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AT CHURCH AND AT SCHOOL

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A TALE OF TWO SETTINGS: AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' LITERACY EXPERIENCES AT CHURCH AND AT SCHOOL

By

Gwendolyn Michele Thompson McMillon

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

A TALE OF TWO SETTINGS: AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' LITERACY EXPERIENCES AT CHURCH AND AT SCHOOL

By

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The development of a more sociocultural view of literacy has resulted in the need to investigate out-of-school literacy experiences. Examining students' *outside* literacy experiences, may assist in understanding the difficulties that some African American students have *inside* their classrooms at school. The African American Church has historically taught African Americans successfully, but its voice is excluded from the conversation concerning effectively educating African American students. While some research has reported on African American church history and theology, few studies have focused upon educational aspects. Specifically, little is known about literacy practices and student/parent/teacher relationships within the church. Although the African American Church has been accepted as an influential institution, it has not been considered a resource for educators. In this ethnographic study, I closely examine the literacy practices and literacy network systems of the African American Sunday School and first grade public school classes of two African American boys, by addressing discourse, pedagogical, social, and relationship-orientation similarities and differences from a naturalist perspective. Classroom observations, interviews, and student records are sources of data in this study which utilizes discourse, narrative and social network analysis to locate plausible sources of

incongruence between the school and church environments and identify possible points of connection.

Findings illuminate several plausible sources of incongruence:

- Issues of power and dominance
- Differing definitions of success
- Ideas and values that provide cultural capital in the church environment, but cultural interference in the school environment
- Tension between providing culturally congruent classrooms and "gateways" into the culture of power
- Difference in purposes and responsibilities for the literacy network systems
- Difference in providing opportunities to utilize literacy skills in meaningful ways outside of the classroom

Several possible points of connection were also identified:

- Teacher awareness through information dissemination & exchange
- Increased parental involvement
- Improved teacher education & professional development programs
- Cooperation between school & church to provide increased opportunities
  to display literacy skills

This dissertation study provides insightful information concerning literacy practices in public school and the African American Church. By developing an understanding of each environment, teachers in both settings can teach more effectively, and assist their students in becoming *border crossers* - successfully negotiating cultural boundaries between learning environments.

"When I Can Read My Title Clear"

When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to ev'ry fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.

Should earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurl'd
Then I can smile at Satan's rage
And face a frowning world.

Let cares, like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall;
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my heav'n, my all:

There shall I bath my weary soul,
In seas of heav'nly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast.

The Psalms, Hymns & Spiritual Songs
of the Rev. Isaac Watts

DEDICATION

To God be the Glory!

To my soul-mate, Vincent, who has supported me wholeheartedly in words and actions, especially at those critical times when I doubted my own abilities.

To Morgan, David, and Joshua who have unselfishly shared me with others, while keeping their focus - growing spiritually, achieving academically, and developing socially.

Especially in honor of Mama, and in memory of Daddy, who taught me how to "survive". Those early lessons in life have kept me on the narrow path of success.

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Thanks to the schools and churches that graciously allowed me to observe classrooms and interview teachers, administrators and students. I am especially grateful to the teachers in my study, the parents of my subjects, and my subjects for their consent and cooperation.

I want to thank my family and friends for their support and encouragement. A special thanks to my mother (Pecola Thompson) and mother-in-law (Earlease McMillon) for many hours, days and weeks of babysitting services. Taking good care of my boys took a load off of my mind and allowed me to aggressively pursue my dreams. Also, special thanks to the wonderful people at Herig Elementary who cared for my children while I was commuting to MSU. Ms. Wahnetta (supervisor of the Extended Day Program), has been like a *third grandmother*, and Mrs. Schuler (their 1st grade teacher) would not let them stand outside in the snow or rain if I was late coming home from East Lansing.

Very special thanks are extended to my "sounding boards" - my husband (Vincent McMillon), and the best Sunday School teacher in the world (Georgia Nettles), who listened intently to early versions of my research ideas, providing critical feedback and useful suggestions. Also much appreciation is extended to my nephew, B.J., who provided a "student's perspective" for my research project, and acted as my computer consultant for those difficult to format final drafts.

My love and thanks to "my three sons" – Morgan, David, and Joshua, my greatest motivators, critics, comedians, and personal cheerleaders. You can finally call me "Dr. Mom".

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I believe that every study reflects the researcher's ideas about the world in which we live, and that the conceptualization process is fueled by several contributing factors including the researcher's past experiences. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to begin this dissertation study by locating myself – expressing who I am, and why I am passionately developing a research agenda with the future goal of creating a home-school connections model for African American students by utilizing the African American Church as a *connecting link.* It is important that readers of this dissertation study understand the critical role that my past experiences played its conceptualization, development, and analysis. Throughout the entire process I intentionally established a set of checks and balances to minimize the amount of subjectivity in this study by soliciting feedback from numerous sources during the data collection and analysis phases, and by utilizing multiple readers from various backgrounds. Because of the nature of this study, extra precautions have been taken to follow rigid research guidelines. It is my hope that readers will be able to understand why the African American Church must be included in the conversation concerning the education of African American students, and envision the significant contributions that can be made by this study and future studies conducted in the context of the African American Church.

Personal Statement

I enrolled in the doctoral program at Michigan State University seeking to resolve some issues that had troubled me for many years. I had a passionate desire to find ways to reach and teach the children from my old neighborhood - an impoverished, inner-city area with crack houses on every block, where gang violence is common, and

hopelessness has overshadowed childhood dreams of success. Growing up in the ghetto and attending inner-city schools, I have seen firsthand the endless cycles of poverty that many researchers write about. However, as unlikely as it may seem, the inner-city was also the place where I learned to set goals that seemed unattainable, rise above the pressures of everyday life, and exercise faith in a power much greater than my own.

As the daughter of a Baptist preacher and primary Sunday School teacher, I was taught that attaining a good education was the means to liberation - it was the only way out of the ghetto. After becoming liberated, it was my responsibility to reach back and help others succeed. To my parents, a good education did not only consist of being successful at school, but also included biblically-based training at home and church. I attended church every Sunday with children from many other families. It provided a safe community for its members, many of whom lived in inner-city neighborhoods. As a child, I can vividly recall my mother encouraging her Sunday School students who complained about school problems. My father frequently counseled with parents of children who struggled academically and socially at school. I often wondered why many of my friends did not do well at school, but seemed quite successful at church.

My personal interest in this area was rekindled while working as a long-term substitute teacher at my old high school. I was surprised to learn that some of the star students from my church were in Special Education classes, and others were at-risk of failing several courses. When I saw them at school, they wandered about aimlessly, looking disillusioned, and seemingly quite alienated from the academic process. However, these same children were considered star students in the church environment. Some of them were devoted choir members, musicians, ushers, Children's Church

teachers, Sunday School teachers, and Junior Deacons. They had shown exceptional acting ability when participating in dramatic skits at church, memorizing their parts perfectly, and even improvising when necessary. Their leadership abilities were made evident when they organized their own programs, presided during meetings, and contributed greatly to the enhancement of ministries in the church. They were greatly admired by their church teachers, advisors, and members of the congregation for their skills and talents, but were considered at-risk in school. I was surprised and frustrated to find students whom I believed had unlimited potential doing so poorly in school, and yet so well in church.

These first-hand, childhood observations and teaching experiences motivated me to identify incongruencies between the church and school learning environments for many African American students, and understand how these settings might be better connected. In this study, I have closely examined the literacy practices and literacy network systems of the African American Sunday School and first grade public school classes of two African American boys, by addressing discourse, pedagogical, social, and relationship-orientation similarities and differences. This information will be utilized to develop ways to negotiate the boundaries between these learning environments. My future goal is to create a cultural connections model utilizing the church as the connecting link between home and school. The African American church is a very important voice excluded from the conversation concerning the education of African American students. My research emphasizes the necessity of including that voice.

A Note to Readers

As indicated in the personal statement, this dissertation study was conceptualized from ideas that have been in the process of development since my early childhood days. As an attempt to provide the maximum amount of integrity to this study, I continuously challenged myself to think of alternative interpretations and explanations of the data. Transcripts and ideas were shared with many scholars and colleagues during data analysis. Several researchers read drafts of this dissertation, making recommendations for changes including deletions and additions. These "critical friends" were from various backgrounds with different sets of experiences and were therefore able to provide me with feedback that challenged any biases. The methodology and data analysis chapters will more fully address these issues.

Background of the Study

For years educational researchers have attempted to address the academic difficulties that African American students experience in America's classrooms. These children have been called *culturally deprived, genetically inferior, educationally disadvantaged, and at-risk*, ultimately locating the problem within African American children and families. Researchers have attempted to develop ways to improve the success rate of African American students, despite the persistence of academic underachievement.

Two developments in educational research and theory provide the motivation for this study. First, there is a growing realization that a mismatch exists between the cultures of African American students and that of many of their teachers (usually white, middle-class females) and schools. As Delpit (1995) asserts, differing values, beliefs,

and expectations may cause miscommunication between teachers and students, resulting in academic and/or discipline problems. This development suggests the need to examine the nature of incongruencies in specific areas such as literacy, and identify possible points of connection.

Secondly, the development of a more sociocultural view of literacy, gives researchers a new lens from which to view these problems. It provides the impetus to look *outside* of classrooms to examine institutions that may influence classroom experiences, and also take a closer look at social and cultural issues enacted *inside* classrooms.

From a socio-historical perspective, when assessing the current status of a group of people, it is extremely important to consider their history - the historical events, people, and institutions that may have influenced their present state (Elder, Modell, & Parke,1993). African Americans have a somewhat gruesome history in the United States. Slavery, segregation, discrimination, and all the ideologies that served to cripple them across the years have no doubt affected many generations of Blacks. However, there is an institution that was created from a combination of beliefs, and was specifically designed to meet the multifaceted, complex needs of Blacks in the United States -- the African American Church. When developing educational strategies for African Americans it is imperative that the African American Church be included in the conversation. It was the site of the first formal learning environment organized specifically for Blacks. The church was the place where African Americans first began to learn rudimentary reading skills (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Although public schooling is now available to African Americans, many Black parents believe that the

learning experiences occurring in the church are just as valuable as their childrens' learning experiences at school. This value of church knowledge/biblical knowledge is reinforced by many Black parents in their homes, and has been passed down through many generations. What can we learn from this institution that has effectively taught African American students for many years? Contrastly, what can teachers in the African American Church learn from public school teachers that will assist them in their endeavor to improve the success rate of African American students? Although from a historical perspective the African American Church has successfully educated African American children for many years, it has been left out of the conversation concerning the education of African American students in America's schools.

The present study emphasizes the need for educators to understand the importance of literacy practices in the African American Church and the significant impact that these experiences may have on African American student learning and development in their classrooms at school. Students who participate in African American Sunday School and other church activities develop specific values and beliefs concerning literacy teaching and learning that must be explored and understood in order to develop effective teaching strategies to improve their academic achievement in the school setting, and assist them in successfully negotiating the cultural borders between the church and school learning environments.

Statement of Purpose

This study compares literacy practices and experiences in an African American Sunday School - the most formal learning environment of the African American church, with literacy practices and experiences in a public elementary school for two first graders.

The central purpose of the study was to gain insights into why some African American students are successful in church, but are considered at-risk in school. By exploring issues concerning discourse, pedagogical values, social norms, and literacy network systems in both settings, I have examined several plausible explanations for incongruencies between the school and church learning environments, and located possible points of connecton. With this information, I want to begin an agenda of research with the goal of assisting teachers in developing more effective ways to reach and teach African American students, and supporting their students in the process of learning to successfully negotiate boundaries between their various learning environments.

Theoretical Grounding

This research is grounded in a sociocultural theory of learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978; Luria, 1976; Wertsch, 1985; Scribner, 1985) which focuses upon the ways in which learning takes place within cultural contexts. It is important to examine students' out-of-school learning experiences, and understand the affect that they have on in-school, classroom learning (Resnick, 1987). Resnick (1990) contends that school is only one place where literate activities occur. She states, "To understand the literacy crisis and imagine possible solutions, it is essential to examine the nature of literacy practice outside school as well as within" (p. 170). Purcell-Gates (1997) further emphasizes the importance of understanding outside learning experiences when she asserts:

> When we seek to understand learners, we must seek to understand the cultural contexts within which they have developed, learned to interpret who they are in relation to others, and learned how to process, interpret, or decode, their world (p. 5).

As the daughter of an African American preacher and Primary Class Sunday School teacher, I contend that for many African American children, this processing, interpreting, and decoding of their world is often done through lenses developed in the context of the African American church. While focusing upon the educational experiences of African American students, I utilized this sociocultural view of literacy, to examine literacy experiences and practices in Sunday School and public school for two African American first-graders, as I attempted to locate and understand sources of the incongruencies that occurred between these two learning environments, and consider possible points of connection.

Conceptual Framework

To prepare for this dissertation project, I completed two pilot studies (McMillon & Edwards, 2000; Edwards, Danridge, McMillon & Pleasants, in press) and a comprehensive review of the literature, which assisted in the development of a viable framework within a sociocultural perspective of literacy.

Many African American children begin school with multiple literacy experiences centering around home, church, and community activities. When children attend Sunday School they participate in rich literacy experiences that may affect their initial literacy acquisition and development, the way they think about literacy, and ultimately their literacy development at school (McMillon & Edwards, 2000). The African American Sunday School has many characteristics associated with high quality education. In Sunday School, discourse patterns/communicative styles (Gee, 1991), are usually similar to student home discourse patterns, instruction is often based on unique, African American learning styles (Hale-Benson, 1986), and behavioral problems are essentially

non-existent because of the close-knit relationships. Many African Americans' cultural dispositions are reflected in this learning environment where students often have close relationships with teachers who scaffold their efforts and expect them to succeed (Hale-Benson, 1986; Edwards, et al., in press).

In the African American church environment the "human side" of literacy development (Edwards, et al., in press) is often emphasized through the establishment of meaningful relationships, where adults are addressed as *Brother*, *Sister*, or *Mother*, and respected for wisdom acquired from life experiences regardless of social status or educational background (Proctor, 1995). I refer to relational ties between students, parents, teachers and other key literacy role models - participants in literacy teaching/learning and/or its facilitation, as *literacy network systems*. The literacy network systems within the context of the African American Sunday School, create a trusting, nurturing environment where students have rich literacy experiences while participating in classroom activities, helping peers, and sometimes sharing the teaching role (McMillon & Edwards, 2000). Teachers often enjoy intergenerational relationships with parents and hold high expectations for student performance (Edelman, 1999). Based on a *positive* self-fulfilling prophecy, most of their students achieve (Edwards, et al., in press).

In contrast to the nurturing environment of the church, some African American students may feel uncomfortable with alienating, individualistic, competitive school environments (Fordham, 1988). Schoolteachers commonly complain about disconnections with their students and parents. Current research focuses upon *discourse*, *pedagogical*, and *social norm issues* as possible sources of classroom conflicts. Dissimilar teacher-student discourse patterns can cause misunderstandings (Gee, 1991;

Heath, 1983; O'Connor & Michaels, 1996). In many classrooms, African American students' primary language patterns are not used to help them develop literacy skills (Lee, 1991), and the affect of culture on cognition, resulting in learning style differences among students (Shade, 1989), is often not addressed. Ignoring or devaluing students' discourse patterns and learning styles can be detrimental. Although unintentional, teachers can debilitate student learning when they are unaware of how their own personal biases effect classroom practice (Heath, 1983, Cazden, 1988, McMillon & Edwards, 2000). Classroom conflicts may not only result in academic problems, but may have critical social implications as well, which may cause student frustration and parental ambivalence toward school and schoolteachers (McMillon & Edwards, 2000). Corno (1989) contends that it is not only important for students to do well academically, but they must also be "literate about classrooms." *Successful students* function according to classroom rules; however, students who are socially illiterate are often excluded from social and academic activities (Corno, 1989; McMillon & Edwards, 2000). These exclusionary methods may lead to strained student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships.

An Expanded Definition of *Literacy*

Literacy, for the purpose of this study, not only includes: reading, writing, speaking, thinking, listening, and spelling; but also includes classroom "social literacy" which emphasizes a student's ability or inability to successfully function in a classroom setting. Lyn Corno asserts:

> ...to do well in classrooms, academic competence must be displayed in socially appropriate ways. Students must learn "interactional competence". They must work within the teacher's agenda (often, while simultaneously working within their own), must "read" teachers and peers, and must respond

to them in ways that are sanctioned socially (p. 35).

