the respondent made statements that suggested the school he had heard about in his community was similar to the educational facility Raikes had developed in Gloucester, England.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{82} Bullock, \textit{A History of Negro Education in the South From 1619 to the Present}, 2, 11.
First, he talked about the school in response to a question about the history of the African-American school in his community. That suggested the Sunday School was considered an educational institution. Second, he said the school was in the community when his family moved there, and he heard his mother talk about the school. Again, the implication was that she described an institution that was primarily, if not totally, educational. Last of all, he said he was too small to attend the school. That statement was similar to a statement that would be made if someone was talking about attending an educational facility. Although he did not provide information about specific individuals who may have been responsible for building a school or schools in the community, he did recall the existence of an institution that resulted from educational pro-activeness by forward-thinking, African-American, community members. When these citizens decided to have a school for their children, they organized themselves and worked with the European-Americans who were in power to bring the school into being. They understood the importance of education to the survival of their youth and they actively worked to equip them for the future.

**Q2:** Describe anything you remember African-American teachers, preachers, or other community members doing to encourage students to better themselves?

The person or people who would meet the criteria of the last part of Joseph Baldwin's third Critical Index would defend, encourage and support activities that exemplified the dignity, worth, and integrity of African-American or black people. Ten interviewees recalled being encouraged to better themselves; one interviewee had no recollection of receiving encouragement and the question was not part of the interview for two interviewees. Respondents remembered encouragement coming from churches,
communities, homes, and schools. They recalled being encouraged at home and at church most frequently. In Table 9, sources of encouragement and the number of times respondents recalled those sources were noted.

Table 9. Sources of Encouragement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Times Remembered by Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home and Community</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and Church</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviewees were asked about the encouragement they received from African Americans in their schools or communities, their responses helped identify the sources of support that confirmed their dignity and value to society as they pursued their educational and other goals. It was not surprising that the churches and ministers were identified as supporters of dignity and worth for the youth. Historically, churches had served as schools, and ministers were often the teachers. That was the case in Hardin County, as well. In Lottie Robinson's book, *The Bond Washington Story*, the history of two African-American churches located in the county’s largest city, Elizabethtown, was reviewed. She stated, “Many of our teachers in the early days were Baptist ministers. Classes were taught during the week in the church.” Furthermore, she interviewed one person who said his father had attended school in the church.83 Robinson, also, stated that she “felt” ministers of Embry Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church had been teachers in the

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community; she identified a principal of Bond-Washington School in 1912 and Bond-Washington High School in 1935-1937, as an assistant pastor for Embry Chapel.84

Although research interviewees did not live in Elizabethtown when they were elementary students, there were interactions among the Sonora, Glendale, and Elizabethtown community members. As elementary students, they may have attended an activity in Elizabethtown at First Baptist Church, Embry Chapel AME Church, or Bond-Washington School. Furthermore, until desegregation, Bond-Washington High School was the closest high school for African-American students in Hardin County. Churches and ministers were noted as sources of support in the research target communities. One interviewee, a graduate of Bond-Washington High School, recalled encouragement coming from his church in Glendale. He said, “Well, I would hear it. I would hear this at church. Occasional, I would hear, you know, mention ‘hang in there’ at church.”85 Thus, preachers and other church attendees may not have been teachers but they did encourage students to get an education. A second Glendale community respondent identified the church as a supportive entity. He said, “I remember them telling us to do the education but then things didn’t ring a bell to us back there then, but they was preachin’ it to us.”86 His wife added to his statement, “Could that have been Brother ****? I was here when he was over here preachin’.”87 Later in the interview with the couple, the female participant identified one of her teachers as a minister; she said, “My

84. Ibid., 17.
85. Participant Ten, interview.
86. First Participants, interview.
87. Ibid.
first teacher was Rev. ***... You really did learn something under him. It was no playground. You had to get your lessons." 88

Another participant mentioned receiving encouragement at school and at church. School programs and church sermons were recalled as sources of the support; she remembered a minister whose sermons included stories of people who had been successful because they had "followed, of course, God's commandments, as well as worked hard and tried to get an education." 89

The recollections of encouragement and support for the dignity and value of African-American children coming from the church confirmed the importance of the church in building children's survival skills in pre-Brown Decision America. Additionally, the encouragement was given in an atmosphere of friendliness. Interviewees did not mention any instances when arrogance or unpleasantness was associated with the statements of encouragement. Noticeable also was the connection of the church and the school in providing support to children of African descent during this period of segregation. These two institutions, as separate or joint entities, provided a critical component of the survival initiative for African-American youth in these communities.

Home was remembered as an area of support the same number of times as church. Interviewees recalled what they were told in their homes that built self confidence and outlined what was expected from them, as well. One interviewee responded to the query about encouragement by stating, "No. I never heard of nothing. I'd encourage my

88. Ibid.

89. Participant Three, interview.
Two of the respondents who were interviewed together were children when the one-room schools were in their communities. They remembered being encouraged at home. Their statements about encouragement were:

"I feel the same. Those types of things were just taught at home. You just knew you were going to school to learn. They expected you to go and act like you should act at school and they let you know that." 91

"I remember that mostly coming from my mother. It came from my mother. I don’t remember it so much from anywhere else." 92

In all three instances, parents encouraged their children to do what they believed would benefit them. However, two of the recollections contained codas that underscored how essential they believed education was to the children. Stating “... they was gonna do it” was a strong admonition to be serious about education. Parents believed education would allow their children to have better lives. They encouraged them to become educated and they expected them to go to school and know how to act at school. When the respondent said “they let you know that” she referred to a strong enforcement of parental rules regarding children’s behavior and performance at school. In addition to giving their children verbal encouragement to continue their education, parents worked to make sure their children’s total school environment was the best they could provide.

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90. Participant Two, interview.
91. Ibid.
92. Fifth Participants, interview.
Community support for the students, the schools, and the teachers was obvious in the reflections of the interviewees. It was not surprising that two interviewees quickly identified community members as people who gave them encouragement when they were students. A female community member who encouraged students was described as follows: "She was a good Christian lady and she would always encourage us. She, she would always encourage us. . . She was very firm, very firm, honey. . . She was very good and she would always encourage us."93

Another interviewee who remembered encouragement coming from the school and church also recalled an occasion when a community member did something for the school children that showed she was supportive of their education. The interviewee recalled the event in this manner: "I don’t know what the occasion was but one lady brought us popcorn balls and I thought that was so neat. She took the time and made enough popcorn balls for all of the kids and she brought them to school. So, sometimes people would just come and do things to assist the activities at school."94

A third respondent identified an encouraging male community member as follows: "... he would always, encourage us to stay, you know, to stay in school and to learn, he’d tell us. He was a real, he was a real old guy, just always, and he looked after the kids, you know, around there."95

One research participant recalled being encouraged at home and by people in the community; he said, "My aunt and my grandmother taught us to be all that we could be

93. Participant Seven, interview.
94. Participant Three, interview.
95. Participant Six, interview.
and to learn all that we could. . . and the encouragement (came) from family and friends."\textsuperscript{96} Hence, interviewees' reflections indicated children received support from community members through their words and their actions. Community support was not a novel idea for African-American schools, since these communities had long been considered foundational components of their schools. In the article "African American Teaching in the South," Vanessa Siddle Walker identified the community as a strong support to African-American teachers; she commented that communal support "was most often a financial means of meeting classroom and school needs and a commitment to instilling respect for schooling at home."\textsuperscript{97}

Overall, Actions of African-American citizens in these Hardin County, Kentucky communities seemed to closely mirror Walker's description of communal activities that supported school financially and instilled respect for education. Building respect for school and education was an indication of the communities being proactive in their efforts to ensure their youth were prepared for the future. The respondents' recollection of being taught to be all you could be and to learn all you could learn from family and friends exemplified Walker's description of communal support for schools. Furthermore, supporting schools and encouraging students reinforced the concepts of dignity, worth, and integrity in the African-American community. The respondents' recollections revealed pro-activity among community members and the highly affirming activities that resulted from their efforts.

