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VOICES OF SOUTHERN WOMEN: SPEAKING FROM THE COUNTRY SCHOOLHOUSE, 1915 - 1940 ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

by

Katherine Meador Pasour

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
1996

Approved by

Dissertation Advisor

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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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3-13-96

Date of Acceptance by Committee

3-13-96

Date of Final Oral Examination

PASOUR, KATHERINE MEADOR, Ph.D. Voices of Southern Women: Speaking From the Country Schoolhouse, 1915-1940 Rockingham County, North Carolina. (1996)
Directed by Dr. David Purpel. 241 pp.

This dissertation focuses on the school life experiences of southern women in the rural setting between 1915 and 1940. Southern schooling has historically prepared women for their subordinate role in society, emphasizing the domestic role of women. Agrarian paternalism and religious doctrine had particular impact on the silencing of women's voices in the South.

The opening chapter shows a brief and limited glimpse of the historic southern woman. Chapter Two discusses these issues from the perspective of a particular region, the Wentworth Community of Rockingham County, North Carolina. Chapter Three includes a short review of the writings of feminist theorists, providing a theoretical framework for examining the issue of gender in the school setting.

The oral histories of southern women presented in Chapters Four and Five are a vital part of this research, focusing on the issues of voice and identity. The narratives of three white women who attended rural schools in the Wentworth community and of three black southern women who attended segregated schools in Rockingham County during this same time period are featured in Chapters Four and Five. The interviews reveal a pedagogical hierarchy within the schools of Rockingham County and an emphasis on

domesticity in both the home and school. The narratives also illustrate distinct differences between blacks and whites in gender relationships and the significance of school and community, as well as a sharp psychological and cultural separation between the races. In conclusion, I suggest that schools, as an extension of society, have an influence in the processes that cause women to internalize specific role expectations established by society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The process of creating a dissertation involves many people. Without the support of an extended family, my co-workers, and university mentors, this work would have been impossible. I must first thank my family for their continued faith throughout the arduous years I have pursued this degree. My husband Bob and my children, Mark and Katie, have supported me with their constant love and ongoing patience as they shared wife and mother with the university and a computer.

My parents have demonstrated ongoing support for my schooling and this new venture in the field of education has come with their faith, albeit concern for my determination and perseverance. My siblings and their spouses, Nell and Bill Rose, Jo and Ronald McCollum, and Bob and Trisha Meador, have helped care for my children and allowed me much needed time to work. My oldest brother Jim, has understood my need to pursue this degree as I struggled, as has he, to discover what we want to do when we grow up.

My school home for sixteen years, Draper Elementary, has provided me with ongoing support during my professional and spiritual growth as a teacher and through the extended process of this dissertation. I would particularly like to thank Janice Estes, Margie Purdy, Bunny Jennings, and Steve

Hansel. I also wish to express my appreciation to past principals, Bob Wilkes and Wayne Tuggle for their assistance during the beginning of this process.

I would have been unable to complete this rigorous endeavor without the moral and spiritual support of my church. Bethlehem Methodist Church has been a rock of support for me. I need to particularly emphasize the nurture of Carolyn Anderson, Jewell and John Richard Jarrell, Tim and Mardeen Shelton, and Jean Kinyon.

The North Corolina State Organization of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International has supported me financially in this process as I became the recipient of the Gilbert-McNairy Scholarship. I am deeply grateful for this financial assistance as well the psychological support I received from this educational organization and my home chapter, Alpha Delta in Rockingham and Caswell counties.

Lastly, but with the deepest humility, I express my upmost gratitude to the Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations. Dr. Penny Smith, Dr. Kathleen Casey, and Dr. Mary Lou Veal have provided me with guidance, strength, and support during my schooling at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. My dissertation advisor, Dr. David Purpel, has faithfully been my mentor, challenging me to question, to find my voice, and to speak, and that perhaps, has been the hardest task of my life.

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CHAPTER I

SILENCED VOICES: SOUTHERN WOMEN

> Tis woman's strongest vindication for speaking that the world needs to hear her voice...The world has had to limp along with the wobbling gait and the one-sided hesitancy of a man with one eye. Suddenly the bandage is removed from the other eye and the whole body is filled with light. It sees a circle where before it saw a segment. The darkened eye restored, every member rejoices with it.
>
> Anna Julia Cooper, 1892

This dissertation is an attempt, surely in a modest way, to allow the voices of southern women to be articulated in regard to their schooling experiences. The story of particular southern women presented here, focusing on their social, cultural, and educational experiences, also represents a distinctive portrayal of a specific historical era in America's past. Although the author asserts that women's history has, for the most part been unrecorded, this dissertation represents only a small segment of the extensive, yet largely ignored, past of southern women.

Women's History?

In The Female Experience: An American Documentary, Gerda Lerner (1977) defines the history of women as a "special kind, distorted and alienated because it has been refracted doubly - through the lens of man's records and

observations; through the application to it of male values" (p. xxi). Lerner argues that the experiences of women have encompassed all that is human and women have shared half of the world's history, but "a male oriented conceptual framework has dominated the questions by which the past of humankind has been organized." Historically, scholarship has largely "ignored the history of women and the female point of view in reconstructing the past." Those activities which men have engaged in were "significant to historical development, while the activities of women were considered to have been marginal and insignificant" (Lerner, 1977, p. xxi).

Writing a half of a century in advance of Lerner, Virginia Woolf (1929), in A Room of One's Own, expressed a similar viewpoint. Woolf describes women as being "historically ignored" and argues that women's past contributions have been considered "completely insignificant" (p. 75). Contrasting how women have been portrayed in fictional literature versus recorded history, Woolf writes:

> She (woman) pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life

> she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband (p. 75).

In The Creation of Feminist Consciousness, Gerda Lerner (1993) again confirms this historical dominance of man and the lack of women's written history, viewing the contrast in men and women's history as the very essence of the different relationship men and women have to the historical process:

> Men created written history and benefitted from the transmittal of knowledge from one generation to the other, so that each great thinker could stand on the "shoulders of giants," thereby advancing thought over that of previous generations with maximum efficiency. Women were denied knowledge of their history, and thus, each woman had to argue as though no woman before her had ever thought or written. Women had to use their energy to reinvent the wheel, over and over again, generation after generation. Men argued with the giants that preceded them; women argued against the oppressive weight of millennia of patriarchal thought, which denied them authority, even humanity, and when they had to argue, they argued with "great men" of the past, deprived of the empowerment, strength and knowledge women of the past could have offered (Lerner, 1993, p. 166).

Other authors agree with Lerner and Woolf's stance concerning the lack of women's recorded history. In Women's Ways of Knowing, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) argue that the conceptions of knowledge and truth that are accepted and articulated in today's society have been shaped throughout our history by the male dominated culture. The prevailing theories, cultural values, and

written history which have become the guiding principles for both men and women have largely been constructed by men. "Relatively little attention has been given to modes of learning, knowing, and valuing that may be specific to, or at least common in women" (p. 6).

Joan Kelly-Gadol (1976) asserts that the history of women is not the same as the history of men. "Throughout history, women have been excluded from making war, wealth, laws, government, arts, and sciences" (p. 810). As historians, men have determined the activities which constituted civilization and women have been historically omitted from the political, social, economic, and educational spheres of our culture.

If voices of women have been traditionally silenced, voices of men have been historically powerful. Robin Lakoff (1990) contrasts the language of men and women:

> Men's language is the language of the powerful. It is meant to be direct, clear, succinct, as would be expected of those who need not fear giving offense...It is the language of people who are in charge of making observable changes in the real world. Women's language developed as a way of surviving and even flourishing without control over economic, physical, or social reality. Then it is necessary to listen more than speak, agree more than confront, be delicate, be indirect, say dangerous things in such a way that their impact will be felt after the speaker is out of range of the hearer's retaliation (p. 205).

This is language of the subordinate role. According to Carol Tavris (1992), women in society have learned to "persuade and influence rather than to assert and demand" (p. 298). Throughout their lives, women attempt to "cultivate communication, cooperation, and attention to feelings for others." Tavris believes these characteristics of language are primarily developed from a "power imbalance," rather than from an "inherent deficiency or superiority in communication skills, emotion, or nurturance" (p. 298).

In Daughters of Canaan: A Saga of Southern Women, Margaret Ripley Wolfe (1995) views this power imbalance in gender relations as being rooted in early European settlements in North America. "Englishmen in Virginia placed intrinsic economic value on women as breeders and servants" (p. 15). As soon as the earliest American settlers got beyond the first stages of colonization, past the "starving times" (Bailyn, et.al., 1992), they began to model their social institutions after those in England. In Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies, Julia Cherry Spruill (1938) discusses this formation of a patriarchal society in colonial America:

> Of particularly great and lasting influence (upon the colonists) was the English idea of family relations and the domestic duties of women. The English family was a patriarchy. It included, besides the father, mother, and children, every

> member of the household...At the head was the father - husband and master - whose authority within his home was absolute. Wife, children, and servants were subject to his will, and he in turn was responsible for their physical, moral, and spiritual welfare (p. 43).

Virginia Woolf (1929), although acknowledging the mutual struggle for survival which both men and women faced, describes how the patriarchal society actively contributed to the placement of women in an inferior role:

> Life for both sexes - and I looked at them, shouldering their way along the pavement - is arduous, difficult, a perpetual struggle. It calls for gigantic courage and strength. More than anything, perhaps, creatures of illusion as we are, it calls for confidence in oneself. By feeling that one has some innate superiority - it may be wealth, or rank, or a straight nose, or the portrait of a grandfather by Romney - for there is no end to the pathetic devices of the human imagination - over other people. Hence the enormous importance to a patriarch who has to conquer, who has to rule, of feeling that great numbers of people, half the human race indeed, are by nature inferior to himself. It must indeed be one of the chief sources of his power (p. 59).

Woolf (1929) continues her discussion of patriarchy by using the metaphor of women as a "looking glass, possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (p. 60). According to Woolf, women must be viewed as inferior to the patriarch in order to make him appear "twice the size he really is" (p. 61).

Gerda Lerner (1986) argues that the vestiges of patriarchy established in the colonial era have survived into the twentieth century. In the Creation of Patriarchy, Lerner defines it as, "the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general" (p. 239). In a more recent work, Lerner (1993) uses gender to analyze the construction of patriarchy in our society, "the male" is seen as "the norm and the female as the deviant;" the male is seen as "whole and powerful; the female as unfinished, physically mutilated and emotionally dependent" (p. 3). In a somewhat lengthy, but pertinent discourse, Lerner cites the major assumptions about gender in a patriarchal society:

> Men and women are essentially different creatures, not only in their biological equipment, but in their needs, capacities and functions. Men and women also differ in the way they were created and in the social function assigned to them by God.
>
> Men are "naturally" superior, stronger and more rational, therefore designed to be dominant. From this follows that men are political citizens and responsible for and representing the polity. Women are "naturally" weaker, inferior in intellect and rational capacities, unstable emotionally and therefore incapable of political participation. They stand outside of the polity.
>
> Men, by their rational minds, explain and order the world. Women by their nutuarant function sustain daily life and the continuity of the species. While both functions are essential, that of men is superior to that of women.

> Men have an inherent right to control the sexuality and the reproductive functions of women, while women have no such right over men.
>
> Men mediate between humans and God. Women reach God through the mediation of men (Lerner, 1993, p. 4).

Although Lerner states that these assumptions are both "unproven and unprovable" and are not "laws of nature," she affirms their acceptance by society through their incorporation into "human law" (p. 4).

Lerner (1993) is defining patriarchy as separate from the laws of nature, but part of "human law," a component of the cultural experience of women. Joy Osofsky (1971) agrees, arguing that our society has culturally defined conceptions of male and female roles. The characteristics which are considered masculine, verbal and physical aggressiveness, sharply contrast with accepted feminine behaviors, passivity, conformity, submissiveness, and dependency. The distinctions between these roles contribute to the ongoing patriarchy/inferiority relationship between men and women. As women come to internalize these accepted cultural roles, they become active participants in their own subordination (Lerner, 1993), a process which has been ongoing since the origins of patriarchy.

According to Lerner (1993), patriarchy developed in ancient times through a system of priesthood, kingship, and militaristic elites which featured male dominance over women

and a structured system of slavery. From these early times until the present, males of non-elite groups have struggled with increasing success for a share of power. Lerner views history of the Western world as an "unfolding of the class-based struggle" which resulted in more and more "non-elite" males gaining access to economic and mental resources (p. 5). In contrast, however, Lerner claims that from ancient times, well into the twentieth century, women have been excluded from this process of gaining access. Women have struggled with a dual oppression, educational deprivation and a societal context which describes them as "subhuman and deviant" (p. 5). Lerner argues that this dual deprivation has formed the female psyche over the centuries in such a way as to "make women collude in creating and generationally recreating the system which oppressed them" (p. 6).

Southern Agrarian Society

Before the Civil War the majority of all American families made their livings through agriculture. Working the land was the dominant occupation, providing families with sustenance as well as commodities for the nation's domestic and foreign trade. Even as industrialism and urbanization influenced the economy in the North, the South continued to expand its agrarian production. Bernard Bailyn, et.al. (1992) describe three advantages available in the South which led to this continued increase in

agriculture: the climate and soil in the South were ideally suited to growing cotton and other commodities; the rich network of southern rivers provided transportation opportunities for products; and the forced exploitation of black slaves provided a large labor force.

Within the southern agrarian culture, patriarchal society was firmly established by the time of the American Revolution. The paternalistic society not only placed people of African descent in a position of subordination, but women as well. Although the revolution had encouraged many women to express an interest in politics, their position in society changed little as a result of American independence. Wolfe (1995) elaborates on this point:

> Men hardly considered women to be citizens even as they praised them for their patriotism, and the newly created states continued the practice of regarding women as femes coverts. Neither the Declaration of Independence nor the Constitution of the United States recognized the specific civil existence of women (p. 34).

Gerda Lerner (1993), in the Creation of Feminist Consciousness addresses this same issue. Discussing the "founding fathers" attempts to reconcile "slavery in a republic," the question, according to Lerner, was how to count slaves in regards to "representation and direct taxes." The compromise reached in the debate excluded Indians from taxation and counted slaves as "three-fifths of

a man" for the purposes of voting apportionment (p. 7). The status of women in America never entered into the debate:

> It was different for women. There was no controversy or debate on the definition of a voter as a male. The American Constitution embodied the patriarchal assumption, shared by the entire society, that women were not members of the polity. It was felt necessary by the founders to define the status of indentured servants, persons "bound to Service for a Sum of Years," and Indians in regards to voting rights, but there was no need felt even to mention, much less explain or justify, that while women were to be counted among "the whole number of free persons" in each state for the purpose of representation, they had no right to vote and to be elected to public office (U.S. Constitution, Art. I, 3). The issue of the civil and political status of women never entered the debate (Lerner, 1993, p. 8).

Patriarchy was particularly pronounced in the South and encouraged a general social acceptance of inequality and rank. The isolation of farms and plantations and the rural environment drew sharp distinctions between northern and southern households. Male heads of plantation households dominated extended families of wives, children, and slaves and they were thus able to exercise a far reaching paternalism. Although three-fourths of southern antebellum families owned no slaves and the majority of slaveowners owned less than 20, the minority of large land owners at the top of the economic scale determined, to a great extent, the southern patriarchal culture (Wolfe, 1995).

Patriarchy in the South was maintained economically and politically and received strong support from southern religious leaders. In Religion in the Old South, Donald Mathews (1977) describes the attitude of the clergy towards subordinate members of the southern culture:

> So eager were male Evangelical theorists to establish the principle of human inequality that they insulted and demeaned a majority of their own constituency with the same dull, oblivious insensitivity which they usually reserved for talking about black people. In tract upon tract, male writers emphasized the subordination of women as built into the very nature of human society by God himself, citing scripture to that effect and rewarding the submissiveness of woman with elaborate praise to her grace, "passive fortitude," and "enduring love"...Some publicists were so sure of the inferiority of women that they justified the principle of inequality by comparing the position of slaves with that of wives (p. 169).

In The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, Anne Firor Scott (1970) affirms the reliance on religious doctrine to establish southern women in their proper role as wives and mothers. Relying on letters, diaries, and historical documents, Scott describes the southern female experience between 1830 and 1930. The ideal southern woman was a "submissive wife whose reason for being was to love, honor, obey and occasionally amuse her husband" (p. 4). Scott argues that a broad sector of southern society, including religious leaders, worked together to encourage women to internalize this notion of the southern "belle":

> The mythology assured every young woman that she was a belle, endowed with magic powers to attract men and bend them to her will. This was comforting, since she was also assured that God had created her to be a wife and mother, and men did the proposing. Parents, boarding schools, advice books, and friends tried to help her make up for any natural deficiencies by emphasizing the power of manners, charm, "accomplishments," and virtue. And since God had created women to be wives and mothers it was logical that he had also...designed a lord and master for every woman (p. 23).

According to Wolfe (1995), the southern gentry carefully "prepared girls for domesticity and a life of subordination to men" (p. 42). The lives of white women were closely scrutinized to guard their virtue. "Patriarchs of the Old Dominion and her sister colonies" were "fixated on the chasity of unmarried women and the fidelity of their wives" (p. 26). Women were held to strict standards of virtue while men were free to indulge in sexual relationships. It was considered socially acceptable for southern white men to become involved in extramarital affairs or have a black mistress (Wyatt-Brown, 1986).

African women in the pre-Civil War South were particularly vulnerable sexually. Although concerned with the virtue of their white women, many white southern males freely indulged in sexual relationships with women they considered of inferior status; black, Native American, or poor white. In regards to black women, fertility was

important to produce additional slaves. The paternity of the father mattered little, because laws identified children of slave mothers as slaves (Wolfe, 1995).

Marriage

For white American women, from the time of colonization, marriage was their "chief mode of gaining economic support;" in fact marriage "was their most important occupation" (Lerner, 1977, p. 43). In The Female Experience: An American Documentary, Gerda Lerner (1977) writes, "marriage was the exchange of service and subservient status within one male-headed family unit (the home of her father) for that of another (the home of her husband)" (p. 43). In the colonies, as in England "all women were without political rights, and generally wives were nonentities" (Spruill, 1938, p. 340).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, white women had little identity outside marriage, yet after marriage their property became their husband's and women had little recourse if abused or mistreated in the relationship. Laws defined women as subordinate to their husbands in all things. Sarah Grimke (1792-1873), writes of the unfairness and even the immorality of these laws in her essay "Sisters of Charity" (1977c):

> The laws respecting married women are one of greatest outrages that has been perpetrated

> against God and humanity - To couple the highest and holiest institution, an institution... connected with the noblest aspirations of our being, an institution designed above all others to bring the sexes into harmony, to educate not only the married pair but their offspring to a more exalted life - to couple such an institution on the one side with injustice and oppression and on the other with the loss of self-respect, independence and degradation is an insult...to the divinity he has conferred upon man which has no parallel. Unless marriage becomes a grand and holy institution, unless birth be invested with the consecration of the Divine Presence, it is vain to expect domestic felicity (p. 97).

Sarah Grimke and her sister Angelina had been born in Charleston, South Carolina, but as adults traveled North to join the abolitionist cause (Bailyn, et.al., 1992). Working also to improve the plight of oppressed women, Sarah Grimke argued that unwanted pregnancies and economic dependence were the chief causes of women's oppression in marriage (Lerner, 1977). Grimke viewed education and equal rights under the law as the remedy for women's oppression. She was also aware of sex role indoctrination and the need for women to build self-confidence in order to attempt to overcome oppression. In another essay, entitled "Marriage," Grimke (1977b) writes:

> Man seems to feel that Marriage gives him control of Woman's person just as the Law gives him control of her property...Woman must be conceded an equality of rights thro' out the circle of human relations, before she can be emancipated from that worst of all slaveries - slavery to the passions of Man (pp. 94, 96).

Throughout American history, women's primary contributions to marriage have been to give birth and care for the children, maintain the household, and provide labor and assistance to the husband as needed. By the end of the nineteenth century, the South was still predominantly rural and the burden upon the southern farm wife was heavy. The region was still attempting to recover financially from the ravages of Civil War and Reconstruction and life on the farm often involved "getting by" and "making do." Sydney Nathans (1983) describes farm life in North Carolina at the turn of the century:

> Rural ingenuity enabled thousands of farming families to live on their own resources with little cash income. "Making do" involved the women of a household in the production of their own soap by boiling lye and animal fat. It meant plucking geese or chickens to make downy beds for the grown-ups, stuffing corn shucks or straw into bed-ticks for the young. "Getting by" meant a large garden and as much cropland as could be spared given over to raising one's own food...It meant knowing how to salt the meat and preserve the fruits and vegetables. "Making do" meant feed-sack blankets to keep in the warmth on snowy nights, quilts crafted from colorful scraps of cloth, rugs woven of bright yarn. It meant clothing sewed at home...It meant a knowledge of folk medicine...It meant relying on community midwives or "granny women" to deliver babies (pp. 8-10).

In addition to the rigors of farm life, the southern rural woman still had to contend with the subordinate role in which she was placed in American socity. In Rural Life

and Education, Ellwood Cubberly (1922) notes the harshness of the rural life and the dominant role of the man even as the twentieth century arrives:

> For girls and women, life in the country is too often most unattractive, and too often unnecessarity harsh and exhausting. Generally speaking they have a much harder time than the men and the boys. Successful farming, though, is essentially a partnership business between a man and a woman, and much of the success of the undertaking depends on the woman...A farmer ought to take as good care of his chief human burden-bearer as he does of his brood-mare or his prize fat-producing cow. Too often the man takes all the advantages and gives the woman few or none (p. 115).

Although acknowledging that a business partnership should exist between the farmer and his wife, Cubberly reveals the unequal relationship between the farmer and his wife when he compares her to the brood-mare and milk cow. The woman was still often considered as just another portion of the farmer's property.

In Daughters of Canaan, Wolfe (1995) also discusses the harshness of the life of southern farm women. Women in the agrarian South were "dogged by isolation, loneliness, and drudgery" (p. 127). Men were more likely to go into town to trade, sit or gossip. While women stopped field work to prepare dinner or supper, men relaxed under trees and rested. In spite of substantial labor contributions to the support of the family farm, rural southern women continued

to be primarily responsible for all domestic duties in the household.

Education of Southern Women

Education in the rural South in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was primarily a private, family matter. In a patriarchal society, the attitudes of the father largely determined the level of education which the children received. Sons were more likely to be educated than daughters and when female children were educated, it was most often in an attempt to "enhance their matrimonial prospects and to render them better wives and mothers." This process occurred in both the North and the South with perhaps more emphasis on "manners, social skills, and domestic preparation" in the South (Wolfe, 1995, p. 95).

Although the South lagged behind the North in efforts for universal education, gender gaps were noticeable even in the Northeast. Following the revolution, "boys were to be educated for social usefulness and political leadership as citizens in a republic; girls were to be educated for their social usefulness as wives and mothers" (Lerner, 1993, p. 40). In the United States the differences between male and female literacy rates was a function of region, class, and race. By 1840, almost all white women in the Northeast could read and write. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that this level of literacy was attained

by southern white women. Rural women, immigrants, and African American women were illiterate longer than native born, white, and middle class women (Lerner, 1993). In North Carolina, in the mid nineteenth century, the literacy rate for women was 64 percent compared to 90 percent in the Northeast and middle Atlantic States (Wolfe, 1995).

The antebellum South was "strewn with female academies and seminaries in which curricula ranged from abysmally inadequate to intellectually challenging" (Wolfe, 1995, p. 96). These seminaries usually fostered the established values that kept women subordinate to men. Lefler and Newsome (1973), in History of a Southern State: North Carolina, describe the aim of women's education in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as being to provide "skill and grace in the home and a knowledge of household arts." This could "best be achieved by studies in novel reading, needlework, dancing, music, drawing, and painting, supplemented by elementary branches of knowledge" (p. 409).

In The Female Experience, Gerda Lerner (1977), contrasts the historical educational experiences of boys and girls:

> Life was experienced at a different rhythm by men and women. For a boy, education was directed toward a vocation or professional goal, and his life ideally moved upward and outward in a straight line until it reached a plateau of fulfillment; the girl's education was sporadic and often interrupted; it did not

> lead to the fulfillment of her life role, but rather competed with it. Her development was dependent on her relationship to others and was often determined by them (p. xxvii).

Historically, education for girls was not directed toward a vocation, but toward their ultimate goal, marriage and motherhood. For women who argued for the right to an education, they first had to prove their capacity to be educated. This involved resistance to the prevalent medical beliefs that women were more prone to insanity and should avoid anxiety producing situations such as higher education (Rothman, 1978). Women often had to choose between wifehood/motherhood and an education. "No group of men in history ever had to make such a choice or pay such a price for intellectual growth" (Lerner, 1993, p. 10).

For some young ladies, the sudden awakening of their senses to this difference in the life experiences of young men and young women was traumatic. Frances Willard (1839-1898), one time President of Women's Christian Temperance Union, cried bitterly when she lost her childhood, when she realized she could "never jump a fence" or climb to her "Eagle's nest in the burr oak" because she had to wear a dress:

> No girl went through a harder experience than I, when my free, out-of-door life had to cease, and the long skirts and clubbed-up hair with pins had to be endured. The half of that down-heartedness has never been told and never can be. I always believed if I

> had been left alone and allowed as a woman, what I had as a girl, a free life in the country where a human being might grow body and soul, as a tree grows, I would have been "ten times more a person" in every way. Mine was a nature hard to tame, and I cried long and loud when I found I could never again race and range with freedom (Willard, 1977, p. 36).

One of the most agonizing aspects of Willard's story is the "taming of her nature." Women were not in control of their own destiny. Frances Willard perhaps represents many women who were not allowed to "grow as a tree grows, body and soul."

Although residing in the North, Sarah Grimke, as a native of South Carolina, had an understanding of the southern patriarchal culture. Writing from the viewpoint that women had long been considered as property, a position which lacked dignity and robbed them of their self-confidence, Grimke (1977a) discusses how women were taught to feel inferior:

> Can we marvel that woman does not immediately realize the dignity of her own nature when we remember that she has been so long used as the means to an end and that end, the comfort and pleasure of man, regarded as his property, a being created for his benefit, and living like a parasite on his vitality. When we remember how little her intellect has been taken into account in estimating her value in society, and that she received as truth the dogma of her inferiority (pp. 479-480).

Realizing the power of universal education, Grimke (1977a) urges the education of women as means to improve society as a whole:

> The feeling which universal education produces among people, is clearly discernable in America, and its influence in strengthening that sympathy is incalculable when learning in all its higher branches shall become the common property of both sexes; when the girl, as well as the boy, may anticipate with earnest delight a complete course of study which will enable her to look forward to a life full of continuous culture and of independence and of the fulfillment of high and honorable trust.
>
> ...We cannot easily foresee what will be the result of placing men and women on an equality in education. One thing, however, is certain. It will be an unspeakable advantage to society. The community must increase in wisdom and strength in proportion to the diffusion of learning since there is nothing so admirably calculated to strengthen individual character than the unlimited extension of knowledge (pp. 479-482).

According to Virginia Sapiro (1994), in the period following the Civil War women's education continued to lag behind that of men in two respects. Women received fewer years of education than men and even if women went beyond the elementary level, their education continued to be oriented mostly towards producing "good wives and mothers" (p. 125). This trend continued as the educational reform movement of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries led to the centralization of school curriculum and the consolidation of rural schools. New emphasis was placed on

manual training for boys and home economics for girls. "Sexual stereotyping was reinforced: Girls were to study domestic science and boys were to learn a trade" (Gulliford, 1984, p. 40).

In 1890, Edwin Alderman, a leading educational reformer in North Carolina and Virginia, addressed the limitations of educational opportunities for white women while focusing on their primary purpose in society:

> An army of bright young women in our state are clamoring to be allowed a chance to work in the fields best fitted for them, and these fields daily widen. The difficulties that bar the way of young white women of moderate means to a higher training in North Carolina, are greater than those confronting all other educable subjects in our population--red, black, or white males. No just reason can be given for this. It is simply an inherited wrong in our state life. We have drifted along unmindful of its meaning. An untaught woman is the most sadly marred of God's creatures. The women are not mere onlookers in life. They have a great part to play. It is their part to bear children of the commonwealth and to teach them the duties of life. This is serious work and the state that leaves it to untrained women robs itself of its highest possibilities...(Noble, 1930, p. 432).

Although Alderman addresses the limited educational opportunities for women, his rationale for improving schooling for women is to enhance their performance in the domestic sphere, the care and nurture of children. It appears from Alderman's speech that women were only entitled to an education if it was to provide them with increased

opportunities to nurture children, teaching them the "duties of life" (as defined by the dominant male culture).

In the final decade of the nineteenth century, Walter Hines Page, in a speech delivered at the State Normal and Industrial School in Greensboro, also alludes to this neglect of educational opportunities for the "forgotten woman" of North Carolina:

> O earnest young Womanhood of the Commonwealth, we that had forgotten you now thankfully do you honor. Many a man with the patriotic spirit that is our inheritnace has striven to lift dead men's hands from our stagnant life and has been baffled by a century's inertia. I speak the gladdest speech of my life when I say that you have lifted them. This institution and your presence is proof that the State has remembered the forgotten woman. You in turn will remember the forgotten child; and in this remembrance is laid the foundation of a new social order. The neglected people will rise and with them will rise all the people (Page, 1902, pp. 46-47).

It is interesting to note that even as Page is urging higher education for women, his purpose is still to nurture the "forgotten child." Although Alderman stresses the lack of educational opportunities for white women and Page rejoices over progress in education for the previously "forgotten woman," neither of them addresses the issue of education for black women. Historically, black women have been victims of dual oppressions, through their race and their gender (Etter-Lewis, 1993). These oppressions have

been reflected in the limited educational opportunities for black women and their lack of career choices.

Southern Black Women

The first Africans were brought to Virginia in 1619 and by 1860 the slave population of the South had increased to nearly four million blacks. Women as well as men were subject to heavy field labor on southern plantations. Slaves too old for field work took care of small children or worked in the stables, gardens, or kitchens (Bailyn, et.al., 1992). In addition to the horrors of being property of the white plantation owner, slave women faced additional hardships in attempting to raise their own children and maintain some semblance of family life while being held responsible for extensive field work or housework for the white property owners. Slave marriages were a precarious bond and were highly vulnerable to the whims of white masters. Such marriages were not recognized or protected by law and black families could easily be separated by the sale of one member to a property owner elsewhere (Bailyn, et.al., 1992).

Following the Civil War and emancipation, more than ninety percent of southern Africans were illiterate (Nieman, 1994). The Freedmen's Bureau, set up by Congress in 1865, oversaw the education of over a quarter of a million black children in more than 4,300 schools between 1865 and 1870.