A student who is interactionally competent is described by Corno as one who:

> ...will share ideas with others, stay on task and listen when necessary, will volunteer for jobs, will ask and answer "wh" questions, and the like. Such students do not always become optimally involved with academic tasks. Studies have shown that teachers reward such self-discipline (many report cards include grades for classroom participation) and that students who learn to respond appropriately to classroom participation demands also benefit academically (p. 35).

Interactional competence is a key element of literacy acquisition and development in this study, and is explored within the social norms frame.

In this study, the definition of the term *literacy* not only includes interactional competence, but is also expanded to include a discussion of the *literacy network systems* in the context of school and Sunday School for each subject. It is my belief that the relationships that students have with teachers and facilitators of literacy in educational settings are a critical part of the literacy learning and teaching process; therefore, these relationships are identified and discussed in this study.

Underlying Complexities of the Study

The complexities of this study must be addressed forthright in order to assist readers with moving beyond the limitation that a *superficial glance* of public school and church would provide. This study has been conceptualized to provide both breadth and depth by including an expansive historical overview of both institutions, developing a framework that draws from multiple intersecting bodies of literature, and directly addressing difficult issues that some researchers attempt to avoid. While I realize that this study is a major undertaking, I also realize that conducting studies of great significance always require the researcher(s) to take great risks. Intellectual risks,

methodological risks, and reputational risks are but a few of the risks taken in this study. However, the rewards will far outweigh the risks if by reading this dissertation and/or utilizing the information presented, some educators realize that the African American Church is a viable learning institution from which there is much to be learned concerning successfully educating African American students.

Comparing School and Sunday School

In recent years, the schism between the *church* and *state* in the United States may have deterred some educators from actively attempting to identify linkages between the schools and churches of their students. However, a sociocultural perspective of literacy requires educators to redefine the lines of demarcation that have impeded the achievement of some students. When considering why some African American students are successful in the church environment, but "at-risk" in their school environments, it is necessary to study the enactment of social and cultural activities within their classrooms at school. However, we must also look beyond the school classroom environment into the African American Church to identify literacy practices and closely examine literacy activities within this under researched, but viable educational context.

There will undoubtedly be some objectors to conducting research that specifically seeks to find sources of incongruency between two major institutions that at first glance, may seem to have obvious differences. For example, church attendance is voluntary, but school attendance is mandatory until a student reaches a certain age. Church classes are often quite small in comparision to most over-populated public school classrooms. Sunday School teachers volunteer to teach and rarely receive any compensation for their effort. They are often not certified teachers, but may have careers in the secular world

totally unrelated to teaching. One may assume from this description that Sunday School teachers are not as "qualified" to teach as public school teachers. Additionally, the lessons taught in Sunday School are for the purpose of proselytizing, student evaluations are seldom given, and class periods are only for one to two hours at most. All of these differences would make a study comparing classrooms in the school and Sunday School environment quite difficult to conceptualize. School and Sunday School are different in many ways, but they also have numerous similarities which will be explored in the data analysis chapters.

The purpose of this study is not merely to *compare* attendance records, class sizes, or the other issues mentioned above, (although some discussion of these issues will occur in the data analysis chapters). The main purpose of this study is to closely examine the literacy learning and teaching processes in the classroom in order to identify plausible sources of incongruence between the school and church environments, and locate possible points of connection. Certainly some of the aforementioned issues may affect the learning and teaching processes, but this study does not seek to isolate each factor and/or calculate the significance of them on teaching, learning, or student achievement. A later quantitative study will follow to achieve that goal after plausible sources are identified. This dissertation study is meant to serve as a launching pad for a research agenda that includes identifying sources of incongruence, closely examining each source, and determining their significance (affect on literacy learning and teaching) in order to develop a home-school connections model.

Issues of Power & Dominance

When conducting research in the African American Church environment it is critical to openly discuss issues of power and dominance. The African American Church is the most influential institution in the African American community, and has impacted many sectors of society including political, social and economic. However, members of the African American Church are from a non-dominant culture, and their values and beliefs are not considered "main-stream" in the United States. It may be difficult for some educators with "main-stream" mindsets to grasp the importance of understanding literacy experiences in the African American Church, therefore this section is written to directly address this issue.

Because of the numerous negative experiences that Blacks have had in the United States, it is possible that they have developed "cultural frames of reference not merely as different from, but as opposed to the cultural frames of reference of their white *oppressors*" (Ogbu, 1995). African Americans' unique ways of teaching and learning may be directly linked with deeply ingrained foundational beliefs and values. These ideologies must be examined and understood in order to understand the sources of disconnection and to create connections for African American students between their culturally congruent church environments and incongruent school environments.

Additionally, because the majority of the teacher population in the U.S. are white, middle-class females educated at predominantly white institutions in Teacher Education programs predicated upon white oriented values, beliefs, and standards, it is necessary to carefully access how teachers' past experiences may influence literacy learning and teaching within the classrooms where they teach. Just as literacy experiences *outside* of

the classroom influences how students learn *inside* their classrooms at school, teachers enter the classroom with a set of values and beliefs based on past experiences that influence their literacy teaching and other daily decisions that they make. If teachers are unaware of their own biases and limitations, they could possibly perpetuate white dominance and power values within their classrooms, alienating African American and other minority students and parents who may have a different set of values. Cultural dissonance can result in the classroom of a teacher who is not cognizant of these possibilities and unaware of the importance of continuous self-evaluation. Cazden (1988) asserts that it is the teacher's responsibility to *adjust* their strategies each year to meet their students' needs. In this study, the school and church teachers are closely monitored to identify ways that they exert power over students, attempts to empower students, and how these actions provide supporting evidence to determine the teachers' intentions.

Classrooms: culturally congruent environments or "gateways" into the culture of power?

This study is not an attempt to transform public schools into culturally congruent environments for African American children by changing classroom discourse patterns, pedagogy, and social norms from those currently established, to those utilized in the African American Sunday School. As previously discussed, although church and school learning environments share similarities, there are some distinct differences. Sunday School serves as the main educational arm of the African American church. It is the moral teacher (Ward, 1998) and values perpetuator. The most important purpose of Sunday School is to understand and internalize biblical principles through Bible stories, which is not difficult because attendance is voluntary, and attendees understand the importance of values and beliefs perpetuated in this context. On the other hand,

schooling in the United States is mandatory until a certain age. According to Labaree (1997), school has three main goals: democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility. For many years, African Americans have grasped on to the social mobility goal - the possibility of improving their social status through education (Woodson, 1990; DuBois, 1995; Edelman, 1999). Delpit discusses the importance of African American students acquiring literacy skills that will improve their ability to compete successfully within the "culture of power" (1997), and holds teachers of minority students accountable for these acquisitions. If public schooling is expected to provide the knowledge and skills that will prepare students to successfully compete in their adult lives, thereby improving their chances for social mobility, high standards must be established for all students - Black and White. There is a tension between the desire to transform public school into a place that is culturally congruent for a diverse population of students, and the expectation for school to teach a diverse population of students what they need to know to become *successful* within the culture of power. Classroom teachers make daily decisions that determine the types and quality of literacy skills that their students will acquire based on various factors, such as social class (Anyon, 1981) gender (Kunjufu, 1985), culture and race (Heath, 1985; Irvine, 1990), which are related to teachers' expectations of their students' future needs. During data collection and analysis, it was crucial to address and revisit the tension between cultural congruence and incongruence. I tried to determine if teachers were aware of this tension, and if so, identify the types of literacy experiences that they provided to enhance their students' future chances for success within the "culture of power" (Delpit, 1995). On the other hand, if the teachers

were not aware, I wanted to identify ways that their lack of knowledge influenced their literacy teaching and their students' literacy learning.

Cultural Capital vs. Cultural Interference

Within the context of the African American church, the connection between learning and development, and close relationships, creates a nurturing environment for students to acquire cultural capital while simultaneously developing literacy skills. Some of these students come from homes with parents who may not be able to provide their children with the cultural capital needed to successfully negotiate the cultural boundaries between home, church, and school. Although some parents may not have successful educational histories (Edward et al, 1999), and/or their occupations may not be professional positions that positively influence their children's' study habits (Lareau, 1989), the African American church has historically provided cultural capital for its' members through adult and peer role models (Edelman, 1999; Proctor, 1995).

Many Sunday School teachers and other adult role models in the church setting, attempt to provide students with viable coping skills to help them succeed in school and in their adult lives (Edwards, et al, in press). However, in the alienating context of classrooms at school, the connection between learning and development and close relationships that African American students become accustomed to at church, may be a source of cultural interference/incongruence (Fordham, 1988; Edwards, et al, in press).

Research conducted in the context of the African American Church can inform classroom teachers by helping them understand the complex nature of Black theology and literacy practices in the African American Church. In particular, they can learn how to utilize this information as a resource in classroom teaching and learning, rather than

allowing it to become a source of cultural interference. Additionally, teachers and other adult role models in the African American Church can utilize information from this study to develop strategies that can assist African American students to more successfully negotiate the cultural boundaries between their church and school environments. In this study, I looked for evidence of cultural capital and interference in each environment. A discussion of this issue occurs in Chapters 5 and 6.

Issues related to comparing school and Sunday School, power and dominance, cultural congruence, cultural capital and cultural interference are further explored in the analysis chapters in order to clarify the intent of this research, further justify its rationale, and especially promote its utility.

Rationale of the Study

When addressing issues of power and cultural/social capital, which are directly related to the African American education experience, a need to closely examine the school and church environments becomes apparent. Frank (1997) asserts that there are multileveled perspectives in addressing questions concerning schooling and the processes related to schooling. He believes that the school and the individual are two different levels of research that must be addressed in order to fully understand the process of schooling. Studying the social network system in a school and comparing it to the social network system in an African American church could improve our understandings of teacher-student and teacher-parent relationship in both settings, and illuminate the similarities and differences. This macro perspective could help identify the social networks - relationships between members of the African American church, and *how* these relationships affect literacy teaching and learning. A study of this sort might utilize

survey data from an identified group of people within the context of the church, and would answer the research question by focusing on issues pertaining to the difference in the relationship orientation of African Americans within the church setting and the relationships developed in the context of public school. However, this research design would be limited in identifying other plausible causes of the incongruencies between the church and school environments for many African American students.

As the initial study of my research agenda, in this study I have taken a micro approach by focusing upon the *individual* level of research (Frank, 1997), in order to identify the maximum amount of plausible causes for the incongruencies between the church and school environments. Studies have been done that look at the culture and overall environment within the African American church (Shade, 1989; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Myers, 1991; Freedman, 1993; Franklin, 1997). Literature about the history of the African American church (Frazier, 1963; Meltzer, 1964; Nelson, Yokley, & Nelsen, 1971; Nelsen & Nelsen, 1975; Sernett, 1975; Mukenge, 1983; Washington, 1984; Smith, 1988; Baldwin, 1991; Billingsley, 1992; Montgomery, 1993), Black preachers and the Black sermon (Proctor & Watley, 1984; Swift, 1989; Mitchell, 1990; Baldwin, 1991; Freedman, 1993; Moyd, 1995), Black theology (Burkett, 1978; Cone, 1989; Felder, 1991; Copher, 1993; Hopkins, 1994; Cone, 1997; Hopkins, in press), Black religion (Asante & Vandi, 1980; Baer, 1984; Sobel, 1988; Proctor, 1995; Wilmore,1998), Black gospel music and observations during programs and worship services (Williams, 1974), have been written. This literature describes historical perspectives and the overall environment of the African American church and/or examines specific beliefs. However, there is very little literature written specifically about the church's role in the education of

African Americans (Hale, 1994; Kunjufu, 1989), and none specifically examining Sunday School - the most formal learning environment within the church. Therefore, I have taken a micro approach in this study in order to complete a detailed, descriptive, exploratory study that uncovers multiple layers of data including experiences, events, and relationships that helped me locate plausible sources of incongruence (Goetz & LaCompte, 1984) and possible points of connection between the two environments. My future plan is to further explore each cause and their interrelationships.

Significance of the Study

My research utilizes a *fresh, new* approach to an old educational problem. Researchers have addressed African American students' educational problems in various ways. However, the African American Church has not been considered a resource for researchers and educators when addressing the education of African American children. I believe this research is timely and will make an important contribution in the fields of education and religion. In the spirit of the old African proverb "*It takes a village to raise a child*," my research seeks to improve the education of children in the United States by integrating community resources. These community collaborations have vast implications for connecting faith communities and public schools to support improved academic achievement and social mobility possibilities for all students.

My research challenges all teachers to step out of their comfort zones - created by their past experiences, values and beliefs, to consider how their pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices might disable children who are different from themselves. Because teachers are expected to teach children from diverse backgrounds, teacher education programs must equip teachers with knowledge and skills that prepare them to teach *all*

children. However, educational institutions cannot solve literacy problems alone. As stated earlier, literacy problems must be approached from the *inside* and *outside* of school. By understanding the literacy practices and literacy network systems of the African American church, classroom teachers will better understand the cultural frame of reference from which many African American students operate. With this knowledge, teachers will be better prepared to develop creative ways to more effectively teach African American students. Additionally, by locating sources of incongruence between these two environments, I can begin to create a cultural connections model to help church and school teachers assist African American students in negotiating the cultural borders between their home, church and school learning environments.

Overview of the Study

This introductory chapter has placed the present study within a historical context, and provided the theoretical grounding, conceptual framework, and rationale for the study. The following chapters will expound upon the issues presented in this chapter. Chapter 2 - The Review of Relevant Literature - will give an in-depth, detailed explanation of current literature relevant to this dissertation study. It is organized into three parts and includes multiple intersecting bodies of research. A complete explanation of the chapter organization will be given in its introduction section. Chapter 3 - Research Design & Methodology - includes specific information pertaining to the ethnographic methods utilized to design the study, and subsequently collect and analyze data. Because this study compares two learning environments, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are organized to first analyze data collected in school (Chapter 4), followed by analysis of data collected in the context of two African American Sunday Schools (Chapter 5), and Chapter 6 will discuss

plausible sources of incongruence and points of connection between the school and church environments. Chapter 7 will discuss important conclusions and implications of the study, and end with recommendations for further studies that might increase awareness in the area of literacy development for African American students.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

> "*The eighth wonder of the world is that Blacks, after being enslaved for more than 200 years have become a 'literate' race*" (Henry Louis Gates, Harvard Professor).

The literature review for the present study encompasses multiple intersecting categories. To give depth to this study, I will begin with the history of the public school system in the United States as it relates to African Americans, subsequently followed by a comprehensive historical overview of the African American Church. This information will lay the foundation for the analysis of data collected in each setting, and especially be helpful in more fully understanding the sources of incongruencies discussed in the comparison chapter. By utilizing the periodization method, I will summarize the historical development of the institutions of public school and church. Emphasis will be placed on significant events and places, along with some influential people who played critical roles. The purpose, goals, foundational values, and beliefs of school and church will be discussed, which will provide a mechanism for adequately comparing the two settings from the past to the present at the macro level, ultimately focusing in at a micro level on the specific school and churches in this study.

The history of the African American in the United States is a history of a toilsome, humiliating, cumbersome, struggle for liberation continuously combating an antagonistic system created by a group of people, including some who believed that African Americans should not have access to the human liberties referred to in the Constitution. The institutions within this antagonistic system were developed by *founding fathers* including several that supported the slave trade and considered blacks as property similar to cattle - purely in terms of economic gain. The founding fathers

certainly agreed that an educated citizenry would be most capable of building a nation that would perpetuate their values and beliefs, and therefore were quite motivated to develop an educational system early in the history of the United States. However, this system was originally developed for white males - who the founders considered would be the leaders of the country (Woodson, 1968). Everyone else - white women and non-white men and women, had to fight to gain educational opportunities, and was eventually included in the educational system through various reform movements (Morgan, 1995).

Is it possible that African American students have always struggled in the United States' educational system because it was not developed to educate them? This system - developed by a group of people including several individuals who thought of blacks as animals lacking the ability to think or make any contribution of significance to society - has been through many series of reforms. We must ask ourselves: Have these reforms been simply rhetoric to temporarily appease the current challengers of the system? In reality, after experiencing more than two centuries of reformation, can educators now assure African Americans and other non-whites that the educational system in the United States is adequate enough to create a learning environment that offers equal access to knowledge, equal preparation for social mobility opportunities, equal chances to develop students' personal strengths, interests, and talents, and equal treatment from teachers who were educated in programs that did not know how to prepare them to teach students from diverse backgrounds? I contend that the answer to this critical question is *no*. In fact, African American and many other students including poor whites are still suffering academically, while middle and upper class whites continue to be successful in school (Hale-Benson, 1986; Irvine, 1990).