\textsuperscript{96} Participant Four, interview.

Fourth Critical Index

Two questions were asked that referred to the fourth Critical Index and one question referred to an African Identity and Culture Characteristic.

Critical Index—The person recognized the opposition of racial oppression (via people, concepts, institutions, etc.) to the development and survival of black people, and actively resists it by any appropriate means.

African Identity and Culture Characteristic—Ubuntu (Humanity)

Q1: What was taught about racial oppression in the community?

Three research participants said they were not taught about racial oppression in the community. There were no responses from six interviewees to this question because the question was not directly stated during the interview. Four research participants responded. The first two respondents did not recall hearing any specific reference to racial oppression, but they implied it was an unstated part of their lives. Portions of their statements provided some insight into what they observed that related to racial oppression during this period. The responses of the four interviewees are shown in the Racial Oppression Table (Table 10).

Table 10. Racial Oppression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Males  | 1 | Racial oppression was mentioned but it was sort of kept under, it, wasn’t mentioned very much, but you could see it....in the actions that take place between the students and not particularly between the teachers, but definitely between the students. And then a part of the ‘everyday’ life you knew that there were certain standards that you had to meet, a certain place you had in the community or even in that school.  

98. Participant Four, interview.
Table 10 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;Adults did what they could to protect children from racial incidents. They (adults) were aware of safe and unsafe areas and they steered children to safe areas.&quot;99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

> "We knew we can’t ride the bus, too we have to walk to school. And there they are riding the bus. We knew that wasn’t fair.” When the respondent and a friend bought some ice cream and sat on the stools in the community drugstore, “a man said, I’m sorry you all can’t sit up here.” She continued to say, “... it just hurt our feelings... and we never forgot that.”100

> “...the county where I lived, we had no high school. So, my mother sent me to Elizabethtown... For my second year of school, I had to stay home and the county would not pay for me to go to Elizabethtown.” The teacher recalled losing her job due to desegregation. She said, “the superintendent told me that he would not hire me in Hardin County. He said that the people would not accept me.” She noted that the superintendent secured a job for her (after she threatened to sue him) in a segregated school in another Kentucky county.101

The first two respondents attended Sonora Colored School and Glendale Colored School through the fifth grade. They completed the next three grades in two different schools, grades six and eight in a segregated school in a neighboring county and grade seven in a desegregated school in the city where they lived. All of the teachers at the desegregated school were European American. The first respondent remembered more negative racially influenced interactions between African-American children and European-American children than between African-American children and European-American teachers when he attended the desegregated school. He did not mention any

99. Participant Three, interview.
100. Participant Seven, interview.
101. Participant Eight, interview.
specific incidents, but in his reflection of the actions of his European-American peers, racial oppression was strongly implied. Subsequently, as his recollection continued, he reflected on the understanding African Americans had regarding their standing in the larger community and said there was "a certain place you (African Americans) had in the community or even in that school." Consequently, he remembered African American and European American interactions being prescribed by communal expectations which were oppressive to African Americans.

The second respondent did not recall learning about racial oppression at school, but she did express an understanding of its presence in their communal lives. Her response focused on the behaviors of adult African Americans in the community. Again, she did not mention specific incidents, but she did express the belief that their behaviors were responsible for the safety and protection of the children in their environments. The fact that such protection was necessary emphasized the existence of racial oppression and the need to resist it by any available and appropriate means.

More specific descriptions of racial oppression were given when the third respondent recalled two incidents that occurred during the period of segregation. She remembered walking to school and seeing European-American children riding the bus to school in the same city. Elementary education was available to children from both ethnic groups but the African-American children did not have access to bus transportation as European-American children did in the racially divided society. Lottie Robinson reported in her text that one Superintendent of Hardin County schools during the period of desegregation, said he presented a petition to the Board of Education that would allow black children who lived in isolated areas to ride the bus and the Board approved the
petition; however, African-American parents refused the offer because the African-
American children would have been seated in the back of the bus. Their children got
to school by walking, riding with paid drivers, or riding with other friends and family
members. The parents’ reaction to the offer of transportation exemplified active
resistance to racial oppression in the manner they believed to be most appropriate. In
essence, they showed they would rather have their children walk than accept that racially
biased offer. This respondent also described an occasion when she and a classmate were
told they could not sit on the stools in their local drug store where they had purchased ice
cream. Her recollection of this incident showed the existence of racial oppression and its
life-long effects on those who were oppressed; she remembered the experience as being
hurtful long after it occurred. Her final comment about the situation was “And we never
forgot that.”

The fourth respondent, a former one-room school teacher, recalled two events in
her life that underscored the existence of racial oppression. The first event was that she
was not able to return to her second year of high school in the early 1930s because her
county (Bullitt County, a neighboring county to Hardin County) would not pay the tuition
for her to return to school. There were at least two high schools in the county,
Shepherdsville High School and Lebanon Junction High School, but she could not attend
the schools at that time. Although each county was mandated by a Kentucky General
Assembly Law passed in 1908 to have a public high school, the schools in her county


103. Participant Seven, interview.
were attended by European-American students only. Therefore, she had to rely on the discretion of her home county to assist her educational endeavors and pay her tuition and / or room and board in one of the few public or private high schools that were available to black students. Fortunately for the respondent, her county resumed paying her educational expenses and she was able to complete her high school education.

However, the second event the fourth respondent spoke about occurred after the 1954 *Brown decision* and the county schools were desegregated. She was not rehired to teach in the county where she had taught since 1941. The unwillingness of the school official to rehire an African-American teacher who had a college degree and had been in the system for approximately fifteen years was motivated by the perceived racial attitudes of the European-American community. The Superintendent used his influence to assist her in securing a job in a segregated school in another rural county. Her determination to have justice in this situation led her to threaten legal action in order to continue teaching; she resisted the unfair racially motivated decision and was able to continue working in her chosen profession.

All respondents’ comments noted the behaviors of adults. Three of the four respondents recalled childhood interactions with adults who supported them in a racially oppressive climate. One respondent told of two racially oppressive incidents that occurred in her life, one when she was a child and another when she was an adult. Indeed, African-American citizens in Hardin County, Kentucky encountered and fought racial oppression in their communities. Their refusal to submit to oppression without offering resistance was an affirmation of their humanity in a repressive environment. They pressed for acknowledgement of their humanity by others.
Q2: Is there anything else you would like to share about your one-room school experience?

Ten of the former one-room school students responded when asked if there was anything they would like to state about their one-room school experience. During the course of the interview, the question was not directly stated to three of the research participants. The responses were related and overwhelmingly positive. Several themes appeared in those similar, affirming responses. Respondents described the schools in the following manner: good places, places for good times and good experiences, places where social and cultural foundations were built, places where close relationships were formed. Yet, when two respondents were asked to tell what they wanted to share about their overall one-room school experience, they mentioned problem areas or areas of potential problems. One participant described the harsh disciplinary actions of a teacher and the other participant applauded the educational progress made since desegregation, but indicated a readiness to protect African-American children in the desegregated schools, if necessary. Nevertheless, the responses of a majority of the research participants revealed the high regard they had for their schools which were also viable instruments of resistance to racial oppression.