These schools often operated during the day for children and had night classes for adults (Lerner, 1977). In African Americans and Education in the South, Donald Nieman (1994) describes educational efforts for black Americans after the Civil War:

> Among the forces shaping black education, none was more important than the black's passion for education...Black initiative, northern white assistance, and southern white resistance combined with the reality of black poverty to establish the parameters of black educational advancement during the decades following emancipation. On the one hand was significant progress. A system of black public and private schools took shape, offering African Americans a range of educational opportunities unimaginable under slavery. On the other hand, the resources devoted to black schools were never adequate and after the end of Reconstruction, the disparity between expenditures on white and black schools steadily widened. This mix of progress and poverty was reflected in statistics on black literacy: between 1860 and 1900, the rate of illiteracy among southern blacks was nearly halved, falling from over 90 percent to about 50 percent. Still despite this very real progress, one half of all black adults remain illiterate, unable to read a labor contract or a ballot, or to examine a store account or a wage settlement with an employer (pp. xi-xii).

The southern economy following the Civil War continued to be controlled by the white population, even though both races suffered from poverty. Employment opportunities for southern black women were limited to teaching and domestic work. Teaching jobs were restricted by the number of schools for black children and the availability of funds to support educational endeavors. Domestics were paid

arbitrarily low wages and the only way to get ahead was to work "for good whites that had money," ones that gave away presents in compensation for low wages. To receive this compensation, called "extra," the domestic or wash woman had to be "nice," the "self-effacing servant who knows the desires of her employers and who acts within the range of behavior prescribed for this stereotypical southern servant" (Tucker, 1988, p. 112).

In Telling Memories Among Southern Women: Domestic Workers and Their Employees in the Segregated South, Susan Tucker (1988) interviewed both domestic workers and white employers from the southern states. Tucker asserts that domestic workers connected southern whites and blacks to one another. Black women were the link between black and white families as they traveled from their homes to work in the homes of whites. Tucker describes how black domestics saw themselves as a part of southern society:

> Southern black women are apt to describe themselves in terms of race. Being a black female in the South meant, until recently, that it was quite possible that one might always work outside one's home. Being a black female in the South also meant that if one could not find other work, she could always be a domestic worker. In such domestic work, she would, on a daily basis, leave her home and possibly her children, to care for those of a white employer (Tucker, 1988, p. 16).

White women and black women were viewed differently by southern society. According to Hazel Carby (1987), the four central virtues of "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" (p. 23) were central to the white "cult of true womanhood" (p. 20) espoused by southern society. Black women were judged by their ability to perform physical work. Carby argues that this creed subordinates all women while fortifying male dominance.

In summarizing the differences in the characteristics of southern white and black women, Susan Tucker (1988) writes:

> White and black women often were said to exhibit opposite characteristics. White women were encouraged to be passive and to hide whatever strength they might possess. They were often taught to fall back upon emotional displays in times of crisis. Black women, on the other hand, were encouraged to be active and to display whatever strength they might possess, albeit strength couched in the stoical acceptance of traditional behavior dictated for blacks. They were often taught that in times of crisis they should fall back on their own abilities to earn money or do whatever was needed (Tucker, 1988, p. 132).

Into the twentieth century, many black women continued to work as domestic workers. In 1966, slightly more than five percent of all employed white women were domestic workers. Of working black women, 30 percent were employed in the domestic vocation. Women continue to earn less than

men in every occupation with black women being at the bottom of the economic scale, behind white men, black men, and white women (Lerner, 1977).

The opening chapter of this dissertation has shown a brief and limited glimpse of the historic southern woman. In Chapter Two, I will discuss these issues from the perspective of a particular region, the Wentworth community of Rockingham County, North Carolina. Chapter Three includes a brief look at my search for identity and a short review of the writings of feminist theorists. There I seek to provide a theoretical framework for examining the issue of gender in the school setting. The fourth and fifth chapters utilize oral history narratives as a means of sharing the schooling experiences of southern women who attended school between 1915 and 1940. The narratives of three white women who attended small rural schools, as well as the newly constructed Wentworth Consolidated School, will be featured in Chapter Four. The fifth chapter will include narratives from black southern women who attended segregated schools in Rockingham County during this same time period. The final chapter of this dissertation will contain my interpretations of information gleaned from these interviews with southern women in relation to the historical material presented in the previous chapters.

CHAPTER II

WENTWORTH: A SOUTHERN RURAL COMMUNITY IN ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

> Nearing Wentworth and home, it was natural our conversation should change to this old home town--our county seat, with about a hundred people living here. It is hard to believe that it once was a thriving town with several tobacco factories, two hotels, three churches, three or four stores, and other business houses. All have vanished with the years.
>
> Maude Reynolds, 1949

Early History

Rockingham County is located in the northern Piedmont of North Carolina, adjoining the southern Virginia border. Created by the North Carolina General Assembly on December 29, 1785 from the northern half of Guilford County, the new county was named for the second Marquess of Rockingham, Charles Watson-Wentworth (1730-1782). A leading Whig and former Prime Minister of Great Britain, Watson-Wentworth's popularity in America was assured when he secured repeal of the hated Stamp Act in 1766 and later initiated negotiations to terminate the Revolutionary War. From 1768 to 1781 he had expressed opposition to the English government's American policy and the war (Butler, 1982).

Following William Byrd's survey of the dividing line between Virginia and North Carolina in 1728, thousands of settlers from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia had entered the North Carolina back country by way of the Great Wagon Road, which extended from Philadelphia, southwestward into the Carolinas. This rapid expansion of population created the necessity of forming a new county to more easily govern the influx of settlers (Butler, 1982).

With agriculture as the predominant industry, wealth was largely demonstrated by the amount of property owned. Governance of the newly formed county was in the hands of a set of justices appointed from the land holding gentry. The first session of the new court convened in February 1786, at the Adam Tate plantation near Eagle Falls, on the South side of the Dan River (Butler, 1982). One of the first acts of this court was to establish a commission to select a permanent site for the county seat. Apparently the court planned to build the courthouse near Eagle Falls, but this location was challenged for not being near the geographic center of Rockingham County. The county surveyor was instructed to ascertain the approximate mid-point of the county. On January 1, 1787, the General Assembly appointed another commission to locate the county seat "on the lands of Charles Mitchell on the east side of the Big Rock House Creek..." (Butler, 1982, p. 20).

This site was located near the geographical center of the county. With an eye for economic gain, Constantine Perkins and Charles Gallaway purchased a 200 acre tract from Mitchell. The commissioners selected a portion of this land upon which to construct the county courthouse. In August of 1787, Perkins and Gallaway conveyed to the county one acre of land and construction was begun on the courthouse (Butler, 1982).

According to A.R. Newsom (1929), in "Twelve North Carolina Counties in 1810-1811," Robert Gallaway gave 100 acres (including the existing courthouse) in 1796 in an effort to establish a town at the site. The North Carolina General Assembly of 1798 appointed a group of trustees to "receive the deed and to lay off and sell at auction for benefit of the county as many one acre lots as they should agree upon" (Newsom, 1929, p. 298). However, Lindley Butler (1982), in Rockingham County: A Brief History, reports that Gallaway sold 125 acres of land to the trustees of Wentworth who afterward authorized the sale of 21 lots. Whatever be the method of land acquisition, the town was called Wentworth, another tribute to the favored Marquess of Rockingham. This action, in addition to the prior establishment of a Federal Post Office in 1794 near the courthouse site, assured the initial growth of the settlement.

By 1810, Wentworth was thriving, according to William Guthrie's textbook for geography. The text, A New Geographical, Historical, and Commercial Grammar and the Present State of Several Kingdoms of the World, introduces North Carolina geography with a catalogue of county names, listing population and a "chief" town. Rockingham County's population in 1810 was 10,278 and Wentworth was listed as the chief town (Coon, 1926a). However, a Rockingham County resident, Alexander Sneed speaks somewhat disparagingly about the settlement in a sketch printed in a Raleigh newspaper. Sneed, a county justice, register of deeds, and a former representative in the State House of Commons, had this to say about Wentworth in 1810:

> Leaksville and Wentworth are the only Towns in the County, and they, at present, scarcely deserve the name. Wentworth, which is the County Town is remarkable for nothing, except its high and healthy Situation. It stands about three miles South of the River Dan, in a poor and broken part of the county, and near its Center; we have here a tollerable wooden Court House, painted, and a common Gaol built of wood and Stone, the Rooms of which are dark and miserable beyond description; there are likewise some public Houses for the accomodation of Strangers, and the citizens generally, tho' Scarcely enough for so populous a County (Newsom, 1929, pp. 298-299).

Being a resident of Leaksville, chartered by the General Assembly in 1797 (Butler, 1982), Sneed's comments may be related to the loyalty which he felt for his own locale.

With its establishment as the county seat, the town of Wentworth appeared to be on its way to prominence in the county of Rockingham. However, the decision to construct the first railroad through the southern area of the county rather than across the central region led to the end of Wentworth's continued growth. During the 1860's the railway was built to pass through the tiny settlement of Reidsville. Billy Carmichael (1950) discusses the changes this act brought to the Wentworth community:

> When Reidsville was a crossroads, Wentworth was a thriving town of over 400 souls. There were three or four factories, two inns, two churches, and a group of taverns and saloons. The town was growing, but received its death blow when the railroad was constructed through Reidsville in the 1860's. Business and industry as well as some inhabitants moved to Reidsville (Carmichael, 1950, p. 8).

At the close of the Civil War, Reidsville had been a small settlement in comparison to Wentworth, but the construction of the railroad brought the tobacco industry into Reidsville to take advantange of rail transportation. By 1870, Reidsville was a growing community consisting of numerous tobacco factories, merchants, and craftsmen. Leaksville and Madison had been founded earlier to utilize transportaion and industrial opportunities offered by the Dan and Mayo Rivers. Without natural or man-made transportation access, Wentworth began to fade from

prominence in the shadow of economic growth in other parts of the county.

By the turn of the century, Reidsville was the largest town in Rockingham County with a population of over 3,000. Madison and Leaksville were smaller, having less than 1000 inhabitants each. Rockingham County's population was 33,163 in 1900, 11,617 of these persons were classified as "Negro." Less than 300 people were living in Wentworth as the new century arrived (North Carolina Yearbook, 1902, 1914, 1922).

Education in Rural Rockingham County

Education in Rockingham County in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a reflection of the educational experience throughout North Carolina. Prior to 1840, education was considered primarily a private or family matter. The wealthy had access to private tutors or academy schools, but the poor had little opportunity to receive an education outside the home. Occasionally a group of concerned parents with limited funds might pool their resources to set up a field or subscription school in their neighborhood. Wealthier parents who could afford the luxury of educating their children sent them to private academies. By 1825, the North Carolina legislature had chartered 177 academies, mostly for male students. Thirteen of the 177 academies were for girls (Lefler & Newsome, 1973). In Rockingham County, Leaksville and Madison opened private

academies in 1820. In 1844, Numa Reid and Franklin Harris opened the first private academy in Wentworth (Butler, 1982).

The Common School Movement

The push for universal education in the United States began in the Northeast with a group of individuals who spread the popular ideology of common schools through educational periodicals published between 1825 and 1850. Joel Spring (1994) credits the Massachusetts Common School Journal, edited by Horace Mann; the Connecticut Common School Journal, edited by Henry Barnard; and the Ohio Common School Director, edited by Samuel Lewis as being the most influential of these journals. These publications worked to build support for the common school movement in communities where the idea of universal education was not well received (Spring, 1994). Another source which reformers utilized in their push for universal education was educational organizations. According to Lawrence Cremin (1951), the most important organizations for disseminating the ideals of the common school movement were the American Lyceum, established in 1825; the Western Literary Institute and College of Professional Teachers, founded in 1829; and the American Institute of Instruction, organized in 1830. These organizations held numerous lectures, public discussions,

and conventions where common school supporters were able to share their ideas.

In June of 1837 Horace Mann accepted the position of Secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education. Moving from the profession of law in which he had "failed to save society," he believed the field of education was a "higher calling" (Spring, 1994, p. 67). Concerned about social disorder, increased crime, and religious conflict, Mann believed the schools had a moral purpose to give each child a "common moral education based on the general principles of the Bible and on common virtues." Such education would "eliminate crime and corruption in society" (Spring, 1994, p. 69).

Joel Spring (1994) in The American School: 1642-1993, describes three distinct aspects of the common school which distinguished it from past educational movements. Emphasis was placed on educating all students in a common schoolhouse, being taught a common social and political ideology. Secondly, the common school philosophy accepted the direct link between the "government educational policies and the solving and control of social, economic, and political problems" (p. 63). The third distinctive characteristic of the common school was the creation of state agencies to control the local school (Spring, 1994).

The North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation in 1839 to develop a system of common schools in North Carolina. The legislation provided for the division of the state into school districts and the establishment of a primary school in each district through county tax supplements and allocations from the Literary Fund. County and district school boards began to inaugurate the system in August of 1839 for those counties that approved it by a vote for tax support. On January 20, 1840, the first public school in North Carolina to operate under the new law opened in Rockingham County in the Williamsburg community (Butler, 1982; Powell, 1989).

Approval of public schools hinged on a vote within each county. A commission appointed by the State Legislature had studied the situation and had determined that because of the state's inability to fund a school in each of the 1,250 districts of the state, public schools were more likely to succeed if a combination of public funds and special taxes were used. The commissions's proposal was that a special election be held in each county on the question of "school" or "no school" with the offer of $100 for each district in any county which cast the majority of its votes in favor of a tax for schools (Noble, 1930). In A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina, M.C.S. Noble (1930) describes the impact of this first free school law:

> The men who gave North Carolina its first school law, weak and incomplete as it was, laid down the foundation of the greatest single service the state has ever yet rendered. The law lived and grew and bore fruit because the great mass of people believed in the cause of common schools, which had been discussed in their hearing for many years. Practically every county in the state voted in favor of the tax for schools (p. 62).

The public school system in North Carolina expanded rapidly. By the end of 1840, there were 632 primary schools operating in North Carolina (Powell, 1989). In Rockingham County, the 1848 report of school board chairman, John L. Lesueur, lists 35 school districts with 39 teachers (Butler, 1982). The system of common schools in the state continued to grow, increasing to 2,657 public schools by 1850 (Powell, 1989).

In his First Annual Report of the General Superintendent of Common Schools, Calvin Wiley reported that in 1840, 19,483 white children were attending school in North Carolina. By 1850, the number of white students had increased by over five hundred percent to 100,591. Wiley attributes this increase in student attendance to the successful development of the common school system. This report, written in 1854, was addressed to "His Excellency, David S. Reid, (a native of Rockingham County) Governor of the State of North Carolina" (Wiley, 1854).

In this same 1854 report, Wiley lists these statistics for Rockingham County. Of 3,696 children of school age in the county, 1,383 were taught in the common schools. The average school term was five and one-third months with teachers receiving an average salary of $18 per month. As reported by Wiley, school terms in North Carolina ranged from less than two months to more than five. Only six counties, one of which was Rockingham, reported terms of five or more months. Six counties reported differences in salaries of male and female teachers. Although Rockingham County showed no distinctions between the salaries of men and women teachers in this 1854 report, school board records indicate that in the decades following this time period, men were paid higher salaries than women (Rockingham County School Board Minutes, 1877-1885).

Although the common schools increased educational opportunities for many children, there was still resistance to the concept of public, tax supported education in North Carolina. Financial limitations caused hardships for the growing system of common schools. Lefler and Newsome (1973) describe some of these difficulties:

> Many people were still indifferent; most school buildings were poor and inadequately furnished; the teachers were men mostly unfit for work, salaries for teachers averaged $25 per month; the school term was less than four months; text books and equipment were scarce and inadequate; the curriculum included only reading, writing,

> arithmetic, grammar, and geography; pupils of all ages studied and recited in the same room. Nearly all schools were one-teacher schools. Since the chief support of the system was the Literary Fund, in the nature of an endowment from the Federal Government, the average North Carolinian before 1860 was not habituated to the payment of taxes for public education (p. 404).

The Literary Fund had been established in 1825 based on a bill drawn up by Barlett Yancey. The fund to establish common schools consisted of bank stocks, dividends from state owned stock in certain navigational companies, liquor excise taxes, and income from the sale of state owned swamp lands. After establishing the Literary Fund, the state had waited more than ten years before again approaching the issue of common schools and initiating the legislation which established common schools in 1840 (Powell, 1989). Lefler and Newsome (1973) attribute this delay in developing a public school system to mismanagement of funds. The Literary Fund suffered from the dishonesty of the State Treasurer, John Haywood, from poor investments, and from "bad faith on the part of the legislature which borrowed from it for general purposes including the payment of salaries for its own members" (Lefler & Newsome, 1973, p. 333).

The common schools initially encountered competition from private academies and from subscription or field schools organized by a parent or teacher in the community; however, as the system continued to expand, field or

subscritions schools became less prominent. Attitudes against poor whites and African slaves also limited the effectiveness of the common school. The professed goal of the common school in the South had been to educate all white children with a common moral education. Southerners certainly saw no need to educate blacks and many were reluctant to pay taxes to support schools for lower class whites. In A Hard Country and a Lonely Place, William Link (1986) discusses the southern paternalistic society and its effect on education:

> In the antebellum South, a slave society based on inequality bred a paternalism that prohibited black education and provided for an elitist system which discouraged the schooling of lower-class whites. Common schools were of no use for a "plain farmer or mechanic" because even a rudimentary education unnecessarily raised expectations. Schooling in the South remained a combination of half public, half private neighborhood and denominational schools until the Civil War (Link, 1986, p. 7).

Along with many of the other southern states in the antebellum period, North Carolina had laws in effect which prohibited the education of slaves. For example, a North Carolina statute, passed in 1831, read in part: "Whereas the teaching of slaves to read and write, has a tendency to excite dissatisfaction in their minds, and to produce insurrection and rebellion..." (Cohen, 1974, p, 1622). Joel Spring (1994) sees this denial of education for African

Americans as a means of maintaining white dominance through continued cultural subordination and economic exploitation.

In spite of the limitations of the public school and competition from the private arena, the common school system continued to expand in the period before the Civil War. The 1860 census shows 13,169 students enrolled in 434 academies across North Carolina. In this same year, the common schools enrolled over 100,000 students (Lefler & Newsome, 1973).

Recovering From Civil War

A variety of factors influenced southern rural schooling in the period following the Civil War. In The History of A Southern State: North Carolina, Lefler and Newsome (1973) describe some of these factors: the southern agrarian economy, the general poverty of the region resulting from the Civil War and Reconstruction, and a general apathy among the populace toward education. In North Carolina, the state system of common schools collapsed early in Reconstruction as a result of the general demoralization of the times, an unwillingness to educate the recently freed African slaves, and a loss of funding when the Literary Fund became bankrupt (Lefler & Newsome, 1973).

The conservative Democratic leadership that controlled the North Carolina state government after 1870 did not enforce public education. Because of the general poverty of

the state, tax revenues were insufficient to support four month schools and and by decree of the State Supreme Court, county commisioners were not empowered to levy a special tax. "The unwillingness of the people to vote additional taxes made it impossible for counties to have four month schools" although the state constitution mandated this lenghth of term and the "indictment of county commisioners who failed to provide it" (Lefler & Newsome, 1973, p. 537).

Lefler and Newsome (1973) attribute the reasons for North Carolina's poor educational standing following Reconstruction to "general indifference to public education and a sterile reactionary political leadership" (p. 536). Racial prejudice and severe poverty also contributed to the lack of support for public education. The concept of tax supported schools was not yet firmly established in the state. Southerners equated state directed common schools with higher taxes. In a region which valued individualism, familial identity, and personal honor among white males, hostility toward the public control of youth education was inevitable (Link, 1986).

In the period following the Civil War, white land owners struggled to maintain control of their region, politically and culturally. White male voters were generally indifferent or hostile to education. The wealthy often opposed the entire principle of public education and

supported a system of private schools. No political leaders of the state crusaded for improved education. "The economic, unprogressive educational policy of the Democratic leadership was pleasing to the majority of the tax-hating population," particularly those who owned substantial amounts of property (Lefler & Newsome, 1973, p. 537).

In addition to the indifference of the populace and lack of progressive leadership, education in North Carolina in the later part of the nineteenth century was also hampered by the scattered rural population, bad roads, a large school population in relation to the number of taxpayers, and the maintenance of a dual (separate) system of schools. In 1875, the North Carolina Constitution was amended to legally provide for separate schools for whites and blacks in the state. This law necessitated the development of two school systems in each county, although both the black and white schools were administered by white school boards. In part, this statute read:

> The children of the white race and the children of the colored race shall be taught in separate schools; but there shall be no discrimination in favor of or to the prejudice of either race (Cohen, 1974, p. 1647).

School Board records for 1878 indicate that Rockingham County maintained 39 school districts. In this particular context, a school district was the area served by one

school. As mandated by state law, the county operated a dual system of schools which enrolled 4,155 "white" children with a budget of $3,758.44 and 2,540 "colored" children with a budget of $2529.20 (RC School Board Minutes, 1877-1885). According to these figures, the average expenditure per child was $.90 for white children and $.99 for black children. Records from 1880 show that in a two year period, expenditures increased for both races to $1.16 per white student and $1.15 per black student. Although these records indicate that in 1878, per pupil expenditures were higher for black children and in 1880, expenditures were nearly the same per pupil for each race, records show that property values were lower for the public schools for black children, and black teachers were paid aproximately $5.00 per month less than white teachers. Records for 1881, report 36 public school houses, 25 "white" and 11 "colored." Property value for these "white" school houses is listed at $2,115.00 and for the "colored" school property, $625.00. Thirty percent of the schools were for black children, but this property was 23 percent of the value of the total public school property (RC School Board Minutes, 1877-1885).

By 1884, both the number of school districts and expenditures in the county had expanded. Since 1878, the number of school districts in Rockingham County increased to 48 for "white" children and 44 for "colored" students. The

county maintained 42 public school houses for "white" children and 18 for "colored" children. School population and expenditures increased for both races: 4,647 white students with a budget of $5,625.71 ($1.21 per student) and 3,168 "colored" children with a budget of $4,505.34 ($1.42 per student) (RC School Board Minutes, 1877-1885). Although these records indicate a significant increase in expenditures for schools for black children, it is still not clear from school board minutes how this money was being spent. Black teachers were still being paid less than their white contemporaries ($21.99 per month for black teachers and $26.58 per month for white teachers) and the county was maintaining only 18 public school houses for the 44 black districts in comparison to 42 public school houses for the 48 white districts.

The county School Board records for 1884 differ from the state superintendent's report in the area of pupil attendance. John Scarborough, State Superintendent during the 1883-84 school year, reports that although the county had a white student population of over four thousand students, only 2,033 of these children were in attendance in the public schools. From a population of more than three thousand black children, Scarborough reports an attendance of 1,483. The average salary for "white" teachers was $26.58 per month; for "colored" teachers, $21.99 per month

(the same figure reported by the school board). The county superintendent had examined and approved 47 "white" teachers and 38 "colored" teachers (Scarborough, 1884).

Increased Support for Public Education

This increase in educational expenditures in Rockingham County reflected a statewide trend in North Carolina. The authors of History of a Southern State: North Carolina attribute this progress to continued economic growth in the state. Lefler and Newsome (1973) claim that as the century came to a close, economic recovery in North Carolina was nearly complete and poverty could no longer be blamed as a cause of educational backwardness. Before 1900, property values had begun to increase, while the tax rate was decreasing. In 1890, the per capita school tax in North Carolina was 44 cents per year, while the national average was $2.11 (Lefler & Newsome, 1973).

William Link (1986), however, views southern rural poverty as continuing to be a factor in the region into the twentieth century. In 1900, the South was still the poorest region in the United States. The property value of southern farms was 44 percent below that of northern farms. With a continued low level of tax support, "southern schools suffered from ill-equipped facilities, lowest teacher's salaries, and the shortest school terms in the nation"

(p. 7). Rural enrollments suggest that community support for education in the South was comparable to the rest of the nation yet as late as 1910, the South Atlantic states spent, on the average, approximately one-third as much on education as the North Atlantic states and the length of school terms in the South was about three-fourths of the length of terms in the North (Link, 1986).

The rural South faced an additional problem when an agricultural crisis emerged in the last decade of the nineteenth century. As farmers had expanded production to meet growing market demands, many turned to credit in order to increase their production. As production expanded, farm prices dropped and debt increased. Ultimately, many farmers lost their land and were forced to become tenants or sharecroppers for other landowners. By 1890, in North Carolina, one of three white farmers and three of four black farmers were sharecroppers or tenants (Nathans, 1983). According to Elwood Cubberly (1922), in Rural Life and Education, loss of property ownership not only reduced the property tax base for a community, but inhibited the community interest in government and education as well.

With agriculture as the predominant industry at the turn of the century, Rockingham County would have been affected by this rural crisis. Black families were disproportionately affected, representing only 35 percent of

the population of Rockingham County in 1900 (NC Yearbook, 1914), but a possible 75 percent rate of tenancy. In contrast, only 33 percent of white farmers were sharecroppers (Nathans, 1983). Lack of property ownership also lowered the tax base for black residents allowing white educational leaders to bemoan expenditures for the education of black children. In a speech delivered to the National Education Association in 1884, Major Robert Bingham of North Carolina addresses this issue:

> The white people of North Carolina, as I have already said, pay ninety-nine hundredths of the taxes, and three-sevenths of the money raised goes to sustain the public schools for the blacks; and, besides this, we have, of our own accord, established separate normal schools to teach their teachers; we have of our own accord, established a separate deaf and dumb institution for their mutes; and we have of our own accord, built a costly asylum for their insane; in order to do this we have taxed ourselves up to the highest constitutional limit, and as Massachusetts taxes herself; and in consideration of our local option taxes for graded schools, and in further consideration of the fact that the blacks, composing nearly half our population, pay next to no taxes, the white people of North Carolina are to-day taxing their dollar twice as hard as the white people of Massachusetts are taxing their dollar for public schools, and yet we can keep our public schools open only three months in the year, and can pay the teachers only $25 per month and they board themselves (Bingham, 1884, p. 15-16).

Speaking to a predominantly northern audience at the educational meeting held in Madison, Wisconsin, Bingham discussed southern resentment towards northern interference

in educational issues. A Confederate veteran and former slave owner, Bingham operated a school in the years following the Civil War and became a strong advocate for southern education without influence from residents of the North. However, he was not above asking for financial assistance as he delivered his speech, citing the high illiteracy rate in the South and the need to send aid to the area where it was most needed:

> In time of danger the army goes to the threatened point; the navy goes to the threatened point. When an epidemic prevails, the aid goes to the threatened point. Illiteracy is the point of extreme danger and should not the aid be sent to the place where it is needed on the same principal which regulates the movements of the army or the navy, or of aid when epidemic or flood comes? (Bingham, 1884, p. 16-17).

As the new century emerged Charles B. Aycock turned the North Carolina gubernatorial campaign of 1900 into a crusade for education. Lefler and Newsome (1973) quote from Aycock's inaugural address in 1901:

> On a hundred platforms, to half the voters of the State, in the late campaign, I pledged the State, its strength, its heart, its wealth to universal education. I promised the illiterate poor man bound to a life of toil and struggle and poverty, that life should be brighter for his boy and girl than it had been for him and the partner of his sorrows and joys. I pledged the wealth of the State to the education of his children...We are properous as never before--our wealth increases, our industries multiply, our commerce extends, and among the owners of this wealth, this multiplying industry, this extending

> commerce, I have found no man who is unwilling to make the state stronger and better by liberal aid to the cause of education...I declare to you that it shall be my constant aim and effort, during the four years that I shall endeavor to serve the people of this State, to redeem this most solemn of all our pledges (p. 589).

In 1900, there were 660,000 school age children in North Carolina. Of this number, only one-half attended school on a regular basis. Governor Aycock was apalled by these statistics and began to canvass the state in an extended series of public appearances. His speeches advocated elementary schools supported by local taxes, open four months a year, within walking distance of children's homes. Aycock pushed for a higher tax rate in North Carolina to support this expansion of the public school system. His argument was that taxes for education represented a wise investment. Educated workers would mean better industry and increased production, Aycock urged. His arguments were evidently persuasive to the Democratic legislature. From an educational appropriation of $100,000 in 1899, the amount in 1901 was doubled (Powell, 1989).

Aycock formed a Central Campaign Committee for the Promotion of Public Education in North Carolina. The group included Charles D. McIver, James Y. Joyner, and Eugene C. Brooks. The campaign proved to be one of the most successful ever launched in North Carolina. Men and women of every business, profession, religious denomination, and

political party addressed hundreds of educational rallies around the state. Newspapers gave extensive publicity, ministers preached on education, and Superior Court judges instructed grand juries "that it was quite as much their duty to investigate the conditions of school buildings as it was to investigate jails and poor houses" (Lefler & Newsome, 1973, p. 590). Aycock and the other members of the Campaign Committee inspired the public with a vision of a developing and prosperous state, convincing them of the wisdom of voting school taxes to provide for longer school terms, better school houses, and higher salaries for school teachers (Lefler & Newsome, 1973).

The impact of the campaign was noticed immediately. An author of southern history, writing shortly following Aycock's term as governor, describes the developing changes in the state's educational philosophy:

> An enthusiastic and persistent educational campaign has been carried on ever since with most gratifying results. The system as a whole is better organized, the schools better equipped and managed, and the teachers better paid and trained. Public interest has been aroused and the state is definitely committed to public education of a sort hitherto unknown in North Carolina (Chandler, 1909, p. 513).

By 1900, Rockingham County was divided into 77 school districts, operating 78 "white" schools and 37 "colored" schools. Of 7,573 "white" school age children in the

county, 4,348 were enrolled in the public schools. The census of "colored" children determined that 3,742 black children lived in the county with 2,189 of this number enrolled in school. An increase in the number of teachers examined corresponds with the increase in the student population. Ninety-seven "white" teachers were approved along with 56 "colored" teachers. Average salaries were listed by gender as well as by race with "white" males being paid at the highest rate, $27.59 per month. "White" females received an average of $25.60 per month followed by "colored" males at $23.45 per month. "Colored" females were paid at the lowest rate, averaging $21.26 per month (Joyner, 1902).

Education for African Americans

In 1860, approximately four million of the nation's 4,442,000 African population lived in the South (Tyack, 1967). Following the Civil War, a band of Yankee schoolteachers came South to educate the "Negro." They saw their work as a continuation of the war. In Turning Points in American Education, David Tyack (1967), describes this avowed mission:

> We might withdraw our swords, but we should send spelling books and Bibles to the front. The military might has been disbanded, but the missionaries should organize (p. 266).

Although the northern schoolteacher believed her journey South to be a "mission" to educate the recently emancipated African slaves, the South was often resentful of this interference. In The Mind of the South, Wilbur Cash (1941) speaks with derision concerning the Yankee "schoolma'am:"

> The Yankee schoolma'am moved in numbers to the unfortunate South in the train of the army of occupation to educate the black man for his new place in the sun and to furnish an example of Christian love and philanthropy to the benighted native whites. Generally horsefaced, bespectacled, and spare of frame, she was of course, no proper intellectual, but at best a comic character, at worst, a dangerous fool, playing with explosive forces which she did not understand. She had no little part in developing southern bitterness as a whole and, along with the peripatetic Yankee journalist, contributed much to the growth of hysterical sensibility to criticism (p. 137).