In this literature review, my goal is to create a backdrop that portrays a scenery which allows readers to clearly visualize the sources of difficulties that many African American students experience in school, and why some of these same students flourish in the environment of the African American Church. I believe that many of the problems experienced by African American students today have been predicated upon the tensions, overt racism, and hypocrisy that have not been effectively eradicated from the educational system since its origin. Threads of racism have been interwoven in the institution of education in the United States from the beginning of the common school movement and remnants remain today (McMillon, 1995). By juxtaposing the history of public education in the United States with the history of the African American Church, it will become apparent that the African American Church has always been the place where African Americans could go to learn in a friendly, nurturing environment. The church has provided a safe cocoon where African Americans could safely learn and grow when the outside world (including public school) was hostile and unwelcoming (McMillon & Edwards, 2000). Literature shows that many African American students still experience inhospitable surroundings in their school and classroom environments (Irvine, 1990; McMillon & Edwards, 2000; O'Connor & Michaels, 1996; Shade, 1989; Delpit, 1995; Hopkins, 1997).

The framework presented in Chapter One includes discourse, pedagogical values, social norms, and teacher student relationships as the main foci for discussing literacy development in both the school and church environments, however, the following detailed discussion of the school and church histories add some additional context to this multilayered issue.

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Historical Overview of Public Education for African Americans in the U.S.

> *Despite fundamental elements of truth in the standard story of literacy development in the United States, the story does not prepare one to understand the distinct experiences of African Americans or to gauge the impact of their experiences on the nation's complex and contradictory attitudes regarding the rights of individuals to literacy.*
> (Anderson, 1995, p. 20).

This statement was taken from a critical chapter that highlights the history of public education in the United States as it relates to African Americans. James Anderson, a well-known historian, stated these words in his introduction to prepare the readers to understand that the history discussed in his chapter would be in contrast to "the standard story" of public education that one may be accustomed to reading in history textbooks. This story has different versions, depending on who is telling the story. Slave narratives (Meltzer, 1964; Jacobs, 1987) give one perspective, while history textbooks discussing the accomplishments of the founding fathers give another perspective. Research literature offers several interpretations of history. This section of the literature review, utilizes several resources to *paint a picture of reality* that provides readers with a story of history filled with *pain* experienced by a group of people who were stolen from their homeland and sold into the dehumanizing institution of slavery. This story describes the struggles experienced in their quest to first of all, be considered *humans* and not *animals*; and their continual fight to gain rights that were *supposedly* provided for in the Constitution. However, policy changes, biased court interpretations, and outright refusal to adhere to laws often disallowed African Americans from exercising freedoms in the United States. Access to education was one *right* that was not provided without numerous fights and many setbacks. Still today, African Americans struggle to gain

access to knowledge that will prepare them to meet challenges and overcome obstacles, ultimately gaining entry into the "culture of power" (Delpit, 1995).

This section will utilize the periodization method to highlight significant events, people and places that influenced public education for African Americans. Victories, setbacks, tensions, overt acts of racism, and hypocrisy will be illuminated to portray the mountainous terrain traveled by those who believed that African Americans were *human,* United States *citizens,* who should receive *human liberties* based on the Constitution prior to the laws passed to exclude them, including a free public education.

Literacy spreads among African Americans – (1630 – 1739)

Many early advocates of slavery favored the education of Blacks. They used the argument that they were *helping* Blacks by enslaving them to *enlighten* them concerning the Gospel message of Christianity. Missionaries were the first educators of Blacks because their responsibility was twofold: to teach Blacks to read and most importantly to proselytize them, often using Bibles as textbooks (Woodson, 1916).

The African American struggle to acquire literacy began during the 17th century. Their education in early America was based on three main principles: 1) To educate slaves for Bible reading, to make them Christian; 2) All people should be free and should support Christian efforts to abolish slavery and provide equal access to education (supported mainly by Quakers); 3) Slavery should be abolished to enable Africans to take their rightful place among the other citizens because the country emerged from a concept of individual freedom. "Rightful place" did not necessarily mean "equal status." Many well-known *abolitionists*, such as John Jay, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Benjamin Franklin,

and others supported the latter view of education for Blacks, based on their words and actions (Morgan, 1995), while Thomas Jefferson vacillated on his beliefs.

State records show efforts of various individuals and organizations that attempted to assist African Americans in their quest for literacy acquistion and development. As early as the 1630s, French Catholics were providing an education for all laborers, regardless of race, in Louisiana. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts financially supported missionaries and schoolmasters who taught slaves and free persons of color how to read and write. The Society sent Rev. Samuel Thomas to South Carolina where he began teaching African Americans around 1695 (Gordon, 1971). By 1705, he had assisted more than 20 Negroes in their efforts to become literate (Woodson, 1916). The Society also supported the opening of a school in New York in 1704 under Elias Neau (Harley, 1995), who held evening classes in his home after students completed their daily tasks. By 1708, he was teaching approximately 200 hundred students, and had moved classes to a church building (Morgan, 1995). Neau's school was temporarily closed following an insurrection in 1712. It was believed that the 28 Blacks involved in the slave revolt were students of Neau's school. The school was reopened after investigators learned that the armed slaves had met secretly in the center of the city, and were not students. Their plan was to set fire to the home of one of the slave owners as a distraction. Whites who came to help battle the blaze were shot. The New York State Militia was called in to find the plotters and as a deterrent to other slaves who may have desired to join the revolters. They were eventually captured and put to death. When the school's name was cleared, slaves were actually encouraged to attend

Neau's school because slave holders began to believe that the school would occupy the slaves and serve as a deterrent to other conspiracies.

What was considered "progress" to African Americans and advocates for their education, was threatening to the economic futures of some slaveholders and they set out to desist the rapid growth of literacy development among Blacks.

More than a century of continuous dehumanization (1740 – 1867)

In 1740, South Carolina enacted a law prohibiting the teaching of slaves and from using slaves as scribes (Woodson, 1916). South Carolina's reaction began a plethora of responses by slave and free states during the early 18th century. However, missionary groups fought hard to provide Blacks with an education. By 1773, Quakers in Rhode Island had opened a school for "Colored" children, with a ministerial group from London providing the financial backing. Another school for "Colored" children was opened in Boston with Elisher Sylvester, a White teacher, in charge (Morgan, 1995). In 1780, Pennsylvania and New Jersey allowed Black and White children to attend school together. The Quakers were especially active in setting the stage for this phenomenon, opening schools for poor children and making no racial distinctions (Morgan, 1995). Philanthropic giving from their membership supported the education of Blacks on a local basis. They encouraged fellow Quaker members to duplicate their efforts throughout the country, but they were more successful in the North than in the South (Morgan, 1995).

The Quakers formed the Manumission Society in Philadelphia, and later in New York, to protect slaves from bounty hunters. The trustees of this organization read like a "who's who list" of important people. Alexander Hamilton, one of the authors of the *Federalists Papers*, and John Jay - the first Chief Justice of the United States, were

trustees. Jay suppported anti-slavery movements and schools for African Americans. He felt that slavery diminished the national character. The African Free School started with 40 students, most having slave parents (Morgan, 1995). Cornelius Davis left a White school to become the first teacher. In 1791, girls were admitted after a female teacher was hired. By 1796, the school had its own building which was lost to a fire. The City of New York contributed land for the construction of African Free School Number 1, and African Free School Number 2 was built in 1820 to accommodate 500 pupils (Morgan, 1995). The powerful trustees of the schools were not very involved during the early stages of the school. Administrators had to develop ways to increase their interest. Scholars and educators from around the world were invited to observe the school's program. Programs including poetry, prose and essay reading by the pupils were presented to the international scholars, who were quite impressed. Morgan (1995) describes some of the school's accomplishments:

> This pragmatic mission of empowerment for free Blacks gave rise to a concentration on direct instruction in reading, writing, natural history, astronomy, arithmetic, navigation, and moral education. Joseph Lancaster had developed a unique approach to instruction, materials, and supplies in the teaching of poor children in England, and the Lancasterian system was adopted by the African Free School. The African Free School gave to education some of our earliest examples of special classes for the gifted, called "Merit" classes, and the use of pupils to tutor younger pupils in lower grades. In later years the school expanded its curriculum to include globe use, composition, map making, and linear drawing (p. 42).

Some of the graduates of the African Free School became quite successful leaders in the African American and White communities. Ira Aldridge became known in Europe as one of the greatest interpreters of Shakespearean characters; James McCune Smith became the first Black pharmacist in New York City, later graduating from the University of Scotland and becoming the medical director of the Colored Orphan Asylum in New

York; Edward A. Jones graduated from Amherst College in Massachusetts in 1826, becoming the first African American college graduate. John B. Russman was the editor of the first African American newspaper, *Freedman's Journal*, later becoming the superintendent of schools in Liberia, and the governor of the Colony of Cape Palmas in Liberia. Martin DeLaney graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1852, and practiced medicine in Pittsburgh. He participated in halting a cholera epidemic, but could never develop enough support for private practice. He served in the Union army during the Civil War, and eventually worked for several newspapers including his own *The Mystery*, and Frederick Douglass' *The North Star.*

Although some Africans Americans were successful after completing the African Free School's programs, many were not successful in attaining positions in their areas of training. The American society was not ready to allow Blacks access to employment, regardless of their schooling experiences. Blacks who were not fortunate enough to participate in special schools such as the African Free Schools especially suffered at the hands of a prejudice society.

With the forming of a new nation, there were questions concerning the status of African Americans which addressed their "legal" citizenship with rights as set forth in the U.S. Constitution. Free African Americans were especially concerned with this issue because access to public schooling was based on citizenship status. From the beginning, the United States was founded on a belief in white supremacy, and was considered a white man's country. Illuminating this belief, the "founding fathers" limited naturalization to white aliens during a meeting in the First Congress of the United States in 1790 (Takaki, 1979). Although this limited the citizenship of "newcomers", it did not

address the issue of people who were already in the country during its inception, such as African Americans.

Individual states were left to make their own decisions, and the northern states' their belief in white supremacy became evident. In Indiana, African Americans could not testify in court against whites, participate in the military, nor vote, based on laws passed by 1811. In 1807, Ohio excluded them from state residency unless they posted a $500 bond for good behavior (Gerber, 1976). Illinois ordered every free Black to leave the state or receive 39 lashes, which would be repeated every 15 days until their evacuation. Wisconsin, Michigan, and Iowa refused Blacks the right to vote (Berwanger, 1967).

Midwestern laws set precedence for the western territories. In 1849, California voted to adopt restrictions on African Americans including not being allowed to intermarry with whites. In 1857, Oregon was admitted to the union as the only free state to have a black exclusion clause in its original constitution. Oregon demanded that all Blacks leave the state or receive floggings, and ultimately servanthood to Whites. In Kansas many antislavery advocates voted to exclude Blacks from living in the territory, which illuminated the belief that many antislavery advocates fought slavery in the name of white supremacy only. Many of them voted to bar Blacks from office holding and militia service. This belief was also prevalent in Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Nebraska.

It was difficult to understand why the western territories were especially anti-African American because few Blacks actually lived in these areas. It is believed that anti-slavery movements in these states won their fight against slavery by agreeing to preserve the areas for whites only. In 1831, Prudence Crandall established a girl's

boarding school in Canterbury, CT. She admitted one African American girl a year latter, which resulted in the withdrawal of most of the white students. Crandall responded by opening an all Black school with the help of some abolitionists. In response to the Quaker woman's successful endeavor to open a high school for African American females, Connecticut agreed to limit the African American population in the state in 1833. Locals attempting to close the all Black school took Prudence Crandall to court based on the allegation that she was violating the new law prohibiting providing an education for colored persons who were not citizens of the state. The school was eventually closed after a series of trials and arrests.

Although laws to gradually abolish slavery had become effective by 1804 in many northern states, African Americans were still not allowed access to education for the most part. Their education was left up to the benevolence of whites in their state and often depended on their citizenship status. This connection of citizenship and rights to education provided the rationale that many whites needed to feel comfortable limiting Blacks' access to literacy.

The federal government supported the degrading actions of the states by continuously allowing them admission to the union. However, the legal status of African Americans was not defined by the federal government until the Dred Scott decision of 1857, which outlined the government's belief that the founding fathers never intended to include descendants of Africa, whether slave or free. Unfortunately the issue was not settled until 1868, when the Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship to people of African American descent, thus allowing better access to literacy.

Access to literacy was very limited from the nation's inception to the Civil War. Even when free states admitted African American children they were sent to separate facilities away from white children. In Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York and New England states, African American children were usually sent to segregated schools when they were allowed to attend (Litwack, 1961). In 1835, Noyes Academy in Canaan, NH admitted several African Americans. Protests of whites displayed their belief that they did not want Blacks in public or private schools with their children. Noyles Academy passed a policy in 1835 that stated they would allow anyone who qualified to attend their school regardless of race or color. The local magistrate stopped a white mob who intended to destroy the school in July, 1835. During the same month, an "official" town meeting appointed a committee to destroy the school. In August, the committee used nearly 100 yoke of oxen to remove the building from its foundation (Litwack, 1961).

In many states African Americans were excluded from educational opportunities. Although African Americans were taxed locally to support the public schools in Ohio, their children were not allowed to attend school. Finally, in 1829 the state tried to provide an education for blacks, but it was delayed for 2 years resulting from local officials' refusal to provide schools for Blacks. Even though these schools were all Black, Whites were not satisfied. In Zanesville, Ohio Whites entered the African American school and destroyed books and furnishings, eventually driving the institution out of town. Teachers were exposed to insults and violence in many other Ohio cities. Although legislation was eventually passed in 1849 to use a portion of common school funds to provide for Black schools, most African American children were educated in

private schools financed by private contributions, and often located in churches or shacks (Gerber, 1976).

Because Illinois legislators feared the prospect of Blacks attending school with white children, they voted down an education article in 1848, and avoided discussing public education altogether until 1870 (McCaul, 1987). School districts progressive enough to admit African American children had to incur additional costs without state aid, because state funds were only provided for white children. Consequently, most school districts opted not to provide an education for African Americans. During the school year 1865-1866, there were approximately 300 or 5% out of 6,000 African-American children attending school in Illinois; in comparison to 614,000 or 80% of 759,987 White children (McCaul, 1987). Interestingly, Illinois along with many other states denied African American access to education during the pre-Civil War period, but continuously used illiteracy as the reason for denying voting and other rights.

Despite efforts to inhibit Blacks from becoming literate, they gradually managed to gain access to education especially in the heavily populated urban areas. Many opted not to attend schools which were made available to them because they were continuously harassed. Also, public schools for the poor carried the stigma of education for "paupers", and many Blacks refused to be categorized as such. Instead, they found other ways to provide an education for themselves, their children, and other Blacks. African American churches were utilized as educational societies and began opening their own schools in the 1790s. By the mid-1820s African American Sunday schools were teaching basic literacy skills to many Northern Blacks. Many free Blacks made great sacrifices to provide an education for other Blacks. In 1807, Bell School, the first school for Black

children in Washington, D.C., was established by George Bell, Nicholas Franklin, and Moses Liverpool - free Blacks. In 1811, Christopher McPherson, a wealthy free Black, opened a night school for free Blacks in Richmond, Virginia. Because he refused to yield to the threats of prejudice Whites in powerful positions, he was eventually jailed and sent to the Williamsburg Lunatic Asylum, and the teacher was run out of town (Harley, 1995). In 1814, the African Free School in New York City was burned, but reopened in a new location in 1815. Philadelphia free Blacks established the Pennsylvania Augustine Society for "the education of people of colour" in 1818 (Harley, 1995).

Although some Blacks were receiving an education, literacy learning was mainly limited to the elementary level. In 1850, Gilmore High School in Cincinnati was the only secondary institution for African Americans in a major city. African Americans made great sacrifices to obtain an education for their children. In the school year 1849-50, African American children attending school ranged from 38% in Cincinnati to 79% in Boston (Curry, 1981). Blacks continued to strive for increased access to literacy for their children, and gradually made great gains in spite of the danger and harrassment it caused.

On the eve of the Civil War most states refused to recognize African Americans as citizens (Wood, 1968), and did not provide an education for Black children. Some states, including Indiana and Iowa, excluded them from settling in their state, and every Midwestern state denied them the right to vote or serve in the military (Voegeli, 1967). Many urban areas that allowed African Americans to attend school separated them into unequal, poorly furnished facilities. However, after the war states began to change their "black laws" (Wood, 1968).