Table 11. Overall One-Room School Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;...this male discipline will always hang with me....I've seen as many as four or five students get whipped at the same time.......if you went home and told your parents, then, then you were likely to get a whipping from them. And besides that the teacher may say well, yes I whipped...&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td></td>
<td>your child and you might get some of the same thing if you were dissatisfied with it. You’re not going to forget that. I didn’t.” 104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The one-room school experience had gave a closeness with relationships....it (one-room school) accomplished everything that these multiple school rooms seems like they can’t accomplish. But we see a lot of black folk, black children falling by the wayside. I have to wonder sometimes if more means better. I don’t believe it. I believe what it takes is quality teachers, quality teachers. If there was one aspect of that one-room school that I thought was the greatest, it was the fact that you were exposed to as much education as you could gather in at the time.” 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Well, the only thing I can remember now in the one-room school, we was all, in a class together. So, we actually knew everybody. We knew where they lived. We ate with them everyday. After school we associated with them. So, we knew every one of them. We knew everybody and was real close. We was all real close, after.” 106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>“I thought it was a good place you know, in the school, you know. I thought it, you know, it was a place that I could, you know, learn. It was a good place and it was a school.” 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“But see, they don’t have to worry about us now, cause they all go the white schools ....and they treat them good at them white school....They better. Yeah, I ain’t got non there, but I’d go up in their face. ......Some of them said, ‘Lord you’re something else.’ I said, ‘I don’t care. I ain’t gonna do nothing wrong. I going for the right and when you go for the right, you’re all right.” 108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“We just had a lot of fun. All of us played together and we’d have base ball games together, just, just had a lot of fun together.” 109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

104. Participant Ten interview.
105. Participant Four, interview.
106. Participant Nine, interview.
107. Participant Eleven, interview.
108. Participant Two, interview.
109. Participant Six, interview.
Table 11 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;It was a great foundation for us, I think socially, culturally. I like the homogeneity, like I said earlier, of the group. You are with your own people. You actually felt more comfortable, although integrating into the white school was OK. But you felt more comfortable with your own people, or I did. It was a good foundation, a good thing to start out with; we were equipped with what we needed.&quot; 110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I just remember it being a good experience….those teachers had to be teachers; they had to teach you about some of everything. One teacher and manners and all of that was intertwined into your school day. And so they taught you morals, you know, you read the Bible. A lot of things that went on in that one-room school that probably would not go on today.&quot; 111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Well as I’ve said, we had a good time. We did and I guess we really didn’t know any better….there was camaraderie there, you know. We all played together and the older children looked after the younger children and I think in doing this you learned to care.&quot; 112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It (one-room school experience was positive . . The activities and experiences that I remember wee ones that I enjoyed . . the fact that we had much less than some of the other schools in the city or the other majority schools in the city was something we really didn’t know about and I didn’t pay attention to it. So, that’s something our parents and the other adults were quite aware of, but for some of us as children, it wasn’t a concern for us. My memories of that time period are good memories. And actually, they are memories that I have had confirmed as I talked with other people. 113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Henry Allen Bullock noted that by the end of the nineteenth century southern states had established some type of law that provided free public education for African-American and European-American children; the systems encountered problems that ranged from establishing a tradition of collecting taxes for schools to fears that publicly

110. Fifth Participants, interview.
111. Ibid.
112. Participant Seven, interview.
113. Participant Three, interview.
supported schools would lead to an imposition of mixed schools.\textsuperscript{114} Despite the problems, a system of education for African-American children continued to evolve in the twentieth century. Schools for African-American children were not supported to the same extent as schools for European-American children, but citizens in communities where schools were established for the children were extremely proud of that accomplishment. Besides being sources of pride, schools educated children and education was viewed as a means to fight racial oppression. Based on the recollections of research participants, the schools enabled the children to learn and grow in an environment that provided entertainment, promoted camaraderie, facilitated strong social and cultural foundations, and encouraged discipline along with providing instruction in academic areas. Thus, the schools became primary instruments in African-American resistance to oppression in pre-	extit{Brown decision} America.

RQ3: What cultural and communal activities supported the schools?

Two participants did not recall any cultural and communal activities that supported the one-room schools. The question was not part of the interview for one participant. Nevertheless, ten research participants recalled cultural and communal activities that supported one-room schools. The activities they remembered were hospitable, social, and recreational events.

\textsuperscript{114} Henry Allen Bullock, \textit{A History of Negro Education in the South}, 52, 58.
Table 12, Community/School Activities, includes the frequency with which these activities were recalled. Three participants who remembered activities being held at school were not sure if they were sponsored to benefit the school.

Table 12. Community/School Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Times Remembered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fish Fries</td>
<td>Food Related</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Activities</td>
<td>Festive</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chili Suppers</td>
<td>Food Related</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays</td>
<td>Festive</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduations</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy Sales</td>
<td>Food Related</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festivals</td>
<td>Festive</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soup Suppers</td>
<td>Food Related</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling Bees</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selected comments from respondents about the activities follow:

- "... sometimes, we would have fish fries and sometimes we’d have chili suppers or soup suppers. .. We had it in our church up here on the hill, outside. And we would have to have them haul stoves with them long wicks... We’d have them out there just going, fryin’ and a cookin’. We had everything going on... I tell you we worked hard to try to get that little school over there in order to Ms. Bertha, you know, wouldn’t have to worry about it. .. The insurance companies (white) they give us money, you know, to put in our well.”

- “Plays, fish fries, Halloween parties. The community would turn out for these and they were a lot of fun. They were a lot of fun”

- "We raised money, I guess, to buy things for the school or, you know, to buy supplies and things and we would always have a fish fry... and each family, you know, the child would, would say they’d donate such and such a thing... there was always the Christmas program.”

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115. Participant Two, interview.
116. Fifth Participants, interview
117. Participant Seven, interview.
• “One that comes to mind at Sonora was a Halloween program or Halloween activity. I remember being very excited because we were going to have costumes and we were going to gather at school. But what I didn’t realize then was that not only were the children going to be there in costume, the adults were also going to be there. So that the school programs and activities were truly community activities. And all I can remember is once we got to school and it got dark, my friend and I stayed right with mother because those adults were scaring us in their costumes. Of course, they were just laughing and having fun, but they didn’t look like anybody we knew.”¹¹⁸

The school and community activities recalled by research participants were identified in three categories. One category was comprised of social occasions that involved food: Candy Sales, Chili Suppers, Fish Fries, and Pie Suppers. Another category focused on festive activities such as Festivals, Holiday Activities for Halloween and Christmas, etc. and Plays. The last category included educational activities such as Graduations and Spelling Bees. Comments from four participants emphasized the importance of the school and community connection. In the first comment the interviewee described an event that focused on food; stoves, frying and cooking were mentioned in the description of what took place. The pronoun “we” was used four times in the brief account of an activity to support the school; ”we” referred to community members who were committed to having a school that could accommodate the students’ needs. Communal commitment was underscored in this part of the statement,”... I tell you we worked hard to try to get that little school over there in order to Ms. **** (the teacher), you know, wouldn’t have to worry about it.” This respondent also, referenced support from the majority community; she remembered money for the school coming from European-American businesses and said”... the insurance companies gave money.”

¹¹⁸. Participant Three, interview.
The second interviewee’s response noted that community members came to activities that focused on the schools, and the activities were social and recreational. Comments from a third interviewee supported what was mentioned in the comments of the first interviewee regarding communities supporting the schools. This interviewee was more specific and mentioned raising money to buy things for the school such as supplies; also a procedure for having something to sell at the events was described in the following manner:

“... each family, you know, the child would say they’d donate such and such a thing.”

At this event, donated food products or other items would be sold to raise money for the school. A fourth respondent described a festive event (a Halloween program) that was held at the school. At the Halloween event, children wore costumes and so did the adults. Some of the children (the interviewee and friend) were intimidated by the adults in their costumes, but the interviewee remembered the adults laughing and having fun. This was another example of a communal social and recreational activity that took place at the school.

African-American one-room schools and the communities where they were located mutually supported each other. This cooperation was essential because the barriers to black education came from many levels. Decision about education for blacks in pre-Brown decision America grew out of compromises between northern and southern educators whose first conference was at Capon Springs, West Virginia in the late nineteenth century; it was prescribed to preserve southern ways. Furthermore, the Northern and Southern European-American educators agreed that the best way to educate
African Americans was to educate the “neglected whites.” Walter Hines Page, a founder of the Southern Education Board, described the education they were seeking to provide in the South in the following manner: “... an uneducated white boy. He is the fellow we are after. We want to train both the white boy and the black boy, but we must train the white boy first, because we cannot do anything for the Negro boy until his white friend is convinced of his responsibility to him.