From this awkward beginning, resented by southern whites, the response following Reconstruction was to educate the "Negro" in the South in order to have control of "his" education. Governor Charles B. Aycock of North Carolina reflected this growing belief that it was necessary for the South to educate the former African slaves, "Since it is going to be done anyhow - since the Yankee is plainly determined to do it...it would be better if we beat him to the draw and do it ourselves" (Cash, 1941, p. 174). Knowing his southern countrymen, Aycock's advocacy of education for

the former slaves had an ulterior motive. "It will enable us to make sure he acquires no dangerous notions, to control what he is taught, to make sure that he is educated to fit into, and to stay in, his place" (p. 175).

Part of Aycock's successful educational campaign for governor of North Carolina had hinged on his claim of the superiority of whites and his support for the disfranchisement of the "illiterate Negro" (Lefler & Newsome, 1973, p. 561). By 1900, state constitutional amendments had eliminated the right to vote for all but a few blacks (Nathans, 1983). According to J. Morgan Kousser (1994), as taxes were increased to support expansion of education in North Carolina, poor blacks were paying taxes at much higher rates (based on income) than their comparatively wealthy white neighbors. This higher tax rate did not guarantee large educational expenditures for black schools. From 1900 to 1910, the "ratio of black to white expenditures per school age child dropped by 53 percent" (Kousser, 1994, p. 187).

As the white population in North Carolina increasingly expressed resentment for educational expenditures provided to black schools, the push to limit educational expenses for blacks to tax revenues garnered from black households met with opposition from Governor Aycock. His resistance to the bill, however, was not because he supported increased

expenditures for black schools, but because he feared Court intervention if such a bill should be passed by the North Carolina legislature:

> If it should be made to appear to the Court that in connection with our disfranchisement of the Negro we had taken pains for providing to keep him in ignorance, then both amendments (the literacy test and racial separation taxes) would fall together (Kousser, 1994, p. 193).

The disfranchisement was considered "priceless to the Democrats" and should not be bartered away for a "few tax dollars" (Kousser, 1994, p. 193).

James Joyner, a former professor at Woman's College (Lefler & Newsome, 1973), served as State Superintendent during the term of Governor Aycock. Joyner describes the state's policy towards the education of African Americans:

> The Negro schools can be run for much less and should be. In most places it does not take more than one-fourth as much to run the Negro schools as it does to run the white schools for about the same number of children. The salaries paid teachers are very properly much smaller, the houses are cheaper, the number of teachers small...If quietly managed, the Negroes will give no trouble at all about it (discrimination) (Kousser, 1994, p. 193).

Not only a local and state practice, the push for reduced expenditures for the education of black children was also discussed regionally. At the Second Capon Springs Conference for Christian Education in the South, concerned

educators gathered in 1899 to focus on problems and concerns regarding southern education. J.L.M. Curry spoke concerning the need for increased focus on education of the white population:

> I shall not stultify myself by any fresh argument in favor of negro (sic) education, but I must be pardoned for emphasizing the fact that there is greater need for the education of the other race. The white people are to be the leaders, to take the iniative, to have the directive control in all matters pertaining to civilization and the highest interests of our beloved land. History demonstrates that the Caucasian will rule. He (sic) ought to rule. He made our Constitution; he achieved our independence; he is identified with all true progress, all high civilization; and, if true to his mission, while developing his own capabilities, he will lead out and on other races as far and as fast as their good and their possibilities will justify. This white supremacy does not mean hostility to the negro, but friendship with him. On the intelligent and more refined class of the white people, the negroes have been compelled to rely heretofore for the educational advantages which they possess, and on them in the future they must depend to prevent a widening of the breach between the races and to bring about their higher advancement (Curry, 1899, p. 28).

In his attempt to justify the supremacy of the white race, Curry not only ignores the contributions of the African American to the development of the American society, but also overlooks the possibility that women may have had an impact upon independence, progress, and civilization in the United States. In fairness to Curry, however, it is

necessary to note that he is speaking in the accepted male dominated language of his time. Historically, Curry not only refers to the notion that the Caucasian "will rule," he justifies this fact as necessary for the future development of the United States. In Curry's address African Americans of both sexes have been "historically eliminated" from our country's past, while at the same time Curry's language omits women from his recorded message.

In Rockingham County, as in communities all across North Carolina, blacks were segregated within their housing, their educational opportunities, and their career choices. In Carolina Crossroads: A Study of the Rural Life at the End of the Horse and Buggy Era, Rosser Howard Taylor (1966) describes the status of blacks within an eastern North Carolina rural community:

> Many white people thought the education of Negroes a waste of time and money. Educate them for what? What little learning Negroes acquired in school would merely put notions into their heads. There was no place in the community for a negro lawyer or physician. An educated Negro, unless a minister, or schoolteacher must perforce emigrate to the North or else remain a misfit in the South. Basically the opposition to the education of Negroes was derived from a seldom-mentioned fear. Embodied in the inherited pattern of thought of the average southerner was the fear that education would disturb race relations, make it more difficult for the white race to keep the Negro in "his place" (p. 108).

In Rockingham County, along with many other North Carolina communities, schools remained racially segregated until the 1960s. Although formal integration in Wentworth school was achieved calmly in 1966, southern educational leaders had strongly resisted outside interference for nearly one hundred years. Since Reconstruction, southern schools had been segregated both legally through state legislation and socially by the desires of the white public.

The Push for School Consolidation

In Rural Life and Education, Ellwood Cubberly (1922) describes the rural school as inadequate to meet the demands of a changing population. He calls for "educational insight and leadership of a high order" and for a "reorganization of rural education under some authority of a larger jurisdiction and knowledge than that of the district-school trustee" (p. 95). Discussing what he perceives to be the plight of the rural school, Cubberly (1922) states:

> It has largely ceased to minister, as it once did, to community needs; its teacher no longer plays the important part in neighborhood affairs that he (sic) used to play; it has lost much of its earlier importance as a community center; its attendance has frequently shrunk to a small fraction of what it once was; it finds itself in serious financial condition; it has been left far behind, educationally by the progress which the schools of neighboring towns and cities have made (p. 102).

This rural-life "problem" would have been of some magnitude in North Carolina and in Rockingham County. In 1920, over 80 percent of the population lived in rural areas (Cubberly, 1922). Cubberly considered the inadequacies of the rural schools as being too complex for local efforts to solve. He recommended the "reorganization of rural education, along good educational and administrative lines" to meet the needs of the "present and the future" (p. 103). Cubberly describes this need for "redirection:"

> The rural school is today in a state of arrested development, burdened by educational traditions, lacking in effective supervision, controlled largely by rural people, who, too often do not realize either their own needs or the possibilities of rural education, and taught by teachers, who generally speaking, have but little comprehension of the rural-life problem or of the possibilities of a reorganized and redirected rural school (p. 105).

This push for administrative control and "redirection" of country schools led the drive for consolidation of rural schools. According to reformers, consolidated schools would "act as a beacon of town values" and would "reinforce the social stability of the countryside" (Link, 1986, p. 136). A key component of the reform argument was that modern consolidated schools would allow educational opportunities similar to those provided for students in the urban schools of the state. John D. Philbrick, a leading proponent of

"uniformity in excellence" in urban education, wrote in 1885 of the "one best way" of educating children everywhere:

> Modern civilization is rapidly tending to uniformity and unity...The best is the best everywhere...The future of our cities will be largely what education makes it and the future of our country will be largely what the cities make it (Tyack, 1974, p. 40).

The Committee of Twelve Report from the National Education Association had recommended the consolidation of one room schoolhouses in 1897, and by 1900, southern education professionals, civic groups, and intersectionalists such as Edwin Anderson Alderman and Charles Duncan McIver were all focused on the issue of school improvement (Link, 1986). In the form of a "one best system," the newly designed rural school would teach country children "sound values and vocational skills." The result was to be a "standardized, modernized community in which leadership came from professionals" (Tyack, 1974, p. 23).

Part of the impetus for school consolidation came from the Federal government. In 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt formed the National Commission of Country Life to find solutions for rural problems, not the least being the "rural school problem" (Gulliford, 1984, p. 41). The slogan for the country life movement was "Better farming, better business, better living." New agricultural techniques were introduced and advocates pushed for consolidated schools and

better roads. "In the interest of efficiency, education became compartmentalized" (p. 41).

In Rockingham County, the issues of school consolidation and rural school improvement appear to have converged in the form of a Country Life school. The first mention of a Farm Life and Domestic Science School appears in Rockingham County School Board Records on February 27, 1916. The "Citizens of Ruffin graded school district offered to bond themselves in the sum of $1500.00 to erect suitable buildings for said school" (RC School Board Minutes, 1909-1937). The "Citizens of Leaksville" make an alternate proposal:

> Citizens of Leaksville proposed to deed property known as Leaksville-Spray Institute consisting of one girls dormitory - 25 rooms (valued at $9,500.00), one boys dormitory (48 rooms, $8,000 value), one dormitory consisting of an auditorium and eight classrooms and seven acres of land and 25 acres near the school with suitable barn, dairy buildings, stock, etc. Proposition included repairing buildings, lighting, etc. Total value of offer -$40,000.00 (p. 23).

The School Board voted to delay action. In April of the same year, the board met and wrote a recommendation to the County Commissioners requesting an election by voters to determine "location, ways and means of establishing a Farm Life School in Rockingham County" (RC School Board Minutes, 1909-1937).

Focusing again on legislative action in North Carolina, which had an impact upon school consolidation, the General Assembly, in 1913, enacted a series of laws designed to improve education. A statewide property tax of five cents on a $100 valuation was to enable schools to lengthen their terms to six months. A compulsory school law was enacted "requiring all children between the ages of eight and twelve to attend school at least four months each year" (Lefler & Newsome, 1973, p. 591). Children under twelve were prohibited from being employed in factories except as apprentices and only after having attended school for the required four months. The General Assembly also made provision for the teaching of agriculture and domestic science in the state's high schools (Lefler & Newsome, 1973). This legislation increased attendance in public schools and had an impact on the longevity of student enrollment. As students began to stay in school longer because of fewer employment opportunities, school boards, local communities, and the state legislature began to be more concerned about providing secondary education.

In 1918, an amendment to the North Carolina Constitution, approved by the voters of the state, extended the school term to six months. Another drive, mounted simultaneously, was to consolidate rural school districts of the state into larger units and provide transportation to

these schools at public expense. Combining several small schools into one larger one presumably allowed an increase in course offerings, better libraries, instruction in vocational education, and introduction to the arts (Powell, 1989). Proponents argued that consolidated schools "provided opportunities that approximated those now enjoyed by the children in representative cities of the state (Link, 1986, p. 136).

Consolidation did not always come easily to rural areas. In some areas school consolidation "bitterly polarized rural communities and set neighbor against neighbor" (Gulliford, 1984, p. 43). The issues were not limited to the location of the new school, the increase in taxes for the community, or the crusade for better education. "Parents realized that the centralization of rural schools meant the beginning of the end of rural farm life as they had known it" (p. 43). Andrew Gulliford (1984), in America's Country Schools, focuses on this sense of loss for the rural community:

> Rural people knew that to lose their school meant to lose the focus of their community... The loss of the one-room school symbolized an abrupt entry into the twentieth century and a shattering of the community spirit of the original settlers. Parents feared that if their children left the community to attend schools elsewhere, they might one day leave home permanently. As country schools consolidated, the exodus from the farm increased (p. 43).

The one room country schoolhouses had been controlled by local trustees. In the push towards consolidation, it was difficult for these local men to surrender their authority of school governance, particularly as they recalled the importance of the country school within their community. In Rural Life and Education, Ellwood Cubberly (1922) addresses the issue of resistance to consolidation while also focusing on the past contributions of the rural school:

> One of the best evidences as to the hold these old-time district schools had on a community is the bitterness with which members of the older generation everywhere have opposed all attempts at a change in the conditions. The school, in the days of limited outlook and limited knowledge, was a center of community life, and provided instruction which was then deemed of much value. Considering the limited needs of the time, the early rural school was remarkably efficient, and the recollection of this past efficiency has been a strong force in leading older men to oppose a change in conditions. The rural school has become endeared by age and by sentiment, and those who experienced its benefits have been most vigorous in opposing any changes in its organization (p. 89).

Wentworth Consolidated School

The decision of the Rockingham County School Board was to build the Farm Life School in the Wentworth community. According to the May 30, 1922 edition of the Reidsville Review, the school was to be located "Between the county

home and Wentworth, on the right hand side of the road where there was formerly a shop." The county had "acquired a large number of acres of land lying on a gently rising hill." The article describes the building which was estimated to cost $100,000.00:

> The building will be of T shape, of three stories, with an auditorium of 1,000 capacity forming the foot of the the T, while the class room building will be on the cross-arm. This main class room building is 184 feet long. From the front of the class room to the rear of the auditorium is 126 feet. On the ground floor, under the auditorium, is the agricultural department with 25x40 rooms--one for laboratory, and one for shop.

The Reidsville Review (1922) continues to describe the proposed building; the toilets, the heating system, and the offices. The school was to be equipped with a "complete domestic science department with a large kitchen, pantry, storerooms, regular size dining room, a clothing laboratory, a fitting room and a storage room."

The state of North Carolina was to pay for 75 percent of the upkeep of the agricultural and domestic science departments and for half of the cost of the building. The county was to pay the remaining cost. This may have been the bone of contention which led to a lawsuit, J. Walter Lovelace, et.al. versus T.R. Pratt, et.al., Commissioners of Rockingham County. Described by Charles L. Coon (1926b) in "School Support and Our North Carolina Courts," this case

provided the opportunity for Judge Hoke to uphold a 1921 statute which stated that public schools were not just confined to the elementary grades. The statute read in part:

> (The General Assembly) "authorizes the board of education and the board of commissioners of any county to contract a 20 year debt for school buildings and to pledge its payment with interest by means of the levy of a county tax, all without vote of the people" (p. 426).

At the 1924 Spring term, Judge Hoke validated $45,000 worth of bonds in Rockingham County, the proceeds to be used to erect consolidated school buildings at Stoneville and Wentworth, "on the grounds that the debt was necessary to the proper maintenance by the county of a six months school term in those districts" (Coon, 1926b, p. 427).

Wentworth Consolidated School opened for students in January of 1924. In Chapter Four I will relate the experiences of three young, white, southern women who entered the new Farm Life School at this time. These young women had been attending one, two, or three room schoolhouses in the communities of Calvary, Bethlehem, and Wentworth and had experienced the strong bond which the country school had created in their neighborhood. They remember with fondness the community gatherings in their local school, they recall some members of their community scoffing at the need for a consolidated school, and each of

their stories vividly depicts the excitement, newness, and bigness of the new consolidated school.

However, prior to the sharing of the oral history narratives of these southern women, I need to explore my own roots at Wentworth School. In order to place myself in this research of southern women's educational experiences, I need to examine my own memories of growing up in the southern, rural, paternalistic society. Chapter Three explores my memories of Wentworth School, my search for my identity as a woman, and provides a brief review of the writings of feminist theorists in relation to the gender issues to be explored in the oral history narratives of Chapters Four and Five.

CHAPTER III

LOOKING FOR VOICES AT WENTWORTH SCHOOL:

FINDING MYSELF

> It's almost over, but I guess you know that as well as I do. Will you cry at graduation? I think I just might. Remember our freshman year when all those upper classmen seemed so tall and sophisticated? Remember biology class when we cut up those tough-skinned worms and dismantled crawfish and starfish? And how about great chemistry when we almost dismantled the lab?... These years have been just fantabulous!
>
> Sharon Lillard (Bailey), 1971
> Wentworth High School Yearbook

The Visit

His young body was tense, coiled in the front seat beside me. As I was driving, from the corner of my eye, I could see he was nervously nibbling his fingernails in anticipation of the "visit." My son, Mark, had attended school with me in Eden for six years at Draper Elementary where I was a teacher. Now as a sixth grader, he would be entering school in the district in which we lived. Today would be his first official visit as we drove the short distance from our home to Wentworth School. Although I sensed his nervousness, I did not comment on it, but discussed experiences from my time as a student at Wentworth.

The youngest of five children, I grew up on a tobacco farm working in a strongly patriarchal environment. My mother was a primary school teacher at Wentworth, constantly overworked as she attempted to combine a teaching career with the nurturing of five children and an authoritarian husband. I had attended Wentworth Consolidated School from 1959 until graduation in 1971. At that time Wentworth School consisted of grades one through twelve. With the construction of a new Rockingham County High School in 1977, Wentworth now provides schooling for students from kindergarten through the eighth grade.

As we pulled into the driveway, Mark sat on the edge of his seat. As the familiar brick facade loomed in front of us, warm memories of my years at Wentworth flowed over me. Little had changed on the campus since my years as a student. These had been happy years for me. A close, nurturing relationship had existed between students and faculty. The school enrollment had been small enough that we felt we knew each other well. As a high school student, I had been involved in an extensive amount of extracurricular activities, strengthening the bond between me and the students and teachers with whom I participated.

As Mark and I parked the car and prepared to enter the building to meet the principal and tour the area, I perused the building with an older set of eyes. Even now, the three

story building still appears immense. Of red brick, weathered by seventy-two years of variable North Carolina seasons, Wentworth Consolidated School stands as a monument to the Wentworth community's first consolidated graded school which provided both elementary and secondary education. Much has changed in my life since I was a student here, but my years of schooling at Wentworth laid the foundation for my college education and my teaching career. However, I pondered as we walked toward the steps which would lead us into the building, what was it about this school that shaped me into the woman I am today.

As we moved up the sidewalk, the main entrance way loomed one and one-half stories above us. Walking up the wide flights of steps and entering into the second floor, I noticed the Roman numerals above the arched portal, MCMXXIII (1923), the year of construction, although the building did not open for students until January of 1924. As I entered the building, I stepped back in time; the polished wooden floors, the long echoing hallways, and the tall ceilings taking me back to 1971, my last year as a student. The oil painted murals along the hallway, drawn by Miss Maude Reynolds and her art students, were just as they had appeared in my days as a student.

As we entered the building, the auditorium was directly in front of us. I remembered "Our Town," the play that our

drama club had produced during my senior year. I had been Emily, the young heroine who died tragically in childbirth. My mother had carefully and lovingly made all my costumes for the play (in spite of being overworked with teaching and domestic duties). My friend Sharon had been Mrs. Gibbs who shared the last scene in the cemetary with me. Sharon had also used her creative talent to design a wonderful program for the play which seemed to encompass all the delightful experiences we shared as we prepared for the production.

As Mark and I walked, we passed by the old familiar classrooms. Mrs. Odom had stimulated us in English, challenged us in the Glee Club, and supported us in the publication of the school newspaper. The room directly across from the principal, Mr. Hunter's office, had been Mrs. Rankin's. Her classes, whether in English or French, were always stimulating and creative. Mrs. Rankin and Mr. Smith were always our faithful companions on Beta Club trips, sharing both the joys of our growing years and our tragedy when a young member of our club was killed in an accident during a trip to the state convention in Asheville.

As Mark and I traveled downstairs to the first floor, we passed the gym. Many fond memories assailed me there; basketball games, both as a player and a spectator, assemblies, and graduation. As we entered the newer part of the building, we passed the home economics room and moved in

the direction of the biology and chemistry labs. Mr. Butler had been such a unique blend of knowledge, talent, and personality that his classes were often our favorites. Our discussions in his science class were always interesting, a combination of his stimulation and creativeness and our desire to learn.

The hallways were silent today in anticipation of school opening the following week. I imagined I heard our voices, those of my friends and me during our time period at Wentworth. Then my thoughts traveled further into the past. I wondered what Wentworth School had been like for those first young students who had walked these halls, particularly girls from the farm as I had been. Among my classmates, few of the girls were raised on farms, but I felt a strong sense of connectedness to those young women who entered Wentworth as students in 1924 when Rockingham County's economy was still predominantly agrarian.

As Mark and I concluded our visit and returned to the car, he was less agitated about leaving Draper School to attend Wentworth. He spoke with anticipation in reference to the start of school the following week. While sensing his relief and being pleased at his excitement, my mind was preoccupied with a new sense of purpose. The building we had just left was a part of my history, but the voices I felt calling to me were more, they were a part of myself. I

was anxious to begin my search, to seek the experiences of southern women, memories of their school relationships; but first I had to seek my memories and my own voice, a struggle which had been raging within me for more than two decades.

Remembering Wentworth School

It has been difficult for me to examine my experiences at Wentworth through the window of my present female consciousness. As a young high school graduate in 1971, I felt the world was in my hand and as a young and optimistic female, untouched by oppression, my destiny was my own. Now, even though I bear the scars of middle aged cynicism, I remember the years at Wentworth School as rewarding and happy. With a child's resistance, I have avoided tainting those happy memories.

However, faced with the need to immerse myself into research for women and having done background reading on the patriarchal and paternalistic southern culture, I attempted to recall my years of schooling with an emphasis on gender relationships. I remember few differences in the way boys and girls were treated at Wentworth. The curriculum seemed to be the same for all of us except boys taking agriculture and shop while the girls learned sewing and cooking in home economics. I never felt the desire to build furniture at the time and actually enjoyed home economics; however, now I

find housework to be a chore of extreme drudgery and would much prefer to be outside involved in farm or yard work.

Within the classroom, I don't recall distinctions in the ways boys or girls were treated in relation to discipline, academic expectations, or career expectations. My mother taught at Wentworth and, as children, my brothers, sisters, and I had been strictly disciplined at home. As a consequence, I was never a behavior problem in school. In my classroom, boys seemed to get into more trouble than girls; however, at the time, I never considered the reasons for this.

I have been able to recall only one incident of what I considered, at the time, to be unfair treatment based on gender. Girls had fewer opportunities to participate in sports during my time as a student and we felt unfairly treated in the ninth grade when the boys had more physical education time than we. After complaining to our teacher (without results), we decided to take matters into our own hands. On a day when we were supposed to have health in the classroom, we all went to the gym and prepared for physical education. Our protest was quickly squashed by two males, the principal and guidance counselor. Our female physical education teacher was not supportive and appeared upset and hurt by our rebellion. My mother was also very disappointed in me for my actions against the established system of

patriarchy (the schedules were done by the principal and guidance counselor). The pain I suffered from this incident came much more from my mother's disappointment than from the lecture we received from the principal.

Academically, I always performed well, making good grades and scoring well on standardized tests. I never felt any pressure from my parents to be a high achiever, but I'm sure the expectations were there. We never received extrinsic rewards for good grades, but I always pushed myself (except for a brief lapse during my freshman year of college). My mother was a college graduate and my father always regretted that he had been unable to attend college. He was very much determined that all five of his children would acquire higher education. Each year, after the harvesting of tobacco, he would place a portion of his profits from the farm into savings accounts for us to attend college. Although we all had labored many years on the farm and worked while attending college, these funds started by our father served as the financial foundation for our future education. Even as a child, I knew that I would attend college and, for the most part, I looked forward to this challenge with anticipation.

After graduation from Wentworth, I attended Rockingham Community College and Appalachian State University. The community college had just opened in 1966 in Rockingham

County, was located very close to our home, and was much less expensive than any four year institution. It was understood that I would attend Rockingham for the first two years of my college education. I enjoyed being a part of Rockingham Community College so much that it was while attending this institution that I made my decision to become a school teacher. The environment at the community college had been as nurturing as my schooling at Wentworth School. My decision to attend Appalachian was more complex; a combination of the school's reputation as a quality teacher preparation program and the idealistic romanticism of a young college student. Although Appalachian prepared me well for my chosen career as an educator, I never felt the caring relationship with my peers or teachers which I had experienced at Rockingham Community College.

My Awakening

After graduation came the trauma of job hunting. In Rockingham County, physical education teaching jobs were difficult to come by in the 1970s and my limitations in job hunting were further compounded by my desire to stay near home. It was during this time that I was awakened to the possibility that men and women were treated differently in the work force. I was shocked when a job for which I believed I was better qualified went to a man with less education and experience than I. This was my first

experience with discriminatory practices in gender relationships in the work force.

In 1979, I began teaching in the Eden City Schools and my primary assignment, then and now, has been at Draper Elementary School. My first principal was Bob Wilkes, a warm, nurturing man who seemed to bring out the best in all his teachers. Although I was very much involved in developing and expanding the physical education program at Draper School, it was to Mr. Wilkes that I first confided my desire to continue my education. He strongly encouraged me in this endeavor and in 1989, I enrolled at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. It was not until I embarked upon this search for myself that I began to examine my need for affirmation from my male mentor, Bob Wilkes.

It has been this compelling need to know myself and the strength of my resistance to this need which has influenced my graduate work. Having led a somewhat sheltered life, growing up in a paternalistic environment, I was largely unaware of my own oppression, that of others, or my own participation in that oppression. The greatest struggle I have faced in my own reflective process is the necessity to affirm my life, its past and present, and its potentiality for the future.

My experiences in the Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Studies have been life changing. My

eyes, heart, and mind have been opened to an epistomological framework which I never knew existed. Through my coursework, interaction with members of the faculty, and readings of critical education theorists and feminist writers, my consciousness has been changed. I have become aware of oppression in the world and the subordination of people because of race, class, or gender. Within myself, I have discovered a need to communicate, not only to express my own experiences, but those of women who have come before me. I am connected to those southern women discussed in Chapter One. We share a historical bond of subordination and silence. My thoughts again return to the women who entered Wentworth long before me, in 1924 when the school first opened. I feel joined to them, not only because we grew up working the red dirt of Rockingham County, but also because we shared the acculturation of the southern experience, a society which worked to keep women in their proper role.

I have come to see that gender relationships between men and women in our society are "social and not natural" (Kelly-Gadol, 1976, p. 810). According to West and Fenstermaker (1993), gender is not merely an individual attribute, but something that is accomplished through interaction with others, constructed by culture and society. Carol Chodorow (1978), in The Reproduction of Mothering,

views gender construction as socially organized and asserts that when observed historically, the tenacity of this systematic construction is revealed.

In Theory on Gender/Feminism on Theory, Cecilia Ridgeway (1993) views gender interaction in society as a key component of the systematic disadvantaging of women. Women fall behind in both power and wealth when their words and actions are not valued. "Women also end up disadvantaged in the struggle for identities of competence and self-worth, since interaction is the arena in which these are formed and affirmed" (p. 175).

In Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching, Madeleine Grumet (1980) refers to gender development as "not an isolated process," but one that is "intrinsically related to and contingent upon the processes of becoming a knowing subject in a particular set of relations filled with desire, need, and hope" (p. 64). Carol Tavris (1992) also alludes to this notion of "knowing" when she asserts that gender, like culture, "organizes for its members different influence strategies, ways of communicating, nonverbal languages, and ways of perceiving the world" (p. 291). Grumet (1980), however, is more vocal about the influences of schooling on the development of gender perceptions:

> Studies of the differential treatment given to male and female children in elementary school and secondary school classrooms, of

> the images of adult males and females in school texts, and of the bias in counseling and professional advancement that functions to hold women to certain academic disciplines and certain professions all provide evidence of sexism and the imposition of restrictions placed upon an individual in response to his or her sexual identity (p. 45).

In Women Teaching For Change: Gender, Class, and Power, Kathleen Weiler (1988), also emphasizes the ways in which schooling reproduces existing gender inequalities. Feminist reproduction theory focuses on the manner in which schools act to reproduce gender divisions and oppression. Basic to the view of feminist reproduction theorists is that "women's oppression in the paid work force and in domestic work is reproduced through what happens in the schools" (p. 31). The focus of this feminist analysis is on the class-based nature of women's experience in the schools, the ways in which the experience of schooling reproduces gender oppression, and how the schools work ideologically to prepare girls to accept their role as low paid or unpaid workers in capitalist society (Weiler, 1988).

When I examine my own memories at Wentworth in the light of the feminist theory discussed above, questions emerge. Did boys get into more trouble in school because girls were expected to be more "lady-like" and conforming? Were boys expected to be more outgoing and mischievous? I was strongly encouraged by all my teachers to speak out in class, to achieve high academic goals, and to perform my

best in school. Was I the norm or the exception in reference to the support I received from my family and from the faculty of Wentworth School? During my years at Wentworth, I could only recall one incident of gender oppression (our suppressed physical education rebellion). If I didn't feel particularly subordinated as a student was it because I was treated as male students were treated or was it because I was trained to accept my proper role in society? How much did family, the school, and the female students themselves contribute to the subordination of women in the southern agrarian society?

My research in this study is grounded in the notion that schools have a powerful influence upon the gender development of children. It is my premise, in this dissertation, that schools actively reinforce these existing social gender roles which have been constructed by society and that both male and female students participate in this reconstruction. However, this study focuses on the issue from the woman's perspective.

Research for Women

In Theories of Women's Studies, Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein (1983) assert that all women are oppressed and that as researchers we need to identify and understand both the similarities and differences of our oppressions. She goes on to urge that studies involving

women must begin with their own experiences as women. Klein (1983) distinguishes between "research for women" and "research on women." Research for women "tries to take women's needs, interests, and experiences into account and aims at being instrumental in improving women's lives in one way or another." In contrast, Klein describes research on women as often being conducted without "careful examination of the suitability of the methods used for feminist scholarship." Researchers often do not state "why they chose a particular method and what problems occurred during the research project" (p. 90).

Barbara DuBois (1983) elaborates on the limitations of traditional research in regard to studies on women:

> We cannot see women through traditional science and theory. The distorting conceptual and perceptual lenses of patriarchy are the lenses we have been taught to look through; removing them is slow, sometimes painful and frightening as it opens our eyes to reality - without - explanation; and it is often startling. It is also a communal, not an individual task. As each one of us removes those lenses and is able to say what she sees, the world opens up for all of us; things begin to make sense (p. 110).

In A Different Voice, Carol Gilligan (1982) affirms this difference in the lenses through which men and women view the world. According to Gilligan, women operate within a framework of morality, responsibility, and care while rejecting the traditional male values of impartiality,

detachment, and justice. Women argue that moral choice is important because the needs of individuals cannot always be determined from general rules and principles. Justice, as a means of dealing with oppression, is not evil in the eyes of women, however, women perhaps view men as overly dependent upon the impartiality of the dispensation of justice. Although often labeled as morally deficient to men, Gilligan (1982) views women as believing in mutual understanding as the most likely way to reach a creative consensus about how everyone's needs may be met in resolving disputes.

Research by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) in Women's Ways of Knowing reinforces the views of DuBois and Gilligan that research for women is a "communal" process built on connectedness and relationships. The authors interviewed women to see the pattern in women's voices. Those interviewed were told, "we wanted to hear what was important about life and learning from her point of view" (p. 11). The authors concluded from their research that women come to know in different ways than men, agreeing with Carol Gilligan that the female consciousness is based upon a different framework. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule grouped women's ways of knowing into five major epistemological categories:

> silence, a position in which women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless and subject to whims of external authority; received knowledge,

> a perspective from which women conceive of themselves as capable of receiving, even reproducing, knowledge from the all-knowing external authorities, but not capable of creating knowledge on their own; <u>subjective knowledge</u>, a perspective from which truth and knowledge are conceived of as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited; <u>procedural knowledge</u>, a position in which women are invested in learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge; and <u>constructed knowledge</u>, a position in which women view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing (p. 15).

The work of the authors of <u>Women's Ways of Knowing</u> has been widely used in research for women as a result of its revealing portrayal of the differences in the ways in which men and women "come to know." As with Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), the use of oral history narratives will be an important part of my research, to reveal "what was important about life and learning" (p. 11) from the point of view of the women interviewed.