After the emancipation of 4 million slaves in the South, with a 90% illiteracy rate in 1865, African Americans organized with determination to gain access to literacy during the postwar period.

Citizens on "paper" with "limited" access to knowledge (1869 – 1899)

After the war, men, women, and children enthusiastically gathered in schools to acquire basic literacy skills. Children hurried to school after their work was over, and men rushed home from the fields to get in an hour of study time before dusk. African Americans utilized their "newfound" skills to improve life for themselves and others. Soldiers, some who were former slaves, wrote to Washington to complain of inadequate medical treatment, or to request protection for their enslaved family members. Newly freed slaves wanted to learn to read so they could read the Bible. Others realized the importance of understanding labor and property contracts. In several states, some freedmen were tricked into signing contracts making them indentured servants right after the war. Literate people in the Black community were often called upon to decipher contract terms as a precaution.

In the North, there were basically two schools of thought concerning the education of Blacks. Some voices in the Freedmen's Bureau believed that Blacks aspired to become literate because they understood the power and influence that Whites had was connected to education, and therefore desired to acquire the same education. However, others in the organization recognized that one of the conflicting functions of literacy created a "double-edged sword" of liberation and control that created confusion. Still others believed that education was the only viable way to integrate a previously enslaved race into a racist society (Anderson, 1988).

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This belief in acquiring a "White" education as the best way of improving one's life was not shared by all Black Southerners. Some believed that they were better off being separate from Whites, and making a life of their own. In January, 1865, a group of educated Savannah African American ministers organized the Black Education Association and founded their own schools, with their own teachers and curriculum. By 1867, they had organized 120 schools in 40% of Georgia's counties, with staffs consisting of Black teachers only.

Many Northerners, Black and White, did not share the belief that Blacks could run their own literacy program. They were often astonished at the accomplishments of Black Southerners concerning literacy development. Although they were enslaved, most Black Southern ministers were literate – having secretly learned to read and write. Although Northern missionaries and freedmen's aid societies preferred to employ northern teachers, they hired Southern Blacks out of necessity. Schools were expanding quickly and there was a dire need for teachers in the North and South. Some Blacks who escaped slavery were determined to go back South to make a difference amongst the recently emancipated group. Harriet Brent Jacobs, author of Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1987), was among them. She was taught to read by her mistress and hid from her master's sexual advances before escaping to the North. Jacobs and her daughter returned to the South and taught in Savannah.

Tensions mounted in the educational efforts of the postwar period, as Blacks made it clear that they preferred Black teachers. They continuously chose Black schools over White ones that were made available to them. Some African Americans felt that Whites lowered the standards for teachers that taught Black students, and they did not

believe that White teachers were as adamant as Black teachers about providing exceptional educational experiences for their students that including encouraging them to fight for equal rights. Several white philanthropists refused to support Black schools that advocated civil rights. In response to such attitudes, the Fort Scott Kansas *Colored Citizen* published the following in 1878:

> While we believe it is an outrage upon the civilization of the age to carry on the caste schools, yet if they must be forced upon us and if our children are always to be reminded by them that they are not entitled to the privilege of going to the same school that every other class of Americans are permitted to attend, then we shall insist upon it, that our educated sons and daughters are placed in them as teachers and not always content with sending them to some poor white man or woman who would not be permitted to teach in the white schools, but are put off on the colored people (Berry & Blassingame, 1982, p. 278).

In addition to hiring unqualified White teachers to teach at Black schools as a roadblock to Black education, some White churches licensed Black preachers to persuade Blacks to attend their church and schools. Many of the Black preachers were found to be illiterate, which infuriated ministers in the African Methodist Episcopal organization, who prided themselves in establishing high standards for their ministers.

Although much credit is given to northern missionaries and philanthropists, African Americans, themselves were responsible for founding and perpetuating most of the educational efforts in the South after the war. Ex-slaves were the leaders who were mainly responsible for the entire late 19th century public education movement in the South who carried with them from slavery into freedom the belief in universal learning as the foundation for freedom and citizenship (Anderson, 1988). By the end of the 19th century African Americans had made great accomplishments toward their goal of eliminating illiteracy among their people.

to help their people included Jeremiah Sanderson, Mifflin W. Gibbs, and other California Blacks who organized a statewide conference to work for integrated schools in 1871. Mary Jane Patterson became the first principal of Preparatory High School (later Dunbar High School), Washington, D.C.'s premier school for Blacks. Many Black colleges and universities were founded by churches during this period. In 1890, Emma Frances Grayson Merritt principal of the Garnet School, established the first kindergarten for Black pupils in the United States, in Washington, D.C.

Although Blacks made many strides during this period, the eve of the 19th century brought a terrible blow to the struggle for academic access and freedom. In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled in the famous *Plessy v. Ferguson* case that there can be separate, but equal public accommodations. Wounded, but determined, Blacks would continue their fight for literacy, fighting tirelessly some of their most difficult battles in the early 20th century.

The Twentieth Century African American "fight" for literacy (1900 – 1999)

In 1900, the literacy rate for black males ages 10-14 was 64%; for black females ages 10-14, the rate was 71%; and adult black men ages 45-54 had a literacy rate of only 36%. Illiteracy remained high among adults because of slavery, but African American children were becoming more literate, with approximately 65% ages 10-14 attending school in 1900 (Margo, 1990). Blacks seemed to be progressively improving their plight - striving to achieve universal literacy. However, it was at this time that Whites decided to display their feelings of discontentment by mounting a campaign of massive resistance to the educational progress of Blacks in the South. They used their old, slavery rationale that educated blacks were "troublemakers" and "discontented laborers". Moreover, they

were considered a threat to the region's social order. Governer James K. Vardaman of Mississippi stated: "The Negro isn't permitted to advance and their education only spoils a good field hand and makes a shyster lawyer or a fourth-rate teacher" (McMillen, 1989, p. 72). The ex-governor of Alabama, William Dorsey Jelks agreed:

> The education of the Negro has made him a burden, or, to express it differently, far less valuable as a citizen. The farm is the one opening for him, and this, when he has acquired a smattering of letters, he leaves. He congregates in the towns and leads for the most part an idle life, and in large numbers, a vicious life. Teaching him to read has thus far proven a curse to the material interests of the South, and this beyond the costs of the schools. The hope many had lay in the expectation that a second and third generation that could read would mark a distinct improvement on the first. We are yet to learn if this hope is ground-less. Books have given us a larger proportion of vagrants and a larger proportion of thieves as well (Jelks, 1907, p. 391).

Whites had varying ideas concerning Black public schooling, but the most pervasive was the fear that it would change the economic and social order (McMillen, 1989). This fear combined with the outspoken opposition of men like Vardaman and Jelks resulted in state and county policy changes that "reversed the pattern of advancement that had characterized black public education from Reconstruction to 1900. During the first half of the 20th century the dominant white South would use state power to repress the development of black public education, a process of repression so severe that it continues to affect the shape and character of black public education throughout the region (Anderson, 1995, p. 32).

While some Whites were trying to impede access to public education for Blacks, some Blacks were fighting amongst themselves concerning the best way to educate their race. Two of the most prominent voices were W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington. The following poem written by famous Black poet Dudley Randall (1972)

describes the contrasting educational philosophies of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois:

Booker T. & W.E.B.

"It seems to me," said Booker T.,
"It shows a mighty lot of cheek
To study chemistry and Greek
When Mr. Charlie needs a hand
To hoe the cotton on his land,
And when Miss Ann looks for a cook,
Why stick your nose inside a book?"
"I don't agree," said W.E.B.,
"If I should have the drive to seek
Knowledge of chemistry or Greek,
I'll do it. Charles and Miss can look
Another place for hand or cook.
Some men rejoice in skill of hand,
And some in cultivating land,
But there are others who maintain
The right to cultivate the brain."
"It seems to me," said Booker T.,
"That all you folks have missed the boat
Who shout about the right to vote,
And spend vain days and sleepless nights
In uproar over civil rights,
Just keep your mouth shut, do not grouse,
But work, and save, and buy a house."
"I don't agree," said W.E.B.,
"For what can property avail
If dignity and justice fail.
Unless you help to make the laws,
They'll steal your house with trumped-up clause.
A rope's as tight, a fire as hot,
No matter how much cash you've got.
Speak soft and try your little plan
But as for me, I'll be a man."
"It seems to me," said Booker T. -
"I don't agree," said W.E.B.

The philosophies of DuBois, Washington and several of their supporters will be further explored in the next section of this literature review - the African American church historical overview.

Several other Blacks spoke out concerning educating the Black race during this time, including Horace Mann Bond, who documented the shift in black public education in an essay featured in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Negro Education* (Bond, 1932). He discussed the shift from relative equality in the late nineteenth century to gross inequality in the early twentieth century. He focused upon common/elementary schooling because blacks had yet to receive fair treatment in secondary and higher education institutions. Bond discussed the changes that had occurred in Alabama from the 1889-1890 academic school year when African American children were 43.8% of the population and received 44% of state funds to schools, to 1929-1930 when they were 40% of the school population, but only received 11% of the state funds. This shift also occurred in the other Southern states.

Funds were not only limited for African American students, but teachers as well. In Mississippi, a law was passed that allowed the school board to pay white teachers the maximum $55, and pay African American teachers at the same grade level, the minimum $25 (Bond, 1932).

Because public education was established to be funded by equal taxation to everyone who owned property (with or without children), African American landowners were receiving a raw deal. They had to pay taxes for white children to attend schools, and had to pay for their children to attend black schools that were funded privately. In Alabama, out of 1,056 schools for black children, 426 were publicly owned in 1915. This situation became progressively worse over time. In 1938,only 730 out of 2,407 school buildings for blacks were publicly owned.

The outlook was even more grim for blacks who wanted to receive a secondary education. From 1880 to 1930, America's high schools transformed from elite private institutions into public schools attended by many. The South kept up with the changes that were occurring in secondary education. In 1934, 54% of White high school aged children attended high school in the South; whereas only 18% of African American high school aged children attended high school, (except in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, and Mississippi, where only 10% attended) (Anderson, 1988). Anderson emphasizes:

> ...by the early 1930s, when rural whites, urban working-class whites, and the children of European immigrants had been brought systematically into the public high school, black children as a class were deliberately excluded (Anderson, 1995, p. 35).

This pattern of exclusion continued until the 1960s. Only 23% of high school aged African Americans were attending public high schools when World War II began, and only 20% attended in Louisiana, Georgia, Arkansas, and Alabama. Throughout the 1940s enrollment trends vacillated, initially decreasing until 1946, and finally increasing to approximately 33% by 1948. Finally in the 1960s public high school education was considered universal (Anderson, 1995).

The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) tackled the problem of discrimination in schooling and won a landmark case - *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* in 1954. After 58 long years, the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision was finally reversed, when the Supreme Court ordered the integration of public education. The courts allowed time to desegregate schools, which allowed some places to organize massive resistance efforts. For example, Alabama paid a psychologist to "prove" that Blacks had lower IQs than Whites, and in 1956 nineteen Senators and eighty-one Representatives signed a Southern Manifesto, which addressed their resistance

to integration (Berry & Blassingame, 1982). Many Blacks who allowed their children to attend integrated schools loss their jobs and were threatened. In some areas such as Little Rock, Arkansas and Prince Edward County, Virginia, public schools were closed to prevent Black children from attending school with Whites. In other areas, state funds were used to open private White schools. Between 1954 and 1963 Whites rioted or bombed schools nine times, to display their disagreement with school integration. During this time, Black teachers and principals were systematically fired or downgraded. Some areas were still not desegregated as late as the 1970s.

In the North, Whites moved out of the cities into the suburbs, as Blacks migrated to urban areas. This resulted in the creation of public school systems that were predominantly Black or White. The tax base in the city dwindled, and fewer and fewer dollars were allotted to the large metropolitan populations within the city. By the 1960s many Blacks in the urban areas were taught by White teachers who lived in the suburbs and sent their children to suburban or private schools. In the 1970s the increasing population of upper- and middle-class Blacks joined White suburbans, sending their children to suburban or private schools, leaving the urban school districts in a more deteriorated state.

Blacks began to realize that integration was not necessarily as beneficial as it was initially perceived to be. Edwards (1993) addresses this issue when she states:

> It is not surprising that today's school districts are faced with a second generation of desegregation problems. Many of these problems have surfaced because trying to attack racism within the school system was never a part of the desegregation package. Simply put, desegregation put African-American children in a racist context hoping that they would learn anyway because, at least they then could share in the same material benefits of an integrated school (p. 343).

The consequences of desegregation have not all been positive. Lightfoot (1980) raised a critical question: Can a desegregated school maintain segregation in how it treats its students, their community, and their parents? After a decade, Bates (1990) answered this question:

> These problems stemmed from inequities *within* schools rather than between schools. They included such educational matters as unequal access to classrooms and programs and the disproportionately high rates of suspension and dropping out among minority students. At the same time it was becoming very clear that, in addition to segregation by race, in-school segregation was also occurring by gender and national origin (p. 10).

Experienced Black teachers and principals were the first to feel the brunt of integration when they were downgraded or fired. However, new Black teachers found it difficult to gain employment in integrated schools. Black students also had a difficult time, frequently being expelled, suspended, and placed in the lowest educational tracks at much higher rates than Whites. Black parents did not have a voice in the curriculum, staffing and other goals of the schools where their children attended. Black students were counseled into vocational or general education programs, seldom being allowed to pursue college preparatory courses. James Forman describes his typical experience as a black youth:

> The whole argument about *us* being Negroes and all the implications of this, and *our* not being able to get jobs and *we* should get some security and four years of shop would give *us* some basis for getting a job if *we* do not go to college and *we* might well not go to college because *we* don't have much money --- all those arguments were too much for me. At no point in this debate did anyone consider my personal aptitudes (Berry & Blassingame, 1982, p. 283).

Although Blacks were being allowed in public schools, they were still not receiving an "equal education". As Bates (1990) indicated above, in-school segregation was prevalent.

During the 1960s and 1970s the largest and oldest school districts became progressively "Black". By 1970, the 100 largest school districts in the United States serviced half of the 3.4 million Black students. By 1980, two-thirds of the Black students in the U.S. were attending predominantly Black schools which were often ignored by public officials. Many of these schools were overcrowded and understaffed, and seemed to do more harm than good. In 1965 Harlem students were described:

> Little is expected of them; they are rewarded for mediocre performance, and consequently accomplish increasingly less than pupils at their grade level should accomplish. It is an ironic and tragic inversion of the purpose of education that Negro children in ghetto schools tend to lose ground in I.Q. as they proceed through the schools and to fall further behind the standard for their grade level in academic performance. The schools are presently damaging the children they exist to help (p.283).

Social mobility (Labaree, 1997) has always been one of the goals for schooling that Blacks pursued. However, as a result of the caste system, Whites gained much more economically than Blacks. An inverse relationship between the amount of education an African American man had and the likelihood that his income would equal that of a White man with the same amount of education developed over a period of time, and still exists today. The battle for equal educational opportunities still has not been won. National and state test scores on reading and mathematics reveal that African American children still linger behind their White counterparts. The following statement made by Rev. Jesse Jackson is indicative of the feelings of many African Americans today:

> The challenge of this generation is to protect the gains of the past and close the education and economic gaps in our society. This generation must run faster in order to catch up. It must *excel* because we are behind. There is one White attorney for every 680 Whites, one Black attorney for every 4,000 Blacks; one White physician for every 649 Whites, one Black physician for every 5,000 Blacks; one White dentist for every 1,900 Whites, one Black dentist for every 8,400 Blacks. Less than one percent of all engineers are Black, Blacks make up less than one percent of all practicing chemists.

> The New Generation must excel because resistance to our upward mobility has increased. Bakke and "Bakkeism" has convinced White America, erroneously, that Blacks are making progress at the expense of Whites. The mass media has conveyed to White America that Blacks have gained too much, too fast and have come too far in their quest for equality. There is resistance to our upward mobility.
>
> The New Generation must excel because the sickness of racism, in too many instances, forces us to be superior in order to be considered average. A White high school dropout still has greater job opportunities than a Black high school graduate....Our goal is educational and economic equity and parity (Berry & Blassingame, 1982, p. 293-4).