Although other European Americans educators may not have expressed the purpose of education for African Americans as directly as Walter Page did, there was generally agreement that African-American education would not promote racial equality. With that purpose in mind, education for African Americans was directed towards industrial education and the trades rather than to the fine arts.

The southern states did establish public education systems for Americans; however, elementary education for rural, southern African Americans was very limited when the twentieth century began. Bullock noted that in 1910, there were still no eighth-grade, rural African-American public schools in the South. However, there were schools for African Americans in southern states, and the rural schools were often in need of financial support and official supervision. These rural institutions were assisted by donations from the Peabody Fund, the Slater Fund, the Jeanes Rural School Fund, and the Rosenwald Foundation. Even with the assistance of private funds and more assistance from local districts, African-American schools were not supported at the same level as

119. Ibid., 93.
120. Ibid., 94.
their European-American counterparts; consequently, the support of African-American communities was critical. The schools and the communities jointly assisted each other. The communities provided financial and in-kind assistance to the schools and the school provided cultural and social activities for the communities.

Results

What was said or done to assist the research participants' educational pursuits must have been effective because 92 percent of them completed the eighth grade and 69 percent completed high school or obtained a GED. Thirty-one percent enrolled in institutions of higher education and 23 percent obtained degrees that led to professional careers. All became working contributing members of their communities. As the research respondents shared memories of their one-room school experiences, some similar, pleasant recollections were noted in the conversations. These recollections supported the overall positive tone of what was recalled. Activities or events that were frequently noted and were remembered as positive elements of one-room experiences follow:

Students learned about pride. They were taught to be proud of themselves as individuals, to take pride in their accomplishments, and to be proud of the accomplishments of other African Americans.

Play was a socializing activity that was a memorable part of the elementary school day. Playing together was a very enjoyable activity for the children; it supported closeness and a sense of community among the children. Although many children got
physical exercise by walking to and from school each day, they eagerly anticipated and participated in play activities such as playing ball and other games.

**Students benefited when they participated in peer learning experiences.** The mixed grouping of children enabled them to assist each other socially and academically, and to learn incidentally as they heard other lessons. The children were encouraged to help each other and that supported an attitude of caring for each other as they played and learned together.

**Education was a valued commodity in these African-American communities.** Respondents recalled being encouraged to take advantage of the educational opportunities that were available to them by church members, other community members, and in their homes. The benefits of education were emphasized in their communities.

**Communities were connected to the schools.** African-American communities were proud of their schools. Community members provided in-kind and financial support to the schools; they invested time, labor, and resources in the institutions that educated their youth. These rural citizens gathered for social and cultural events that supported their schools, and the events were enjoyed by the attendees.

Implementation of these events might benefit African-American children in twenty-first century elementary educational institutions. Suggestions for the implementation of these positive components of rural, African-American, one-room school education follow:

**Pride.** The diverseness of the American school population lends itself to lessons, events, and activities that inform about the history, traditions, and contributions of the
various ethnic groups that make up American society. By teaching lessons that inform about the contributions of various ethnic groups to American society, children of different ethnic groups could develop pride in their ethnicity and develop an appreciation for the ethnicity of others.

**Play.** Organizing the learning environment to include play as part of the school day should be a priority for elementary school educators. Teachers can plan structured and unstructured play activities for their classes. The socialization and/or physical exercise that could take place would be invaluable to the children’s development.

**Peer Learning.** Incorporating peer learning experiences into the school day would benefit the children. As they assist each other in mastering educational concepts, students will gain knowledge from their peers, learn to care for others, become supportive of others, and appreciate learning differences.

**Value of Education.** Schools can and should be at the forefront in promoting the value of education. Supportive, competent teachers and administrators can ensure quality education. Schools partnered with businesses, community groups, and religious institutions can provide encouragement, advisement, and mentoring to students. With this assistance students should acquire an appreciation for education and a determination to become educated.

**School/Community Connections.** Teacher and community linkages can provide valuable assistance to educational institutions. Activities that require the participation of parents and teachers would benefit schools. An emphasis on supporting parent-teacher organizations, increasing the number of participants, and expanding the activities
performed by the organization would strengthen the link between the school and community.

Information from respondents' recollections revealed the presence of African Consciousness among the community members that supported their efforts to educate their youth. Elementary students in the twenty-first century schools, particularly African-American students, would certainly benefit from the implementation of specific learning and supporting strategies that were identified in the one-room schools and the school communities. Teaching students to be proud of their ethnicity and enabling them to play together and learn from each other will strengthen them emotionally, physically, socially and academically. Having the community understand and value the importance of education will lead to a school and community connection that will continuously seek to provide the best educational opportunities for their children. Twenty-first century teachers frequently do not live in school communities. Teachers should strive to learn about their school communities in order to gain a better understanding of their ethnicity, religious affiliations, businesses, and social organizations. Learning about the school neighborhoods will allow educators to determine the most appropriate manner to connect with the communities in activities that support the schools.

**Summary**

The schools that were the focus of this research were one-room structures where all eight grades were taught by one teacher. The school was furnished with a desk and chair for the teacher and seats or desks for the children; a chalkboard and a pot-bellied stove were also in the room. Water and toilets were outside. School days generally
included morning devotions, instruction in subject areas, recess, and a lunch period; other school related activities such as visits by the school nurse, program rehearsals also took place. Students learned from the teachers who were described as pleasant and from those who were remembered as unpleasant or harsh disciplinarians. Overall, the one-room school experience was remembered as a good experience.

Evidence of Baldwin’s concept of African Consciousness and Makgoba’s characteristics of African Identity and Culture were apparent in school and community activities. These rural African Americans possessed an awareness of their black identity and they shared information about the positive accomplishments with each other. Practically, one-fourth (23 percent) of the respondents did remember either learning about black people who were considered heroes or attended graduations where black people were presented in heroic roles. Youth were encouraged by family and community members to take pride in their educational and occupational accomplishments.

Black citizens in these Hardin County, Kentucky communities understood the need to pass on traditions, practices, and customs that affirmed worth and integrity. They shared similar traditions and helped each other learn the traditions. Interviewees remembered singing Negro spirituals and playing school games that were part of the black school educational tradition; another tradition noted was that students attended an African-American school and had a teacher from their ethnic group. These traditions were passed on in the schools and in the communities.

The African-American community members were pro-active. They worked to guarantee the survival and freedom of citizens, and to defend their personal dignity, worth, and integrity. Encouragement was offered in friendly environments. Education
was a valued survival skill and having a school to train the children was a pro-active survival strategy. Information about a Sunday School in one community supported the existence of long-term pro-activity by community members; interviewees recalled encouragement to better themselves coming from churches, community members, homes, and schools.

Africans Americans in these communities used various means to resist racial oppression. They cared for the children and worked to prepare them to resist and oppose racial oppression. Adults worked to provide protective environments for their children. Educational and occupational goals were pursued despite difficulties and setbacks; despite the oppressive racial climate, interviewees’ final statements about their one-room school experiences were overwhelmingly positive describing the schools as good places where social and cultural foundations were built and close relationships were formed. Their one-room school experiences seemed to support and strengthen their determination to succeed despite racial oppression.