<u>Oral History as a Research Tool</u>

Oral history, as an approach to the history of education, lies at the intersection of life history, biographical, and narrative studies (Weiler, 1992). As a research tool, oral history is valuable because it allows the researcher to draw interpretations from within the framework of the setting of research (Nelson, 1983). When used in historical research, interviews can identify gaps in

documents and offer a different analysis of information found in written materials (Nelson, 1992).

A personal narrative represents the individual's general solution to the task of making sense of his or her life (Mishler, 1990). Precisely because narratives are meaning-making structures, they must be preserved by investigators who respect respondent's ways of constructing meaning and analyze how it is accomplished (Riessman, 1993). Meaning within the narrative is produced through the interaction of the speaker and listener. Expanding upon this notion, Riessman (1993) states, "meaning arises out of a process of interaction between people: self, teller, listener and recorder, analyst, and reader" (p. 15).

The importance of the relationship between the speaker and listener should not be underestimated. Kathleen Casey (1993) in I Answer With My Life, addresses this issue:

> We engage in a dialogue, whether we are in an actual conversation with another person, or watching television, or reading a newspaper. While we read or listen, we continually make judgments on what we see or hear; we make sense through a process of selection and rejection. And what we select and reject very much depends on who we are, who is speaking to us, what they say, how they say it, where and when we are listening (p. 7).

In any dialogue, the listener allows certain phenomena to become meaningful simply by attending to specific

information spoken in the narrative discourse (Riessman, 1993).

In "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms," Ann Oakley (1983) describes this relationship between speaker and listener as "personal involvement." More than a "dangerous bias," personal involvement is the "condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives" (p. 58). According to Oakley (1983), interviewing women is a strategy for documenting women's own accounts of their lives. The interview is a "tool for making possible the articulated and recorded commentary of women on the very personal business of being female in a patriarchal capitalist society" (p. 41).

Lynda Measor (1985), also addresses the issue of relationship between interviewer and speaker. According to Measor, the quality of data collected in the narrative is dependent upon the relationship formed between the participants, both speaker and listener. Research by Forrest and Jackson (1990) reinforces this notion. In "Get Real: Empowering the Student Through Oral History," these researchers describe the use of oral histories in narrative research as a method which allows genuine human interaction with the capacity to produce real human feelings between the interviewer and the speaker.

A bond develops between the speaker and listener through the exchange of personal experiences. This interaction has the power to change both participants. In my research the bond between the speaker and listener can best be exemplified by the shared emotions which resulted as the following portion of one narrative unfolded:

> As I said, my brother was in World War I. Some man came in the school yard on a horse and buggy and said, "The war's over! The war's over! The Armistice has been signed!" The teacher said, "Oh, well, you can go home now. We're going home!" We could hear the mill whistles at Draper and Spray. Oh, it was just music. The American Tobacco Company sirens were going. Mama was ringing the dinner bell. Mrs. Ratliffe and Mrs. Moore were ringing the dinner bell. You have never heard such a racket in your whole life! My brother grabbed me by the arm and away we went down the hill. He said, "Thomas is coming home!" And I expected him to be on the front porch when we got there and how disappointed I was when he wasn't there! I didn't know where Paris was.

Throughout this passionate statement the emotions of both the speaker and listener ran the gamut of joy, anticipation, laughter, and tears.

How can I, as a researcher, justify the existence and need for emotions in my dissertation? According to Sprague and Zimmerman (1993), research on gender introduces issues that are not easily quantifiable. Qualitative techniques which allow the "use of emotion and self-reflection as data" (p. 261) are especially appropriate for feminist research on

gender because it is based on mutual recognition of women's subjective experiences and employs resources such as "intuition, emotions, and feelings, both in ourselves and those we wish to investigate" (Klein, 1983, p. 95).

When discussing the limitations of qualitative research, Sprague and Zimmerman (1993) refer to the "subjectivity of the researcher" as being "privileged," rather than the "subjectivity of women involved in the study" (p. 261). As defined by Peshkin (1988), subjectivity is "the quality of an investigator that affects the results of observational investigation" (p. 17). As a researcher, I must observe myself in a focused way in order to learn how my personal qualities connect with the collected data. As a woman, my connection to these young southern women who attended Wentworth School in 1924 is a vital link to my research on gender relationships in the school setting. With this increased awareness of my voice and my subjectivity, I turn to the voices of women who attended Wentworth School as it opened in the first quarter of this century.

Voices From Wentworth School

In order to gain a social and educational perspective of gender relationships within the Wentworth community from the time period in which Wentworth School opened (1924), I interviewed women who attended school then. I wanted

accounts from women who lived during this first quarter of the twentieth century. Their stories would be an important and vital complement to the literature presented in Chapter One regarding the social and educational experiences of southern women.

The authors of Women's Ways of Knowing found that in their attempt to bring forth the "ordinary voice" (p. 20), they were educated. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) not only learned "about" these women and their "ways of knowing," but they learned "from" these women and developed an increased awareness of their own sense of self. In Chapters Four and Five, I will attempt to present the voices of "ordinary" southern women; "ordinary" only in the rationale that their lives have been similar to those who lived in the Wentworth community both before and since and they are not famous or well known beyond the boundaries of our community. However, the lives of these women have been "extraordinary" in the sense of the richness of their stories, their willingness to share their experiences with those of us who have come after, and the "education" which they have given to me through the sharing of their oral history narratives.

Initially, each speaker and I shared the experience of being raised on a farm in rural Rockingham County, living first hand the paternalistic, agrarian, southern life. We

each attended rural schools in Rockingham County. These mutual experiences allowed the "articulating of points of intersection and the discovery of common ground" (Casey, 1993, p. 24).

Maria Mies (1983) labels this notion of common ground, "conscious partiality" (p. 122). The researcher identifies her own experience with the women who are "objects" of her research. On the basis of a limited identification, common experience "creates a critical and dilectical distance between researcher and 'objects' - widens the consciousness of both the researcher and the researched" (p. 123). According to Kathleen Weiler (1988), the consciousness of women is grounded in actual material life. "Women live their relationship in the material world" (p. 61). Focusing on the everyday lives of women should reveal the connection between public and private and disclose ways in which larger forces, both ideological and material, place limits and conditions on the lives of women (Weiler, 1988).

As revealed in Chapter One, the history of women has been largely ignored in American society. According to Barbara DuBois (1983), the endeavor in which feminist scholars are engaged is almost archeological in nature, discovering the "actual facts of women's lives and experiences, facts that have been hidden, inaccessible, suppressed, distorted, misunderstood, ignored" (p. 109). It

is with this endeavor in mind that I reach into the past of Rockingham County, to share the memories of six southern women concerning their schooling experiences.

Still searching for my own roots on the farm and in the country school, I am interested in the life experiences of women in the area of schooling and how these experiences influenced their development as women. I am concerned about how the schooling of young southern, rural women reinforced the prevailing gender relationships in the agrarian South. I want to hear their voices, their stories of country schooling, school consolidation, and most particularly, their memories of gender relationships in the school setting. It is not possible for me to separate myself from the stories of women who attended Wentworth from the time of its opening in 1924, nor do I wish to. But as a woman, I not only want to hear the voices of white women who attended Wentworth in the early years, but the stories of black women who grew up in the same area, who were not allowed to attend Wentworth School. Black women have been doubly oppressed, both as women and as a racial minority. In the context of this dual oppression, I am concerned with the gender relationships of black women in their school setting. As part of the past, of women's lived history, the life stories of both black and white women are a part of me. In searching for their voices, I hope to find a part of my own.

CHAPTER IV

VOICES FROM THE COUNTRY SCHOOLHOUSE

Introduction

In Chapters One and Two of this dissertation, I have attempted to move from a broad yet brief historical review of southern women, while placing my study in the rural southern community of Rockingham County. As a native of this county and a southern woman, it has also been necessary for me to place myself in this research which I have done in Chapter Three. In the next two chapters, I will focus on the life stories of six southern women using selected material from their oral history narratives.

Since the beginning of my research on the historical schooling experiences of southern women, I have intended the oral history interviews to be a vital and integral part of this dissertation. Not only a research tool to provide an eyewitness account of schooling between 1915 and 1940, these narratives have allowed me to listen to the actual voices of southern women. Their willingness to share their life experiences with me, knowing of my intent to write of their schooling, has allowed me to provide the vehicle by which their voices can be heard. This endeavor has been an affirmation; of their lives as a vital part of southern history, of our intertwined lives experiencing southern

acculturation, and of my own life as I came to accept my womanhood.

Black and White in the South

After a great deal of thought, I have made the decision to separate the narratives of white and black women into two different chapters. Although concerned about continuing or condoning the historical blight of southern segregation, I am also very much aware that during the time period of this study, 1915 to 1940, black and white students had no contact within the school setting and little or no interaction in the social sphere. The relationship which connected blacks and whites was largely economical in the area of employer and employee. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the resulting contact between the two races in the rural South would, for the most part, involve a white farm-owning family with a black tenant family (Nathans, 1983) and the farmer's wife using the black woman for domestic help or as a wash woman (Tucker, 1988).

Southern black and white women coexisted in a state of social and economic inequality. Historically, from the time of slavery, through the period following emancipation, and into the twentieth century, a broad cultural gap existed between southern blacks and whites. Although these distinctions were a function of class, economic inequities, racial issues, and social barriers, "race overshadowed class

as a division within southern society" (Tucker, 1988, p. 99). The result of this racial division in the South was a dominant/subordinant relationship between whites and blacks. While not condoning this social and racial inequality or segregation by color, I am separating the narratives of these six Rockingham County women in order to do justice to the stories of the African American women. Their experiences during the early part of the twentieth century, were very different from those of white women, thus, using a separate chapter for their stories allows me to focus on their lives without the shadow of white domination.

With this rationale in mind, Chapter Four will include material from the narratives of three southern white women who attended small country schools and the new Wentworth Consolidated School following its construction in 1924. Recognizing the limitations placed upon me by the time period of this study, I searched for women who were old enough to have attended school prior to the second World War. The women I asked to share their experiences of schooling were all well known to me, an aunt, a former teacher, and a neighborhood friend of the family. I visited each of these women in their homes and recorded their memories of schooling. After transcribing the interviews, I have selected portions of each narrative to be included in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Five, I will share selections from the narratives of three southern black women who attended separate schools, although they lived in or near the same neighborhoods as the white women who graduated from Wentworth School. Each of these chapters is divided into three sections: Part One focuses on the personal lives of the speakers and their families; Part Two explores their experiences in the school setting with particular emphasis on school organization, gender relationships, discipline and academic expectations, career opportunities, and people who had significant impact upon their lives; and Part Three provides an analysis of specific aspects of the narratives using related historical and feminist literature.

PART ONE - "That Was Living Then, Know What I Mean?"

> Well, up rides the big ole yellow monster in the fall of 1924. And all of these little ignorant country kids who had never been to a big building before got in that monster and rode to the big place of Wentworth School. Past the County Home, on to that great big, astronomical building on down there; it pulled up and let us out. They herded us all into the beautiful auditorium and it was absolutely beautiful! They herded us in there and then they picked us out like you were picking out chickens. You know, put that one in that pen, that one in that pen, that one in that pen, call teacher's names. They finally let us go to the bathroom. The girls go this direction, the boys in that direction. You didn't dare go in the same direction. Harry Dorsett was there as Principal, "You go this way, you go that way."
>
> Mary Jarrell Meador (1994)

<u>**Mary Jarrell Meador**</u>

Seventy years later, as Mrs. Meador shared her memories of her first day at Wentworth School, her vivid language allowed me to feel as if I was sitting in the Wentworth School auditorium with her. As she described the yellow "monster," the "astronomical" school building, and the "herding" and sorting out of the children, I again felt the apprehension of being a young student in a "big" school. While a student at Wentworth, I had been in that same auditorium before it had been remodeled to serve as our library.

Mary Jarrell Meador is also my Aunt Mary, having married my father's brother Joe in 1933. She shared her early schooling experiences with me on a brisk fall day in 1994 in her cozy kitchen, heated by a wood stove. As a child, I had always enjoyed visits to Aunt Mary's and Uncle Joe's and today was no exception. Aunt Mary served me fresh oatmeal cookies for a snack and a hot meal with angel biscuits as our "short" talk extended into a daylong activity.

During our conversation Aunt Mary's love of history and her expertise as a storyteller converged as she shared her family background. I was entranced as she described her mother's childhood and how her parents had met when Mr. Jarrell had been on jury duty in Wentworth, the county seat:

> My mother was a Stultz and was born in Virginia. Her mother died when she was so young that she didn't remember her. She was about 15 months old. Her Daddy had been in the Civil War and he had a bad leg and kind of dragged it. I remember Grandpa, he's the only grandparent I remember. He never remarried. Mama lived with her Grandmother Glass until she died and then she went to live with her older sister, Eliza Williams, at the Pannell Place where Joann (author's sister) lives now. My Daddy was a whole lot older than my Mama. He was serving on jury duty at Wentworth. Uncle Tom Williams had a job at the courthouse and he told my Daddy he could go home with him to spend the night. Sleeping quarters were scarce when they had court there (at Wentworth) and the Wright Tavern was full. So Daddy went home with Uncle Tom and that's where he met Mama and they were married on the Pannell Place in the old house in 1890. It was a beautiful place to have a reception and a dance. Back then, you know, you'd celebrate two or three days. You didn't let the bride and groom get out to themselves and when they did, then everybody else would celebrate!

After their marriage, the Jarrells settled on a farm in the Bethlehem Community of Rockingham County. The family grew rapidly, as Richard Turner and Betty Stultz Jarrell became the parents of nine children.

Mary Jarrell Meador was born in 1911, the eighth child and youngest daughter. She began attending the Bethlehem School in 1918:

> I started to Bethlehem when I was seven years old. I think it was the year the war started that I started to Bethlehem. The reason that I remember it so well is that I had a brother that was in World War I. I had heard Mama and all them talking and reading the paper. To go to school, I lived just across the hill there, I crossed the cow pasture and the branch and went up there to the old school. You know where the old school was? It was right before you get

> to the church (Bethlehem Methodist)...I could talk forever about that old school.

Bethlehem was a two teacher, rural schoolhouse providing schooling for children in grades one through seven. Mrs. Meador attended Bethlehem until 1924 when the new Wentworth Consolidated School opened, graduating from Wentworth in 1930. After her marriage to Joe Meador in 1933, further education was delayed as she cared for her husband and three sons. Mrs. Meador completed her college education on a part time basis and became Wentworth School's librarian in 1963, working in this capacity until 1977.

The Jarrell farm was near enough to Bethlehem School so that Mary Jarrell (Meador) and her older brothers and sisters could walk across the cow pasture to school. Mrs. Meador shared her earliest memory from school:

> The first thing I really remember and I'll tell you this. We had double desks and I was seated with Lucy Moore. That's the way we would sit, an older student with a first year student. I had these little dresses that Mama had made me and little bonnets that matched my dresses. I never had any pretty petticoats before and she had made me some outing petticoats, pink and blue, to go with whatever color my dress was. She crocheted a little edge on the bottom of them. Well, I had never had anything like that! Every time I sat down, I would pull my dress up and show my petticoats and Lucy would take my dress and pull it down over my petticoats. I remember it like it was yesterday!

Bethlehem School was "one of the nicest schools around," recalls Mrs. Meador. "They had just one room for a

long time, before my day." After the second room was added, Bethlehem became a two teacher school. The principal teacher taught fifth, sixth, and seventh grades and the primary children were schooled by the other teacher. Students who completed the seventh grade received diplomas. If they wished to attend secondary school, it was necessary for them to go to the Leaksville-Spray Institute or to Reidsville to high school. Some students would go out of the county to further their education. According to Mrs. Meador, just the experience of being away from home was a learning opportunity for these young men and women. "They would go away for a while. If they didn't stay but six weeks or three months, it was still a learning experience for them to learn how to be away from home," recalls Mrs. Meador.

> I remember my oldest brother, Thomas, got his first experience of stepping out into the world, so to speak. He went to Greensboro and worked on the streetcar. He was there when World War I broke out and he went into the army from there.

Mrs. Meador remembers this experience of being away from home, whether it be in the army or in school, as having a lasting effect on the community. The young people not only grew from their learning experiences, but brought back this gift of experience to share with the community:

> They liked to put on plays there in the community. We had some talented young people that had learned how to put on these things. They had been over to the Institute, my older brothers and sisters had gone over there when they finished at Bethlehem. They'd go in a horse and buggy over there to the old Leaksville High School, you know the one they made such a fuss about tearing down. Some of the young people packed up and went to different schools. Davenport was one of the schools that Nell Gammon and some of the others went to. They'd come back and bring these different ideas and we had people move into the community too, like Mrs. Jim Ratliffe, who were more educated than some of the other women in the community. She was your great-great Aunt Nellie. She worked with the young people and so did Miss Nannie Ratliffe. They put on plays at night. I remember so many of them.

As Mrs. Meador shared her experiences, it became apparent that Bethlehem School was a gathering spot for community activities. The rural schoolhouse functioned as a social and intellectual center for communities (Nelson, 1983), ministering to a variety of needs (Cubberly, 1922). Mrs. Meador remembers a number of activities which went on at the Bethlehem School:

> They put on so many little plays. When they added on the other room, they made the blackboards so they could raise them. They could seat right many people facing the stage. The politicians would come and make a speech. They'd get on the stage and put the chairs in a dignified manner. Some of the people would bring their own chairs. There was a little cloakroom on the side which people used to dress before they went onto the stage. They had some curtains, what you talking about! I can remember how some of them would perform. We had a lot of talent in the community. It was, well, it was living then; do you know what I mean? Get the lantern and walk across the cow pasture.

> Some of them that had to drive, the ones that had horses and buggies would tie them out there to Mr. Ratliffe's fence. That was good living.

Mr. Jim Ratliffe and his wife, "Miss Nellie," lived near the Jarrell farm and Bethlehem School. According to Mrs. Meador, their home was a social gathering place for the community. Mr. Ratliffe's sister, Nannie, enjoyed spending time with the children at Bethlehem School. Often on Fridays, the children who had done well that week would be treated to an outing with "Miss Nannie":

> She would escort us out to the church (Bethlehem Methodist), if we had gotten all our work done. She would play the organ and let us sing. She would forget to pedal it sometimes, but she would sing on. She'd get so carried away; she'd get so delighted with us! That was a great experience to go with Miss Nannie. It was an experience that meant a lot to me.

"That was good living." Mrs. Meador shares her memories of childhood and early schooling with confidence and optimism. I sensed the connection which members of her community shared and the function of the school as a link to the community. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the school was often the focal point of the community, the center of the community spirit (Gulliford, 1984). Mrs. Meador's sadness at the loss of the school was apparent as her narrative unfolded:

> The good old days at Bethlehem. I wanted them to leave that school, but they just couldn't.

> The new road came by and they tore it down because of the new highway. They had changed it. They had torn off the room next to the Jim Ratliffe house and took the old room and made it into a dwelling. People lived there for a good many years. Mr. Jim Ratliffe had gotten the land back and he put some tenants there.

Mrs. Meador's regret at the loss of Bethlehem School reflects both her belief in the positive experiences she had as a student in the school and the impact of the school upon the social bonding of the community. While her narrative reveals the excitement which she felt when the new "big" school at Wentworth opened in 1924, her memories are tinged with sadness at the loss of community connectedness when the Bethlehem School closed.

As Mary Jarrell (Meador) was participating in school and community activities in the Bethlehem community, across the county near Wentworth, another young lady was attending a country school. The farm of Ellis and Elizabeth McCargo was several miles Southeast of Wentworth. In many ways, the family life and schooling experiences of their oldest daughter parallel those of Mary Jarrell Meador.

Lucy McCargo Rankin

Lucy Frances McCargo (Rankin) was born in 1908, the oldest of five children born to John Ellis and Elizabeth Womble McCargo. She started to school in 1915 at Calvary School near Wentworth. Calvary was a one teacher rural schoolhouse. Mrs. Rankin started in the third reader at age

seven having been taught at home by her parents prior to beginning school. "I didn't start when I was six, because at that time I would have had to walk a long two and one-half miles to school."

By 1920, Lucy McCargo had finished the sixth reader. About this time, Calvary was consolidated with a three teacher school in Wentworth, located West of the Courthouse. Mrs. Rankin attended the old Wentworth School until the winter of 1924 when Wentworth Consolidated School was completed. After graduating from high school in 1925, Lucy McCargo (Rankin) attended Elon College, obtaining a teaching certificate in 1926. After teaching a year in Farmer, North Carolina, she taught at Monroeton School (in Rockingham County) for the 1929-30 school year. In 1929, Lucy McCargo married William Alexander Rankin. She began teaching at Wentworth School in the Fall of 1933 and taught there until 1972, completing a Bachelor's and Master's degree along the way in addition to a summer session at Laval University in Quebec.

I interviewed Mrs. Rankin in October of 1994. Having known her all my life in her capacity as a teacher at Wentworth and being aware of her love of history, she seemed a wonderful choice to share a narrative of her early schooling experiences. Our meeting confirmed my expectations as Mrs. Rankin clearly described her years of

schooling at Calvary School, the old Wentworth School, and Wentworth Consolidated School. After a warm and comfortable morning of sharing, Mrs. Rankin treated me to lunch at the Family Dining Room, a restaurant in Reidsville.

I was so absorbed in my interview with Mrs. Rankin, that it was not until I read the transcription of our conversation that I became aware of the lack of information relating to her family. Knowing that I was interested in her early schooling, Mrs. Rankin had limited her narrative to her experiences in the school setting. As I noted this lack of family background, I remembered Mrs. Rankin's active participation in the Rockingham County Historical Society. I reviewed The Heritage of Rockingham County and discovered a sketch which Lucy Rankin (1983) had written about her parents, John Ellis and Elizabeth Womble McCargo. From this article, I will share some information about Mrs. Rankin's parents and a brief glimpse of the early life which Lucy McCargo shared with her parents on their farm. I also discovered an interesting connection between the McCargo family and the Jim Ratliffe family in the Bethlehem Community, mentioned by my Aunt Mary in her narrative.

According to Lucy McCargo Rankin (1983), John Ellis McCargo was well-educated as a young man. She describes her father's early schooling and his decision to become a farmer:

> He attended local schools but he was a very intelligent and ambitious boy, and after he had received all the education the local schools provided, his father helped him attend Thompson School in Siler City, popular at that time. He spent two years there and wanted to continue his education and become a dentist or a school administrator but he had always been rather frail and his health began to show symptoms of the consumption that had killed his mother. Doctors advised him to give up school and get out of doors in the interest of his health. Therefore he returned home and began farming with his father and his brothers (p. 400).

After returning to Rockingham County to farm, Mr. McCargo taught school during the winter months. While teaching at the Bethlehem School, Mr. McCargo stayed with his uncle, Mr. Jim Ratliffe and his wife Nellie (Eleanor). Mrs. Ratliffe's niece, Elizabeth Womble from Chatham County, often visited with the Jim Ratliffe family. The first time John Ellis McCargo and Elizabeth Womble met, she was six years old. Mrs. Rankin (1983) describes how their friendship developed:

> The young man, Ellis, and the child, Lizzie, as she was usually known, were attracted to each other and this attachment grew over the years. On December 4, 1907, John Ellis McCargo and Mary Elizabeth Womble were married at the Womble home near Moncure in Chatham County. Papa was then twenty-eight and Mamma was eighteen (p. 401).

As a young bride, Lizzie McCargo became responsible for a household which included her husband's father, two of his

brothers, and an elderly aunt. Mrs. Rankin (1983) describes the workload which her mother encountered as a young wife and how this burden increased as five children were added to the household:

> Mamma's life was far from easy as a farmwife over such a household, her work increasing as her children began coming, but she never complained. She soon became known as one of the best housekeepers and cooks anywhere around. Hospitable, she often invited neighbors and relatives for meals, and it was taken for granted that pastors of the near-by church and visiting ministers would stay at the McCargo's. She also sewed, making all the clothes for herself and her five children, and many of Papa's, too (p. 401).

Mr. and Mrs. McCargo took an active interest in the local schools. Mrs. Rankin (1983) remembers her father often saying that "education was a cause dear to his heart" (p. 401). According to Mrs. Rankin, Ellis McCargo served on the local school board and acted as treasurer for many of the special school funds.

Mrs. Rankin's (1983) sketch of her parents in The Heritage of Rockingham County reveals the importance her parents placed upon the school, the church, and the community. Her father's strong belief in education is reflected in the support he gave to Lucy McCargo (Rankin) during her years of schooling. Having provided this brief biography of Mr. and Mrs. McCargo, I will now return to Mrs.

Rankin's narrative and continue with her early experiences at Calvary School.

The first school Mrs. Rankin attended, Calvary School, was located on the Chinqua-Penn Farm Road (now called Wentworth Street), near the present Calvary Church. The Chinqua-Penn Farm Road, named for the plantation built by Jeff and Betsy Penn, was the road used to travel from Wentworth to Reidsville. Mrs. Rankin describes the school:

> It was a one teacher school. It was new of course. At that time, most of the country schools had double desks, two students at the same desk; but Calvary with its new desks had single desks and that was quite an improvement. There were seven grades and about 40 youngsters in the school. As we went in the front door, we went past the teacher's rostrum, where her desk and chair were, to our seats facing the door and the teacher. I remember very distinctly that above the teacher's rostrum was a great big printed placard that said, "Be Good." We had devotional every morning and we sang one of two songs. One was "America" and the other was "Twilight Is Stealing Over the Sea." That seems to be the only two we knew.

Mrs. Rankin discussed the lack of "modern conveniences" at Calvary School. The school was heated by a large wood stove. The men in the community would often participate in the cutting and delivering of the wood to the school. Mrs. Rankin laughed as she recalled the toilet facilities at Calvary school:

> Of course, we didn't have any running water or indoor facilities for toilets. We had out on one side of the schoolhouse, the little toilet

> for girls, and on the other side, the one for the boys. Interestingly, a roll of toilet paper, as we know it today, was unheard of. Our favorite toilet paper was old Sears Roebuck catalogs. That was memorable! Schools have come a long way.

As with the Bethlehem Community, the families in the Calvary Community were active supporters of their school. Mrs. Rankin recalled how money was raised to start a library at the newly opened school, "We had a box party supper to make money to buy some books, about 20 books that started the library for the school." In America's Country Schools, Andrew Gulliford (1984) describes how such events contributed to the support of the country school:

> Box socials generated almost as much excitement as dances. To finance improvements in country schools, conservative farmers preferred a one-time donation at a play or a box social to an increase in taxes or a mill levy that would stay on the books forever. For that reason every kind of fund-raising activity imaginable took place in country schools. Schools sponsored box socials, pie socials, and ice cream socials; in lean years, they even had cornmeal mush socials. In this way, country schools made enough money to pay for playground equipment, water containers, clocks, or anything else that might be needed. A single box social could raise enough money to buy an encyclopedia, new textbooks, a pendulum clock, a globe, or extra desks for the school (p. 84).

In 1920, Mrs. Rankin began attending the old Wentworth School. The school had three teachers, Miss Clara Hudson for first, second, and third grades; Mrs. Hal Reid for fourth, fifth, and sixth grades; and Mr. Floyd Shearouse

(the principal) for eighth, ninth, and tenth grades. Mr. J.H. Fleming became the principal the following year.

By this time, Mrs. Rankin was in the seventh grade. She remembers that the seventh grade "sat with the high school and also went at other times to the other two teachers for instruction." Mrs. Rankin's father, being a "good mathematician," helped her with higher level arithmetic which she describes as "being too advanced for me." Mr. McCargo worked nightly with her that year, "I got along quite well with that course and still use some of the things, short-cuts, that I learned in it." Mrs. Rankin remembers being well-prepared in English composition and grammar through her experiences with Miss Clara Hudson while in the seventh and eighth grades and with Miss Annie Campbell in the tenth and eleventh grades:

> I got a good foundation in English that served me well through the rest of my high school and college days. When I went to college, I would get about the same grades on my composition work that I got in high school and others around me would say, "Look at this, I got a C, I would have made an A on that in high school!" But, I didn't have that problem. I was well prepared in English when I got to college.

After starting to attend the old Wentworth School, Mrs. Rankin rode a bus for the first time:

> We rode the first bus that was used in the county. The first day it ran, the County

> Superintendent of Schools (L.N. Hickerson) drove it. During one period of time, they were paving the Wentworth to Reidsville road by Chinqua-Penn Farm and we had to get off the bus at different places and walk around the construction. For some bit, we had to get off at the old County Home and walk all the way down to the old Wentworth School. That was a good sized walk.

Mrs. Rankin attended the old Wentworth School for three years until the new consolidated school building was constructed about one mile East of the old school. Plans for the new building had indicated it would be open in the fall of 1923, however, construction was not complete at this time. The three room Wentworth School had been sold necessitating the arrangement of make-shift provisions for the schooling of students in the community. Mrs. Rankin remembers how the Wentworth community joined together to provide facilities:

> They sent part of the elementary students to the Methodist Church in Wentworth and part to the Presbyterian Church and the rest of us, the high school students, to the upstairs over Percy Gunn's store. They built an outside staircase. They put partitions there and had three classrooms. We went there until after Christmas. After Christmas, the new building was ready and we went into it in January of 1924.

Mrs. Rankin described an early experience, at the new school, where as an older and more responsible student, she was asked to help evacuate the building after an accident:

> It (Wentworth) was a complete school, first grade through the eleventh, with the eleventh grade being the graduating class. I remember one incident there that was potentially dangerous. I was in a classroom on the third floor. In another classroom on the third floor was the home economics lab. The chemistry class met in the basement, but there were no facilities there to store the chemicals, so the chemicals were stored up in the home economics classroom. One day, the teacher was putting water into one that was supposed to be covered with water and she made a mistake and put it into another one and it exploded. It went, BANG, and we heard it all over the floor. The Principal stuck his head inside my classroom, called my name and said, "Go to every classroom in the building and tell them to get out!" So, I did that little chore. The marks where that explosive material hit the walls and the blackboard in that room were there for years until a complete renovation was done. The home economics teacher and the chemistry teacher both got some burns and some facial injuries and had to be out a day or two, but no students were burned.

Lucy McCargo (Rankin) had entered Wentworth Consolidated School as a tenth grade student in January of 1924. Much of her early schooling occurred in the country schools of Rockingham County and Mrs. Rankin remembers each of her schools, Calvary, the old Wentworth School, and her year and a half at the new Wentworth School as important aspects of her educational preparation. As Lucy McCargo (Rankin) was making plans for her final year at Wentworth, several miles away in the Bethlehem Community, another farm daughter was preparing to enter Wentworth School as a fourth grader. Although she was living in the same community as

Mary Jarrell (Meador), the early experiences of this young girl differed from those of Mrs. Rankin and Mrs. Meador.