Summary of historical overview of public education

The history of the African American experience in the public school setting has been one of turmoil, frustration, and humiliation. Over the years, educational opportunities have been provided and then retracted, offered and then taken away, promised and then not given. African Americans and other minorities have had to *fight* for literacy. These negative experiences within the educational system of the United States for African Americans are in stark contrast to the positive learning experiences that the African American Church has provided. While comparing the histories of these two significant institutions, it becomes apparent why African American students have historically had difficulties excelling in their public school environments, but have been, and continues to be successful in the learning environment of the African American Church.

Historical Overview of the African American Church

Because of the unique approach being utilized in this project, I believe that it is necessary to establish the African American Church as one of the most influential institutions in the African American community by discussing the significant role that it has played in every aspect of African American life (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Frazier,

1963; Weems, 1991). In the learning environment of the church, many cultural values are taught, reinforced, and perpetuated (Delpit, 1995), especially black theological perspectives of the Christian Bible (Felder, 1991; Moyd, 1995; Cone, 1989; Hopkins, 1994; Proctor, 1984). It is my hypothesis that this unique way of interpreting the Bible is the basis of the teaching and learning (internalizing) of literacy in the context of the African American church; and regardless of the literacy experiences that African American children have or do not have at home, when they attend church, they participate in numerous literacy experiences that are based on Black theology. I further hypothesize that these experiences affect their initial literacy acquisition and development, the way they think about literacy, and ultimately affect their literacy development in their classrooms at school (Edwards, Danridge, McMillon & Pleasants, in press). By simultaneously discussing the historical development of the African American church and the literacy acquisition and development of African American people affiliated with the church, it will become apparent that the two portray a direct relationship. As the African American church grows, African Americans become more literate; and as African Americans become more literate, the African American church grows. I will show how this growth was based on a foundation of black theology which developed from the initial need for a unified response to the slavemasters' efforts to justify slavery with the Christian Bible, and a continuous need to fight racism in the United States.

Also related to the development of black theology is the similarity between discourse patterns of the African American church and home, which in my opinion, originated from a historical phenomenon that demonstrates the interconnectedness of

religion and language for African American people. This section will discuss in detail the historical phenomenon from which these discourse patterns evolved. I believe the complex relationship between religion, language, literacy, and politics for African Americans continues to be interconnected and is the foundation upon which the *fictive kinship system* (Fordham, 1988) is built. This social network system serves as a resource of cultural/social capital for its members (especially within the church environment), aiding in the perpetuation of social norms, and the facilitation of negotiating cultural boundaries between various environments outside of the church. However, the fictive kinship system can also be a source of cultural interference in the classroom of an uninformed teacher who is not aware of its existence (McMillon & Edwards, 2000), and do not understand the influence that out-of-school experiences can have on classroom learning (Resnick, 1987; Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1995; Edwards, Pleasants & Franklin, 1999)). This section of the literature review will vividly explain the frame of reference from which many African American students are operating, thereby showing evidence of the importance of conducting research in the context of the African American church, and the necessity of including its voice in the conversation concerning the education of African American students.

What is the African American Church?

In order to fully grasp the nature of my argument, it is necessary to first understand what the African American church is to African American people. It has *no* counterpart in the United States. The separation of church and state does not exist for most African Americans, because they believe that religion plays a significant part in *every* aspect of their lives. Broadly conceived, the African American Church is often

represented as the most successful and influential institution in the African American community. As such, many metaphors have been used to describe the African American church. Historically, it has taken the leadership role in the community by serving as the *mouthpiece, advocate*, and *defender* (Proctor, 1995). The African American church has always been the *clearing house* for the community. Whether the issues were social, political, or economic, the African American church has been the place where conversations occurred, ideas were shared, problems were solved, and actions were taken (Nelson et al., 1975). To African Americans, the church is not just a place of worship. It is a *safe haven* for wounded spirits, a *firm foundation* for unstable families, and a *fortress* in a community that is constantly under attack by outsiders trying to promote their own agenda by attempting to exploit the weaknesses of others (Mukenge, 1983). The African American church is the only institution that African Americans own and control without having to answer to *outsiders* (Freedman, 1993). It is one of the few institutions that endured through slavery. After worshipping with their masters, slaves would secretly attend their own church, an "*invisible institution*" located in the backwoods of plantations or in their own slave quarters, where they would hear a *liberation gospel* that taught them that God created all men equal (Montgomery, 1993). The African American church continues to be the place where African Americans go to receive encouragement, reaffirmation, and validation. The African American church is the "*mother womb*" of black culture (Lincoln et al., 1990). It has given birth to schools, banks, insurance companies, and low-income housing; and has nurtured young talent for musical, dramatic, and artistic development (Lincoln et al., 1990). E. Franklin Frazier's description, "*nation within a nation*" represents the multiple levels of involvement of the

African American church in the black community (Frazier, 1974). There is an old cliché that is well known in the black community that states: "*anything worth anything came out of the black church.*" Within the numerous metaphors used to describe the African American church, there lies the opportunity to discover how the positive atmosphere of the church can support the learning of African American children. However, it is first necessary to understand what they are taught in this setting.

What is black theology?

The African American church as indicated above is a very powerful institution. It is a place where theological perspectives are taught and developed. Theology is the study of man's beliefs about God. When a group of people has similar beliefs, those beliefs facilitate the development of a sense of community among them (Frank & Yasumoto, 1998). Because of the dehumanizing way that most blacks were brought to the United States, they shared a common slavery experience, and many brought African religious beliefs and practices that had similarities. These commonalities between blacks created a unique "social location" from which to develop a cohesiveness that would continue to unify them forever (Weems, 1991). Dr. Renita Weems, an African American Vanderbilt theologian, defines *social location* as: past experiences, values, and beliefs from which a person develops his/her perspective which becomes the foundation of their decision making process. In an effort to develop strategies for survival, slaves created a black theology that met their needs based on their social location. This black theology was the impetus that compelled black men and women to separate from white Christian churches and start their own church - the African American Church. Although slavery no longer

exists, black theology continues to thrive and is the foundation upon which African American churches are built today.

Black theology is a liberation theology, (also called a *liberation gospel*) (Felder, 1991; Moyd, 1995; Cone, 1989; Hopkins, 1994; Proctor, 1995), based on three goals: 1) Fighting racial discrimination; 2) Building black resources; and 3) An undaunting, unrelentless faith in freedom. First, fighting racial discrimination refers to the efforts to restructure the power relations between blacks and whites in the United States. Much energy is spent on attacking restrictions caused and imposed by the white-male dominated power structure. This goal intertwines religion and politics in the African American church, and "is identified with black self-determination for political power, claiming one's space" (Hopkins, p. 5). As I previously stated, there is no such thing as separation of church and state in this context. As a matter of fact, the African American church was birthed in response to oppressive political strife (Cone, 1997). Secondly, building black resources refers to the church's commitment to building black people, institutions and movements. This goal is associated with the cultural beauty of blackness and self-identity. The church has invested much time, energy, and other resources focusing on the arts. Many famous musicians, actors and singers first performed in the African American church setting. The African American church spearheads numerous community and economic development programs in an attempt to build black institutions. Also, the African American church has been and continues to be a resource of human capital for movements that strive to improve the status of blacks in this country, including the NAACP, and countless other organizations. Lastly, an unrelentless faith in freedom has been the bricks and mortar that cemented the African American church together for

centuries. A belief in their own destiny of freedom has always been based on the unique African American interpretation of the Christian Bible. The core message of the Christian Bible and the lived experiences of African Americans are uniquely similar in that they both exemplify the struggles of the poor and demand justice, equality, and liberation for all. The very existence of the African American church has been based on the three aforementioned goals and the belief that it is God's divine will to continue to pursue attainment of these goals. Thus, pursuit of these goals have shaped the belief and value system within the context of the African American church which affects the beliefs and values of its members. When children attend African American churches they learn from explicit and implicit teaching of these values and beliefs. They attend classes and participate in activities that teach them to process, and interpret their world according to the African American church value system, which becomes internalized after continuous exposure. These values are learned and reinforced socially, politically, psychologically, spiritually, and economically. Therefore, African American children, many of whom attend African American churches, have a unique pre-established frame of reference from which to build (in the case of a teacher who understands their culture) or that can be a source of cultural interference (if their teacher is uninformed).

Introduction

The unique, pre-established frame of reference described above has a long, toilsome history of development. The following section traces the historical development of the African American church and the interrelated literacy development which resulted in the development of black theology and the fictive kinship system. Utilizing the periodization method, the inception, organization and development of the African

American Church will be discussed. I will specifically focus on the two largest black Christian denominations - Baptists and Methodists. Although one of the churches in this study is considered *non-denomination*, it has Baptist and Methodist influences because the pastors and the Sunday School teachers grew up in African American Baptist and/or Methodist churches. Therefore, understanding the historical development of these two denominations will give readers an in-depth perspective of the data collected at the churches in the study. For organizational purposes this section is divided into four parts: Pre-slavery West Africa - The Great Awakening (1600 - 1740); The Emergence of the African American Church (1740 - 1800); Liberation and Organization (1800 - 1900); and The Twentieth Century Church (1900 - 1999).

Pre-Slavery West Africa - The Great Awakening (1600 - 1740)

The history of the African American church is not a history of consensus. E. Franklin Frazier (1974) asserts that all traces of African heritage were erased by the inhumane experiences of slavery. For many years this belief was accepted as part of the story of African Americans. While other ethnic groups could utilize their hyphenated labels with pride because they shared a history and culture to help define who they were, African Americans according to Frazier, had severed their African historical and cultural ties as a result of their inhumane slavery experiences. Several scholars agree with Frazier's ideas. "The Negro is only an American and nothing else", they concluded. "He has no history and culture to guard and protect (Billingsley, 1992, p. 83)." However, Frazier's beliefs have been challenged by some scholars. "Contemporary scholars have demonstrated that the history and the heritage of the African-American people does not begin or end with slavery. It goes far back into ancient Africa, back to the origins of all

humankind and the rise of civilization (p.84)." The question is: Where did the African American church come from? Did it begin after slaves were evangelized by white Christians as a way of coping with the new environment -- a way of sensemaking for a group of enslaved people in a strange land? Or did it derive from an intersection of three influences: a combination of West African religions that endured the savage impact of slavery, white Christianity, and the common experiences of slavery? A closer look at the historical events surrounding the story of the African American church will clarify these issues.

How did Africans get to America?

Contrary to the past teachings of many historians, most Africans were not sold by their brutal, barbaric brothers as slaves to white Europeans in exchange for tobacco, alcohol, clothes, and other material gain. Most slaves were sold by chiefs and other powerful decision-makers as prisoners of war from intertribal wars (Sobel, 1988). Because many tribes did not believe in killing their prisoners, they held them hostage for many years and made them work as slaves. When Europeans offered them tobacco, alcohol, clothing, and other items, they sold their prisoners of war for economic and personal gain.

The first 20 slaves were brought to the United States in 1619 as indentured servants (Harley, 1996). The difference between slaves and indentured servants was that servants served a limited amount of time and were eventually freed. The first 20 slaves gained their freedom after several years of bondage. However, a slave market was created as Europeans brought more African slaves to the United States. Farmers and plantation owners were unable to cultivate large pieces of land alone, and they made

requests to slavetraders for large amounts of slaves. After a period of time certain plantation owners made requests for slaves from specific geographical locations because they seemed to be better "fit" for certain types of work (Sobel, 1988). Some plantation owners refused to buy slaves from certain areas because they were not "fit" for the work on their land. Depending on the nature of the work (i.e. cotton fields, housework, etc.), slaveowners believed that slaves from certain areas worked better in various capacities. Because large amounts of slaves from specific geographical locations were brought over to work on the same plantation, some of them were able to salvage their beliefs, values, languages, and religious practices. The African slaves taught their first generation American born children, thus perpetuating some of the African religious practices.

What were some of the common religious practices of the African slaves?

Most slaves brought to the United States were from West Africa. When they arrived, they already had West African values and beliefs based on their West African culture. Sobel (1988) discusses the Sacred Cosmos, which he defines as the African "world view." Sobel states: "Every culture can be said to have a world view, by means of which the potential chaos of the social world is ordered and evaluated. This construct can be used in the study of American slaves through analysis of the developing world views of black Africans as they came into contact and interacted with the changing world views of white Europe-Americans (p. 3)." Sobel believes that the world view of a people is their way of making sense out of their environment. He discusses five categories that assist in the canalization process of the West African Sacred Cosmos: time, space, causality, purpose, and concepts of being. According to Sobel, these categories create a system of meaning making for the West African culture.

Sobel's concept of "world view" is especially significant in terms of searching for the origin of the African American church and its relation to the people who assisted in its creation and development. From their world view , West Africans had to form new identities in the United States. Sobel states:

> The relationships between the world view, individuals, and social structure in a given culture are dialectical. In part, the world view routinizes and stabilizes the individual's memory, thinking, conduct and structuring of significance provides taxonomy, models, and goals in relation to which the individual must evaluate reality and choose action. The individual's pattern of priorities is, in part, given to him by the world view, but the individual is, at one and the same time, a participant, a co-producer, and a dialectical taker and giver. He finds a system. In his taking it, however, he changes it, making it both his own and something different. The world view that emerges is changed by each and every view and products of it; yet, they, too, transform and then transmit further a somewhat changed world view. By stabilizing or institutionalizing cultural elements, institutions change the relative importance of these very elements and create the need for new responses or new understandings. Thus, the world view of any culture holds within itself dynamic elements. Its transmission by individuals and institutions must lead to its change, although clearly different world views regularly generate change at different rates (p. 4).

Sobel's explanation of the Sacred Cosmos assists in understanding how West Africans learned to cope with their new environment. Many of the slaves that came to North America spoke different languages and had various religious practices, however, the social trauma of slavery motivated them to search for commonalities, and combine their commonalties to create a West African Sacred Cosmos which captured the essence of their most significant values and beliefs. The creation of the Sacred Cosmos was possible because there were foundational similarities between the West African belief and value systems. Some of the foundational West African beliefs that were similar included:

God as Supreme Being

West Africans believed in a Supreme God who was in total control, and they understood the importance of being in touch with Him. They desired to commune with Him and live in peace. To achieve that end, they were committed to living a certain way.

Prayers and Worship

Prayers to the Supreme God were common among all West Africans. Prayers were offered daily, and at some ritualistic occasions such as planting, harvesting, and before a battle. Extemporaneous prayers were frequently spoken throughout the day. Some groups had professional priests who dedicated their lives to serve in their formal temples. Altars were built in the temples and smaller versions were found in every family compound. God's name indicated a connection with spirit, force or power, and also meant glory, dignity, majesty and grace. When trying to make sense of slavery most West African people viewed God as having removed Himself for various reasons. Some believed that man broke some kind of rule. Others believed that man was making too many minor requests and God become irritated and withdrew. While there were various beliefs concerning God's distancing Himself, most believed that they would one day be in constant communion with Him again. After death man would live in peace again. "The Yoruba and the Mawu maintain an expectation of personal contact with God, but only after death. The Yoruba believe that when we die we shall have to state our case in the hall of heaven. The good will be sent to the good heaven, and the wicked to the heaven of pot sherds (Sobel, p.12)."

Spirit: Nyam or Da

Nyam was used to refer to the Supreme God and in relation to spirit, force, or power. Nyama was characterized by the Bombora as "a force, a power,...an energy...possessed by every man, every animal, every living being...which never disappears, for even after death it continues to exist. This energy, this fluid, is the envoy, the messenger of hatred, of vengeance, of justice, and it goes where a directing and ruling will send it, taking, rightly or wrongly, misfortune, poverty, sickness, death (Sobel, p. 13)." Among the Fon of Dahomey, Da was "a force which manifest himself in the world in a number of ways (p. 13)." It is "androgenous and the source of the gods that create men (p. 13)." According to Sobel no one has been able to adequately translate this concept into Western terms. He states: "It is the essence of being; it can be used for good or evil; it is the recognition of the presence of universal spirit; and it must always be taken into account. It can be in words (curses or blessings) and things, animals, people, spirits and divinities; it *is* God (p. 13)."

Man

"Becoming is a basic West African principle (p. 14)." The soul is seen as being separate from the body. It is gift given and its' destiny is in the hands of the body that possesses it. There are two natures within each soul and it is the responsibility of the individual to resolve the evil vs. good conflict so that he/she can emerge empowered to fulfill their purpose. If they do not fulfill their purpose, they may have to be reincarnated. At death, the soul returns to its source and it is a happy time for the soul that has completed the requirements. Names are given and have meanings. To call a person's name is to summon the entire essence of the individual, which includes their spiritual

connection. Naming a child is considered very important and is usually celebrated. "It identifies the individual and establishes his or her clan relationship (p. 15)." Clan relationship is extremely important. Their descendants established a person's place in society. Many privileges and responsibilities were linked to their positions. A second birth, which established their position usually, occurred at puberty. Various rituals marked the celebration of a person being placed in their position of authority, after which they were required to learn how to connect with God by communicating with the divinities and living dead.