The schools and the communities worked in unison, not as separate units, to educate the children. Schools were community education centers and they provided many cultural activities for the communities. Community members, sustained by African Consciousness, provided in-kind support and financial support to the schools. Community members also assisted in the transmission of cultural traditions, practices, and customs. The schools and communities connected in mutually beneficial efforts to provide education for their youth.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

One-Room School Strategies and Twenty-First Century Learning

This study was designed to investigate the impact of rural, one-room African-American schools on the educational experiences and racial consciousness of African-American children and adults in selected Hardin County, Kentucky communities prior to the 1954 Brown decision. The setting for this project was primarily the African-American communities of Sonora and Glendale in Hardin County, Kentucky, and to a lesser degree the African-American communities of Upton in Hardin County and Siberia in neighboring Larue County. Both communities at one time had one-room schools for their children. In the early 1950s, the schools in Sonora and Glendale were merged and students attended the school in Glendale. Soon after the 1954 Brown decision, Glendale Colored School closed and most of the children who remained in the county attended integrated schools; a few children attended a segregated school in a neighboring county after the school closed. The buildings were not torn down. One became a private residence and the other a church.

The premise for the project was the isolation of segregation evoked a “centeredness” supported by African Consciousness that enabled rural, African Americans to educate their children. That premise was supported by the works of four African American scholars: Joseph Baldwin, Molefi Asante, Carter G. Woodson, and W.
E. B. Du Bois. Baldwin’s “Africentric Theory of Black Personality” and Asante’s “Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change” provided the definition for African Consciousness. The Critical Indices of Baldwin’s theory identified four characteristics of people who subscribed to African Consciousness. Those people were aware of their black identity, recognized black survival priorities and the need for affirming black institutions, participated in activities that were pro-active in promoting black survival, recognized and resisted racial oppression. In addition, characteristics of African Identity and Culture as identified by M. W. Makgoba were noted in the findings. Those characteristics included hospitality, friendliness, consensus and common framework-seeking principle, ubuntu (humanity), and emphasis on community rather than individual.1 Asante’s Afrocentricity Theory noted the importance of the center position in historic, economic, social, political and philosophical thought for African Americans. He credited Woodson’s text, *The Mis-education of the Negro*, with identifying basic problematic issues in the education of African Americans. A major issue was the education African Americans received dislocated them from their own culture. Both Asante and Woodson viewed the de-centering of African people from African thought and traditions as detrimental to their progress. Du Bois’ text, *The Souls of Black Folk*, noted a compelling reason for black people to pursue education and that reason was that education could lead to respect for self.

Research questions for the project were:

RQ1: What was it like to be educated in the southern, rural, African-American one-room school?

RQ2: What Afrocentric ideas were reflected in the schools and communities?

RQ3: What cultural and communal activities supported the schools?

Interview questions were developed to solicit information about one-room school educational activities, one-room school cultural and communal activities, and the presence of African Consciousness in the schools and communities. The questions related to African Consciousness were based on the Critical Indices of Joseph Baldwin's theory and M. W. Makgoba's fundamental features of African Identity and Culture. Themes for interviews were: African Consciousness, Educational Activities, Personal Perspective, School and Communities Activities, and School History. Interview questions are listed in Appendices A and C.

The target population was identified and prospective participants were contacted and asked to take part in the study. The researcher and the participants agreed on interview locations. The researcher traveled from Atlanta to Kentucky for the ten interviews. Two interviews took place in the participants' homes in Atlanta, Georgia. One phone interview was conducted in Atlanta when the participant passed through the city en route to her grandson's high school graduation in another Georgia city. Also, one follow-up phone interview was conducted when the researcher in Atlanta called a participant who had been interviewed earlier in his home in Kentucky. Research participants' responses the interview questions offered answers to the project's research questions. A summary of research findings follows.
RQ1: What was it like to be educated in the southern, rural, African-American one-room school?

A general description of the schools that were the focus of the research was obtained from the interviews. The schools were described as one-room structures where all eight grades were taught by one teacher. The school room contained a section for coats and lunches; it was furnished with a blackboard, desks, and chairs. The twenty to thirty children in the room were warmed by a pot-bellied stove when the weather was cold. Water was provided by an outside pump or cistern on the school property, or from a location off the property. Outside toilets were provided for the children.

Research participants had vivid memories of their teachers. Those memories ranged from the teacher being “wonderful” and greatly admired to the being “a bad teacher” who was quick to discipline with a switch. Nevertheless, the participants indicated they learned from all of their teachers.

School activities were recalled by the participants. They remembered school days beginning with devotions which often included a song, prayer, Bible reading, and the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag. School subjects mentioned were math, reading, geography, history, spelling, health, writing, and English. At recess, the children played ball and other games. During their lunch break, they either ate the lunches they had brought with them to school or walked home for lunch. Certain activities were recalled as being part of closing day activities; those activities involved helping to prepare the room for the next day and included picking up paper, cleaning the chalkboard and erasers, sweeping the floor, and straightening up bookshelves. When the school day
was over the children were dismissed; after they played together for a short time, they
either walked home or were driven home by a paid driver or the teacher.

**RQ2:** What Afrocentric ideas were reflected in the schools and communities?

The premise of this project suggested the interrelatedness of isolation,
"centeredness," and African Consciousness in one-room school communities allowed the
African-American citizens to build and maintain schools for their children. Public school
education evolved after the Civil War in the American South. Between 1863 and 1875,
separate state school systems for African Americans were established in the South; the
system in Kentucky was established in 1874. Although the system was instituted,
education for African-American children was hampered by the racist policies that
evolved; schools were underfunded and southern farmers opposed African-American
education and worked to keep the children in their agricultural-based work force.
Positioned on the fringes of the majority educational system or isolated from the same
public school benefits (teacher training, transportation, facilities, supplies, etc.) as
European Americans prompted rural African Americans to place their children's
educational needs at the "center" of their thoughts and conscious efforts. With education
in the "center" position, African Consciousness guided the behaviors and actions of these
rural citizens as they supported the children and the schools. This second research
question focused on identifying actions and activities in the one-room schools and
communities that reflected the presence of African thought.

Two questions were asked regarding the first Critical Index and information was
revealed about one feature of African Identity and Culture:
Critical Index—The person possesses an awareness of his/her black identity (a sense of collective consciousness and sees value in the pursuit of knowledge of self i.e. African history and culture throughout the world-encompassing African American experiences).

African Identity and Culture Feature—Consensus and Common Framework Seeking

In the first question, respondents were asked to tell what they learned about African-American heroes. Eight respondents did not remember learning about black heroes at school or in their communities. However, three respondents did share revealing information about black awareness in the communities. Two respondents mentioned learning about specific black people (Booker T. Washington, Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, and George Washington Carver) who were considered heroes. Furthermore, one respondent described the eighth grade graduation as an activity where blacks were viewed as responsible people or seen in heroic roles. Graduation was notable for two reasons: it featured respected African Americans encouraging and supporting young people to excel their educational and occupational endeavors, and second it was of general, if not specific, interest to many community members. As a result, community members of varying ages, interests, and backgrounds attended an activity that celebrated and supported black identity.

In the second question, interviewees were asked to tell what they were taught about black pride. Five interviewees said they did not learn about black pride and six interviewees said they did learn about black pride. However, one interviewee who remembered learning about black pride told of learning a negative association to black pride. Respondents’ reflections on black pride did not necessarily focus on pride as a black person. They spoke about pride in accomplishments and learning about black
people who may have been considered accomplished people; also, they mentioned individual pride or pride in being a good person. There was an interesting difference in the respondents’ memories of learning about black heroes and learning about black pride. Responses to the query about black heroes showed 62 percent not learning about black heroes and 23 percent learning about black heroes. Responses to the question regarding black pride revealed that 39 percent did not learn about black pride and 46 percent did learn about black pride. Although the respondents indicated more was learned about pride than about black heroes, it was apparent that both concepts were present in their communities. It can be concluded that African-American residents of these two communities possessed an awareness of their black identity and they worked together to share information about the positive contributions of African Americans with their community members.

Three questions were asked regarding the second Critical Index and information was obtained about two features of African Identity and Culture:

**Critical Index**—The person recognizes black survival priorities and the necessity for institutions (practices, customs, values, etc.) which affirm worth and integrity.