<u>Olivia Moore Rich</u>

Olivia Moore Rich was born in 1915 and began attending school in Reidsville in 1921. According to Mrs. Rich, the school at Bethlehem, which her older brothers and sisters had attended (along with Mary Jarrell), had closed and Wentworth Consolidated School was not yet open. Olivia Moore's childhood was very different from that of Mary Jarrell and Lucy McCargo because of the early death of her mother. Mrs. Moore (Olivia's mother) died three weeks after the birth of her seventh child. Olivia was four years old at this time. She had two older brothers, Ben and Thomas and two older sisters, Ivey, aged 15 and Lucy, who was 12 at the time of their mother's death (the same Lucy who shared a desk with Mary Jarrell at Bethlehem). Olivia had two sisters who died at a young age; Jewell, Lucy's twin, died at age five from leukemia and Mary Byrd died as a result of a genetic heart condition at age 25.

The first fall and winter following the tragic death of Mrs. Moore, four year old Olivia was sent to stay with her mother's parents near Goldston while her father and the older children completed the harvesting and sale of the tobacco crop. She returned the following spring to live

with her father and older siblings. Their father, Mr. Tom Moore, never remarried.

Olivia's mother, Mary Byrd Womble, was a cousin of Lucy Rankin's mother, Elizabeth Womble. I had been unaware of this relationship before I interviewed Mrs. Rich. In another interesting coincidence, Mary Byrd Womble and Thomas Anderson Moore met at the home of Jim and Nellie Ratliffe. Olivia Moore (Rich) describes why Miss Nellie often had visitors in the Ratliffe home:

> Well, see, she didn't have any children and she had that big house. They had more than a lot of people had and I reckon she just loved to have her kin people to come and visit her, the girls. I don't think they had any boys to come. She would invite girls to come and visit her and that's how Daddy met Mama and that's how Lucy Rankin's daddy met Cousin Lizzie.

Following Mrs. Moore's death, Olivia's two older sisters, Ivey and Lucy, maintained the household. The two older sisters married and by the time she was 16, the young Olivia was maintaining the household for her father and two older brothers. She describes a typical day:

> I would, in the mornings, put dinner on after breakfast and then I would go to the field or if it was handing leaves (tobacco) or something like that, I would go to the barn and work until about 11:30, and then I would go to the house and get dinner on the table for Daddy and Ben and Thomas. After dinner, when I got the dishes washed and everything, I would go back to the field and help. Most of the time I had enough

> stuff cooked for supper, too. But when I was going to school, I got up at 5:00 am and cooked breakfast on a wood stove. I always made biscuits and cooked some kind of meat and eggs and had breakfast for Daddy, Thomas, and Ben as long as they were there, and then got ready to walk that mile to meet the bus by 7:00. How did I do it?

Mrs. Rich's narrative reveals the responsiblity she had, both for the maintenance of the household and the nurturance of the men living in the Moore home. She recalls how she had to urge her older brother, Thomas, to get ready for school each morning:

> The funniest thing of it was I reckon I always had more energy. I would have to make Thomas get up every morning and he was older than me. Daddy would get up and build the fire in the wintertime, go around the house, and when he got to the front, he would holler out to me, "The fire is made!" I got up and went down and cooked breakfast. I would go to Thomas's room and I would say, "Thomas, get up!" I would have to call him three or four times before I could get him up. He was the hardest thing to get up. "Put your shoes on. We've got to hurry!" I would always be ahead of him, but he just didn't like to move early in the morning.

Mr. Tom Moore was an active supporter of the schools in the Bethlehem Community. Mrs. Rich recalls her father's service on the school board and described some of his duties:

> He would go to meetings and all and they would decide about the principals and the superintendent. Back then they had a county superintendent. He went to Raleigh a time or two. He was on the board about four years. Ater I finished, he said

> he wouldn't be on it any more because he didn't have children in school.

Olivia Moore (Rich) continued to nurture the men-folk of her family, her brothers until they married and her father until his death in 1953. She graduated from Wentworth Consolidated School in 1933 and remained on the family farm caring for her father. In 1945, Olivia Moore married Floyd Rich and following the death of Mr. Moore, the Rich family settled in Wentworth, just down the road from the site of the old Wentworth School building attended by Mrs. Rankin.

Olivia Moore Rich shared her experiences of schooling with me on a cool fall day in 1995. Her husband, Floyd, was recuperating from surgery on his back. Mr. Rich had returned from the hospital on the couple's fiftieth wedding anniversary. Both Mr. and Mrs. Rich were looking forward to his recovery and a possible trip to the mountains to celebrate their fifty years together.

Mrs. Rankin, Mrs. Meador, and Mrs. Rich range in age from 80 to 87 at this time. Their schooling experiences in the public schools of Rockingham County span the years from 1915 to 1933. Part One has provided a brief biographical sketch of each speaker. The second part of this chapter focuses on their experiences within the school setting.

PART TWO - In the School Setting

As the narratives of Mrs. Meador, Mrs. Rankin, and Mrs. Rich unfolded and they recalled their schooling experiences, themes began to emerge within their stories. Both spontaneously and from my questions, these Rockingham County women discussed classroom organization in the country school, teacher methodology, gender relationships within the school, the types of disciplinary measures used by their teachers, and the academic expectations which the teachers had perceived for students. Particpants spoke about their career possibilities and the impact the school had on their choice of vocation. As their narratives proceeded, it also began apparent that special people had contributed significantly to the lives of these women. Within this portion of Chapter Four, excerpts from the narratives of Mrs. Meador, Mrs. Rankin, and Mrs. Rich will reflect upon these themes.

School Organization in the Country School

The women interviewed for this study remember recitation and seat work as being the primary teaching methods utilized within their schools. Mrs. Rankin shared with me how the teacher at the one room Calvary School organized her classes:

> Everything was one on one. You would study at your desk and go up and recite. The teacher called us up when it was our turn.

> Classes were very short, about 10 to 15 minutes with each group. I learned as much by listening to the older students when she called them up to the recitation bench. As she questioned and discussed with them, I listened and learned a great deal that way.

Mrs. Meador recalls recitation time at Bethlehem School when her reading class was asked to come to the front of the room:

> When they would call you up, they had a log that was just like a church pew. You'd go and sit down on that church pew when your reading class was called up. If I was in the second or third grade, I would be seated with a bigger person. They'd stay and do their work at their desk when we were called over in the corner to recite, so you didn't disturb others if they wanted to read.

Students would read or work at their desks until the teacher called up their class to recite, work at the board, or practice spelling. Mrs. Meador remembers a Spelling Bee at Bethlehem:

> I never will forget, the only time I ever remember cheating, I got caught! I was in the third or fourth grade. We had the word "vinegar." They (at home) had coached me and I practiced the night before. I wanted to stay at the head of the line. They line you up to spell and if you miss a word, you go to the end of the line. If you could stay at the head of the line for a week, you would get a little gold star and you put it in your little booklet. Well, I was having the hardest time spelling "vinegar." That night they worked and worked with me. Well, the next morning I had this sneaking idea. I wrote the word "vinegar" and stuck it on the side of my desk. Well, sure enough, they gave me the word "vinegar" and instead of trying to spell the

> word, I looked over at my desk and she (the teacher) said, I remember it very well, she said, "Mary, go to the end of the line." So, I wasn't the head of the line anymore! And I never write the word "vinegar" that I don't think about that!

The organization of the country schools attended by Mrs. Meador, Mrs. Rankin, and Mrs. Rich was influenced by the rural environment. Characteristics present in the urban schools such as permanent facilities, regimented and standardized curriculum, and centralized administrative control were rarely present in the rural schools (Link, 1986). Important decisions in the country schools were made by parents and officials closely integrated with the agrarian economy. Mrs. Meador recalls an essay contest which speaks to this notion of community impact upon the schools:

> They had an essay contest during the Depression. They had all the students in all the schools to write an essay on living at home, "How to Make Do With What You Had at Home," was what we really had to do, what the subject was - raise your own corn, grow your potatoes and take care of them, plant your own everything and harvest it and live at home and you really didn't have to go anywhere and buy anything except your sugar and coffee. We had to write essays on that. Mr. Fred Walker was the Farm Agent and he was supporting that, giving prizes. I got a prize, I remember, and I was very pleased. I just knew how Mama and Daddy had always done it. Going back to the Civil War, Daddy had learned how to watch and do. He learned how to "root little pig, or die," so to speak. We were taught it was a sin to waste anything. If you made a dress, you kept the scraps. You made quilts out of them. Feed bags,

> you could get a real pretty dress out of them, see what I mean?

By 1920, rural schools were far from being modernized, but changes had occurred. Increasingly, control of the schools was being centralized and both parental input and local control of rural schools were reduced. Link (1986) defines bureaucracy as the "augmentation and centralization of school administration and the creation of impersonal agencies to direct it." What followed this bureaucratization was a "loss of local power and parental participation and the creation of pedagogical hierarchy, and the institution of a new agenda of education designed to maintain dominant class relationships" (p. 124).

For the women involved in this study, this "pedagogical hierarchy" is apparent. Each of their elementary teachers was a woman. Male teachers were only mentioned as the students approached high school. During this time period in Rockingham County, high school teachers were paid more than elementary teachers (RC School Board Minutes, 1909-1937). All of their principals were men. As an elementary student at Calvary, a young Lucy McCargo (Rankin) remembers a visit by two prominent men to her school:

> I remember very distinctly that year, Dr. Joyner, the (State) Superintendent of Education came (to Calvary School). He was brought by the County Superintendent, we called him Professor, L.N. Hickerson. I remember very well Dr. Joyner

> standing there by that stove talking to the teacher and to us.

In the passage quoted to introduce this chapter, Mary Jarrell (Meador) recalls the authoritarian presence of the Wentworth School principal the first day she arrived at the new consolidated school. As the children were "herded" into the new auditorium, Harry Dorsett was a powerful figure as he "picked" the children out "like chickens." "You go this way, you go that way!" (as boys and girls were sent in different directions to keep them separated by gender).

Gender Roles and Relationships

Although the above example illustrates the authoritarian presence of the male principal, it also reveals information in reference to gender relationships in the schools. Both Mrs. Rankin and Mrs. Moore also remember boys and girls being separated during "free time." As a high school student, Mrs. Rankin describes the restriction of boys to "one side of the grounds and girls to the other side of the grounds." When Olivia Moore (Rich) entered Wentworth, Mr. Stroud was the principal and his wife, Mrs. Stroud, worked at the school as well. She recalls the strictness of the two Strouds, particularly at recess when the boys and girls were kept strictly separated. On the playground, as well as in the building, boys and girls were expected to avoid contact except during class time. Mrs.

Rich recalls, "the boys had one side of the building and the girls had the other side of the building. We couldn't be together." Mrs. Rich did not know why this separation of the sexes was enforced, but remembered occasional times on the playground when boys and girls were allowed to play a game of baseball together or in the playroom under the auditorium when boys and girls were allowed to talk to each other.

These responses from Mrs. Meador, Mrs. Rankin, and Mrs. Rich came as a result of specific questions on my part in reference to gender relationships in the school. I had asked each of them to describe times when boys and girls were treated differently in the school setting. I also asked each participant to describe the types of chores which they performed at home and at school. For the young women involved in this study, each was raised on a farm and participated in the work required to keep the farm operational and productive. The chores for the girls tended to involve helping their mother with household duties, gardening, and canning, as well as working with the tobacco crop. For their brothers, chores tended to be more outdoor oriented, gathering wood for the tobacco barns and house, tending the animals, and field work in tobacco, grains, and hay. In the case of Olivia Moore (Rich), she assisted her older sisters in the maintenance of the Moore household

until their marriage when the entire domestic responsibility became hers.

In an effort to determine if school activities were gender determined, I asked each participant in this study to describe the chores boys and girls were asked to do in their rural schools. From their responses, I learned that girls were often expected to clean the desks and blackboards and sweep the room. The boys were responsible for splitting and carrying in the wood as well as fetching water if there were an available spring nearby. Mrs. Meador recalls a conversation she recently had with a male schoolmate. They were at the Bethlehem Methodist Church building from which they could see the site of the Bethlehem School which both had attended prior to 1924:

> Francis looked out across there and he said, "See that scar there at my eyebrow?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Remember how they used to split the wood out there at the old tree?" I said, "Well, law, I reckon I do." He said, "Well, that right up there, _____ was splitting wood and I ran up too quick and it flew up and cut a gash right there." It had just missed his eye. He said, "I ran up there before he got through. He was looking at the wood, not at me." Oh, mercy!

In the case of Olivia Moore (Rich) it appears that she was asked to assist the school in an area in which they were aware of her proficiency. As a high school student, the teachers and administrators of Wentworth School were

knowledgeable of Mrs. Rich's responsibilities at home and asked her to help in the "soup kitchen" at Wentworth Consolidated School. She describes this experience which occurred in the 1932-33 school year:

> We had a soup kitchen after I was in high school, and it was upstairs on the third floor in the southeast room. Two ladies cooked a big thing of soup to feed the children that didn't have anything to eat. It was a lot of them that didn't, I mean some of them didn't have anything. And so they were given a bowl of soup and two crackers. Then they would have sandwiches if anybody had money and wanted to buy lunch or if the teachers wanted to buy something they had that day, maybe some cookies or something, and they always had milk. That was added my junior year. In my senior year, having a study period before lunch, they asked me to go in 15 minutes ahead of time and serve the stew or the soup to the children. They knew I knew how to do it. They asked me to do that, so I felt like a privileged character to be able to do it.

Mrs. Rich was not only proud because she was asked to help in the soup kitchen, but also of her abilities in this area. Her domestic responsibility in the home had allowed her to provide a service to the school and the role model of the domesticated, nurturing woman was being reinforced by the school.

Several years prior to this time when Mary Jarrell (Meador) was a student at Wentworth, the home economics classes prepared the soups and sandwiches which were served at the school. Mrs. Meador recalls the home economics teacher supervising this process:

> We had peanut butter and raisins. I remember that little food chopper that we would grind those raisins in. Mix it with that peanut butter and it was good. You made a big sandwich. The loaf bread, you had to cut it back then; it didn't come sliced. We made a cheese sandwich and the peanut butter and raisin sandwich. You could get a sandwich for five cents. You could get the hot chocolate for five cents. That's about all we served because we had to fix it. We fixed the hot chocolate in a white enamel pan on the wood stove.

In the home economics room, which was located on the third floor, the teacher also instructed her pupils in the proper way to eat. The girls would take turns eating with the principal and the superintendent. From Mrs. Meador's account, this was a privilege for the lucky few:

> You'd draw numbers to see who got to eat with the superintendent and the principal and so on. You'd get to sit at the table with them to eat. Gosh! I got a ticket that I could eat with them! Everybody (the other students) was standing, looking in the door.

The introduction of vocational education in the North Carolina Schools had provided for home economics instruction for girls and agricultural education for boys. If the girls were "awarded" the opportunity to eat with the male principal and superintendent (after preparing the meal), it would be interesting to discover what type contact occurred between the administration and the boys' agricultural

classes. Would the boys have grown vegetables for the principal or built a desk for the superintendent?

Following the advent of vocational education in North Carolina during the State Superintendent's terms of E.C. Brooks, 1919-1923 (Lefler & Newsome, 1973), the boys at Wentworth Consolidated School took agricultural classes as their vocational course. The classes met in a small structure behind the larger school building. Normally the boys did not take home economics, but Mrs. Meador recalls one exception:

> I had to work with _____. He was in Scouts and was trying to get a pin. We had a home ec. partner and my partner had dropped out of school. I was the only one who didn't have someone with them. Anyway, we had to make some biscuits. So, we got the pan out and we measured and we made the bread and we cooked it. _____ wouldn't touch the dough. He just stood there. He'd hand me a spoon. And I made those biscuits. We had to make those biscuits - I didn't know what was done with them at the time. He took those biscuits down to the principal's office. He carried them to him and got his Scout credit on those biscuits! The principal down there ate our biscuits. I remember him saying, "They didn't kill me. I survived from eating that bread!"

Although Mrs. Meador expressed disdain that the male student obtained credit for making the biscuits when he had done little of the work, her story was told in tones of resignation, not surprised by his behavior or the actions of

the administration in approving the biscuits as the male student's Scout project.

Another aspect of gender relations which appears in these narratives is the relationship between female teachers and male students. Mrs. Meador discusses the relationship between young women teachers and some of the older male students at Bethlehem School:

> I can remember them being partial to some boys and sometimes flirting with the older boys. We had some older boys and sometimes some young little teachers. Some of the boys were bigger than the teacher. They taunted the other children, they taunted the girls; just being a nuisance. The teacher couldn't do much about it.

In this statement, Mrs. Meador is revealing the power which some male students displayed over both the female teachers and students. Mrs. Rich also recalls an incident in which the woman teacher was intimidated by a male student:

> _____ would bring a big ole sweet potato and he would have a biscuit about this big. He didn't get to come to school very often because his Daddy made him stay home and work, but he was smart. He and his sister made A's all the time. We would have a study period before lunch in our classroom. _____ would pull out that sack of food and he would say, "I'm hungry," and would eat it before lunch time. Nobody else dared pull out theirs because they knew that would be a mistake, but the teacher never said anything to _____. They let him do as he pleased...he was as big as... back then he was a great big man. He did as he pleased when he came to school.

At Wentworth Consolidated School, Mrs. Meador also recalls a situation in which male high school students "tormented" a female teacher:

> We had a Miss _____ and she was something else! The boys just tormented her to death! She would sing to them in Civics class. They'd (the boys) would say, "Well, Miss _____, you're going to give us a song today, aren't you?" She would sing and hold her hands up like this and the boys would just laugh and she wasn't aware of how she was allowing those boys to take over her class.

Although these narratives reveal times when males exhibited power over both female students and women teachers, Mrs. Meador also recalls an incident in which the males acted as protectors. The toilet facilities at Bethlehem were located outside. A new male student had moved into the Bethlehem Community and was attempting to observe the female students as they visited the outhouse:

> They had moved here from Virginia and he said anything! He was a... could have been a bad influence, but I'm going to tell you one thing, those boys in that school beat the tar out of him. As the saying goes, "He got his whippin'!" The teacher didn't have to give it to him. Looking up the holes, that was terrible! They had this little john out back and that's where the girls would go. Well, that little sneaker would go around when he would see the girls go out and try to get down where he could see. The other boys, they would catch him and beat the fire out of him. Bethlehem didn't do that way. See what I mean? They civilized him!

In this particular incident, the boys at Bethlehem school were protecting the girls from the inappropriate behavior of the new student, a possible contrast to the times when the boys were "picking on" the girls or displaying power over the teacher. However, this is not a contradiction because the boys were taking control of the situation to protect the virtue of the young ladies. This tradition of protecting women is part of the southern patriarchal heritage and is another example of the power displayed by men (Wolfe, 1995; Wyatt-Brown, 1986).

Discipline and Academic Expectations

The types of discipline used by teachers when these three young women were attending school between 1915 and 1933 included spanking, switching, and staying in. Both Mrs. Meador and Mrs. Rankin remember boys getting into more "mischief" than girls. Mrs. Rankin comments about the difference in disciplining boys and girls. "The boys would get a switching and the girls would have to stay in, even though they might have done the same thing." Mrs. Meador also mentions this disparity. "I don't ever remember knowing a girl to get a spanking." She recalls one of the teachers at Bethlehem keeping children after school to discipline them:

> The teacher would keep them in. She boarded at home (with the Jarrells) and she would walk over

> there (to the school). She'd make me stay after school when she punished them. She'd switch them and I'd witness. That wasn't fair to me. She'd keep me to walk with her home. I was being punished as much as they were.

Although her parents tolerated this teacher's behavior for the remainder of that school year, Mary Jarrell (Meador) was angry at being punished in this way and her frustration contributed to Mr. and Mrs. Jarrell's decision not to board the teacher the next year.

When I asked Mrs. Rankin about teacher expectations for behavior as relates to gender, she commented:

> The teacher's expectations weren't different for boys and girls, but as a usual thing, the girls often got better grades than the boys. The girls would conform more to what was expected, what was wanted. The boys were a little more independent and didn't conform as well and didn't put out the effort that the girls did. The girls would come through with better grades.

Mrs. Rankin knew at a young age that she wanted to attend college. Her family was supportive although her father informed her in advance, that with five children, he could not afford to send all of them through four years of college. Recalls Mrs. Rankin, "He tried to give us one year apiece. He gave me my year and a summer school."

As she entered Wentworth Consolidated School in 1924, Lucy McCargo (Rankin) was planning for her future:

> My classmates who had been in the tenth grade at the old school went into the eleventh grade

> at the new school, but I knew I wanted to go to college and I knew I didn't have the credits. I would have had to have taken an entrance exam, so I decided, with my parents approval, to go through the tenth grade again in the new school. In that way, I earned enough credits to enter college without entrance exams.

Mrs. Rankin strongly believes that her high school curriculum prepared her well for college and for her career as a teacher. She described her course work at the old Wentworth School and the new consolidated school:

> I took five subjects each year for five years in high school and that extra number of subjects and work in high school helped me too, when I got to college. It helped me to be better prepared. I had math. I had three years of Latin; two years of French; history, from ancient all the way through modern; and other courses that went along with it; five years of English, of course, with a great deal of parallel (supplemental) reading that we were required to do.

At Wentworth Consolidated School, Mrs. Rankin participated in speaking contests and was a member of the debating team, the Triangular Debates, for two years. Historically, however, women have not always been encouraged to participate in public speaking. Barbara Soloman (1985), in <u>In the Company of Educated Women</u>, describes the struggles of educated women in their attempt to speak, whether it be at their college graduations, community events, or political activities. This battle has been an ongoing one, since

young women first began to struggle for an education outside the confines of the domesticity of the home.

Joy Osofsky (1971) confirms this distinction between the encouragement males and females received to behave appropriately as relates to their gender. "Males are encouraged to be verbally and physically aggressive, whereas females are discouraged and sometimes even prohibited from showing those traits" (p. 30). According to Osofsky (1971), if women do display these traits, they are often labeled as aggressive and condemnation results.

Residue of this traditional non-verbal role for women continued to exist in the schools of Rockingham County during the time period of this study. Only five years after Lucy McCargo (Rankin's) graduation from Wentworth Consolidated School, a county-wide Declamation and Recitation Contest in which Mary Jarrell (Meador) participated still made distinctions in the speeches of male and female students. These activities took place in 1930 at the Wentworth Courthouse and included students from throughout Rockingham County. Recitation contests were for girls and Declamation contests were for boys. Mrs. Meador recalls that the contests were separate for boys and girls, but did not know why. She did remember that there was a clear distinction between the two events. As defined by Webster, declamation is "the act of speaking loudly with

rhetorical effect." Recitation is "the act of reciting" or the "oral delivery of prepared lessons by a pupil." It is interesting to note which contest the girls were allowed to enter; not the one involving "loud speaking with rhetorical effect."

The historical roots of this oratory separation have been visible since women first struggled for coeducation. In the mid-nineteenth century, in a "coeducational" high school in Pennsylvania, boys and girls were kept in separate sections of the building except for graduation exercises. "At commencement, young men delivered orations from the platform while young women read essays from the lowest of three steps leading to the platform" (Altschuler, 1990, p. 16).

Other than their memories of being separated by gender within the school and on the school grounds, this public speaking event at the Wentworth Commencement was one of the few incidents discussed in these three narratives when male and female students in the Wentworth community were treated with visible distinctions because of their gender. All three of the women participants in this study expressed satisfaction with their schooling. Each felt their schooling prepared them for their future role in society.

<u>Career Opportunities</u>

The support which Mrs. Rankin received in her home and in the school setting enhanced her confidence and enabled her to achieve her goal of attending college She obtained a teaching certificate, a college education, and was a teacher for 43 years. When I asked her if Wentworth School had made any effort to channel students into certain careers, her answer reflected both her experiences as a student and as a teacher at the school:

> No, in the elementary school (students were not channeled into certain careers); in the high school, a little. This was a rural school and there was the agricultural department and many of the students went into agricultural pursuits from that. There was some guidance in career choices. One of the things that I was happiest about in my teaching was being able to channel students into college. At the time I started teaching in high school, there was not a parent who had a college education and they didn't think anything about having a college education. There were some good students in the senior class. I was the senior class homeroom teacher and I encouraged them to go to college. Those two girls went to Appalachian and graduated and became teachers, both of them, good teachers. You could just see with them going to college, the whole family went to college. The family interest grew. That sort of thing was one of my most satisfying experiences in teaching.

Mrs. Meador's response to the question relating to career choices and expectations reflected the time period in which she graduated from high school, the Depression years. She comments:

> You chose a career to survive, know what I mean? Survival was what we had on our minds then. Right many people dropped out of school to get a job. Boys had to quit more often than girls. Boys had to get out and work more than girls.

Mrs. Meador discusses this pressure on boys to quit school in order to get a job, but she also articulates the seemingly contradictory notion of the lesser importance placed on the education of females:

> If there was a family and there had to be a choice, it was educate the boy. You see what I mean? Because he would be the breadwinner. Girls were going to be mothers. And they sort of frowned on it if a mother would leave her children and go out if it wasn't a necessity.

Mrs. Meador expresses an awareness of the societal expectations for women during this period. Girls were not encouraged or expected to go to college because they were to get married and have children (Weiler, 1988).

Olivia Moore (Rich) had continued her education at Wentworth while maintaining the household for the men in her family. When she graduated in 1933, she had hoped to be a nurse. Her father encouraged this career choice, but the young Olivia, being concerned about her father's health, put his needs above her own:

> When I finished high school, I had always wanted to be a nurse. Daddy told me, "Now if you want to be a nurse, I'll go to Danville and get a job and we'll get a little house somewhere in the wintertime and you can go to school down there

> and then come back in the summertime." And I said no. He wasn't well and I knew it. I said no, we're staying right here. I'll do what I can do here and help take care of you and do what I'm supposed to do. I stayed right there and I never did go to school any more. But I would have loved to have been a nurse.

Olivia Moore (Rich) remained in her father's house until his death in 1953. She had married in 1945, but continued to care for her father. She felt a powerful bond with this man who had nurtured her through childhood and her father was pleased with this relationship. His reaction to her decision not to go to nursing school was one of relief:

> He was happy with my not giving in to myself and looking after him. He didn't need to change jobs at his age and do anything like that, I didn't think. I was happy to stay there and do what I could to help him. He looked after me when I was a baby and I felt like it was my time to look after him.

As Olivia Moore Rich described her relationship with her father, her narrative reflected the family connectedness exhibited in the stories of Mrs. Rankin and Mrs. Meador as well. Along with the closeness of family, these narratives also revealed significant relationships with teachers throughout the schooling experiences of these three young women.

Special People In The Lives Of These Women

As a result of my own self-examination during this research, I recalled many people who contributed to my

personal development during my years of schooling. Wanting to know if these women who shared their narratives of schooling with me had experienced these same significant relationships, I asked each participant to describe an individual or special people who had a meaningful impact upon them during their years of schooling. Each speaker discussed the importance of their family influences, but each also mentioned one or more teachers who had special influence upon their lives.

Olivia Moore Rich has fond memories of several teachers. As a young girl without a mother, Mrs. Rich received special attention from her first grade teacher in Reidsville:

> Miss Gwaltney was so good to me. I think I was her pet. Because I was a little country girl and didn't have a mama. If she thought I didn't feel good, she would take me home with her when school was out and call over to the high school and tell the school bus to come to her house and pick me up. And she would take me home with her and put me to bed. Can you imagine?

During high school, Mrs. Rich remembers Mrs. Stroud as being a "wonderful influence." She describes Mrs. Stroud, the principal's wife, as being very concerned about the students at Wentworth School:

> Well, she was a good Christian woman. And she believed in doing what was right. She expressed her opinion on what was right and what was

> wrong. We had a boy in our class that came to school one day when he had been drinking. She sent him home and after he left, she came back in the room and she was so hurt and so concerned that she cried. She just hated to see him throw his life away like that. She talked to us about it. It made you really know that she cared about us. And she did.

Mrs. Meador's narrative also reveals Mrs. Stroud's concern for the students of Wentworth School. Mary Jarrell (Meador) graduated in 1930, as the county was in the grips of the Depression. Knowing the students would not have money to buy new clothes for the ceremony, Mrs. Stroud took steps to rent gowns for graduation exercises:

> Mr. and Mrs. Stroud came there our senior year. She was our senior class sponsor. She wanted us to have caps and gowns. I'd never seen that before, but she said money was so scarce and people didn't need to buy those dresses and flowers that they would need for graduation. I think we rented our cap and gown for $2.00 each and everybody looked alike. Mr. Penn had planted roses around his estate and he invited us over to cut his roses and we made the first rose chain.

Mrs. Rankin describes her high school English teacher, Miss Annie Campbell, as being influential upon her life. Miss Campbell's "enthusiasm and thoroughness" are the characteristics that endeared her to Mrs. Rankin's memory. These are characteristics which I remember Mrs. Rankin exhibiting during her own teaching career.

It is interesting to note that each of these Rockingham women mentioned one or more women teachers as having

significant impact upon their lives. This was revealed in my own self-examination as I recalled my experiences at Wentworth School. It appears that teachers can have a lasting influence upon the lives of children with whom they come in contact.

The narratives of these three Rockingham County women reveal their rural community heritage, their strength of character, and the acceptance and affirmation of their schooling experiences. In Part Three of this chapter, the experiences of these young white women will be discussed in conjunction with writings which relate to the feminist consciousness and historical experiences of women.

PART THREE - Analysis

The final portion of this chapter will be a brief analysis of specific aspects of these narratives from the standpoint of historical and feminist writings. This analysis will follow a similar organizational pattern as Part Two of this chapter, focusing on school organization, gender relationships, teacher expectations, and career opportunities. However, as the themes discussed in Part Two tend to blend somewhat in analysis, I have categorized them in a slightly different format.

School Organization and Gender Relationships

During the latter part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century school methodology was most often organized under a curriculum model proposed by William T. Harris (Schubert, 1991). Harris wrote in 1880, "The what to study is as important as the how to study" (Tanner & Tanner, 1990, p. 90). Favoring the textbook recitation method, Harris explained, "The textbook was both the method of teaching and the curriculum" (p. 90).

In The Struggle for the American Curriculum, Herbert Kliebard (1986), refers to this curriculum approach as "mental discipline," the mind as a muscle. "Certain ways of teaching certain subjects could further invigorate the mind and develop these powers (memory, reasoning, will, and imagination)" (p. 5-6). According to Kliebard, this use of mental discipline, textbook-recitation proved to be the backdrop of a "regime in school of monotonous drill, harsh discipline, and mindless verbatim recitation" (p. 6).

In Rockingham County, primary documents such as school board records reveal little information regarding curriculum and teacher methodology during the time period 1915 through 1933. Information found in school board records, for the most part, focuses on school finance, enrollments, the acquisition of property or supplies, or the construction of new buildings. In contrast to the memories of these young women, who attended school before World War II, and can

recall seating arrangements, Spelling Bees, and teaching styles, written documents have only recorded impersonal statistical information.

The organization of the classrooms of these students reveals a male dominated "pedagogical hierarchy." The bureaucratization of the schools extended into the classroom within the areas of curriculum as advocated by predominantly male authored texts and centralized school board control which focused on numbers rather than children. School organization within the county was dominated by a masculine hierarchy of state and county personnel and male school principals. Even within the classrooms of these young ladies, male students exhibited authoritarian behavior toward female students and teachers.