The Living Dead and Divinities

The living dead and divinities were seen as middle men who were mediators between God and humans. They were created by God according to the West African Sacred Cosmos. The two terms were characterized as follow: "(1) the divinities who are based on real or mythical personalities from the unknown distant past, and (2) the living dead, the spirits of those who have died relatively recently and who are still recalled by name and character. (When those who knew them in life are all dead, these spirits move into the general class of divinities, becoming more dangerous because of their lack of direct ties to the living) (p.16)." The spirits were believed to have the same personalities that they had when they were alive. "They have likes and hatreds, weaknesses and strengths, and must be dealt with as one deals with living persons, but they also have far greater power over spirit (p.17)." Because they were considered dangerous, professional help was needed to find out what they wanted so that a person could try to fulfill their requests. The trained profession practiced witchcraft, Juju, and Voudou. When a slave was known to be a median, the slaveowners were required to tell another slaveowner

before he purchased the median. Whites and blacks were afraid of the medians who seemed to have mystical powers.

Transcendentalism

Transcendentalism is defined as the ability to leave one's physical environment to visit another. Africans often had visions and would visit other places for a period of time. Tribal leaders would have visions and inform other tribal members of their experiences. These experiences were considered a form of prophecy, and depending on their positive or negative aspect, the vision might be celebrated. Visions that allowed slaves to visit heaven and other beautiful places kept them alive during traumatic experiences, such as severe beatings, separation from family, etc.

Spirit possession

Africans believed that good and evil spirits could possess individuals, animals, and objects. Trained professionals were often asked to mediate in order to find out the spirit's desires and purposes. Witchdoctors or medicine men were also asked to exorcise the spirits at various times if the spirits were causing sickness or pain. However, individuals were sometimes thought to have offended the spirits in some way and brought their problems upon themselves.

This detailed explanation of West African religious beliefs and practices illuminates some similarities to White Christian beliefs (e.g. belief in God as the Supreme Being and the necessity of daily prayer). Some West African practices were adopted by White Christian churches who believed that blacks had a special relationship with God unlike their own. Some Whites believed that Blacks could connect with God through prayer and meditation, and could speak on behalf of God when preaching. Acceptance of

some West African beliefs and practices affected the White Christian worship services, ultimately influencing the method of worship in African American churches as well.

Problems Encountered in Practicing African Religions

Although some historians claim that West African religious beliefs continued to be practiced after slaves arrived in the United States, it is certain that some problems were encountered. Many plantations had homogenous groups as a result of the plantation owners' requests for slaves from specific geographical locations. On these plantations, it was much easier for slaves to continue their old ways in a new land. However, contrary to popular belief, most slaves did not work on large plantations (Frazier, 1974). Most slave owners lived on small plantations and farms with as few as 1 to 5 slaves. These slaves often worked in the field next to their masters on a daily basis. Because they were alienated from large groups of slaves, these slaves were more apt to adapt to American life. They were pressured by their masters to assimilate, and were also frequently pressured by other slaves who had a good relationship with the master, or who did not want to be disciplined because another slave was not conforming. The slaves on the smaller plantations and farms often became totally submerged in American life because they were *always* around their slave owners. In some cases, the slaves and slave owners had very *close* relationships. These were usually the slaves who learned to read and sometimes were given an opportunity to gain their freedom. On the other hand, slaves who were on large plantations usually had their own slave quarters and did not interact very often with their slave owners. The overseer who reported to the slave owner governed them. Although the condition of their houses, clothing and food may not have

been as good as the slaves who lived on smaller estates in their masters' houses, the slaves on large plantations had a greater chance of retaining some of their old practices.

When attempting to preserve their African religious practices, slaves who resided near other slaves originating from various geographical locations encountered another difficult barrier -- language differences. Being in locations with slaves who did not speak their language made it difficult to communicate initially. Although there were 600 different languages spoken in Africa at the time (Sobel), they can be categorized in four strands. Within the strands and across the categories, foundational similarities in their value systems can be found, which some scholars believe made it easier for the African slaves to understand each others' languages. Not having established concepts related to their values and beliefs, the African slaves found it difficult at first, to communicate. However, they were forced by the trauma of slavery to overcome these barriers for survival, thus they worked diligently to communicate, eventually recognizing many similarities in their languages. The language similarities that were found helped them *create* common languages. After learning some English, they combined their West African language similarities and developed their own style of speaking (Sobel). I believe this newly developed, original style of speaking that combined West African language similarities and some broken English (they were never formally taught how to speak English), was the origin of what is referred to today as Black vernacular English. This dialect was utilized by slaves and passed down through generations. When the African American church was established, black ministers used the "created language" to teach and preach. **I believe that this historical phenomenon is the reason that many African American homes and churches utilize similar discourse patterns today.**

Although some language barriers were encountered and overcome by creating a new black dialect, it is documented that many Africans could speak more than one language, and they utilized their language skills for interpretation purposes. W.E. B. DuBois (1963) believed that there were a number of slaves who spoke more than one language, which was manifested in the *Amistad* revolt and on many other occasions. Scholars have learned that several tribes were known to barter and exchange goods and services, in which case a common language was used to communicate. Although they were probably unaware of the slaves' language skills, some slave owners intentionally tried to impede slave communication for fear of slave revolts. These slave owners tried to force slaves to assimilate to their new conditions. They did not want the slaves speaking African languages or practicing African religions. Slave owners with this mindset often disciplined slaves. Some Africans were afraid of the torture that they would have to endure if they disobeyed. Slaves who did not want trouble alienated the slaves who refused to assimilate. This division among the slave population put more pressure on the slaves who tried to retain parts of their culture. Although some of the slaves spoke many languages and many slaves overcame their language barriers by *creating* their own language, Whites perceived slaves as barbaric people and felt that they needed to become *civilized* by being proselytized into Christianity.

Slaveowners Find an Answer

Many slave owners did not want slaves practicing their *uncivilized* religions. As mentioned previously, they were afraid of the Voodoo ministers, and even some of the slaves who did not practice Voodoo seemed to have *strange* religious practices. There was a difference of opinion among slave owners concerning the possibility of offering an

alternative religion to their slaves. Some slave owners were skeptical about introducing Christianity because European law required that slaves who were baptized be set free. There is documentation that one of the original 20 slaves brought to America in 1619 had a grandchild who was baptized and set free (Sobel). In response to the slave owners' skepticism, England passed a law that slaves did not have to be set free when baptized in North America (Harley, 1995). Some slave owners did not share the baptism concern. Many of them greatly desired that their slaves accept Christianity. They allowed the slaves to worship in their churches and black ministers were welcome to preach to all white and integrated congregations.

The evangelical outreach to slaves was especially prevalent during *The Great Awakening*, which began in 1740. White Christians established goals to "save the lost" regardless of skin color. During this time however, another major disagreement occurred among white Christians. Although they wanted to introduce slaves to Christianity, their purpose for evangelizing differed among the various groups. Quakers advocated evangelizing and teaching to read in preparation for freedom. Baptists and Methodists spoke out vociferously against slavery but did not advocate educating slaves. Interestingly Baptist and Methodist missionaries were required to free their slaves before evangelizing as an outward manifestation of their stance against the institution of slavery. However, they did not agree with the Quakers' belief that slaves should be taught to read. Because of the *mixed signals* that slaves received from their slave owners concerning their well being, there were various reactions to the introduction of Christianity.

Slave Reaction to White Christianity

Some slaves accepted Christianity wholeheartedly, turning away from their old beliefs. This total acceptance was especially seen on the smaller plantations by slaves who had close relationships with their masters. Many slaves accepted Christianity, but kept some of their African values, thus creating an intermixture of Christian and African beliefs and practices. Other slaves totally rejected Christianity as a *white man's religion* (i.e.. spiritualists and Muslims). This occurred more frequently on very large plantations where slaves had opportunities to socialize and worship in their own way because their interactions with the slave owners were limited. Some slave owners did not concern themselves with slave life as long as the slaves fulfilled their labor requirements. In this environment, slaves were free to continue their African religious practices, speak their own languages, and develop a *separate* society. This was also the location of many *all black* churches.

Although some slaves were encouraged to worship with their masters, they were forced to accept undesirable seating arrangements in the churches. The slaves usually sat in the back or in the balcony of the churches, and were forced to give up their seats for white latecomers. Also, slaves who could read began to read the Bible for themselves and realized that the white ministers were not telling *the whole story*. They read passages that taught equality and liberation in Christ. These stories were told to slaves who could not read, and the messages were repeated over and over again. Eventually the slaves became unwilling to ignore the hypocrisy of their slave owners. The slaves recognized that the slave owners were using the Bible to justify their acts of oppression. As slaves learned more about Christianity from other slaves who could read the Bible, they

developed their own theological interpretations of the scripture. Words like *captivity, liberation* and *God's chosen people* took on greater personal meaning. As indicated by Landes (1989) scripture passages like the Exodus empowers the oppressed to become revolutionary. The slaves saw themselves as *God's chosen people* and felt the need to develop a new theology - a liberation theology - a Black theology.

Slaves began to have their own private worship services. Most slave owners responded in one of two ways. Some of the slave owners became concerned that the private worship services were meetings to plan revolts. A law was passed that a white man must be present if 5 or more slaves were together (Harley). Other slave owners encouraged their slaves to have their own services. Some of them thought that the slaves were ignorant and too emotional during worship service. They needed to have their own services so that they could stop interrupting the white services. In this case, the slave owners were well aware of the private services and actually documented slave baptisms and special programs in their white church records (Sobel). However, in situations where the slave owners did not want slaves to have private services, the slaves created the "invisible institution" that Frazier speaks of (1974). These services were held secretly in the backwoods or in slaves' quarters. According to Frazier, **this was the first African American church**. This invisible institution was also the site where a *secret communication system* was developed. Slaves would sing songs while in the field working or when they came in contact with one another that delivered secret messages about private church services or slave escape plans. The songs were also sung as a means of spiritual edification (DuBois, 1963).

The Emergence of The African American Church: 1740 - 1800

The African American Church emerged during the period between 1740 and 1800. Although many West African slaves continued their religious practices and taught them to their American born children, the introduction of Christianity had a great impact on these religious practices. This section highlights the influence of Christianity on the slave population, and the emergence of The African American Church.

White Resistance to the Introduction of Christianity

The introduction of Christianity to the American slave population did not occur without conflict. Many Whites were against the proselytizing of black slaves. Even after England responded to their concern by changing the law so that slaves were not considered free after baptism, some Whites continued to have a problem with sharing their religion with their slaves. When a convert joined the Anglican church, for example, it was customary to give them godparents who would accept the responsibility of being their spiritual guardians (Sobel). Many ministers had serious difficulty finding godparents who were willing to stand up for Blacks who they considered "property" and might sell for profit the next week. It became a serious moral dilemma for some white slaveowners. One response to this dilemma was documented concerning Hugh Jones, rector of William and Mary Church in Maryland. He allowed Blacks to become godparents, "thereby making an important statement about their spiritual equality (p. 63)." He also performed marriage ceremonies for Blacks in his church. Although some white Christians were interested in the spiritual well-being of the black slaves, others had to be coaxed into introducing their slaves to Christianity. One plan to encourage slaveowners to share the Gospel with their slaves was a proposal to defer a head tax that

was levied on every slave 14 years and older. If the slave was a Christian, the tax could be deferred for 4 years (Sobel).

The Great Awakening

Through the message of the Great Awakening, Christianity was offered to all, including black slaves. "The revivals of the Great Awakening stressed a religion of the heart rather than of the mind; emphasis was on the conversion experience rather than on spiritual growth through study and discipline (Smith, 1988, p. 29). The appealing ideology of the Great Awakening crossed denominational and racial lines, thus creating new religious communities (Smith, 1988). Blacks began to worship in previously all-white congregations. Some received the *call of God* and were ordained to become missionaries and preachers. White Baptists and Methodists gained the most converts from all races. Initially, they spoke out vociferously against slavery and they de-emphasized the importance of an educated clergy. These ideas were especially appealing to Blacks because many were uneducated, but had a burning desire to preach God's message.

West African religious practices were incorporated into some of the Baptist and Methodist revival meetings. "For example, the shout, introduced into camp meetings by blacks, reflected the influence of the so-called danced religions of West Africa. During a shout, those struck by the spirit threw their arms into the air and began to shuffle about. A circle (known as a ring shout) would often form as the pace of the movement quickened. The shout might continue for some time, and shouters would often collapse in a state of ecstasy or exhaustion (Smith, p. 31)."

The Christian Education of Slaves

Once the black slaves became converted at revivals many joined white churches. These new converts were met with some animosity from Whites. Some of the white pastors were not interested in the Christian education of black converts. Several ministers included adult Blacks in weekly classes with white children. This combination was demeaning and disturbing to the black adults. They recognized that many Whites believed them to be imbeciles. Some pastors responded to the needs of Blacks by offering Saturday classes, but these classes did not guarantee that the mindset of Whites was any different toward the slaves. The following quote from a white minister summarizes a widely held sentiment: "As for the Negroes I have been at pains, for I sometimes at the Church Porch teached them the principles of religion, though many are very dull, and when I am not employed, I catechise the Children" (Sobel, p. 61).

Several examples of Whites who genuinely made an attempt to assist Blacks can be found. In Virginia, William Black of Accomako made rounds to instruct slaves at their masters' houses. Because of his vigorous efforts over 200 blacks attended the Lord's Supper three times a year. Whites and Blacks overflowed the churches in his area to worship together. Anthony Gavin, also from Virginia traveled over 400 miles per year praying at twelve places. He baptized 229 Whites and 172 Blacks during his first year of service between 1737 and 1738 (Sobel). During the 1750s, Hugh Neil from Delaware is documented to have met with slaves every Sunday evening to instruct them concerning the Christian doctrine (Sobel). "These early isolated cases of Anglican efforts to reach adult Blacks may well have built up a reservoir of Christian faith that provided the groundwork for some early Baptist conversions and all-black churches (Sobel, p. 62)."

Independent Efforts to Evangelize and Educate Blacks

Because of the hypocritical actions of white slaveowners, some missionary organizations were formed for the purpose of evangelizing and educating the slaves. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts of London was one such organization. Because they were financially independent, they did not depend on the approval of slaveowners. They appointed Thomas Bray as a leader in Maryland. With assistance from over 300 missionaries, he set out to convert Blacks to Anglicanism. Bray and his associates were much better educated and more dedicated men than the local ministers. They were met with much resistance from the ministers and the slaveowners "due to the white attitude toward educating blacks (Sobel p. 65)." A school was opened in New York, but Whites threatened to close it because of the possibility of black rebellion. Several other schools were opened by the Anglicans for both slaves and free Blacks. They successfully taught some Blacks to read and write, but often their owners would not cooperate. "The owners who cooperated generally sent slaves to learn to read and write so that they could use these skills, and then withdrew them (Sobel, p. 65)." In Williamsburg, Virginia a school was run for about 30 students per year between 1760 and 1774. Fredericksburg, Virginia was the site for another school from 1765-1770. "The school in Charleston, South Carolina, Commissary Garden attempted to circumvent one problem by buying slaves to be trained as teachers, but it too functioned no more than twenty years (1743-1763) (Sobel, p. 65)." Although the Anglicans taught many slaves to read and write, they did not successfully convert many slaves to Anglicanism.

Most attempts to educate Blacks was for the purpose of proselytizing them. Free Blacks also took a leadership role in trying to establish a means to educate themselves and their people:

> As early as 1790, the Brown Fellowship Society in Charleston maintained schools for the free Negro children. An important fact about the schools which the free Negroes maintained was that many of them were Sunday schools. On the eve of the Civil War, there were then in Baltimore Sunday schools about 600 Negroes. They had formed themselves into a Bible Association, which had been received into the convention of the Baltimore Bible Society. In 1825 the Negroes there had a day and night school giving courses in Latin and French. Four years later there appeared an African Free School, with an attendance of from 150 to 175 every Sunday. Although the Sunday Schools represented before the Civil War one of the most important agencies in the education of Negroes, nevertheless the churches through their ministers urged parents to send their children to whatever schools were available (Frazier, p. 44).