**African Identity and Culture Feature**—Ubuntu (Humanity) and Consensus and Common Framework-Seeking Principle.

One question was about the traditions, values, or practices respondents were taught in school or in the community. Information was not received from eight of the respondents for several reasons: the respondent did not answer the question, the respondent did not recall any information, and the question was not asked during the interview. Five research participants did share information about the practices, customs, and values that were part of their educational and communal lives. They spoke of
traditions of learning from black teachers, playing a body percussion game that continued
the African drumming tradition, learning and singing Negro spirituals, participating in
church activities, rearing their children well, and being taught “our” (African-American)
way of life. Remembrances of these activities indicated the existence of institutions
(practices, customs, values, etc.) that supported black survival in the communities.
Additionally, the citizens supported these institutions operating in the communities. That
support reflected the presence of two African Identity and Culture Characteristics:
Consensus and Common Framework-Seeking Principle and Ubuntu. Participation in the
same educational, recreational, and religious institutions reflected consensus about
common goals. Ubuntu or humanity was shown as community members assisted each
other in learning about and participating in those valued institutions. Additionally, the
second question sought to determine if the traditions, values, etc. were taught in the
community or at school. Responses noted traditions being passed on and taught in the
both places. Both academic teaching and communal teaching existed in the communities,
and the children were the beneficiaries. Question three was designed to assess the
communal thinking when a critical institution was dismantled; they were asked how they
felt when the school(s) closed. Eleven respondents shared their feelings about the
schools closing. They shared feelings that revealed a variance of opinions stated as both
disapproval and approval of the closings. The largest number of responses was noted as
neither sad nor glad. Instead, those reactions were communicated as indifference,
nervousness, a matter of fact, and gladness and sadness. When the schools closed,
institutions that were instrumental in passing on valued traditions, practices, and customs
were lost. Even those who were glad to have the opportunity to attend better funded
desegregated schools acknowledged the closing of the African-American, one-room schools as the loss of an institution that galvanized communal support and camaraderie.

Research respondents were asked two questions that focused on the third Critical Index and one feature of African Identity and Culture:

**Critical Index** — The person actively participated in the survival, liberation, and pro-active development of black people and defends their dignity, worth and integrity.

**African Identity and Culture Feature** — *Friendliness*

In keeping with the concept of pro-active development, the respondents were asked what historical information they had about the schools and if they knew any African Americans who might have been involved in building the schools. Two respondents shared recollections that provided historical information about the education of African-American children in these communities during segregation. No historical information was obtained from the other participants. One respondent stated that Glendale Colored School may have been built around 1950, and another respondent recalled beginning school in the neighboring Upton, Kentucky community and completing the eighth grade in Sonora Colored School. The existence of a school for African-American children in Upton, Kentucky was new information for the researcher who had grown up in the Upton community. The respondent who gave the information about the construction of Glendale Colored School also supplied information about another school that existed in the Glendale community before Glendale Colored School. He informed about a Sunday School that had been in the community, but he had been too small to attend it. Sunday Schools were of British origin; they began in the 1780s by Robert Raikes in Gloucester, England to provide religious and secular
instruction to poor factory children. Methodist Minister Francis Asbury started a school in Virginia using the Raikes plan in 1786 and the concept was widely supported in eastern cities and pioneer communities in the Mississippi Valley. It was conceivable that a Sunday School of Raikes’ design would have been in the area since Kentucky was part of Virginia until 1792 when statehood was gained. Having a Sunday School that preceded the Colored School in the community supported the existence of long-term proactivity on the part of the African-American citizen to develop their youth and support their dignity, worth, and integrity. The second question asked respondents to identify people, who encouraged students to better themselves. They remembered encouragement offered in the friendly environment of their churches, their communities, their homes, and their schools. The supportive people were individual community members, ministers, parents, relatives, and teachers. The rural citizens’ encouragement and support of the children and the schools was indicative of their promotion of their youth.

Two questions were asked in reference to the fourth Critical Index and one feature of African Identity and Culture:

**Critical Index**—The person recognized the opposition of racial oppression (via people, concepts, institutions, etc.) to the development and survival of black people, and actively resists it by any appropriate means.

**African Identity and Culture Feature**—Ubuntu (Humanity)

The first question asked what the respondents were taught about racial oppression. Fifty-four percent of the respondents answered the question; the question was not part of the interview for the other respondents. Forty-three percent of those who shared information said they were not taught about racial oppression, but 57 percent did tell what they remembered about racial oppression. Four distinct recollections of racial
oppression were shared. Memories of racial oppression included: being aware of it but not mentioning it, being protected from it, being treated differently while observing others being treated better because of it, and being denied educational and occupational opportunities because of it. Based on the information disclosed, African Americans in these two communities were aware of racial oppression and they worked to protect their children and ensure their survival in environments that could be intimidating and hostile.

The respondents also informed about students’ resistance to racial oppression as they pursued educational goals, despite difficulties and setbacks; they had to walk to school or were not able to enroll for the second year of high school because the county did not pay for the student to attend that year. In both instances, students persisted and attained their educational goals. The respondent who faced racial discrimination in the school district firmly demanded a comparable teaching position received one. These rural citizens resisted racial oppression in different, but appropriate manners. To respond to the second question, participants were asked to share whatever they wanted to tell about their one-room school experience. Ten of the thirteen research participants responded to this question. Eight of those final statements described the one-room schools as good places, places for good times and good experiences, places where social and cultural foundations were built, and places where close relationships were formed. Two responses differed; one described a classroom where the teacher’s disciplinary approach was harsh and the other participant applauded educational progress after the one-room school closed, but indicated a willingness to intervene on the behalf of African-American children in present-day desegregated schools, if necessary. The overall positive descriptions of the
school experience supported their existence as caring, supportive educational institutions that helped prepare the children to resist and combat racial oppression.

RQ3: What cultural and communal activities supported the schools?

Research participants remembered activities that supported the schools; these activities often occurred at the schools. The activities mentioned were classified in three categories: Social Activities with food, Festive Activities, and Educational Activities. Some activities remembered were Chili Suppers, Fish Fries, Candy Sales, Halloween Programs, Christmas Programs, Graduations, and Spelling Bees. Selected comments from the participants further informed about cultural and communal activities that supported the schools. These respondents’ activity descriptions emphasized the connection between the school and the community. One respondent who recalled a social activity that was held to support the school used the pronoun “we” four times in the description; the frequent use of that pronoun called attention to communal involvement and support for the school. In summary, three respondents remembered social and festive activities held at the school and attended by community members, one mentioned money that was probably raised and used to support the school, and the other two recalled those activities as occasions when community members would have fun. Having a social or festive activity to support the schools allowed the rural citizens to participate in a communal cultural activity to support education. African-American one-room schools and their communities were mutually supportive entities in their communities. Their unity of purpose enabled them to educate the children.
Implications for Further Study

Credible portrayals of rural education for African Americans during the period of segregation should review both negative and positive aspects of the experience. The research explored a number of themes that related to one-room school activities. Among the areas examined were school history, teachers, recreational activities, heroes and pride. However, more exploration of how the children and adults were supported in an oppressive environment should be completed. How were people supported when they faced discrimination in employment, cultural events, social activities, education? Who gave the support? This information could benefit people of African descent in twenty-first century America because it could identify effective survival strategies and techniques.