As the move towards school consolidation pushed rural schools to become more like their urban counterparts, bureaucratization led to a "loss of local power and parental participation" as well as the "creation of a pedagogical hierarchy, and the institution of a new agenda of education designed to maintain dominant class relationships" (Link, 1986, p. 124). This hierarchy not only maintained whites in their place of dominance, but men as well in their positions of authority within the educational system.

Conformity and Internalization

When Mrs. Rankin described the differences in expectations which teachers held for boys and girls, her choice of descriptors was apt: conformity in relation to the girls and independence when describing the boys. Nancy Chodorow (1974) has a parallel view, "In any given society, feminine personality comes to define itself in relation and connection to other people more than masculine personality does" (p. 44). In this particular instance, it appears that the female students in Mrs. Rankin's class were rewarded for conforming to guidelines set by the teacher and the school administration. From the viewpoint discussed by Chodorow, the young girls were defining their personalities on the basis of expectations which were set for them by social and cultural norms (the pedagogical hierarchy of the school).

In Women's Ways of Knowing, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) also address the issue of conformity as a differentiating behavioral factor between boys and girls. Citing prior research by Maccoby and Jacklin (1974), the authors describe girls as possessing the tendency to conform more readily than boys to directives from parents and teachers. In contrast, the boys in this research exhibited more curiosity and exploratory behavior (Belenky, et.al., 1986).

In his article, "The Change in Woman's Role in Home and Society," Bruno Bettleheirm (1971) argues that the

distinctions in attitude, in reference to conformity expectations between the sexes, begins in childhood:

> Discrimination usually begins in youth, when there is some indulgence for the boy's non-conformity or revolt because he must "sow his wild oats;" much less tolerance is accorded the girl who seeks to find herself through such a period of non-conformity (p. 22).

The issue of conformity becomes intertwined with the question of role expectations. Girls were expected to perform certain chores at school and to handle domestic duties within the household. The school curriculum for girls tended to reflect these role expectations; home economics classes, working in the cafeteria, lessons in manners, and preparing meals for the principal.

It should be noted, however, that when Mrs. Rankin described the behavior of girls as being more conforming, it was not with negative connotation. On the contrary, she and each of the other participants in this study expressed complete satisfaction with their schooling. Each felt their schooling prepared them for their future role in society.

Kathleen Weiler (1988) would view this acceptance as an internalization of male hegemony. Weiler defines hegemony as an "organizing principle or world view that is diffused by agencies of ideological control and socialization into everyday life" (p. 15). According to Weiler, the schools

are the "formal apparatus for the transmission of this ideology" (p. 15). From Weiler's viewpoint, women are taught from an early age to accept this prevailing ideology:

> It is the internalization of male hegemony that leads women to devalue their own worth and to assume that the career of a man is more important than their own, or that they are incapable of doing math or science. Thus even when choices are freely made, they are choices made within a kind of logic of existing social structures and ideology. This logic is learned very early and reinforced through many institutions (p. 89).

Olivia Moore Rich freely made the decision not to attend nursing school. What had she internalized to make her feel that her career should be sacrificed in order to care for her father? Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) argue that women are encouraged to feel the need to provide nurture through active collaboration from family and school. Social forces combine to influence the choices women select in their family and career decisions:

> Women are drawn to the role of caretaker and nurturer, often putting their needs at the bottom of the list, preceded by other people, husband and children...The eventual path a woman takes is, in large measure, a function of the familial and educational environments in which she is struggling with these problems (pp. 77, 79).

The authors of Women's Ways of Knowing (Belenky, et.al., 1986) are addressing this notion of women as

caretakers, putting the needs of others above their own, from the twentieth century standpoint, however, advocates of this self-sacrificing behavior have historically encouraged women within the domestic sphere. In the nineteenth century, Catharine Beecher wrote extensively about the role of women in American society. In her autobiography of Beecher, Kathryn Kish Sklar (1973) describes Beecher's view of gender roles: "The dichotomies of masculine and feminine identity could be orchestrated to agree with both a standardized cultural score and a specialized personal calling" (p. xii). According to Sklar, Beecher turned "self-sacrifice and submission - traditional values associated with women - into signs of moral superiority and leadership" (p. 83). Sklar argues that this notion of "self-sacrifice" is still with us in today's society:

> Much of the ideology of domesticity is still with us. Perhaps the most powerful tenet supporting it today is the principle of female self-sacrifice. Women have always been praised for their readiness to put the needs of others above their own, but not until Catharine Beecher's lifetime were they led to accept self-sacrifice as a positive good and as the female equivalent to self-fulfillment (p. xiv).

The actions of Olivia Moore Rich certainly fit into this model articulated by Catharine Beecher. By nurturing her father and brothers throughout her life and making the decision to stay in her father's household and forego any

further education, Mrs. Rich placed the needs of other members of her family above her own. Her sense of purpose in caring for her father throughout his later life indicates the internalization of both the "ideology of domesticity" and the "principle of self-sacrifice."

In conclusion, the narratives of these white women as contained in this chapter have revealed the male pedagogical hierarchy present in the schools of Rockingham County during the time of this study, the expected female role of domesticity which was encouraged both at home and in the school, and the connectedness which they felt towards their families. The participants in this study strongly affirm satisfaction with their schooling, both in the country schools and Wentworth Consolidated School. In the following chapter, the narratives of three black Rockingham County women will be presented. Their stories reveal similarities to the narratives of the white participants as well as sharp distinctions.

CHAPTER V

VOICES TWICE SILENCED: BLACK WOMEN IN THE COUNTRY SCHOOLHOUSE

Introduction

In Chapter One of this dissertation, while focusing on the history of southern women, I discussed the difference in the language of men and women. Women's voices have been traditionally silenced while the language of men has been historically powerful (Lakoff, 1990). Race adds another dimension to this portrait of silence. American women of African descent have faced the dual oppression of race and gender. The limited research available which records the African American female experience points to this silence.

Michelle Foster (1991) in "Constancy, Connectedness, and Constraints in the Lives of African American Teachers," discusses the lack of prior research which studies the educational experiences of African American women. In My Soul Is My Own, Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis (1993), addresses this "conspicuous absence" of research on African American women, "This denial of alternate realities/experiences effectively maintains the status quo and excludes knowledge essential to the well-being of society as a whole" (p. xvii). Kathleen Casey (1993), in I Answer With My Life, describes how the

intersection of educational discourse has resulted in the domination of the traditionally powerful white voice:

> Like the social groups that generate them, these sets of explanations are characterized by asymmetrical power relations; inside the dominant white text, black women appear as silenced and inferior figures (p. 111).

The lack of research on African American women in the educational setting demonstrates a need for investigation in this area. However, as a researcher, I have been concerned about my limitations in regard to interpreting the language of the African American experience. As women, we share the commonality of gender, but as black and white, we do not share the same cultural and social oppression. Etter-Lewis (1993) describes bicultural collaboration as the "clash of world views" (p. 139), likely to be distorted by the unequal relationship between the speaker and interviewer:

> Bicultural collaboration, although valuable, naturally poses problems in the interview situation. If the interviewer is from a dominant group and the narrator is from a minority group, the relationship is likely to be one of power and control for the interviewer no matter how sympathetic or sensitive she/he may be (p. 139).

Patricia Hill Collins (1989) concurs with the notion that the history of power and domination by whites has had an impact upon research on the black American schooling experience, "As a result of colonialism, imperialism,

slavery, apartheid, and other systems of racial domination, Blacks share a common experience of oppression" (p. 755). Because of this oppression, research in the area of education for blacks cannot be considered the same as that of the white educational experience. Collins (1989) elaborates on this point:

> One cannot use the same technique to study the knowledge of the dominated as one uses to study the knowledge of the powerful. This is precisely because subordinate groups have long had to use alternative ways to create an independent consciousness and to rearticulate it through specialists validated by the oppressed themselves (p. 751).

As I prepared to study the lives of three African American women in Rockingham County, I anxiously felt my limitations. Could I, as an interviewer develop a relationship with the narrator which would allow the construction of a text that was fully representative of the narrator's life (Etter-Lewis, 1993) in spite of our contrasting cultural and social background? I found reassurance in Deborah King's statement in reference to the goals of research which Collins (1989) quotes in "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought:"

> Any purposes, goals, and activities which seek to enhance the potential of women, to ensure their liberty, afford them equal oportunity, and to permit and encourage their self-determination represent a feminine consciousness,

> even if they occur within a racial community (p. 751).

By providing the vehicle for the expression of their schooling experiences, I am attempting to represent the feminine consciousness of these three speakers. Another area of strength for my study of the educational experiences of black women is the use of oral history narratives. According to Patricia Hill Collins (1989), the language of African American women is rich in the traditions of oral narratives. In oral traditions of story telling, "there is always the consciousness and importance of the hearer" (Collins, 1989, p. 764). Collins emphasizes this ongoing relationship between speaker and listener by quoting June Jordan:

> The assumption of the presence of life governs all of Black English...every sentence assumes the living and active participation of at least two human beings, the speaker and the listener (p. 764).

Although acknowledging the active interaction between the speakers and the researcher, it is appropriate at this time to discuss an initial contrast in my relationship with the black and white women interviewed for this study. Of the white women who shared their stories with me, I had known each of them throughout my life either as a relative, teacher, or neighbor. This prior connection was limited in my relationship with the black women included in this study.

Although I had known one participant for most of my life as she worked occasionally in my mother's household or labored with me in tobacco on my brother's farm, I had not met the other two women before the interview process. This lack of contact contributed to my apprehension about my ability to conduct an interview where both of us would feel comfortable about sharing experiences across traditional cultural barriers.

Although concerned about my stated limitations as a researcher, I proceeded with the interviews of three African American women who attended schools in Rockingham County prior to 1940. I was surprised and pleased with the comfort level which each speaker and I appeared to share. It is likely that these women would have felt more comfortable with an interviewer of their own race and culture, yet I was grateful to be welcomed into the homes of these three black women and felt emotionally moved by their stories.

The Interview Process

As previously stated, as I began this research, I had only limited connections with African American women in Rockingham County who attended school prior to 1940. Unsure of which direction to turn to find black women who would share their schooling experiences, I conferred with Mrs. Janie Cole, a friend of my parents with whom I had worked in tobacco on my brother's farm. Mrs. Cole not only was

willing to share her memories, she referred me to Mrs. Orena Broadnax, a member of her church, who also became a willing participant. The third interview for this study of the schooling experiences of southern black women was initiated by my husband as he arranged for me to speak with Mrs. Gracie Martin, a friend and neighbor from the community where my husband's produce farm is located.

Each participant graciously invited me into her home to share her memories of country schooling in Rockingham County. Our conversations ranged between two and three hours and each interview was recorded. The tapes were transcribed and from these documents have come the excerpts of interviews shared in this chapter.

The remainder of Chapter Five will be devoted to the family and schooling experiences of these Rockingham County women, ranging in age from 67 to 78. Portions of their narratives focusing on the years between 1920 and 1940 will be discussed. As with the previous chapter, Part One of Chapter Five will provide the reader with a personal introduction of the participants and their families. Part Two will focus on school organization, gender roles and relationships within the school setting, discipline and academic expectations, career oportunities, and people who had significant impact upon the lives of these three women. Part Three will be a short analysis of specific aspects of

each narrative using relevant historical and feminist literature.

PART ONE - "We Was Just A Loving Family"

> As I said, everybody in here was a family like, you know? Maybe your mother was a Baptist and she brought her children up here to the Christian Church. My Daddy was a Christian Disciple and part of us joined down there. That's just the way the family got and the two churches worked with each other.
>
> Orena Lester Broadnax (1995)

<u>**Orena Lester Broadnax**</u>

As a child, Orena Lester (Broadnax) lived on a farm located on Highway 87 between Wentworth and Leaksville (now Eden). Her parents, Charlie and Violet Lester, were the parents of eight children, four boys and four girls. Mrs. Broadnax described the farm and the long trek to Piney Fork School:

> We were sharecroppers, we farmed on halves. My Daddy was a big farmer. He had cows, chickens, and hogs. We raised corn, tobacco. and wheat. We raised everything we ate except coffee and sugar. In the fall, we went to school. We didn't go nine months like they did in the city. I went right up there to what they call the Fellowship Hall of our church. I went there and I had to walk four miles a day, two miles going and two miles coming back. We didn't go up the road, we had a path through the woods. My Daddy was scared for us to be on the highway.

The children's journey to Piney Fork School was not only potentially hazardous because of the long distance or the possible danger from vehicles on the highway. The young black students also had to deal with the elements of nature and the hostility of white children:

> When we would walk up to school in the rain, we would be soaking wet. We caught it. We caught it real bad because the white children on the Galloway Farm went to Saunders School. It was up on the other road (now Ashley Loop). When we got big enough to come around that way, the kids from the Galloway Farm, they were mean, would hide in the woods and rock us! I've been the type, if I hadn't done nothing to you, I wasn't going to run and I didn't run! Every one of them would run but me. I would just stand there. They (the white children) would take off because they knew if I could see them I could tell the teacher and the teacher would tell their teacher. That's how they'd work together. I was standing there trying to see them through the woods and the girls would holler, "You'd better come on here or they're gonna kill you!" Well, I hadn't done nothing to nobody and I wouldn't run. I'd go on to school and I'd say, "What yall crazy things run for?" They were just little children like we were. I wasn't scared of them. When they would hide in the woods, rocks would be going everywhere!

School consolidation in the rural schools of Rockingham County changed this situation somewhat when Wentworth School opened in 1924. Saunders School was closed and the white children living on the Galloway Farm Road were provided with bus transportation to attend Wentworth School. The black children in the Piney Fork Community continued to attend the

Piney Fork School. Mrs. Broadnax remembers persistent hostility from the white children:

> Finally they consolidated that school and the white children started riding the buses. They would throw rocks at us. We didn't have a bus, we had to walk and they would throw rocks at us. They would holler out the windows and spit on us. We told our teacher and she went to Wentworth and told the head man over there about it and he stopped it some kind of way. He came over and talked to us and said they wouldn't be throwing rocks at us no more and they didn't. I guess he talked to their teacher and the school bus driver. We really caught it through here.

Prior to 1919, Piney Fork had been a one room school (RC School Board Minutes, 1909-1937). During the 1920s, when Mrs. Broadnax was attending, Piney Fork was a two room, two teacher school providing schooling for children in grades one through seven. Mrs. Broadnax remembers a fire which destroyed the building about 1930:

> This school got burned down. We was going to have a seventh grade dance that morning, a social they called it. They didn't call them dances. We saw the fire from where I lived and we wondered what it was. We got ready to come to school in the morning and somebody came by and told my Daddy that the school had burned down. We don't know if it caught from the stove or if somebody set it. They tore an old school down from Ruffin and brought it up here and that's when they put the three rooms.

Mrs. Broadnax reflects upon the loss of the two room school with sadness. She remembers the hard work which the

community had contributed to add additional equipment to the school:

> We had bought us a piano. We had PTA meetings there and the parents would donate what little money they could and the children would sell different little things. I remember once I sold some chlorine salves and I donated the money. We bought us an old dilapidated piano and we would sing and pray every morning, say the Lord's Prayer.

The school building which was moved and rebuilt on the site continued to operate until the 1960s when Rockingham County Schools were integrated. Following the closing of the school, the building was purchased by the Little Bethlehem Christian Church for use as a fellowship hall. Mrs. Broadnax's present home is near the church and she participates in church activities in her former school building.

When attending the Piney Fork school, Mrs. Broadnax recalls the need to work at home to assist her parents on the farm. At the end of the school day, there were chores to be performed for the Lester children. Orena Lester (Broadnax) described a typical afternoon:

> When I would get home, I would always go to the basement and tie tobacco that they had stripped all day. We would get home about four o'clock and change clothes. We'd go back to the house after we worked and get our supper, clean up the dishes, and get our night water. The spring was just about as far from the house as from here to the road.

> We would get four water buckets at night and wash the dishes and then we could get our lessons. We had to be in bed by nine o'clock. My mother would help us. Daddy didn't help much with the homework, he'd be in the basement straightening up the tobacco and getting things ready.

Throughout my conversation with Mrs. Broadnax, the importance of family was a recurring theme. She remembers the closeness shared by her parents and the Lester children and the responsibility which family members felt to care for others:

> We was just a loving family. Both of them (her parents) was Christian. We was raised to respect each other. If we fought, we couldn't let Mama or Papa know. If we did, we got our backs tore up. I don't know, I just look back on it now. We thought we was having a hard time, but it was a loving time. We had food, plenty. My Daddy raised bees, he had milk cows and chickens...There was so much love in our family. My Daddy raised eight children of his own and when his sister died, he took three. One was three weeks old and the other two were school age. He was the oldest in the family. Then, the oldest boy had to take charge of being the Daddy for the rest of the family.

Mrs. Broadnax shared her experiences of family and school with me on a warm spring day in 1995. We had not met prior to the interview and it was with nervous apprehension that I pulled up into the driveway of the neat, brick home located on the Piney Fork Church Road. Would I behave as I should and say the right words?

I was welcomed into the Broadnax home with warmth and courtesy. Mr. Broadnax joined his wife in expressing interest in my research and voiced a desire for a copy of our interview. During our conversation, Mrs. Broadnax described their early courtship and her decision to leave school before she graduated:

> After I finished the seventh grade here (at Piney Fork), I walked to Douglass School (a distance of several miles). In the morning when we would get there, we would be so cold! I went to school over there for two years and I told my mother I didn't want to go to school anymore. She said, "I wanted to make a nurse out of you." I said, "I wanted to be a nurse." So I quit school and I started going with my husband, the first man I ever went with and the last one! I started going with him when I was 15 and when we got married, I was 18 and he was 21 and then we started our family. We had nine kids, eight boys and one girl.

The summer prior to our interview, Mr. and Mrs. Broadnax had celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary by renewing their wedding vows. She shared pictures and memories of that family occasion with pride. Mrs. Broadnax remembered thinking of her mother during the ceremony and felt her presence, sharing the joy of the occasion.

During her life, Mrs. Broadnax not only nurtured her nine children and numerous grandchildren and maintained a home for her husband, but was employed outside of her home as well. She worked in the homes of white families, in a

laundry in Leaksville, and for many years at the Douglass Elementary School cafeteria. Throughout this time she never lost her desire to continue school and during the 1970s, she completed her Graduate Equivalency Diploma at Rockingham Community College in Wentworth. With pride and a tinge of regret, in reference to lost opportunities, Mrs. Broadnax showed me her diploma:

> I've had a beautiful life. I didn't have any money and when I finished high school (at RCC), some teachers asked me...I had some wonderful men and lady teachers...Mr. Banks asked me what I wanted to major in and I told him I always wanted to be a librarian. The principal at Douglass told me that when I got finished, he would see that I got a job over there. My husband, he hit the ceiling, "I have ate warmed over food for you to finish high school for which there won't no need! An old woman done raised nine children going to high school!" I said, "Wait a minute, there's a lady over there who's head is white as cotton and she's going to school so she can take care of herself" (her husband had recently died). I was just finishing high school and she was taking law. I told him, "You never get too old to learn." That's always been in my mind, you never get too old to learn.

"You never get too old to learn." This statement by Mrs. Broadnax could be a testimony of her life. She expressed pride and joy in her life and in the accomplishments of her children. From her roots in the Piney Fork Community, her family tree has spread its branches throughout Rockingham County, Greensboro, and New York. She encouraged her children to achieve in school and

pursue the careers of their choice. By working to better ourselves, Mrs. Broadnax feels we can make this a better world for all people:

> I tried to stamp into all my children, it's not your color that makes you what you are. It may be for man, but God looks on him just like he do a white man. It's what you make out of yourself. That's how you make the world a better world, what you make out of yourself.

Mrs. Broadnax's narrative reveals her love for her husband, children, and extended family. She believes the love and nurture received from her parents, Charlie and Violet Lester, laid the foundation for her ability to successfully care for her family throughout her long marriage. The community support and her experiences in the Piney Fork School reinforced the nurture Orena Lester (Broadnax) found in her home. This theme of a supportive school atmosphere will be expanded in Part Two of this chapter, but I will first introduce two more speakers.

Janie Finch Cole

In her early childhood, Janie Finch (Cole) lived in the Stoneville Community. Just prior to her tenth birthday, her family moved to the central part of Rockingham County. Mr. Troy Finch and his wife, Lizzie, had been tenant farmers, but had purchased their own land when the family moved to the Wentworth community. Their farm was located on Highway

87, between Wentworth and the Piney Fork community. After moving, Mrs. Cole and her younger sister Evelyn began attending the Piney Fork School. The journey was several miles, but was made more enjoyable by socializing with other children as they walked:

> It took about an hour, depending on how fast you walked. We picked up kids as we went. It won't as many houses down the road as it is now. We'd start out and meet the others along the way. All of us would get together (about 20). Of course, if it was late, some of the rest of them would be going on. They'd wait sometimes for us or we'd run and catch up.

The children not only walked together for socialization, but for safety as well. Janie Finch (Cole) and her friends experienced some of the same hostility from white children as had Orena Lester (Broadnax):

> We used to pass some walking. They'd throw rocks at us and say cuss words when we was walking. We'd stay in bunches and they'd tell us to "get our tail up the road!" The first time, even though they had told me about it, I was so dumbfounded that I was still walking slow. They said, "Didn't I tell you to run?" The others were just a running, holding their lunch boxes up and just flying. I wasn't running. When the rock hit me, I run!

Mrs. Cole had entered Piney Fork as a third grade student. Although having been warned about the rock throwing attacks, she was shocked at the first occurrence. Part of her disbelief stemmed from the fact that most of the

perpetrators were near adulthood, "These weren't little children. These were like teenagers and grown men."

Other hazards of the long walk included the weather and worn out shoes. Girls wore dresses to school which made them more susceptible to the cold. Mrs. Cole remembers how she and her sister dressed for winter weather:

> If it was cold, we had these panties with the long legged drawers and we wore cotton stockings and we wore them hooked up. Nobody wore pants at that time, everybody was wearing dresses. That's what we wore, cotton stockings and drawers like men's underwear, but the legs came way down and we had them hooked up so they wouldn't fall down.

Mrs. Cole also described her efforts to protect her feet when her shoes began to wear out from the daily walk to and from school:

> Lawd have mercy, it was something else! Shoes, you could wear out shoes. My sister, Evelyn, always got two pairs of shoes before I got one pair because she was so rough on them. I'd have a hole and I would put a piece of cardboard in there and by the time I got to school, it was wore out! The bottom of my foot would be just as raggedy as can be. That's the way you had to do it. I'll never forget, I found a little piece of tin and put it in mine. It worked, but it cut my foot.

After moving to the Wentworth area and puchasing a farm, Mr. Finch worked in Leaksville (now Eden) to supplement the farm income. Janie Finch (Cole) and her three younger sisters, Evelyn, Margaret, and Peggy, were

responsible for helping in the house and on the farm. Mrs. Finch often worked for white families in the neighborhood, cleaning or doing washing. As the oldest daughter, Mrs. Cole did a great deal of cooking for the family and at times she would be required to stay out of school to keep the younger children while her mother worked. As Mrs. Cole shared a memory of having to miss school, her story also revealed her mother's concern for the cleanliness and hygiene of her children:

> Sometimes I used to have to stay out if Mama was sick or if she went and done some day work and keep Peggy, cause she was the baby. Sometimes, I'd have to stay out a couple of days with her. I'll never forget, I stayed out a couple of days and when I went back, the teacher was saying everybody was smelling. She had told them all to wash. Where I got burned on my arm it had left a dark place and she said, "All right, go get your rag and soap and wash because you are dirty." I said, "It's not dirty." She said, "Yes, you are." So I went and got the rag and soap and washed and it didn't come off. She begged my pardon. Everybody was cracking up laughing. Mama always wanted us to wash and brush our teeth.

Mrs. Finch had begun working with her oldest daughter, Janie, at an early age, preparing her to help with household duties. Mrs. Cole was already learning to cook by age ten when the family moved to their farm near Wentworth. She was proficient at making cornbread, but was having trouble with

biscuits. She describes her first efforts and her father's disgust at her early failures:

> I couldn't do good with biscuits. I couldn't get it together. Mama didn't teach us how to do it with a spoon. You got in there and worked it with your hand. I used too much grease, I think, and the bread would be flat and hard, but I learned. I hid bread several times. Daddy said he found some bread I had hid down there. I went back and tried to make some more. He said he couldn't afford to buy flour for me to mess up bread. He'd be sitting there pouting and Mama would say, "She's learning! I can't be here always."

As with Mrs. Broadnax, Mrs. Cole had numerous chores to perform when she came home from school. These regular chores would be in addition to her work with the growing, harvesting, and tying of tobacco, laboring in the garden, and working within the house:

> You had so much work to do when you came in from school, get in the wood, pick up the chips, and get the little kindling together. We had to tote water from the spring and get enough so that Mama would have enough. We didn't have an ice box or nothing like that. The spring was so far, I reckon it was over on Paul's (Moore) land. It was a long way to carry water. We'd have a peck bucket and a gallon bucket and it would take so long. Your arms would get so tired. Don't get no trash in it and have a bucket full!

Janie Finch (Cole) attended Piney Fork School through the seventh grade and transferred to Douglass school to further her education. She often rode with her father on

his way to work in Leaksville or she would walk a distance to meet the bus. Mrs. Cole recalls this first opportunity for black students to ride a bus and her decision to stop attending Douglass School in order to work:

> We didn't have no bus until we started attending Douglass High in the eighth grade. I stopped in the tenth. I would get to saying that I needed some money for something and they'd say I'd have to work for it. I stayed out for about a week and went to work for this woman and then went back and the woman said she needed me some more. Daddy said, "If you want to work, go ahead and work. If you want some money..." Well, I needed the money for different things at school. So I said, "I'll just stay out of school then." I stayed and worked, helping that woman. I forget how much I made. It would have paid for some of the things I needed for school. At school you had to buy material and learn how to sew in home economics class.

This was the beginning of a lifetime of domestic work for Janie Finch Cole. During her life she has often kept the children of white families when their parents worked. She supplemented her income from domestic work by also helping farmers with their tobacco work.

I interviewed Janie Cole in her home in the spring of 1995. Although I had driven to her house on several occasions to bring her to work in my mother's home or assist my brother in the tobacco harvest, this would be the first time I had visited inside the Cole house. The home was neat and clean with lovely kitchen curtains sewn by Mrs. Cole as

a visible sign of her enjoyment of that craft. Even though I had known, Mrs. Cole for years, I felt the same apprehension that I had felt at the home of Mrs. Broadnax. What did I need to do to help us both feel at ease in the sharing of her narrative?

The interview proceeded smoothly with Mrs. Cole making every effort to put me at ease. Her story parallels that of Mrs. Broadnax in many ways: the importance of family, the neccessity of hard work by all members in order for the family to survive, and the nurturing atmosphere of Piney Fork School. These issues will be focused upon in greater detail in Part Two of this chapter, but I will first introduce the third speaker in this study of the schooling of African American women.

Gracie Williams Martin

Across the county, between the Happy Home community and the Bethlehem community, not far from Mary Jarrell and Olivia Moore, lived another young black girl whose story is similar to those of Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Broadnax yet has a specific parallel to Olivia Moore Rich. When she was nine, Mrs. Martin's mother, Bessie Williams, passed away, exposing the young Gracie to the same difficulties which Olivia Moore had experienced following the death of her mother. Both children lost the support of a loving, nurturing figure and experienced an increase in their domestic responsibilities.

As a child, Gracie Williams (Martin) first attended the Locust Grove School located off Moir Mill Road near the intersection of Moir Mill and Hamlet Roads. She was a student at this school through the third grade until her family moved from their Hamlet Road home to the Happy Home community. After moving, Gracie Williams (Martin) began attending the Glenn School, which, according to Mrs. Martin, was originally a school for white children which had begun to be used for black students. She describes the walk to Glenn School:

> We didn't miss no days unless it was bad. When we first started going, me and my brother and sister, we lived on (Highway) 700. We would walk through by Mr. Slaydon. My Daddy asked could we go through the pasture so it wouldn't be so far. We would go through the pasture and then we would come out down here at the bridge and then we had to fight that mud up the hill, up this hill down here.

Although affected by the hazards of weather, Mrs. Martin did not recall being bothered by white children or adults when walking to school. The rock throwing incidents described by Mrs. Broadnax and Mrs. Cole were not part of the community in which Mrs. Martin grew up. "I've lived here most of my life and nobody has ever bothered us."

Mr. Sam Martin (husband of Gracie Martin) lived in the same neighborhood as his future wife. He confirms her statement in reference to the congeniality of the community:

> When we would go to the local school, there was a white school right this side of the colored school there. Mr. Jarrett - I don't remember how many children he had going to school down there at the white school and we had to follow along with them until they got to the school they were going to. We would be running and playing, throwing the ball way down there to the other one, you know, we didn't have no arguments or nothing. Everybody was just like they were all one color. Nice as they could be.

As with Olivia Moore, the death of Mrs. Martin's mother increased young Gracie's domestic responsibilities. Mrs. Martin was nine at her mother's passing and she had one brother and one sister. The older sister moved to New York to live with relatives and the young Gracie became responsible for maintenance of the household at an early age. She remembers:

> I cooked and had my Daddy's supper done when he got home. I learned how to keep house. I done all the things that had to be done. My brother, he took care of the cow.

Mr. Williams did not remarry until after his daughter and Mr. Martin married. Following their marriage, Sam and Gracie Martin moved to Newport News and her younger brother came to live with them. Mr. Martin began working in the shipyards and continued working there until 1961. After the death of his father, he returned to the family farm. He farmed and supplemented his income by working in the mill (Fieldcrest) in Eden. The Martins have been married 56

years, have eleven children, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Mr. Martin discussed their courtship:

> Whenever we didn't have to plow or do something we would go to school. So, I met Gracie at the school and I got to talking to her. After we finished school, they moved over here and I would come up here to see her and I finally got her to marry me.

As I congratulated Mrs. Martin on her long marriage, she quipped, "I had to finish the seventh grade first. I never did get mad enough to leave him. That's a long time!"

Following completion of the seventh grade, parents of students who attended Glenn School were forced to make a decision about the continuing education of their children. For students who wished to extend their education and could afford to, going to Reidsville or Leaksville were the only options. There were no high schools within rural Rockingham County to serve black students (NC Yearbook, 1925). Mrs. Martin recalls the necessity of having to stop school after the seventh grade:

> Well, I tell you one thing. I would have liked to have went to high school if I could have. I just couldn't go. I just considered that my Daddy was doing all he could do. He had a job and he worked day time. How long did Papa work on that job, 40 or 50 years? I don't regret it now because everything worked our fine for me and my life. All my children is grown and nobody crippled or sick or nothing. So the Lord has really blessed us.

After completing the seventh grade, Mrs. Martin's first job was as a babysitter for a young white girl whose parents both worked outside of the home. She also kept the house clean and prepared supper for the family. During her married life, in addition to caring for eleven children, she worked on the farm with her husband, at Zarn Plastics in Reidsville, Fieldcrest Mill in Eden, and Draper Elementary School. After a lifetime of work, Mrs. Martin retired in 1986. Following retirement, her health progressively worsened as she began to suffer the debilitating effects of Parkinson's disease. Mr. Martin began to take over much of the household labor as his wife's condition deteriorated.