Christian education was really emphasized during this time. The first Black Sunday Schools were established to teach morals and values while teaching literacy skills. They had four basic characteristics: 1) they were modeled after public schools; 2) their students were members of the congregation; 3) they existed for training in morals; and 4) they were sponsored by a local church (Ward, 1998). The African American Sunday School took on the task of nurturing and caring for the moral teaching of Blacks. Before public schooling was offered to Blacks, many of these children attended Sunday School on Sunday, and returned to the same building - the African American Church building - to attend school Monday through Friday, because it was often the only building in the community owned by Blacks.

Prominent Figures in the History of The Negro Church

Although attempts by Blacks and Whites to educate Blacks may have seemed unsuccessful on a large scale, many Blacks learned to read and write in the process. The

more educated men seemed to rise to leadership positions in the black community. They often became ministers and were well respected in the black and white communities. Some of these ministers were allowed to preach in the white churches and there is documentation of several black pastors of all-white congregations. The Reverend Lemuel Haynes became the first black ordained minister in the Congregational church, and between 1785 and 1833 he pastored predominantly white congregations in New York, Connecticut, and Vermont (Smith, 1988). Harry Hosier, better known as Black Harry, accompanied Francis Asbury, a Methodist evangelist sent by founder John Wesley to build Methodist societies in America. Black Harry and Asbury traveled over 300,000 miles by horseback. Because of their strenuous travel schedule, Black Harry was frequently called upon to preach at camp meetings (Smith). "A Methodist bishop once described Black Harry as the best preacher in the world (Smith, p. 35)."

Due largely to the efforts of Asbury and Black Harry, the first Methodist meeting houses were organized in 1772. By 1785, black congregants were restricted to sit in certain pews in the church. Between 1785 and 1787, Blacks began to leave the white Methodist societies to form a colored Methodist society (Smith). The first black Methodist churches in the South emerged from this society: Sharp Street Methodist Episcopal Church, and Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The extent of the common practice of within church segregation can be understood from close examination of Saint George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia. Blacks had been a part of the church since its establishment in 1767. Blacks were not only restricted to sit in certain pews in the church, but church classes were segregated by race. Some Blacks were not satisfied with this type of treatment. Richard Allen, a local

Philadelphia black Methodist preacher suggested in 1787 that Blacks form their own church. Few blacks agreed with Allen. Instead of forming their own church, they formed the Free African Society "to foster moral character and render assistance to members in times of need (Smith, p. 36)." In the summer of 1791, the society asked several white philanthropists to help them purchase land for a church building. "These plans acquired greater urgency after an incident at Saint George's during the summer of 1792. The gallery had just been erected, and Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and other Blacks were directed to sit there. Just as prayers began, the Blacks were pulled from their knees and ordered to the rear of the gallery. Instead of retiring to their seats in the rear, Allen states that 'all went out of the church in a body and they were no more plagued with us in the church' (Smith, p. 36)." The majority of Blacks who walked out of St. George's erected a new building -- St. Thomas' African Episcopal Church -- and Absalom Jones, after being ordained the first black Protestant Episcopal priest, became the pastor (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Allen, committed to maintain the Methodist form of worship, organized Bethel Church of Philadelphia in August 1794, which became the *mother church* of what was to be a new denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). By 1800, there were 12,000 - 15,000 black Methodists.

The first known black Baptist was listed as one of fifty-one members of the Newton, Rhode Island church in 1743 (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). By 1762, the church had 19 black members. Blacks were also received as members of the First Baptist Church of Boston in 1772. However, most of the black Baptists were in the South.

> The ancestry of the National Baptist Convention reaches back to the first known black churches in America, generally acknowledged to have been the African Baptist or "Bluestone" Church on the William Byrd plantation near the Bluestone River in Mecklenberg, Virginia, in 1758, and the Silver

> Bluff Baptist Church, located on the South Carolina bank of the Savannah River not far from Augusta, Georgia. Although historical records indicate that the Silver Bluff Church was established by a slave named George Liele sometime between 1773 and 1775, the cornerstone of the present church building claims a founding date of 1750 (Lincoln & Mamiya, p. 23).

George Liele, a slave born in Virginia became converted while accompanying his master to church. His master freed him so that he could carry on his work in the ministry. However, when his master was killed and the heirs questioned his free status, Liele evacuated with the British. Before leaving, he baptized Andrew Bryan, a slave, who organized the African Baptist Church of Savannah around 1788. Another slave, Jesse Peters, who had previously been a member of the Silver Bluff Church, assisted Bryan, and became the pastor of the Springfield Baptist Church of Augusta, Georgia, which was organized around 1787 (Lincoln & Mamiya).

While Blacks were organizing black churches, there were some black preachers who were pastoring white congregations, and several white preachers ministered to black congregations. Josiah Bishop at Portsmouth and William Lemon at Gloucester are known to have pastored white Baptists in Virginia. Robert Ryland was the white pastor of the first African Church of Richmond for 25 years. At the turn of the century the number of black Baptists was estimated to be in excess of 25,000 (Lincoln & Mamiya).

White Response to Negro Church Growth

Although Baptist churches were organized independently, the degree of independence diminished as more slaves became members. Regulations were increased in fear of insurrections. Many slaves were only permitted to attend white church services of their masters or black churches pastored by white men. These white responses to the emergence of black churches forced slaves to retreat to their "invisible institutions" in the

slave quarters or backwoods of the plantations for their worship services (Frazier, 1974). "Even when secrecy was not mandated, under no circumstances were the scattered independent churches allowed to develop formal black associations, though some of them did seek to join with existing white Baptist organizations (Lincoln & Mamiya, p. 25).

> A Negro Baptist church was somewhat independent in the North, although associations like those in Philadelphia and New York could appoint preachers for Negro churches. In the South a large congregation of colored people could lay no claim to sovereignty apart from the white people. This point is illustrated in the First African Baptist Church, Savannah, whose membership of seven hundred was divided into three churches by the Savannah Association in 1802. Only after emancipation can complete autonomy be called a distinguishing mark of a Negro Baptist Church (Lincoln & Mamiya, p. 25).

Although Blacks were frustrated with the mindset of white congregants, they could not truly separate from them in the South because of slavery laws that impeded the free worship of Blacks. As the quote above states, black churches were not liberated until the liberation of slaves in the form of the Emancipation Proclamation.

A Century of Liberation & Organization: 1800 - 1900

As tensions increased aggravated by slave uprisings engineered by Gabriel Proseer in 1800, Denmark Vesey in 1822, and Rev. Nat Turner in 1831, restrictions became more severe concerning black congregations. White Baptists split in 1845 over the issue of slavery, while the number of black Baptists continued to grow. By 1850 there were 150,000 black Baptists and nearly 500,000 by 1870 as a result of independence from slavery restrictions.

Baptists

In the north, the move toward more racially separate churches was a protest against discrimination in the white Baptist church setting. Blacks wanted to be treated

equally and refused to accept unequal and restrictive treatment. During this time several historic black churches were started. Thomas Paul founded Joy Street Church originally organized as the African Baptist Church in 1805, and the Abyssinian Baptist Church in 1808 (latter pastored by Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Dr. Samuel D. Proctor). Henry Cunningham organized the First African Baptist Church in Philadelphia in 1809. Black Baptists also attempted to organize a national denomination with much difficulty. From 1815 to 1880, many black Baptists affiliated with existing white Baptist organizations such as the American Baptist Union. However, after the division of white Baptists over the issue of slavery, most black Baptists associated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

The first all-black Baptist associations were organized in the midwest: Providence Association in Ohio in 1834; Union Association in Ohio in 1836; Wood River Association in Illinois in 1839; and Amherstburg Association in Canada and Michigan in 1841. Unlike their white counterparts, the black associations spoke out vociferously against slavery, and were active in the Underground Railroad in Ohio and Canada. As a result of this heightened race consciousness, and in response to the discrimination from southern white Baptists, and the paternalism of northern white Baptists, the independent church movement among Blacks intensified. "Though in tension with a competing school of thought which favored working on a cooperative basis with whites within the existing northern Baptist organizations, the separatist ideology prevailed and ultimately culminated in the establishment of an independent Baptist denomination" (Lincoln & Mamiya, p. 27). Although some Blacks wanted to affiliate with white national organizations, I believe that they chose to organize separately because they recognized the need to hold fast to their black theological perspective.

The Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention was the first national effort at consolidation, but inadequate financial support and internal class conflicts between the educated northern Blacks and the southern ex-slaves concerning emotional fervor and political activism caused its demise. From this convention three new associations were organized. In 1880 the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention of the United States met with 151 delegates from 11 states in Montgomery, Alabama. Rev. W.W. Colley headed the convention, which sent missionaries to Africa and addressed domestic social issues such as the use of alcohol and tobacco. In 1886 the American National Baptist Convention was organized by Rev. William J. Simmons with 600 delegates from churches in 17 states. This convention eventually grew to include 9,000 churches with 4,500 ministers in spite of resistance from northern white Baptists. The National Baptist Educational Convention of the U.S.A., was organized in Washington, D.C. in 1893 by Rev. W. Bishop Johnson to educate and train clergy and missionaries. At the 1894 annual meeting of these conventions in Montgomery, a proposal was set forth recommending a merger of the three bodies. A committee was appointed to report on the proposal the following year. The merger was accomplished September 28, 1895 in Atlanta, Georgia at a meeting attended by over 500 delegates. The new organization was the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., with subsidiary Foreign Mission, Home Mission, and Education boards, to which a publishing concern was added in 1897. Rev. E.C. Morris was the first president of the new convention.

This display of unity was timely because African Americans had entered a new era of intensified discrimination. From 1890 to 1910 laws were passed by all southern states which effectively disenfranchised African Americans, and gave license to

lynchings and other forms of racial suppression. The Supreme Court ratified the Jim Crow segregation by approving "separate but equal" railroad cars and other public facilities in Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896. In the process, the ranks of the black churches, which constituted the sole place of sanctuary, expanded accordingly. Between 1890 and 1906 the number of black Baptist ministers increased from 5,500 to over 17,000.

While the black church national organizations were growing, they not only focused on political issues, but addressed educational issues as well. Many black institutions of higher learning have Baptist origins and maintain Baptist affiliations. Many of them were founded by black church organizations and continue to be supported by them today. Among them are Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina; Virginia Union University, Richmond; Shaw University, Raleigh, North Carolina; and Morehouse College and Spelman College in Atlanta. Some schools such as Tuskegee Institute were closely connected to Baptists organizations through the influence of leaders like Dr. Booker T. Washington. The American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville is jointly operated by the Southern Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention, Inc.

African Methodist Episcopal (AME)

Methodists were more conservative than Baptists about allowing Blacks to preach in their churches. Their attitude about Blacks emanated from a belief in maintaining an educated clergy, and their belief that allowing uneducated Blacks to preach would give them an opportunity to introduce barbaric ideologies and practices. Most white Methodists would not ordain Blacks, but allowed them to serve as lay preachers or exhorters (Montgomery, 1993).

Early in the nineteenth century when the African Methodist Episcopal church tried to penetrate the South, Whites did not welcome it. They were becoming more suspicious of all independent black churches and correctly believed that the AME church was involved with the antislavery movement. African Methodist Episcopal churches remained mostly in the border states and in cities such as Mobile, New Orleans, and Charleston. Like some of the early Baptist congregations, the AME churches were considered elite among southern Blacks, and most of the members were free Blacks. A free, rich black man, Morris Brown, founded an AME church in Charleston in 1817, but local Whites became frightened after the slave conspiracy led by Denmark Vesey and burned it to the ground in 1822. In 1841 Jordan W. Early organized St. James AME Church for free Blacks in New Orleans. John M. Brown, an Oberlin College graduate, also organized Morris Brown AME and Trinity in New Orleans.

The AME church organized nationally in 1830, when Richard Allen organized the first of several Negro Conventions "for the purpose of bringing the common efforts of the Black Church leadership and other potential sources to focus on the galling issues of slavery" (Lincoln & Mamiya, p. 52). The abolition of slavery, relief for the needy, and encouraging education attainment were the goals on which the AME church focused. Although many of the church leaders were not educated, they understood the importance of education to the advancement of blacks. Bishop Daniel Payne, a previous schoolmaster in Baltimore, established the AME goals by insisting upon a trained clergy and encouraging pastors to organize schools in their communities. In 1864 at a General Conference of the AME Church Bishop Payne stated: "We assure you, dear brothers, this is not time to encourage ignorance and mental sloth; to enter the ranks of the ministry, for

the education and elevation of millions now issuing out of the house of bondage, require men, not only talented, but well educated; not only well educated, but thoroughly sanctified unto God" (p. 53).

Payne was instrumental in founding Wilberforce University in 1856. Other AME colleges include Morris Brown founded in 1881 in Atlanta, Georgia; Allen founded in 1870 in Columbia, South Carolina; Paul Quinn founded in 1881 in Waco, Texas; Shorter Junior College founded in 1886 in Little Rock, Arkansas; and Edward Waters founded in 1901 in Jacksonville, Florida. The A.M.E. Review , the oldest journal in the world owned and published by blacks, was founded in 1881.

After the Civil War, the Methodist denomination prospered in much the same way that the Baptists did. Before the Civil War, the AME church had approximately 20,000 members, but by 1866 the number had increased to 75,000 due to growth spurts in the southern churches.

White response to the African American Church

Whites were concerned about the independent African churches and their influence on their slaves. They began to intrude more and more into the religious lives of their slaves. They encouraged slaves to receive Christian instruction and many of the slave masters taught their slaves themselves. They insisted that the slaves attend their worship services, although the seating arrangement was segregated. Some slaveholders required their slaves to attend church, and punished them if they did not conform. The punishment in some cases was denial of food and tobacco for the week (Montgomery). The demands that Whites placed on their slaves to attend church was a display of piety and self-interest. They may have been concerned about the souls of their slaves, but they

also believed that showing interest in their slaves' spiritual well-being would decrease pressure from the abolitionists and some religious sects. Also, if Whites required their slaves to attend church with them, they could control what they were being taught about the Bible. "Lessons in discipline and obedience were designed to instill in slaves their Christian duty to accept their appointed station in life" (Montgomery, p. 31). When instructing slaves white ministers were careful to stress issues concerning duty, and avoid topics such as liberation. "In their sermons to slave congregations they delivered the message that slaves were slaves because it was God's will, and their duty was to obey their worldly and heavenly masters" (Montgomery, p. 32). In the backwoods, however, slaves heard a liberation gospel - a black theology - that continued to motivate them to strive for freedom.

The Twentieth Century African American Church: 1900 – 1999

Even after slaves were freed, the African American Church had to continue to advocate for its members. The national religious organizations attempted to meet the needs of African Americans on a larger scale, while the local churches ministered to their own members and the local community. However, white oppression continued to wreck havoc in the lives of many Blacks by refusing to accept them as equal. The African American Church responded with an unwavering fight for freedom. Their definition of *freedom* has changed several times depending on the circumstances. Before emancipation, freedom meant liberation from slavery, but in the twentieth century freedom has meant: the right to vote, the right of access to public goods and services, the right to be educated, and most importantly *equal rights*. Unwilling to allow Blacks to participate equally in the American society, Whites utilized the legislative system to

perpetuate racism. On the eve of the nineteenth century, and the dawn of the twentieth century, a series of decisions had a great impact on the lives of Blacks in their pursuit of freedom. In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled that "separate but equal" facilities were constitutional, in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. In 1898, Louisiana originated the "grandfather clause" which qualified males to vote if their fathers or grandfathers were eligible to vote on or before January 1, 1867 (Harley, 1996). This clause excluded most Blacks, and by 1910, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Alabama, and Oklahoma had adopted the clause. In 1907, the Supreme Court ruled that railroads could racially segregate passengers traveling between states, even when segregation was illegal in the states in which the train was traveling. These court rulings are representative of the political climate during this time and indicative of the legislative and judicial support for overt racism in the United States.