Additional information about how students were encouraged to attend school and become educated during the era of segregation merits further exploration. Research respondents mentioned encouragement coming from teachers, preachers, parents, relatives, and community members. More specific description of the encouragement would benefit to those who currently work with children from kindergarten to the eighth grade. For example, teachers and preachers were seen as professionals in the communities. What did they do/say to encourage students? Did encouragement from teachers and preachers differ from encouragement from parents, relatives and other community members, and if so, how? What specific words, actions, or events were encouraging? Answers to these question and others could provide suggestions for supporting African-American students in the twenty first century American educational system.
An issue of significance that was mentioned but only generally explored focused on the transition from segregated schools to desegregated schools. In this project, all of the participants were students or parents of students whose segregated schools closed either at the elementary level or the high school level. Most participants were immediately assigned to desegregated schools. Research respondents recalled being disappointed, resigned, or happy when they were told the segregated schools would close. After the initial acceptance of the forthcoming change, what happened when the students actually entered the desegregated schools? How were they treated by the teachers and the students? How did they adjust to the new, unfamiliar school environment? What assistance did students receive to aid their adjustment? Was their academic preparation sufficient for instruction at their new schools? Were they able to understand and complete assignments? How did parents and other community members connect with the desegregated schools? What assistance was given to parents as they explored the new school environments? A discussion of what occurred as students transitioned into desegregated schools would tell how they handled the change and could provide useful guidelines for twenty-first century students and parents of students who encounter change in their educational careers.

The teacher in the one-room school had most certainly the most pivotal role in the educational process and many descriptions of him or her have been offered. Some of the descriptors were caring, knowledgeable, harsh, kind, attractive, and cruel, to name a few. These teachers were respected for what they could bring to the community. One research participant said of black teachers, “They never got their dues because they did a wonderful job.” When black teachers disappeared from the communities, they were not
around to observe or hear how their former students were doing in the new schools. Consequently, they did not hear the accolades or the criticisms. Questions for another project might be: What happened to the displaced African-American, one-room school teachers? Was she or he retained in the area or did the teacher have to leave the area? If the teacher left, did he or she go to another segregated school or to a desegregated school? What adjustment assistance was given to teachers who were assigned to desegregated schools? Were more elementary or high school teachers retained or displaced? If the teacher did not teach after displacement, what did he or she do? If the teacher left the profession, did he or she remain in the other profession or return to teaching at a later time? In this current climate of teacher displacement, the responses could offer suggestions to assist teachers who are presently dealing with job displacement.

The questions should guide inquiry into an under-researched segment of the American educational system—the rural, African-American one-room schools. Being careful to note the positive as well as the negative components of black education in the segregated system may promote a better understanding of how the system operated and how it influenced the lives of the children and their communities. Furthermore, information gained from the research would give African-American children and parents suggestions for coping with transition and displacement issues in America’s twenty-first century educational system.

African-American one-room schools were recalled as institutions where students learned and cared about each other, and teachers were respected educators. There were numerous indications that African Consciousness, Identity and Culture operated in the
communities. Oral recollections informed about rural, African Americans shared information about heroes, worked to promote their survival, encouraged each other, and opposed racial oppression. Overall, the African-American schools and communities were revealed to be united in their efforts to educate the children.
APPENDIX A

Interview Questions Related to African Consciousness

Critical Indices of the African Self-Consciousness Construct and Related Questions

Critical Index

The person possesses an awareness of his/her black identity (a sense of collective consciousness) and sees value in the pursuit of knowledge of self (i.e. African history and culture throughout the world-encompassing African American experiences.

1. What did you learn about African-Americans or black heroes at school and/or in the community?

2. In what ways were you taught to be proud of African-Americans or black people? Explain.

Critical Index

The person recognizes black survival priorities and the necessity for institutions (practices, customs, values etc.) which affirm worth and integrity.

1. What African-American or black traditions, values, or practices were taught at school or in your community? Were they taught most often at school or in the community?

2. How did you and your parents feel when the school(s) closed?

Critical Index

The person actively participates in the survival, liberation, and pro-active development of black people and defends their dignity, worth and integrity.

1. Tell me what you know about when the school was built and about any African-American community members that were involved in building the school(s)

2. Describe anything you remember African-American teachers, preachers, or other community members doing to encourage students to better themselves?

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Appendix A (continued)

Critical Index

The person recognized the opposition of racial oppression (via people, concepts, institutions, etc.) to the development and survival of black people, and actively resists it by any appropriate means.

1. What was taught about racial oppression in the community?

2. Is there anything else you would like to share about your one-room school experience?
APPENDIX B

Demographic Information

This form asks for basic information about you for our research. Please, complete each section. However, you may leave a section blank, if you do not wish to enter a response.

Name ____________________________________________

Date ____________________________________________

Gender ____________________________________________

Age: _____50-60 _____61-70 _____71-80 _____81-90 _____91+

Residence:

City ____________________________________________

County ____________________________________________

State ____________________________________________

Religious Affiliation ____________________________________________

Educational Background: Years Attended or Completed

   Elementary School _____ High School _____ High School Diploma _____

   Post-Secondary Training ____________________________________________

   College _____ College Degree _____

Occupational Status:

   _____ Employed by ____________________________________________

   _____ Retired from ____________________________________________

   _____ After Retirement Occupation ____________________________________________
Appendix B (continued)

Income Range:

_____ $10,000 – $20,999  _____ $21,000 - $30,999  _____ $31,000 - $40,999

_____ $50,000+
APPENDIX C

Interview Questions Related to History and School Activities

History

Question for Former Students and Adult Community Members

Tell me what you know about when the school was built and about any African-American community members who were involved in building the school.

Educational Activities

Questions for Former Students

1. Tell me what you remember about your first classroom, your first teacher and any of the other school teachers.

2. How did you get to school and what did you do at school before classes began?

3. How did your school day begin?

4. What subjects did you study? Which one was your favorite? Why?

5. How did you school day end? Did you like school? Why? Why not?

Question for Adult Community Members

What do you remember about the schoolteacher(s)?

School/Community Activities

Questions for Former Students and Adult Community Members

1. Describe a school program and another social gathering you attended at school.

2. Do you remember any community events (fundraisers, drives, dinners, etc.) that benefited the school(s)? If so, describe them.
Appendix C (continued)

*Question for Adult Community Members*

What do you know about how the children got to school?

*Personal Perspective*

*Question for Former Students and Adult Community Members*

Is there anything else you would like to share about your one-room school experience?
APPENDIX D

Events of the 1940s and Early 1950s

1940 Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president for his third term.

1941 Roosevelt established the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to prevent A. Philip Randolph from leading a march on Washington.

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7.

The army formed a segregated black flying unit, the Tuskegee Airmen.

1942 President Roosevelt persuaded the Navy and the Marines agreed to recruit African-American service members.

1943 The Core of Racial Equality (CORE) was formed.

Race riots occurred in Detroit and Harlem that resulted in the deaths of African Americans and Caucasians.

1944 The Supreme Court ruled in Smith v. Albright that “white primary” laws violated the Fifteenth Amendment.

1945 President Roosevelt died and Harry S. Truman became president of the United States. Germany surrendered. The United States dropped bombs on two Japanese cities. Japan surrendered.

1946 William H. Hastie became governor of the Virgin Islands. He was the first African American since Reconstruction to govern an American state or territory.

The Supreme Court banned segregation on interstate buses in the Morgan v. Commonwealth of Virginia Case. The ruling had little effect on practices in the South.

1947 CORE and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) went South on a “Journey of Reconciliation” to test the Morgan ruling.
Appendix D (continued)

Jackie Robinson breaks the color bar in major league baseball.

1948 The Supreme Court ruled in *Sipuel v. Oklahoma State Board of Regents* that states had to admit qualified African Americans to previously all-white graduate schools if no comparable black school was available.

President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 mandating equal treatment and opportunity in the military.

1949 Paul Robeson delivered a speech in Paris opposing the Cold War.

1950 The Supreme Court ruled separate but equal facilities for graduate schools unconstitutional in *Sweatt v. Painter and McLaurin*.

The Korean War began African American soldiers fight in desegregated units for the first time since the War of 1812.

1951 A major NAACP desegregation lawsuit resulted from a student strike led by Barbara Johns at a Farmville, Virginia High School.