The narratives of Mrs. Broadnax, Mrs. Cole, and Mrs. Martin reveal the hardships of rural life in Rockingham County prior to World War II, yet throughout their stories the theme of a loving family is clearly visible. In Part Two of this chapter, selections from their narratives will be shared which discuss their schooling experiences between 1920 and 1940. As in Chapter Four, information which relates to school organization, gender and role relationships within the school, discipline and academic expectations, and the career opportunities and expectations these three African American women perceived for themselves will be discussed. As with the previous chapter, the women

described special people in their lives who contributed significantly to their personal development.

PART TWO - In the School Setting

As I studied the narratives of Mrs. Broadnax, Mrs. Cole, and Mrs. Martin, I discovered an emphasis on the African American school as an extension of the family and community. The roots of this atmosphere of nurturance are found within the African American community and the historical origins of the southern black system of schools. The foundations of the southern black educational experience were discussed in Chapter Two, but a brief review is appropriate as I discuss why schools for black children evolved to become closely adjoined with family and community.

Following the Civil War, the recently freed Africans yearned for the education which had been denied them prior to emancipation. Schools set up by the Freedmen's Bureau were filled with children by day and adults by night as blacks perceived schooling as a possible path from ignorance and poverty. However, lack of support from white southern society and white controlled state governments kept the black schools financially strapped.

Money spent on education for blacks in the South was grossly unequal. Southern whites regained control of North Carolina state affairs in 1877 setting the stage for the

reduction of expenditures alloted for the education of black children. In 1896, the Plessy versus Ferguson, "separate but equal" ruling allowed southern states to pass detailed caste laws (Tyack, 1967).

According to William Link (1986), the failure of African American education is interwoven with the story of the larger failure of American society to make emancipation real. Link discusses how segregation contributed to the inequalities suffered by the schools which served black children:

> Racial segregation in public education brought obvious inequalities because black schools were unquestionably inferior in funding, duration of attendance, level of enrollment, and quality of instruction. White control meant that black schools received disproportionately smaller tax support (p. 39).

In the twentieth century, the time period for this study, education for African Americans was a branch of southern education, subject to the handicaps of the region and the additional handicaps imposed by the racial caste system. Southern states devised certification laws which allowed them to pay black teachers less than whites. Educational funding in the South was below the national average, reflecting the South's poor tax base, low population density, and high proportion of children to adults. Education of black children trailed behind

education of white children in economic expenditures. In 1931, considering the South as a whole, the average figure spent per white student in the public schools was $45.63 as compared to $14.95 spent for each black student (Tyack, 1967).

As Link (1986) articulates, the South failed to make emancipation real. The resulting inadequacies of educational opportunities for African Americans following the end of Reconstruction did not dampen their desire to alleviate their ignorance. Their struggle became more community oriented as families worked within their neighborhood to provide improved schooling opportunities which would advance their race through education and community activism.

In reviewing the narratives of these three African American women from Rockingham County, this theme of a school closely integrated with community was present in each of the three stories. Schools were not only organized around the concept of educational opportunities for children, but for adults as well. Parents, teachers, and school administrators were active supporters of the school and advocates of the school's role as a vehicle for community advocacy in black neighborhoods.

Organization in the Black Country School

Mrs. Broadnax remembers a close, nurturing relationship between school and family in the Piney Fork Community. Her narrative reveals the inadequacies of the school which served the black children of her neighborhood and the response of the teachers:

> When I look back on it, I don't see how in the world the teachers did it. It was hard on them, but they looked like they enjoyed it. They wanted to help us, to mold us in the right way. They knew our parents weren't (financially) able so what they could get from the county, they got. We had a pot-bellied stove in there. We didn't have no lights. We didn't have progams at night, only in the daytime.

David Cecelski (1991), in Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina and the Fate of Black Schools in the South, confirms this nurturing atmosphere within the school setting. The schools "nourished their minds, their bodies, and their souls" (p. 34). Training in the black schools complemented the training they received at home, in the church, and in the black community. The family atmosphere at black schools was "born out of African American heritage and a collective struggle for black achievement and self-improvement" (p. 34).

The nurturing atmosphere of the African American community extended to adults as well as children. The teachers in the Piney Fork School were not only concerned about school facilities and supplies, they also felt a

strong need to help the adults in their community pursue their education. Mrs. Broadnax recalls her most vivid school memory, helping teach the adult night school:

> Miss Abigail did a lot for our school. She even organized a night school. A lot of the parents then didn't go no farther than the third grade and they just didn't know. My mother didn't, but she had good character. She was raised with character, but she didn't have much education. And that's the way my Daddy was. The teachers came in here and they would tell them what they were supposed to have. Some of them couldn't even write their names. My mother could write and she could read. She (Miss Abigail) had them come over here to night school and I went to night school. She asked us to come and help them, help her help them. So many of them didn't know "a" from "b." We would help them. The school children would come back and help the teacher help the parents, help them read.

Being advocates for the African American community, the teachers encouraged members of the community to gather at the school, to meet in a collective struggle to plan their course of action. The teachers and leaders of the educational community were very much aware of the inequalities in educational expenditures between the black and white schools. Concerning school supplies, Mrs. Broadnax recalls:

> Well, they didn't have any. We always took the second stuff. They would buy the white kids the new stuff and take their stuff and give it to us. As the teachers grew, they knew we were supposed to have as good as them because our parents pay taxes. That's what they would tell

> us. We organized a PTA up here and the teachers and the principal from Douglass would come over here and talk to the parents and tell them our rights, what we were supposed to have. We weren't supposed to take trash because we pay taxes, our parents pay taxes like everybody else.

Mrs. Broadnax recalled a visit by Professor Boyte (the principal at Douglass High School) to a PTA meeting at Piney Fork School:

> Professor came one night and told the parents - then the children didn't come to school regular because they had so far to walk, and when it got cold or raining, half the kids stayed home. He would tell them to get the bus we need, they would have to encourage the children to come to school and he would tell them then how far behind the Negro children was and the only way they could catch up was to start in grammar school and learn and work up to high school.

Douglass School was the high school for African American students in Leaksville (now Eden). During this time period, Rockingham County had only two high schools for educating black students, Douglass in Leaksville and Booker T. Washington High School in Reidsville. When Mrs. Broadnax completed the seventh grade at Piney Fork, her only option for high school was to walk to Douglass. At this time, school buses were not transporting students from the Piney Fork community into Leaksville to the high school. Through community advocacy and guidance from black educational leadership, a bus was eventually provided to serve the black community at Piney Fork. Mrs. Cole was able to ride the bus

to Douglass even though she had to walk a distance to meet the bus.

The North Carolina Yearbook (1928) reports transportation statistics for white school children as early as the 1915-16 school year when 150 North Carolina children were transported by school bus. The first mention found in this source referring to the conveyance of African American children by bus is for the 1927-28 school year when 1,108 black children traveled by school vehicle. This same year, 135,872 white students were transported by bus to public schools in North Carolina (NC Yearbook, 1931).

Another participant in this study also experienced the same transportation limitations as Mrs. Broadnax. After finishing the seventh grade at Glenn School, Mrs. Martin faced the dilemma of many African American students in Rockingham County, finding a way to attend high school in town with no bus transportation. She described her inability to continue her education:

> When you finished elementary school, the only place for us to go was Washington High (in Reidsville). You had to find somebody to board with in town; that was the only way. We couldn't afford that so I had to stop.

Mrs. Martin had enjoyed school and regretted not being able to continue her education. She felt an obligation to go to

work to help her father support the family in the absence of her mother.

Information presented thus far from the narratives of these African American women has revealed both the nurturing atmosphere within the African American school and the inadequacies in funding. School organization and teacher methodology were a reflection of social and economic factors which had an impact on the school. Although each speaker recalled teachers being nurturing, caring individuals, committed to the advancement of their race, their memories of methodolgy tend to parallel those of the white students of Rockingham County. Mrs. Broadnax describes her early memories of how classes were organized at the Piney Fork School:

> The best I can remember, she (the teacher) taught primer (first), second, and third in the morning and in the afternoon, she would have us get our lessons out for the next day and she would teach the other classes. She would give us our assignments and we would do what we could there and then we would take the rest home and our parents would help us.

Mrs. Broadnax recalls the children being separated within the classroom by grade levels. Each morning the students would rise and recite the Lord's Prayer. At the teacher's direction, the class would again be seated and "she would tell us to get ready for class, tell us what page

to turn to and you'd hear the paper just a fiddlin'. It was just beautiful!"

At the Glenn School, attended by Mrs. Martin, the teacher organized her instructional procedures in a pattern similar to what Mrs. Broadnax remembers at Piney Fork. Mrs. Martin describes how the students were called up for recitation. "She called the first grade and then the second grade and so on. She didn't have as many in the seventh grade as she had in the earlier grades."

Mrs. Martin enjoyed spelling and reading and continues to read a great deal as an adult. She recalled the Spelling Bees each Friday at Glenn School:

> I used to stand at the head of the class and spell as long as there was spelling. I was kind of smart when I was going. I liked spelling and reading and I read a lot of books now.

Mrs. Cole also enjoyed spelling, although when she attended Piney Fork the teacher usually had the students write their words during spelling tests. She described how she studied her spelling words:

> I used to do pretty good, writing and all. I loved arithmetic and spelling. I'd go to bed learning those words. They'd say you didn't miss none if you put your book under your pillow. I put my book under my pillow and every time I would wake up, I'd be spelling those words. I did pretty good at that. I'd walk around doing my work and spelling those words because she'd give us a whole line to

> do. I only remember one time when everybody stood up spelling the words and if you missed you'd sit down. The rest of the time the teacher called them out and we wrote on paper.

Gender Roles and Relationships

As the stories of these African American women unfolded, differences emerged which distinguished their experiences from the white participants in the area of gender roles and relationships. Each of the white narratives had revealed a discussion of male principals and male teachers at the secondary school. None of the African American speakers mentioned a male teacher. Only Mrs. Broadnax discussed a male principal, Professor Boyte from Douglass High School. Mrs. Broadnax also remembered the white authoritarian male figure who put an end to the rock throwing by white students. For the most part, however, their educational nurturing came from women. Kathleen Casey (1993) addresses this function of African American women teachers:

> Being a black teacher means "raising the race;" accepting the personal responsibility for the well-being of one's people, and, especially, for the education of all black children (p. 152).

In My Soul Is My Own, Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis (1993) confirms the role of African American women as teachers in a quest to lift up their race:

> As the African American community moved further away from slavery, the mission to uplift the race shifted from emphasis on group support to an unequal pressure on women to serve rather than to lead...African American women could best uplift the race by teaching the young. Thus many of the women who entered college in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were motivated by a teaching mission which would ultimately advance the entire race (p. 74).

Although the "pedagogical hierarchy" such as male principals and central bureaucratization as described by Link (1986) mostly likely had an impact upon the African American schools, the narratives of these African American women primarily focused on women teachers in their role of nurturers. Gender relationships in reference to contact between students, male teachers, and male principals were limited within the stories of these southern black women. Participants did discuss their parents' attitudes toward gender interaction and gender relationships within the classroom.

Although Mrs. Broadnax, Mrs. Cole, and Mrs. Martin did not mention being separated by gender within the school setting, excerpts from their narratives indicate that parents during this time period were more strict about keeping boys and girls isolated. Mrs. Broadnax describes her mother's belief that boys and girls should not play together:

> At certain times, my mother would let me go out. I had girls to be with, but she didn't believe in letting boys and girls play together. She didn't care if they were sisters and brothers, she didn't believe in it. But now, they throw them together.

In the Lester family, the father most often disciplined the boys while Mrs. Lester was responsible for the girls. Mrs. Broadnax recalls how her parents arranged this:

> Papa had the choice of the boys. Mother had the girls. Well, both of them disciplined us, but Papa disciplined the boys more strongly than he did the girls. He always turned the girls over to mother. I was telling my husband, I remember my Daddy whipping me once. He gave me three licks. My mother would tear my back up any time. Papa wouldn't hit his girls, but he would tear them boys up if they didn't mind. He would get on them in a minute. You see, he was farming and he had to have the boys to help him cut flue wood, feed the hogs, and see after the cows.

In reference to gender relationships within the school between male and female students, Mrs. Cole recalls an incident in which the girls felt threatened by the boys and teachers had difficulty resolving the situation. As with Mrs. Jarrell at the Bethlehem School, the incident involved the outside toilet facilities:

> If you went to the toilet, some of the boys would slip out and catch you - to feel you! You know how boys is! If the boys saw us go out that way they would ask if they could go to the bathroom. They _had_ to go. They wouldn't come in the toilet, but they'd be hid around the corner.

Mrs. Cole described how she tried to escape the situation by limiting her trips to the bathroom. The female students also began going in groups to provide more protection against the male students' unwelcome attention.

> I always tried to go when class was out for lunch time and try not to go no more because I didn't like that (the boys' behavior). Lots of times several of us girls would gang up if we went together. Most times we would get away. We'd run and they couldn't bother us much. The boys thought it was fun. They laughed and thought it was fun. I don't know if the teacher told their Daddys or not. I know that sometime they would send them home or they would have to stay out for a day or two or something like that. I don't know what happened between the parents and all. I know they would say they were going to talk to them, but I don't know what happened.

As with the previous speakers, I asked each African American woman if chores and responsibilities within the schools were delegated by gender. Janie Finch Cole remembers preparing chocolate milk for the students at Piney Fork School:

> I used to make the chocolate milk. I knew how and some of the rest of them couldn't do it. You see, you had that pot-bellied stove and this big old pot on the stove and you fixed the milk. I had to cook at home so I knowed how to do it and she (Mrs. Foy) would always get me to do it.

Mrs. Finch had worked with her daughter, Janie, from an early age teaching her domestic responsibility within the home. The teachers at Piney Fork were aware of Mrs. Cole's

ability when they asked her to fix chocolate milk for all the students. Mrs. Cole remembered the results when another student prepared the mid-morning snack:

> This would be mid-morning when we would fix the chocolate milk. It was canned milk. They had a place to store it at school. You'd open up the can and dilute it with water and they had sugar and cocoa and that's how I made it. I'd mix the cocoa and sugar up together. One girl done it and dumped the cocoa in there and it was the biggest mess you ever seen. It just bubbled around up there on the top and they just laughed and laughed. They poured that out. I learned that you mixed the cocoa with the sugar because it was just powder and you put a little liquid in it and you just put a little bit at the time until you got it all mixed up. Anyway, that's the way Mama had taught me at home to do it. That's the way I would do it there.

Mrs. Cole described the differences in the chores which boys and girls performed within the school. Her answer reveals the many responsibilites delegated to female students:

> Well, cleaning the blackboards and dusting the erasers, the boys and sometimes the girls, too, did that. The girls would have rags and dust around. The boys didn't do nothing like that. The boys would sometimes bring in wood, but if they didn't do it, the girls would bring it in. I can remember that pot-bellied stove, tall and round. Sometimes I heated the milk on that one and when I got to the other class, I used the long one.

Mrs. Broadnax also recalls chore assignments at Piney Fork School during her time as a student:

> The boys had to cut the wood. I think the county was furnishing the wood because a big truck would come and dump it out just any kind of way and the boys would cut it and bring it in and put it in the wood house. That's what we would heat our rooms by. The girls would sweep and dust and wash the blackboards. We had dust rags that we would dust off our seats.

In addition, Mrs. Broadnax remembers carrying water from a spring located near the school:

> We carried water. I've come down here many times, me and another little girl. We didn't have but two water buckets, two to a room and the dippers. The spring is still down there. We'd come down and get water and tote it back up there about twice a day.

Discipline and Academic Expectations

The types of discipline used when these three young black women were attending school between 1920 and 1940 included switching, standing in the corner, paddling hands, and being sent home. Each speaker recalled that teachers attempted to be stricter when managing the male students. As the white women described in the previous chapter, these young black women remember the teachers having difficulty controlling some of the older, bigger boys.

At Piney Fork, Mrs. Cole recalled having to stand in the corner when she had attempted to help her younger sister Evelyn with an answer:

> I'll never forget when Evelyn went and wouldn't know something, I'd hold up my book and try to tell her. The teacher got me. She told me to come up to the front. "You stand in the corner." The others would snig at you. I was just trying to help Evelyn.

Following this incident, Mrs. Cole told her sister, "You're on your own!" She described the teacher's other method of discipline:

> You got a whop with a paddle. She'd hold the hand like that and I'd look at the children. It looked like it would kill them. I don't ever remember seeing a switch or nothing like that, but she'd take that hand and paddle it. I can't remember even getting my hand paddled. I stood in the corner that time and from then on I tried to act right.

Mrs. Cole remembers some of the boys at Piney Fork as being "something else!" As she described some of the mischief in which the boys participated within the classroom, her narrative also reveals how the boys attempted to intimidate the girls as well as the women teachers:

> Some of the boys would act up and carry on and all of a sudden you'd be sitting there and something would hit you on the side of the head and nobody would know who done it. You'd look around and she (the teacher) would say, "What you looking at?" We'd say, "Somebody hit me!" She'd say, "Are you sure?" I said, "Sure, there it is right there." I couldn't say who had hit me.

As I asked Mrs. Cole to describe the teacher's response to the boys misbehavior, her answer reveals the boys' attempts to maintain domination within the classroom:

> Sometimes she would send them home or call the parents. I know after I got over into the sixth or seventh grade, I had carried a boloney sandwich for lunch. Then we had to carry our biscuits to school. I had a boloney sandwich. I was so proud of that boloney sandwich. I was standing up there unwrapping my sandwich and a boy grabbed that sandwich and left me with just a little end. I cried and went and told the teacher and she said, "You act like you have never had a sandwich before." I said, "I haven't!" They used to say the teacher was kind of scared of the boys. Some of those boys would say, "I've got a Daddy down there!" It looked like to me that she wouldn't do too much to them.

Mrs. Cole described an incident which may have contributed to the teacher's fear of the larger male students:

> I don't know if she was afraid of the boys, but one time one of the boys took and pushed a teacher and she fell up against a stove. That's when he didn't come to school for a week and she went and talked to his parents. See, nobody knows what went on there. I just know it was a whole week or something before the boy come back to school. Nobody asked no questions and when somebody did ask, he'd say, "Shaddup!" So you don't know.

At the Glenn School, Mrs. Martin remembers the teachers being strict on both the male and female students. "Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Lomax had a switch and knew how to use it!" Most often, the boys were the recipients of the switching. Mrs. Martin recalls, "She would whip them boys, but I never

did see her whip a girl." Alternatively students might have to stand in the corner. Mrs. Martin's sister once had to stand in the corner for talking, but she describes herself as not wanting to get into trouble in school, being careful not to misbehave, "I was chicken, you know."

When Mrs. Broadnax was attending Piney Fork School, she remembers one incident of being switched for punishment although girls were not usually disciplined in this manner. Her description reveals her father's dissatisfaction with the teacher's actions:

> One teacher whipped me around my legs and my Daddy went to see her. He sent my brother and me to school together and he meant for us to come home together. Papa had gone to Danville to carry some tobacco and Mother was staying with a lady who had a baby. Every time somebody had a baby, they sent for Mother to come and stay with them. We had a Spelling Bee and I had missed three words and she made me stand in the corner, with my face in the corner. In our seats, the part you sit on wasn't fastened to the desk. When she told me to go sit down, I went to sit down and it slid off in the floor and I hit the floor. All the children laughed at me and she thought I did it a purpose. She took that switch and hit me three times. I had on service weight hose and the whelps got that big. Then she told me to get my hat and go home. I didn't say one word. I went on home and when my Daddy got there he said, "What you doing home?" I told him and he said, "Where's Roy?" I said, "He's still at school." He said, "What did you do?" I told him and I said, "Look at my legs." He said, "I'll be there in the morning!"

Mr. Lester spoke to the teacher the following morning. Mrs. Broadnax did not hear the conversation, but remembered that after the incident, "She never did hit me no more. She was good to me."

In this section on discipline and academic expectations, as in Part Two of the previous chapter, I intended to discuss academic expectations in conjunction with gender within the school setting. These three African American women did not recall distinctions in academic perceptions for boys and girls in their school. Throughout their narratives, the issues of race and economic inadequacies appeared to overshadow the inequality of gender relationships.

Career Opportunities

Earlier in this chapter, I emphasized the nurturing atmosphere of the African American school. The schools for black children "nourished their minds, their bodies, and their souls" (Cecelski, 1994, p. 34) acting as an extension of training received in the home. As I interviewed these African American women, I wanted to discover how this nurturance within the school influenced their career decisions.

Early during her schooling, Mrs. Broadnax felt the nurturing atmosphere of the school. She had experienced the joy of helping adult students learn to read. Professor

Boyte's visit to Piney Fork and the encouragement this respected principal from Leaksville (now Eden) directed toward students and parents to continue the children's education left a lasting impression upon the young Orena Lester (Broadnax). She remembers her parents' reaction to the Professor's visit. Her narrative reflects her parents' concern for their daughter and again emphasizes the school's function as a meeting place for the community:

> They thought a lot of it (Professor's visit). My Mother and Dad came over here. I came with them. I wasn't allowed to go with Susie or somebody like that nowhere. Parents seen after the girls. They didn't turn them loose like they do now. When I came up here, I would help the teacher get the classroom in order for the next day so the children could come in. We did it by lamp light because we didn't have no electric lights and the church didn't have electric lights. They had oil lamps, swinging lamps, and they were beautiful.

In reference to students' future occupations, Mrs. Broadnax did not recall the school attempting to channel students into specific careers. There was a general concern for providing as much schooling as possible, but an awareness of the limitations of career opportunities available for African American women during the early part of the twentieth century. According to Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis (1993), career possibilities for black women were limited to "teaching, home demonstration work, or domestic work for whites such as cooking or cleaning" (p. 72).

The teachers at Piney Fork School and Mr. and Mrs. Lester encouraged the Lester children to extend their education. Mrs. Lester had expressed a desire that the young Orena attend nursing school. Although Orena Lester (Broadnax) wanted to be a nurse, she did not feel able to complete her high school education at Douglass School. The desire to learn and the encouragement from teachers and parents were not enough to overcome the economic limitations. It was not until her own children had completed school that Mrs. Broadnax was able to finish high school.

Although African American teachers encouraged black students to continue their education, parents and students were aware of the limited job opportunities available. Mrs. Broadnax recalled the encouragement she received from her teachers while also urging her own children to move North to improve their job possibilities:

> They (the teachers) would tell us that we would be equipping ourselves, to better ourselves so we could have jobs that was available, but it took a long time for there to be any jobs. Martin Luther King, when he had that march, jobs opened up for everybody then, but before then it was just a few people that got jobs. That's why I sent my kids to New York so they could go up there and better themselves. My daughter finished high school and she went up there and they hired her to be a secretary and she couldn't have ever got a job here like that. The only thing that was offered to her was the laundry and I worked there for ten cents an hour and

> I told her definitely no, she didn't want to go there.

Mrs. Cole also remembers being encouraged to go as far as possible in school, but felt financial limitations similar to those which had hampered Mrs. Broadnax in her quest for schooling. As a high school student, Mrs. Cole needed to purchase sewing supplies in home economics classes. She also felt embarrassed if she didn't have money to buy the school meal because "if you carried your lunch after you went to Douglass, they would laugh at you." So, in spite of receiving psychological support to continue school, lack of funds caused many students to stop. Mrs. Cole remembers some of the students' reactions when teachers urged them to complete high school. "Some of the children said, 'We can't do that because we don't have the money to do it.'"

Gracie Williams (Martin) had been maintaining her father's household after her mother passed away. The young Gracie enjoyed school, performed well academically, and wanted to attend high school in Reidsville after completing the seventh grade at Glenn School. Financial limitations and a perceived obligation to help her father combined to influence Mrs. Martin's decision to stop school and go to work.

During their careers, each of the three African American women interviewed for this study worked as

domestics, caring for the homes or children of white families. They also worked in the mills of Rockingham County, school cafeterias, and on tobacco farms. Although each enjoyed school, none of them felt financially able to initially complete high school. In later life, Mrs. Broadnax completed high school, but did not receive psychological support from her husband to attend college.

Special People in the Lives of These Women

As with my search for myself and in my conversations with the three white women interviewed in Rockingham County, I asked each African American woman to describe significant people who had an impact on their lives. For each speaker, family has been a powerful influence, with their mothers being of particular importance in their lives. Mrs. Cole remembers her mother being very supportive of her schooling in spite of Mr. Finch's belief that schooling interfered with farm chores. Her narrative also reveals her teacher's awareness of the struggles which the young black girl was facing in rural Rockingham County:

> Mrs. Foy (Mrs. Cole's teacher) knew what we had to do and she would try to help us. She said, "You work with me and I'll work with you." Sometimes Mama would see her in town and she'd say, "She's pretty smart, I'll work with her if you'll work with her." Mama would tell us one thing and Daddy would tell us another. Mama would say, "Hurry up and get your lessons done and I won't say nothing to your Daddy." If Daddy wasn't home, I'd do my

> lessons and he'd say, "Why are you still getting the wood and stuff in?" She'd say, "I had her helping me." Sometimes she'd be telling me something and I'd be working and trying to cook and I'd have it (homework) on the table and Daddy would come and I'd get that stuff out of there! You just don't want to be hollered at so I'd get it and put it up.

Mrs. Cole's narrative reveals her love and admiration for her mother. As she described her mother's kindness, her story also reveals the hardships of their farm life in the Wentworth Community:

> Mama was easy to talk to. She won't rough. She didn't holler at you. She said, "I'm telling you things for your own good." Cause it was Mama, I couldn't holler and I couldn't lie to her. I said, "I just can't do it, cause that's Mama." She was easy talking. One time she said, "dern" and our eyes liked to jumped out of their sockets because we'd never heard her say that. It was something we hadn't done, because when Mama went to work and we stayed home, we would clean. We had to sweep the yard and clean the pots. You didn't have no Bon Ami or Comet or whatever, you cleaned them with ashes. We'd get a brush broom and sweep the yard. It was mostly hard dirt. You'd get a dogwood, nice and long. In the house, you'd use a straw broom, you know like the straw out here. Mama would get it and she would take a stick and chafe it and get that stuff out. She'd take some twine like your Daddy bottoms chairs with and tie around it and that's what you sweep the house with.

Gracie Williams Martin, after age nine, was without her mother. She remembers the strong nurturing and caring of her father, but also describes a close relationship which developed between her family and a neighboring woman:

> When our mother died, Florence Wells started talking to us and doing things for us. Even though she didn't take the place of my mother, it helped. She didn't even lock her doors, we could go in anytime we wanted.

Within the African American community, Stanlie James (1993) views mothering as a form of "cultural work" or what Bernice Johnson Reagon calls "the entire way a community organizes to nurture itself and future generations" (James, 1993, p. 44). In "Mothering: A Possible Black Feminist Link to Social Transformation," James examines the African American concept of "othermothering" and its importance to the survival of the black community. She defines othermother as "those who assist blood mothers in the responsibilities of child care for short-to long-term periods in formal or informal arrangements" (p. 45). According to James, this concept has its roots in traditional African history and can be traced in America through slavery as a response to the "evergrowing need to share the responsibility of child nurturance" (p. 47).

Mrs. Broadnax also had a close and loving relationship with her mother, Violet Lester. Her narrative reveals a child's misunderstanding of a mother's strictness, but an adult's loving memory of a cherished relationship:

> There were three boys over me and I was the only girl for a long time and I wanted to be out kicking up my heels in the summer and playing. She'd tell me, "You have to read the

> Testament first." I would read and she would tell me, "The downward way is going to be crowded." She said, "That's why I want you to read this Bible, so you'll know God's word." She said, "On the upward way, every now and then you will see a traveler." And I didn't understand, I wanted to be with the crowd. That's what went through my mind. I didn't tell her. I didn't dare say nothing back to her. Lawd, naw! I would sit out in the swing and I'd say, shoot! I don't want to be on the roadway where you see just an occasional person. I want to be with the crowd, but the crowd was the downward way, you see. What she was trying to tell me; people will follow wrong doings more than they will rightous things.

Mrs. Broadnax's father also had a strong impact on her growth, development, and strength of character. She recalled an incident which occurred when a new family of tenants moved onto the same farm where the Lesters were sharecropping:

> It was fun and when you look back on it, it was pitiful, what black people and poor white people had to go through. Some poor white people went through the same thing we did because I lived with them on the farm and they was treated just like we were, but they wanted to treat us different. They tried to run us out of the dewberry patch. They moved there from Martinsville and this other renter wanted to be boss. We went down to the dewberry patch to get some berries. The white children came and told us, "Get out from down here!" And we went, we little scared dudes, back home and Papa said, "Why didn't you get the berries?" We told him, "Them little white children ran us off." So he went to see their Daddy. Papa said, "There's a dewberry patch over there big enough to furnish the neighborhood, why they got to run my children off?" I don't know what else he said, but when Papa came back he said, "I'm gonna tell yall, I want you to go over there tomorrow and pick some dewberries and if you let them run you out, when

> you get back here, I'm gonna take the brush broom and tear your back up." We went the next day and they come down and said, "These are our dewberries." We said, "These are our dewberries, too. We was here before you." We said, "Our daddy said there are enough dewberries over here for the whole generation. We're going to pick ours." They didn't fight or nothing. They stayed on the farm about three years, but my Daddy had been there 33 years. He raised every one of his kids there plus his sister's children. We hadn't ever had anybody to live there that tried to run over us.

This struggle between the established Lester family and a new tenant family who wanted to control the farm echoes the earlier episode of rock throwing in the Piney Fork community. These incidents illustrate the contempt and hatred which plagued many African American citizens at the hands of their white neighbors. There existed a dual standard of moral and ethical behavior, based on the color of one's skin rather than the measure of one's humanity. W.E.B. DuBois (1973) speaks of this "double-consciousness":

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on with amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (p. 3).

Social and economic conditions which oppressed southern blacks stimulated the need for family and community nurturance. The narratives presented in this chapter reveal

their struggle, the attempts of African American women to preserve culture and family in a hostile environment. The strength of these families, their religious faith and support base, the school as an extension of family and community, the teacher as a nurturer, and the inbred strength from years of oppression have combined to help these women, not only survive, but flourish in a hostile world.

PART THREE - Analysis

The final portion of this chapter will be a brief analysis of particular aspects of these narratives from the perspective of historical and feminist writings. This discussion will deviate somewhat from the organizational pattern of this chapter primarily because the narratives of these women sharply transgressed from my original set of questions which had focused on gender relationships in the country school setting. What emerged from our conversation on gender issues in the schools was a portrait of a people, socially and economically oppressed by the dominant white southern culture. The narratives of these three women illustrate the strength of the African American community and the methods by which they coped with racial and economic oppression. This analysis will focus on the African American school as an extension of the community, the teacher as a connecting influence between school and family,

and the economic factors which required the mothers of these black women to work both at home and in the outside labor force as well.

The African American School - Connectedness and Caring

Research by Michelle Foster (1990, 1991, 1992) indicates that a strong kinship bond exists among extended families in black communities. Foster (1991) uses "connectedness" to describe the relationship between African American teachers and the communities they serve:

> Two facets of connectedness, the depth and quality of relationships with students and the ability to develop mutual trust with parents, are present regardless of grade level, geographic location, or place of birth (p. 240).