1952 *Invisible Man*, a novel by Richard Wright, won the National Book Award.

1953 The Rev. T. J. Jemison led a seven-day bus boycott that resulted in concessions from the white leadership in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

1954 The Supreme Court overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* in the *Brown v. Board of Education* Case and ruled school segregation unconstitutional.¹

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APPENDIX E

Minersville School District v Gobitis 310 U.S. 586 (1940)

Key Facts

The Gobitis children, Lillian and William, were expelled from Minersville, Pennsylvania’s public schools for refusing to salute the flag during a daily school exercise. As Jehovah’s Witnesses, saluting the flag was a gesture of respect for the flag that was forbidden by their religious beliefs.

Issue

Did the required salute to the flag violate liberties protected by the First and Fourteenth Amendments?

Holding and Vote

The court held that the state interest in “national cohesion” was “inferior to none in the hierarchy of legal values” and that national unity was “the basis of national security.” No. The Court voted 8 to 1 in favor of the state.

Reasoning

The flag was an important symbol of national unity and it could be part of activities that assist common school children in forming an attachment to national institutions.1

This ruling allowed saluting the flag in school activities. Many citizens viewed the salute to the flag as a means of building national unity.

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APPENDIX F

West Virginia State Board of Education v Barnette 319 U.S. 624 (1943)

Key Facts

The West Virginia Board of Education required that the flag salute be part of the program of activities of all public schools. All teachers and pupils were required to honor the flag; refusal to salute was treated as insubordination and punishable by expulsion and charges of delinquency. A group of Jehovah's Witnesses refused to salute the flag because it represented a graven image that was not to be recognized by their faith.

Issue

Did the West Virginia flag salute violate the children’s First Amendment rights?

Holding and Vote

Yes. The salute was determined to be a form of utterance and a means of communicating ideas. Compulsory unification of opinions was doomed to fail and opposed First Amendment rights. The Court ruled 6 to 3 for Barnette. Students’ rights were violated when they were forced to salute the flag.

Reasoning

No official can determine what can be standard in politics, nationalism, religion or related areas or force citizens to confess by word or act their beliefs.1

The 1943 ruling should have removed the salute to the flag from American classrooms. However, in some Hardin County, Kentucky communities, citizens may not have objected to the activity and it continued to be part of morning activities for number of years after the ruling. Two participants, born after 1943, recalled saluting the flag as part of the morning activities at school.

APPENDIX G

McCollum v Board of Education District 71, 333 U.S. 203 (1948)

Key Facts

In 1940 a voluntary association called The Champaign (Illinois) Council on Religious Education was formed by members of the Jewish, Roman Catholic and some Protestant faiths. The Council in conjunction with the Champaign Board of Education offered voluntary classes in religious instruction to public school students. Courses were conducted in the schools and students who did not attend the classes had to go to another place in the building to pursue secular studies.

Issue

Did the use of the public school system to conduct religious classes violate the First Amendment's Establishment Clause?

Holding and Vote

Yes. The Court held that the Establishment Clause was violated by the use of tax-supported property for religious instruction and the close cooperation between school authorities and the religious council.

Reasoning

Students were required to attend school. By requiring students to attend the religious classes and releasing them from the legal obligation to attend school if they went to the religious classes was "beyond a utilization of the tax-established and tax-supported public school system to aid religious groups and to spread the faith."

This ruling prohibited offering religious instruction, voluntary or otherwise, to students in public schools. Students were legally required to attend school and could not be released from that obligation.


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APPENDIX H

Engel v Vitale 370 U.S. 421 (1962)

Key Facts

In an effort to take the issue of prayer in school out of the hands of local communities, the New York State Board of Regents endorsed a short, voluntary prayer at the beginning of each school day. The nondenominational invocation read, “Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and beg Thy blessings upon us, our teachers, and our county.”

Issue

Does reading a nondenominational prayer at the beginning of the school day violate the “establishment of religion” clause of the First Amendment?

Holding and Vote

Yes. The vote was 6 to 1 for Engle. Although the prayer was nondenominational and voluntary, it was still unconstitutional.

Reasoning

When the New York officials approved the prayer, they officially approved religion.¹

APPENDIX I


Key Facts

A Baltimore statute required that the Lord’s Prayer be recited or the Bible be read at the beginning of the public school day. Murray and his mother, professed atheists, challenged the prayer requirement.

Issue

Does the requirement that public school students participate in a classroom religious exercise violate the religious freedom of students’ First and Fourteenth amendments rights?

Holding and vote

Yes. First and Fourteenth Amendment rights were violated. This requirement infringed on both the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

Reasoning

The readings and recitations were religious activities that were “intended by the State to be so.” Although a parent could have a child excused from the exercises by a written note did not prevent the school’s actions from violating the Establishment Clause. ¹

The consolidated ruling in the Abington School District v. Schempp and the Murray v. Curlett cases supported earlier rulings U.S. Supreme Court rulings. Earlier the Court held that U.S. Constitutional Amendment rights were violated when prayer and Bible reading were allowed in public schools.

APPENDIX J

Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public School v Dowell 498 U.S. 237

Key Facts

Oklahoma City was ordered to desegregate schools. In 1972 court ordered bussing was ordered to support school integration. The school district was determined to have met “unitary” status or to have successfully implemented the plan in 1977 and the court ordered bussing to be terminated. A non-bussed neighborhood school system was established by the school board in 1984 for kindergarten through grade four.

Issue

Whether a federal court has the power to terminate its jurisdiction over enforcing remedies after a reasonable time has passed and the district has complied with the remedies.

Holding and Vote

The Supreme Court held that the federal supervision of local school systems has always intended to be temporary. Once the system showed earnest compliance with an injunction, the federal court can consider removing it. Yes

Reasoning

The federal court must allow for the autonomy of the local school board after the remedy has been effective. However a new action may be brought if the school board violates the remedy.¹

That ruling has precipitated the development of a two-part test to determine when a district could be freed from its desegregation program. The test assesses whether a district has eliminated the vestiges of past discrimination to the extent practicable, in order to achieve unitary status. When a district is granted unitary status, it does not have to participate in the desegregation program. Since circuit courts frequently use a narrow interpretation of “vestiges of past discrimination,” most challenged desegregation programs are closed and the districts are granted unitary status.²

Two additional results of the Dowell Decision are the return to neighborhood schools and an increase in segregation in many school districts (particularly large central city districts with high African-American populations).


APPENDIX K

The Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education 05-915

Key Facts

In 2000, Jefferson County Public Schools were released from court ordered integration. At that point the county implemented its own plan to maintain racial integration. Students could choose schools, but could attend only if the schools could accommodate them. Enrollment was determined by residence, school capacity, race, random, and chance. Meredith and other parents argued that the plan violated the students’ Fourteenth Amendment rights and sued the district.

Issue

Did Jefferson County’s plan fit the decision in Grutter v Bollinger and Gratz B Bollinger that ruled raced based classifications must be directed towards a “compelling government interest” and be “narrowly tailored” to that interest?

Holding and Vote

The plan was unconstitutional because it did not fit the narrowly tailored and compelling interest of the government. It was more directed towards satisfying the schools interest in maintaining racial diversity. It was emphasized that public schools may sometimes consider race to ensure equal educational opportunity. No

Reasoning

Jefferson County’s plan did not involve individualized consideration of students, and it used a limited notion of diversity (black and “other”). The plan supported demographic goals rather than apparent educational goals.1

The desegregation plans of the Jefferson County Board of Education and the Seattle School District were struck down; however, the five to four split decision did allow race to be a consideration if districts were planning to achieve balance or diversity. Some view this decision as a reversal of the Brown Decision that will serve to dismantle more desegregation plans, and will result in even more segregated schools for minority children, particularly African-American children. Results of this ruling will be a challenge for African-Americans in the twenty-first century for it mandates the necessity to intensify efforts to provide quality education to all American children.

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