Foster affirms the positive effect of connectedness stressing the critical role of African American teachers within the community:

> Teachers developed strong racial consciousness and identify and express themselves in a shared cultural solidarity with their students. Teachers have been able to act in ways that shape and construct their own and their pupils' realities by creating a sense of family that weaves together race, gender, and intergenerational continuity with the politics of resistance... Connectedness and intergenerational continuity are central to the ideology of these black women teachers. In order to understand fully the role of black teachers, it is necessary to consider this pervasive and perhaps most unique characteristic - the constancy of extended kinship (p. 261).

In "Power and Caring," George Noblit (1993) describes his experiences as a long-term observer in the classroom of an African American teacher. In the classroom the teacher is a power figure, but the power is not about competition, but about connection, construction, and caring. Noblit observes that African American teachers may "construct education and caring quite differently" than whites. The emphasis is on collectivity rather than individualism. African American teachers understand that "schooling is about morality and continuity" (p. 37). This teacher, as described by Noblit, defined her classroom in the context of "connectedness and solidarity: where individuals were connected by responsibility and obligations to the whole" (p. 31).

The narratives of these black women reveal this relationship of connectedness and caring within the African American school. They share multiple memories which illustrate this nurturing atmosphere: Miss Abigail's night school for adults, the teacher's journey from Piney Fork to the Rockingham County Central Office to stop the rock throwing, Professor Boyte's visit from Douglass High School to encourage the black children's attendance at school, and the use of the school as a meeting place to organize activities designed to improve conditions for the families of the Piney Fork community. These actions reveal the

school's attempt to not only "raise the race" (Etter-Lewis, 1993), but protect and nurture the community as well.

Working Mothers - Double Duty

Within these narratives, Mrs. Broadnax and Mrs. Cole describe how often their mothers went outside the home to work in addition to their duties on the farm and within their households. Both recall their mothers working in the homes of white families, cleaning or washing clothes as well as caring for white women following the birth of a new child. In an era when white mothers generally stayed home, this necessity for black women to supplement the limited family income increased their already heavy workload.

In Telling Memories Among Southern Women: Domestic Workers and Their Employers in the Segregated South, Susan Tucker (1988) discusses the issue of black mothers working outside of their home. Historically, for most black women in the South, it was likely that they would work in the homes of white families as cooks, housekeepers, wash women, or caretakers of the white children. Tucker (1988) describes the difficulties which these black women encountered, low wages as well as stereotypical behavioral expectations:

> Whites paid arbitrarily low wages and the only way to get ahead was to work for good whites that had money - the ones that gave away presents in compensation for low wages. To receive this

> compensation, called "extra," the domestic or wash woman had to be "nice" - self-effacing servant who knows the desires of her employer and who acts within the range of behavior prescribed for this stereotypical southern servant (p. 112).

Although most black women accepted these gifts as being necessary to the survival of the family, Tucker (1988) views the practice as being demeaning, "White women gave to boost their own feelings of inferiority" (p. 149). Most white women did not work outside of the home and their husbands controlled the family finances.

In spite of the time and energy utilized to perform this additional work outside their homes, the children of these working mothers remember their mothers as being caring, nurturing, and very much concerned with their well-being. When asked to describe an individual who had significant impact on their lives, both Mrs. Broadnax and Mrs. Cole discussed their mothers. Mrs. Martin, whose mother died when she was nine, also described an "othermother" (James, 1993, p. 45), a neighboring woman who provided nurture after her mother's death. In an era where domestic work saving devices were limited, these black women carried a tremendous workload, yet were able to instill a family connectedness which lingers in loving memories within their children.

Epilogue - Outrage and Admiration

Although it was my intent to converse with each of these African American women with the aim of discussing school organization, gender relationships within the school, discipline and academic expectations, and career opportunities; the participants primarily talked about racial oppression, the importance of family and community, and the school as an extension of this nurturing black community. As their conversation deviated from my plan of research, I felt concern about the relevance of their narratives to my study, however, increasingly, I experienced the power of their voices. On one level, the focus of their stories became not on schools and gender, but on cultural oppression and enforced economic deprivation, however, on another level the connection between these factors should not be overlooked. Through their narratives, I gained insight that I had not anticipated, but which was very relevant to my overall study. These women were unlikely to be concerned with gender inequities in their schools when the larger and more menacing spectors of racial and cultural oppression as well as poverty loomed constantly at hand.

Before interviewing these black women, my emotions had focused on myself, my nervousness about my inability to communicate with them because of our differing culture. As their narratives unfolded, I quickly forgot myself as I realized the struggle which had long been a part of the

African American existence. I had not been so sheltered that I was unaware of the historical oppression of African Americans, but for the first time, I heard it from those who had experienced it, not from reading the detached interpretations of a white historian. This was real and powerful and I quickly became emotionally involved, experiencing outrage and anger at the pain these women had endured as well as admiration and respect for their courage.

This recognition of my moral outrage has been a moving experience for me. I felt anger at my ignorance and my belief that racial oppression had not dominanted the lives of black Americans for the century following the Civil War. Of course, I had read of the struggle for education and economic opportunity within the African American culture; what I was not prepared for was the ongoing day to day battles which faced these black families as they fought for survival in a hostile environment. Again, it was the lesson in reality which touched me deeply. The voices of these African American women were different from any I had previously heard; no longer was I reading words on a page or viewing a documentary of the experiences of strangers, I was hearing the voices of women who had lived these experiences. I realized that this was exactly what I had intended to do with my research, to provide an opportunity for women's voices to be heard. Although some of what I was hearing was

not what I had asked, the relevance of their stories to the silence which I wanted to end, made it imperative for me to include this material in reference to cultural oppression although it sharply deviated from my original quest for school experiences.

Through this research, my heart and mind have been opened to a new world of experience. I felt outrage at being part of a culture which not only condoned, but actively participated in this oppression of an entire race of people. This outrage is important if I am to do my part to end oppression in our society, through contact with my children as a parent and with the children I teach. We must believe we can make a difference if we are to make this world a better place for all people.

With my feeling of outrage has come a strong sense of admiration for these black women. Their families faced this hostile world with strength and courage, instilling in each of these women faith and courage to overcome the burdens of each new day. Their narratives reveal this courage, moreover, their stories illustrate their faith in humankind and the hope for a better world for their children and grandchildren.

This focus on hope is an appropriate conclusion for this second chapter of narratives. As with the white women in Chapter Four, these African American women look back on

their lives with affirmation, affectionately recalling their school experiences and lovingly remembering their families. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I will focus again on the process of this research; my search for myself as a southern woman, my relationship with the women in this study, and my thoughts on where we are going, from my perspective as a teacher and a parent.

CHAPTER VI

"AIN'T I A WOMAN?"

That man over there say
   a woman needs to be helped into carriages
and lifted over ditches
   and to have the best place everywhere.
Nobody ever helped me into carriages
   or over mud puddles
or gives me a best place...

And ain't I a woman?
   Look at me
Look at my arm!
   I have plowed and planted
and gathered into barns
   and no man could head me...
And ain't I a woman?
   I could work as much
and eat as much as a man -
  when I could get to it -
and bear the lash as well
   and ain't I a woman?
I have born 13 children
   and seen most all sold into slavery
and when I cried out a mother's grief
   none but Jesus heard me...
and ain't I a woman?
   that little man in black there say
a woman can't have as much rights as a man
   cause Christ wasn't a woman!
Where did your Christ come from?
   From God and a woman!
Man had nothing to do with him!
   If the first woman God ever made
was strong enough to turn the world
   upside down, all alone
together women ought to be able to turn it
   rightside up again.

Sojourner Truth, 1852
(Linthwaite, 1993)

Introduction

This dissertation has primarily been a limited look at the history of southern women with particular emphasis on the impact of schooling in shaping the social role of women in our culture. In Chapter One, I focused on a brief history of southern women in reference to cultural and educational oppression in American society. Chapter Two addressed these issues from the perspective of the Wentworth Community of Rockingham County, North Carolina. As a researcher "for" women, I searched for my own identity in Chapter Three and established a theoretical framework to examine the issue of gender in the school setting. In Chapters Four and Five, I shared the schooling experiences of southern women who attended school between 1915 and 1940 and provided a brief analysis of their experiences in relation to literature presented in the previous chapters. In this concluding chapter, I will briefly look at gender relationships in today's educational system, focus again on my own search for voice, and affirm my life in connection to the lives of those women who shared their memories with me.

Where Are We Now?

As a researcher, an educator, and a parent, I am concerned about the ways in which our educational system molds young women to fit into a role established by society. This research looked historically at women in the United

States from the period of colonization, but focused primarily on women's schooling in Rockingham County between 1915 and 1940. The question remains, where are we now? What are the roles of school and society in the development of gender expectations for the young woman of today?

In 1992, the American Association of University Women prepared a report using research material from 1982-1991 that focused on the schooling of girls from preschool to college. In How Schools Shortchange Girls, the AAUW (1992) presents strong evidence of extensive gender bias against women and girls in the educational setting. Among the findings revealed in this report are: boys receive more attention than girls in the school environment, gender bias exists in testing, and textbooks are not always sensitive to the use of nonsexist language.

In 1989, Magda Lewis (1990) interviewed young college women in reference to gender relationships. One young woman's response speaks poignantly to the struggle she faced in attempting to negotiate the masculine hierarchy within her classes:

> I don't speak in class anymore. All this professor ever talked about was men, what they do, what they say, always just what's important to men. He, he, he is all I ever heard in class. He wasn't speaking my language. And whenever I tried to speak about what was important to me, whenever I tried to ask questions about how women fit into the scheme all I got was a negative response. I always

> felt like I was speaking from inside brackets like walls I couldn't be heard past. I got tired of not being heard so I stopped speaking all together (p. 472).

This young woman describes the alienation she felt within her classes as she continually faced the assumption that women were incapable of making contributions to society. Her response was to withdraw into silence:

> In history we never talked about what women did; in geography it was always what was important to men. The same in our English class, we hardly ever studied women authors. I won't even talk about math and science... I always felt that I didn't belong...sometimes the boys would make jokes about girls doing science experiments. They always thought they were going to do it better and it made me really nervous. Sometimes I didn't even try to do an experiment because I knew they would laugh if I got it wrong. Now I just deaden myself against it, so I don't hear it anymore. But I really feel alienated. My experience now is one of total silence (p. 472-473).

Madeleine Grumet (1988) asserts that the structure of the school replicates the patriarchal structure of the family. Kathleen Weiler (1988) affirms this relationship between school and social hierarchy arguing that the organization of the educational system actively works to maintain the status quo. As she discusses this connection between schooling and the perpetuation of social hierarchy, Weiler (1988) places particular emphasis on economic factors

which impact social class, racial divisions, and gender relationships:

> As state institutions public schools reflect the logic of state power within a certain economic formation, in this case, capitalism. Their hierarchal structure, the content of the formal curriculum, the nature of the hidden curriculum of rules and social relationships all tend to reproduce the status quo. In this society, that entails the reproduction of existing class, racial, and gender divisions (p. 150).

Grumet (1988) and Weiler (1988) confirm the contemporary existence of the hierarchal structure of the school which actively participates in the process of role stereotyping, maintaining the status quo in the areas of race, social class, and gender. Within the classroom, Grumet (1988) argues that the preferential treatment given to boys, the images of males and females presented in school texts, and the bias in counseling and professional advancement that limits women to certain academic disciplines combine to impose restrictions on women in response to their sexual identity. Joy Osofsky (1971) concurs, asserting that education can have little positive effect on the lives of women while this distinction in the treatment of boys and girls exists:

> It is futile to expect that the continuing education of adult women will have a marked positive impact on the future potential of women while children's readers continue to

> purvey less realistic pictures of today's women and tomorrow's than do science fiction comic books; while history text books are written as if women had been no more than passive spectators of the panorama; while introductory science and mathematics are presented primarily in terms of boys' interests; while girls are not expected to be as interested as boys in pursuing their education to the highest possible level (p. 90)

If the schools are continuing to shape young girls into their "proper" role in society, it behooves me to address the issue of how this is being done. Within the school organizational structure, of particular concern is the participation of teachers in this reproduction of hierarchy. According to Grumet (1988), women dominate the ranks of teachers (in numbers), but function under a pedagogical hierarchy of organization in which they are usually trained, supervised, and evaluated by men. She speaks of the need to recognize the degree to which women teachers are "complicit in this distribution of power between the sexes in the education establishment" (p. 85).

Based on my own experiences, the literature utilized in this study, and the narratives of these six Rockingham County women, I believe that most women seem to have internalized their subordinate role in society and actively (though unwittingly) participate in the reproduction of this oppressive gender relationship, both in their role as parents and through mentorship in occupations such as

teaching. Through our families and schooling, young women are taught that separate patterns of behavior exist for both men and women. For women who internalize and act in these "proper" roles, social and familial acceptance is the result. Rebellion or resistance results in dissonance, chastisement, and discipline.

Maxine Green (1978) concurs, asserting that the standardized scheme of the culture has already been handed down by our ancestors, teachers, and other authorities. This guide becomes unquestioned:

> The recipes, the interpretations, are treated as wholly trustworthy; they are taken for granted "in the absence of evidence to the contrary." Inevitably, they are internalized by women as well as by men. Once internalized, even such constructs as those having to do with subordination, natural inferiority, and unequally distributed rights are taken for granted (p. 214).

I had not felt particularly subordinated by gender during my schooling experiences, nor had the women I interviewed for this study. Often when I questioned them about an incident which clearly indicated oppression (segregated schools, unequal academic or career opportunities, or unshared domestic responsibilities), their response was, "That's just the way it was." As I had done, they had internalized and taken for granted their own subordination. It was not until I began to examine my past and the history of southern women that I became aware of

wide reaching cultural oppression of women and our own complicity in the spread of this internalization of subordination.

This dissertation has been a journey for me...a quest for my own voice as well as the voices of other southern women. As I attempted to be a vehicle by which the voices of women could be articulated, I came to recognize my own need to find voice and my need to affirm myself as a southern woman. On this final quest for my own voice and where I am going from here, I again feel compelled to look where I have been.

From Whence I Have Come

When I was a child on our Rockingham County farm and the first golden rays of the sun began to warm the earth in the spring, I couldn't wait to shed my shoes and walk barefoot. The bottoms of my feet soon became tough and leathery from my outdoor work and play. Whether in the garden, the tobacco fields, or the cow pasture, I soaked in the smells of spring and the freshly plowed ground. The time following winter, as the sun's warmth brings new life, has always been a period of renewal for me.

I felt this same sense of rebirth as an adult during my graduate program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro when I began to explore literature which awakened me to critical issues in our society. Having led a somewhat

sheltered life on our farm near Wentworth, I had only limited awareness of cultural diversity, gender inequities, or social oppression. However, as with any new growth, this expansion of my horizons has brought risks. Just as the fresh new flowers of spring are threatened by the heat and dryness of the summer sun, my new growth experienced the pain of reality. With the awareness of oppression comes the pain of actuality and the sense of helplessness when one cannot solve the problems which plague our world.

This dissertation has been another step in my process of growth and renewal. When reading about historic southern women, I learned from whence I had come, the agony of the developmental process which has brought women to this point in time. From their roots, I have grown and the new buds which have appeared in this dissertation process continue to slowly blossom.

As I set out to provide a vehicle for the voices of southern women, I did not initially perceive that my voice needed to be articulated as well. As I searched for the roots of southern womanhood, finding my own roots was an unexpected benefit. The process was a congruent one, with an affirmation of my heritage occurring as I was able to claim my own life. Sojourner Truth's poem, "Ain't I A Woman," delivered at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio in 1852, speaks to this search for voice and

affirmation of womanhood. Her voice touched me deeply as her words reveal her anguish at the oppression she had suffered as a woman and as a slave. Although unable to adequately identify with the torture of slavery, the bond which I felt with Sojourner Truth allowed me to connect with my past and with the women who shared their stories of southern rural schooling.

Ain't We Women?

In addition to the literature which has contributed to this research, the interviews with six southern women added another dimension to my study. These women have contributed more than just their memories of schooling, they have shared their lives with me. When I look at them, I see myself, and I feel our connection to the poem, "Ain't I A Woman?" As rural southern women, we have all plowed and planted, felt the limitations of being a woman, and perhaps internalized the compelling need to turn the world rightside up again.

A critical point in my growth as a woman has been the affirmation of our lives as women. I am no longer the "detached researcher." My emotions have become actively involved in my bonding with my foremothers and with the women who shared their life stories with me. My research, my self-examination, and my conversations with these women have created a variety of emotions. With my awakening and growing awareness of injustice and oppression in our society

came anger. Why is the world this way? Why is there injustice toward those of a different color, gender, or social class? Why do we allow it and what can we do to stop it? And most of all, why do we actively condone and perpetuate oppression?

Through the lens of these questions and emotions, I had to view the ambiguity of my reactions to the narratives of these Rockingham County women. At first, although with guilt, I felt anger towards them. I had no justifiable reason to judge these women yet I asked myself... Why did they allow themselves to be treated in certain ways? Why didn't Aunt Mary stuff the biscuits up the nose of the young man who used her skill to help him with his Scout Project? Why weren't the girls in Mrs. Rankin's class more independent and less conforming? Why didn't the men-folk in Mrs. Rich's home contribute to the domestic duties after the death of her mother rather than allow her to shoulder the entire burden of housekeeping at such a young age?

With this initial flash of anger, I wanted to ask these women, "Why didn't you do something?" Of course, this emotion passed quickly away as I asked myself, "What did you do in school or at home?" Naturally, my answer was, "Whatever was expected of me." If rebellion and retaliation against the traditional culture were not acceptable in 1970, why did I expect it to be possible in 1925? The pedagogical

hierarchy which existed during my schooling and the domestic patriarchy that dominated my home life were also experienced by these women in history.

Fortunately, during my developmental process in this dissertation, I have grown in many ways. Quickly following my initial anger came humility, acceptance, respect, and admiration. In a world fraught with economic risks, gender inequality, and social oppression, these women not only survived, but worked at home, in their communities, and nurtured extended families. Under their circumstances could I have done so well? I have developed a sincere respect and admiration for these southern women who have struggled to survive in an often hostile and nearly always oppressive environment.

Perhaps of the above mentioned results of my growth process (humility, acceptance, respect, and admiration), humility deserves the most elaboration. Although not begrudging my intellectual growth, the most important aspect of this dissertation process has been my moral and spiritual development. Through my connectedness with my southern roots, both through literature and the lives of these six southern women who shared their stories with me, my sense of humility has increased. As David Purpel (1989) writes in <u>The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education</u>:

> As educators we know that the more we know, the less sure we become, and that there is a high correlation between an academic's strength and humility...To be humble is not to disregard one's achievements but to be awed and amazed at the intricacies and complexities of what is being studied (p 52).

The interviews have been the most emotionally stimulating part of my research and in Purpel's words, I have been "awed and amazed" at the complexities of the developing relationships among the participants in this study (including myself as researcher). I have been amazed at the courage and the resiliency of these women in the face of social and economic hardship. I have been awed by their hope for the future and their faith in humanity in spite of prolonged cultural subordination. Although my extended reading has broadened my base of knowledge and has strengthened my sense of purpose in seeking women's voices, the narratives which these women have shared with me have created a bond between us. I went in search of my roots and found my base of support. They are the strong trunk which supports the blossoming buds of my growing awareness of womanhood...and now with sincere sisterhood I ask myself, "Ain't We Women?"

Black and White

Yes, we are women, but I fear for our awareness of our sisterhood. My growth process also included an increased knowledge of the oppression which faces black women, even in

today's society. As I argued earlier, women have most often been eliminated from recorded history, however, black women have continued to face the dual oppression of being female and black in a society dominated by the white masculine hierarchy (Etter-Lewis, 1993).

In my smugness as a blossoming young (in experience, if not in years) researcher, I was appalled when some of the white women of this study did not know where the black children in their neighborhood attended school. Some of these children were living on the same farm as the white women and as children, they were playmates. However, as I examined my reaction in the light of my increased humility, I realized not only how little I knew about black children who attended school with me as a child, but how little I had previously known about black culture in the United States. Recorded history has not only omitted women historically, but the African American culture as well.

Where does this leave my research on the schooling experiences of African American women? Certainly in the face of their dual oppression as both female and black in a country dominated by the white masculine hierarchy, the sharing of their voices in this study makes only a small contribution to the gaping lack of recorded history. For me as a researcher, however, the interviews with these women have broadened my understanding so that my increased

awareness of the oppression of blacks in our society can have tremendous influence upon me as a parent and a teacher. During my growth process in this research, I also have come to accept the pain of my connection to the culture which oppressed African Americans throughout the history of the United States, yet as a woman I also experienced a strong sense of pride in the strength of these black women as they nurtured their families in the face of continued economic and social oppression.

Where Am I Now?

Today's woman often struggles with multiple responsibilities, career, home, husband, and children. As women have increasingly moved into the workforce, men have not correspondingly assumed housekeeping duties and child nurturance (Williams, 1993). The struggle is culturally broad, encompassing schooling, career opportunities, and family responsibilities. I have often felt the need to be a "Superwoman" to exhibit enough energy required to maintain a fulfilling but demanding teaching job, attend graduate school, care for household duties (albeit poorly), and be a mother (the most important item on my agenda). The crisis which emerged within my home was a struggle for affirmation and respect. If neither my husband nor I wanted (or had time) to do the household chores, who was going to do them? The question which I continually asked myself and him was,

"Why are cooking, housecleaning, and washing dishes female responsibilities?" Of course, the issue was too personal for us to solve rationally and has not been settled to the satisfaction of either of us, but the larger issue remains. My husband expects me to maintain the household and work outside the home just as his mother did, and as did my mother, and most of the white and black women in this study. Women have moved into the workforce, but now must be "teacher, mother, housekeeper -- Superwoman!"

Jean Anyon (1984) argues that the schools are sending this dual message of career and domesticity to female students. Although acknowledging that some researchers assert that girls are taught submissiveness and passivity, Anyon (1984) claims that girls receive a contradictory message in the social sphere:

> Girls are presented not only with ideologies regarding what is appropriate behavior for themselves as females (for example, nurturance of men and children in a domestic situation, submissiveness and non-competitiveness with men outside the domestic situation, and sexual submissiveness), but also with ideologies of what are appropriate means in U.S. society of achieving self-esteem (for example, through success in the non-domestic, competitive world of work). These two sets of ideologies are in direct contradiction (p. 26).

So if women are to have both, career and family, they must exhibit contradictory ideologies, submissiveness within the home, but confidence and accomplishments outside the home.

In my family, my husband and I share this struggle, the complexity of caring for a family in the face of two careers, household maintenance, and the nurture of children. From this struggle of cultural subordination and multiple societal obligations placed upon women, where do we go from here?

Where Do We Go?

This dissertation began as a search for the voices of southern women. As I searched historical literature and shared the experiences of these six Rockingham County women, I found affirmation and an increased consciousness of my womanhood. Gerda Lerda (1993) defines feminist consciousness as:

> the awareness of women that they belong to a subordinate group; that they have suffered wrongs as a group; that their condition of subordination is not natural, but is socially determined; that they must join with other women to remedy these wrongs; and finally, that they must and can provide an alternate vision of societal organization in which women as well as men will enjoy autonomy and self-determination (p. 14).

In my quest to be a vehicle for the articulation of their voices had I contributed to the lives of these women? It appeared that they had enjoyed sharing their lives with me, however, I was intrigued if this experience had changed their female consciousness as it had mine. After preparing

the chapters which contained excerpts of their narratives, I shared this information with the participants. I allowed them time to peruse the material then asked them to share their reactions.

The responses of each participant were positive in respect to my writing. They were careful not to hurt my feelings by being overly critical, so I am unaware if they had apprehensions or negative feelings. A few mistakes, such as the spelling of names or the location of a city, were noted and corrected, but had this experience changed them in any way as it had me? I do not know. Although I asked these women if reading this material altered the way in which they viewed gender relationships in their school, their responses continued to mirror the concept revealed in their initial interview, "That's just the way it was then."

We were looking at the material from a different perspective. The research process, the reading of the literature, my self-examination, and the interviews changed me greatly. These women viewed this work as my personal quest and although they have been sincerely interested in my research, I don't feel it has been a life changing experience for them. However, in spite of our differences in a search for feminist consciousness, I feel we both have experienced this process as an affirmation of their lives and mine as southern women. Initially, each participant had

expressed amazement and doubt that anyone could possibly want to hear or read about her life experiences, yet each of them expressed pleasure after reading her own story as well as the stories of other Rockingham County women.

I have shared how this experience has changed my life as a woman, but I feel the need to explore how this process might effect me as an educator. Certainly, I have already become more aware of my actions in the classroom in reference to behaviors which might promote social or gender stereotyping. But I must also expose and examine the possibility that I am exhibiting expectations which if internalized may be harmful to the self-actualization of my female and male students. My hope is that by creating an awareness in my own classroom, I can take needed steps in the direction to end practices which encourage the internalization of the dominant male hierarchy. It is my responsibility as a teacher to be critical of our educational practices if my work is to have meaning:

> People have a responsibility to be critical once they decide on a life of meaning, for they must then discern the degree to which their lives are in concert with that sense of meaning. Human dignity entails responsibility, and responsibility entails being critical (Purpel, 1989, p. 132).

Excluding parenting, I can think of no other life's work that incorporates more meaning than teaching. In what other

area do we touch the lives of so many young people? As David Purpel (1989) states, educators must regard their work as "sacred":

> Such educators must regard themselves and their students as holy and sacred, not as tools and mechanisms, hence as ends not means; they must be committed to the development of institutions of learning in which all those involved (teachers, administrators, staff, students) are full citizens, each of whom has inherent and full dignity, and each of whom has the inherent right to grow, learn, and create as much as he/she possibly can. Thus schools can be transformed from warehouses and training sites into centers of inquiry and growth where participants share their different abilities and talents in the pursuit of the common goal of creating a culture of deepest meaning (p. 110).

For our culture to be one of deep meaning, our schools must give our children the legacy of humanity. Each individual, regardless of gender, race, or social class has the intrinsic right to an education which allows them to feel affirmed, not alienated; to be an integral part of culture, not marginalized and ignored; and to be an individual empowered to make the decisions vital to her/his life, not oppressed by a dominant hierarchy.

A Message For Mark and Katie

The final chapter of this dissertation has looked at gender issues in today's schools, has reaffirmed my search for myself and my connectedness to southern women, and has

focused on my aspirations as an educator. I would be remiss in this study if I did not address how my increased consciousness has affected my relationship with my children. In searching for my voice, I have discovered a need to speak to my son and daughter.

This decision to speak to my children is an appropriate end to this dissertation, reflecting both my personal growth and the importance I place on sharing this experience with Mark and Katie. This entire process has been one of connection for me; from my reading of historical literature, my search for my voice, and my affirmation of my life and the lives of six southern women who participated in this work, to my desire to connect my increased sense of consciousness with my primary roles of teaching and parenting. Feeling the need to have my children realize how meaningful this experience has been for me as a woman and as a mother, I share with them the despair I experienced during this process, my apprehension for their development in today's society, and my hope for their future. To conclude this dissertation, I have written an open letter for my son, Mark, and my daughter, Katie.

I have felt anguish and anger regarding the dual status of women, as both domestic worker and career woman. With my growing awareness of the subordination of women in society and our participation in our own oppression through the

internalization of socially constructed gender stereotypes, I despair for the future of my children. However, I cannot succumb, not with my new found affirmation of the struggle which has brought women into this final decade of the twentieth century.

Nor can I give up, knowing that my son and daughter are already being exposed to the same indoctrination of role expectations as children have experienced for generations. I know my son has some awareness of the unfairness of these expectations since he recently described an incident which occurred in a class at Wentworth School. The teacher had asked for volunteers to perform a chore. When boys and girls both expressed an interest in providing assistance, the comment from the (female) teacher implied that girls were not capable of performing this particular job. When discussing the situation, my son expressed dissatisfaction relating to the teacher's assessment of the girl's lack of ability and concern for the emotions of the female students who had experienced the teacher's rebuff. Although at the time, I expressed my pride in his reaction, I want to speak to the issue again:

> Dear Mark,
> Do you remember the anger and sadness you felt when the girls in your classroom volunteered to perform a job and were rebuffed by the teacher? Hold on to those emotions and don't let go. Please try to always remember that we are each vital,

living human beings with individual strengths and weaknesses, but together we can do much. No matter our color, gender, or social class, working together we can make this world better for all of us. We must fight unfairness and injustice with affirmation and faith in humankind.

Love, Mom

P.S. Housework is for everyone who lives in the house!

My message to my daughter is more difficult, knowing that along with the joys of womanhood, she will experience much pain. Her burden will be heavy, if she choses career <u>and</u> family, and even the choice itself will be painful. Even at the young age of five, I know she has already been influenced by role expectations. This fact came abruptly to my attention in an episode which occurred during a break from school due to a heavy snow in January of 1996.

As I watched Mark and Katie playing with Legos, building a scene of a pirate and native altercation on a tropical island abode, I was about to receive a shock. While she searched for the native chief, the discussion turned to the proper headwear for the "king." The missing item was necessary for "him" to be appropriately dressed. When Katie couldn't find the crown for the king, I asked her about having a woman to lead the village. "Oh, no" was her quick reply, "only men can be leaders. Women can't be leaders." Having never discussed such a notion and always attempting to live in a manner which suggested that

leadership qualities are not gender determined, I was shocked -- my little girl, already corrupted by society at age five!

The following week, another incident occurred at school which is also most pertinent to the message I want to send my children. As a kindergarten student at Draper Elementary School, Katie dearly loves her teachers, Mrs. Jennings and Mrs. Patterson. Mrs. Jennings is an exuberant, creative teacher whose energy level competes with the 28 active children she nurtures on a daily basis.

Mrs. Jennings loves each of her students with a fierce passion and demonstrates an ongoing interest in the moral growth of her students. Katie came home describing an event which happened in her classroom when Mrs. Jennings set up a scenario to help children comprehend the pain of segregation and discrimination. The teacher described her experiences growing up in southern segregated society then attempted to show the children what discrimination was like by separating the white children into a different section of the classroom and offering candy only to the black children. When Katie described the incident to me, she did not mention feeling left out because she was white and did not get a sucker. She expressed sadness at the memories which Mrs. Jennings had shared, sadness that her friend and fellow student,

Devon, would not have been able to eat in the same restaurant as she.

My message for Katie reflects my apprehension of the pain which might await her in the future, yet my hope for a better society for all humankind, men and women, no matter their race or culture:

> Dear Katie,
> You are too young just yet to realize all the implications of masculine and feminine relationships, but as you get older, please hold on to the most important fact. You are Katie and there is no other human being anywhere that is just like you. You have exceptional qualities that set you apart from others and the strength to use these characteristics to pursue your goals in life. Remember the sadness you felt when you thought about Devon being mistreated because he is black. Always strive to treat all people with fairness and kindness. And of upmost importance, always remember from whence you have come, the struggle that your "foremothers" lived so that you might be a <u>leader</u>.
>
> Love, Mom
>
> P.S. It's okay to hate housework!

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