While some Whites were fighting against Blacks, some Blacks also fought amongst themselves concerning the best way to educate blacks. Booker T. Washington wanted Blacks to get a vocational educational and stop fighting against Whites. He stated that they should become better trained in vocational areas which would insure them gainful employment (e.g. blacksmiths, housekeepers, etc.). Many white philanthropists supported his efforts wholeheartedly. However, many Blacks considered him a "sell out" to Whites. They felt that he was doing his own people a great injustice in exchange for the fame and fortune that he received from the white population. Two of his greatest opposers were W.E.B. DuBois and William Trotter. In 1903, William Monroe Trotter, a publisher, was arrested for heckling Booker T. Washington at the Columbus Avenue African Zion Church in Boston (Harley). Trotter explained that he

confronted Washington publicly because Washington held a monopoly on the American media, and opposing views on race relations were not heard. DuBois also spoke out against Washington's ideas concerning the education of Blacks. He believed that Blacks should get a liberal education to prepare them for social mobility. In 1905, W.E.B. DuBois held a conference for black leaders and organized the Niagara Movement, which was dedicated to aggressive action on behalf of black freedom and growth. Also, in 1909 W.E.B. DuBois and others, including some Whites, met and advocated a civil rights organization to combat the growing violence against black Americans. This meeting led to the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The national religious organizations were very involved in politics and social justice, however, it became apparent that an organization was needed that strictly focused on issues in these areas. The NAACP fulfilled that purpose, and the African American Church served as a resource for human capital by encouraging their congregants to become members of the NAACP and actively participate in marches, boycotts, sit-ins, etc. African American churches were often utilized as NAACP meeting places to organize and strategize.

While the NAACP was growing as it focused on political issues, the national religious organizations could attempt to make headway in other areas. The National Baptist Convention, Inc. created a new board, the Sunday School Publishing Board in 1915 to provide Sunday School material that was more relevant for its members. During this time, the National Baptist Convention was very active in education, supporting nearly 100 elementary and secondary schools and colleges, as well as providing for the education of African missionaries. Although they had a great impact on the education of

African Americans through the publication of Sunday School literature, and financial support of schools and colleges, the convention also continued to speak out against racial violence and campaigned against segregation in public accommodations, and discrimination in the armed service, education, and employment. They utilized a self-help framework and often entertained speakers during meetings such as W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington. They strongly supported the NAACP and advocated for the right to vote and serve as jurors.

While the African American Church was advocating in the political, social, and educational arenas, it's membership was undergoing a transformation. Migration from the south to the north, from rural to urban areas required the African American Church to adjust some of their ideas about ministry. The 1890 census, the first to give an urban-rural breakdown of the black population, indicated that 9 out of 10 blacks lived in the South. By 1980, 85% of the black population lived in urban areas, with approximately 53% living in the South (Lincoln & Mamiya). Blacks migrated to the North in search of jobs that could finance a better life. Some of the major causes for black migration, according to Lincoln & Mamiya, were the mechanization of southern agriculture, the boll weevil attacks on the cotton crops, the lynchings and violence of a rigid system of Jim Crow segregation, the long-term decline of sharecropping and individual farm ownership, and the need for cheap labor in northern factories and industries. Some Blacks remained in the South, but many of them moved to urban areas. Studies done on black urban churches during the period of the great migrations from 1915 to 1950 indicate that they grew phenomenally. Membership rolls of older, established churches increased, and new

churches were also built - some of which were rented storefront buildings in the poorer parts of cities.

Some churches did not expand their buildings nor purchase new buildings, but they utilized their resources to meet the greater needs of the migrants - help with food, clothing, shelter, and employment. In the 1920s Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., opened one of the first soup kitchens for hungry migrants, at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. In 1939 his son, Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. involved his church in meeting the basic needs of the members, assisting with finding employment, and supported strikes and attempts to unionize by black workers. Powel published a black newspaper, and was a member of the New York City Council before becoming the first elected black congressman from New York State. Powell's quest to gain political clout is another example of the interrelatedness of religion and politics in the context of the African American Church.

In the new urban church, class stratification became prevalent, as uneducated ex-slaves attended church with middle-class, well-educated Blacks. Some churches understood the advantages that this unique mixture of people could offer a congregation, and found ways to utilize the talents of all members. The migration period ended in the late 1950s, during the beginning of the civil rights movement. It is quite ironic that E. Franklin Frazier, the well-known author of The Negro Church in America, who made negative comments that Negro churches were a hindrance to black assimilation into mainstream American life, and that the church was responsible for the so-called backwardness of American Negroes (Frazier), died in 1959. He died before he had a chance to see the activism of black rural and urban churches in the struggle for

integration. He did not have an opportunity to hear black preachers like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rev. Jesse Jackson exhort and challenge Blacks to fight for what they believe. Frazier did not get a chance to feel the resurgence of black ethnicity and pride in the black power and black consciousness movement of the 1960s, nor was he able to witness the various economic and community development programs organized and spear-headed by many African American churches. I believe that Frazier's comments were based on his belief that Blacks did not have a heritage because they severed all ties with West Africa, including language and religious practices.

The best example of the African American's level of black consciousness can be seen in their involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. The movement was led by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., a Baptist preacher, and began with the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955. From the beginning, the Civil Rights Movement was anchored in the Black Church. It was organized by black ministers and laity, and financially supported by black church members. Even secular civil rights groups such as CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) were influenced by black church culture. James Farmer of CORE was a preacher's son, and John Lewis of SNCC was a seminary student. Since the civil rights period, the Black Church has continued to display support for advancement of the race. It played an integral role in Rev. Jesse Jackson's presidential campaigns and the elections of thousands of black officials in large urban areas and small towns across the United States. This participation is a sign of the continued political interest that the church has shown. With the church as advocator, Blacks have made many strides in the U.S., such as an increase in the number

of black students attending colleges and graduate schools, an enlarged black middle-class, and growth in the number of recording artists, movie stars, and sports stars.

One important organization that has contributed to the enhancement of the educational ministry in the African American Church, by greatly improving the African American Sunday School and Vacation Bible School is the Urban Ministries Publishing Company. In 1970, Dr. Melvin E. Banks, Sr. founded Urban Ministries, Inc. Located in Chicago, Illinois, Urban Ministries Publishing Company supplies thousands of African American churches with *culturally designed* Sunday School and Vacation Bible School literature. The literature is especially written for the *urban* church, in that it utilizes illustrations that are quite familiar to African Americans living in urban American. For example, in its Black theological interpretations, it discusses unemployment, drugs, gang violence, teenage pregnancy, racism, discrimination, imprisonment, and other topics of interest to Blacks who are plagued with these problems on a daily basis. The company supplies literature for all ages. The beautiful posters, books, and other materials illustrate all Biblical characters as African Americans. Thus, Sunday School and Vacation Bible School attendees see Jesus and other important Biblical characters as looking like themselves. This concept solidifies the Black theological perspectives that are taught in the African American Church by reinforcing the internalization of the Holy Scriptures through personal identification with the characters (i.e. considering oneself a part of *God's chosen people*; or seeing the Black fight for liberation in terms of the *Exodus* story). Urban Ministries, Inc. has made an especially, significant impact on the literacy experiences of African Americans because the literature does not utilize the doctrine of any denomination, but instead presents a general Black theological perspective. This

approach has gained the company favor across all African American denominations, and allowed them to successfully create an "International Sunday School Curriculum," followed by most African American churches. Of the 70,000 African American churches in the United States today, Urban Ministries, Inc. supplies 38,000 of them. A subsidiary, the Urban Ministries Conference for Black Christian Educators and Pastors, provide conferences and workshops for pastors and teachers, which keeps them abreast of significant developments in areas such as education, community and economic development, and politics.

An improved Sunday School and Vacation Bible School are but two of the developments that have occurred in the Twentieth Century African American Church. A broader perspective can be gained by looking at some specific examples. The following is a description of three African American churches today, and their efforts to meet the demands of the twentieth century:

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church is located in Baltimore, Maryland. The church is 209 years old and has approximately 6,000 members. Under the past leadership of Bishop John R. Bryant and his wife, Rev. Cecilia Bryant, and the current leadership of Rev. Frank Madison Reid, it provides many social-service programs. Members come from middle and working class families. The Outreach Center Ministry was established to provide a broad range of services to needy individuals and families. Its components include a "Faith Store" to provide clothing for the needy, a food pantry, employment referrals, emergency shelter, Alcoholics Anonymous, and counseling services. There are eight staff members, including seven volunteers. It is financed mostly by the church. Formed about 10 years ago, the Teen Parenting Enrichment Place

is a program that was formed to prevent adolescent pregnancy and to enhance the parenting skills of male and female teen parents. This multiservice support center provides assistance to the children of teen parents and to the grandparents on both sides. The center has 11 paid staff members, and is financed by the church and government. The Senior Citizens Program provides wholesome social, cultural, recreational, and educational activities for senior citizens. It is operated by 2 volunteers. Bethel Christian School was established to provide affordable, quality private education to children of low-income families. The school also provides spiritual and cultural enrichment. The school is financed through tuition fees and church contributions. Spiritual enrichment to prison inmates is provided by the Prison Ministry. Major activities include Bible study, group discussions, church services, and individual counseling. Other programs include the Bethel Women's Center to provide support to abused and disadvantaged women and the Bethel Bible Institute to provide ministerial training for lay persons.

Shiloh Baptist Church, located in Washington, D.C., was founded by several ex-slaves in 1863. The church, under the leadership of the late Rev. Henry C. Gregory III built the Shiloh Family Life Center at a total cost of $5 million. It provides a wide range of facilities for the whole family: a full-scale restaurant, full basketball court, racquet ball courts, exercise rooms, banquet hall, meeting rooms, rooftop garden overlooking the neighborhood, all of which are open to the community. Shiloh sponsors a nationally recognized child-care development center, and conducts a parent-child math and science learning center. It sponsors a Male Youth Health Enhancement Program in which the men of Shiloh are mentoring about 100 young men from the neighborhood, many of whom come from single parent, low-income families. The project has attracted

foundation support and has a small staff. The mentors and staff work together with the parents, who are organized into a parent group that meets regularly. They keep in touch with the schools in order to monitor the progress of the boys. They provide an after-school program each weekday, weekly seminars on life, drugs, sex, health, and African American history. They also take local and regional field trips to scientific, educational, and cultural facilities. These are all in addition to sponsoring a local branch of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs or America, the Boy Scouts, and the Girl Scouts. These programs provide opportunities for volunteers not only from the church membership but nonmembers as well - particularly for students pursuing careers in education, social work, or the ministry. It also provides a major bridge between the social classes.

St. Paul Community Baptist Church of Brooklyn, New York is a 69 year old, 2,000 member church, under the leadership of Rev. Johnny Ray Youngblood. The church has many social service programs. The Nehemiah Housing Project is designed to provide affordable low-income housing and a decent community environment for residents in the East New York section of Brooklyn. This nationally acclaimed effort is sponsored by an interracial and interdenominational consortium of churches, which provides the major source of funding. To date approximately 3,000 homes have been built. Funding comes from a variety of public and private sources. St. Paul Christian School was established to provide a quality private elementary school education to disadvantaged children from nursery through 6th grade. In addition to a strong academic curriculum, the school provides wholesome spiritual and cultural enrichment. The school, which has 22 paid staff members, is financed by tuition fees and church contributions. Share is a program designed to enhance the accessibility of nutritious food

to low-income individuals and families. Major program activities include facilitating more cost-effective and nutritious food purchases, and distributing fruits and vegetables to families in need. St. Paul Corporation is a program established to foster the development of community-owned small businesses that enhance the quality of the neighborhood stores and rent them to neighborhood residents at no profit. The corporation is financed mainly by the church and revenues from their business enterprises. Increased participation of senior citizens in wholesome social activities is the goal for St. Paul's Creative Hands program. Activities include: arts and crafts, Bible study, field trips, cultural events, and educational seminars.

The goals of the Twentieth Century African American Church have gone from fighting for the right to vote and integration, to economic empowerment. The examples above exemplify the broad range of resources that the African American church provides. Each church represents what Bishop Roy Calvin Nichols characterizes as a *vital church.* Nichols defines a vital church as: "one in which the redemptive and liberating power of the Gospel is applied with ever-increasing effectiveness to the real needs of people in the context of their personal and social situation in the world (Billingsley, p. 361). According to Dr. Vincent Harding, professor of religion at the Iliff School of Religion in Denver, the genius of the African American church is that it sees it's two missions - the spiritual and the social - as one. The African American Church has met this challenge, and in so doing, has established itself as the most influential institution in the African American community. This *influence* is based on a history of genuinely striving to meet the needs of Blacks, successfully educating them in a nurturing learning environment, and the critical development and perpetuation of a cultural frame of reference based on

Black Theology. Conducting research in the context of the African American Church is necessary in order to understand its literacy practices and the impact that they have upon African American students' literacy learning in America's classrooms.

Summary of the African American Church Historical Overview

In this section of the literature review I have shown that the African American church ***is*** one of the most influential institutions in the African American community. It has played a significant role as advocate, protector, defender, and exhorter for Blacks. The complex interrelatedness between religion, language, literacy, politics and economics is shown pervasively throughout this chapter. For example, in their pursuit to make sense out of their new situation, West Africans combined similar religious beliefs and practices to create the West African Sacred Cosmos. In the process of creating this new worldview, they also created a new language - born out of the need to communicate. I believe this combination of West African languages and broken English was the origin of Black vernacular English - the discourse often used in African American homes and churches.

With the West African Sacred Cosmos and a new language created, slaves continued their pursuit of an acceptable explanation for their situation. When Whites shared Christianity with slaves, their West African Sacred Cosmos intersected with White Christianity and an awesome phenomenon occurred. Some slaves were taught to read and when they read the Bible they learned of the liberating power of the Holy Scriptures through *literacy*. Literacy opened up a new world to slaves, and they were no longer willing to accept the *misinformation* passed on to them by their slave masters, but developed their own theology - Black Theology or Liberation Theology.

By tracing the African American church's historical development, I have shown that Black Theology has provided the basis for teaching and learning and the impetus for growth in the this context. As Blacks became more educated, they met the new challenges in the political, educational and social arenas by organizing national organizations that could combine their resources to meet the vast needs of their people. Members of the churches were taught many cultural values explicitly through sermons from the pulpit and classroom teaching. Values were also taught implicitly through involvement in such activities as boycotts, marches, sit-ins, and Afrocentric Vacation Bible School. All of these activities and classes are based on Black Theology and affect the literacy development of children who participate in them.

The social network system manifests itself in multiple ways, including providing manpower to organize the activities and teach the classes mentioned above. The three examples of the Twentieth Century church exemplify the numerous resources that are provided by African American churches for its members. These resources provide cultural/social capital that many children and parents would not have access to outside of the church environment. The existence of this resource system is based on Black theology in that it reinforces the importance of "building people". Programs such as the mentoring program at Shiloh Baptist Church offers students an opportunity to interact with role models who can encourage and motivate them by helping them understand that social mobility can be a reality.

In conclusion, the African American Church is a learning environment that influences many African American children. The Black theological perspective taught within the context of the church is an unique pre-established framework from which

many African American students base their daily decisions. Because of the significant role that the African American Church plays in the lives of many, *it must be included* in the conversation concerning the education of African American students.

Expansion of Conceptual Framework

While utilizing a sociocultural theoretical perspective, this study examines two learning environments while focusing upon discourse patterns, pedagogical values, social norm issues and relationships between the student, parents and members of the literacy network systems. This section of the literature review expounds upon issues under each category in the conceptual framework by discussing additional related literature.

Discourse Patterns

> *We have to consider how the words spoken in classrooms affect the outcomes of education: how observable classroom discourse affects the unobservable thought processes of each of the participants, and thereby the nature of what all students learn.* (Cazden, 1988, p. 99).

Research shows that one source of cultural incongruence between many white teachers and African American students is discourse patterns (Michaels, 1981; Heath, 1983; Gee, 1991; Cazden, 1988; Edwards, 1996; Delpit, 1995; McMillon & Edwards, 2000). Discourse patterns are ways of talking, acting, listening, thinking and being. Primary discourse patterns are the communicative styles used in the home, and secondary discourse patterns are those utilized in environments outside of the home, such as at school or church. When middle-class, white students begin school, they are often at an advantage over their black counterparts because they usually enter a classroom taught by a white, middle-class teacher. Because white students and teachers come from similar cultures, their discourse patterns are likely to be similar. Therefore, white, middle-class students do not need to learn the teacher's discourse/communicative style because they

utilize the same style at home. They can immediately begin to focus upon becoming comfortable in their new environment, getting to know their new friends, and learning classroom routines and rules. On the other hand, African American students come from a different culture and often utilize a different communicative style in their home. When they enter school, they are required to learn their teacher's communicative style, while becoming familiar with their new environment.

Differences in communicative styles of black and white children have been noted by several researchers. Heath (1983), in her landmark study reported that discourse styles between black and white children were markedly different. Michaels (1981) found that White children utilized a topic-centered discourse style which matched the teacher's language patterns and her ideas concerning the appropriate way to present a Sharing Time story. However, black children in the study utilized a topic-associating style that included "a series of implicitly associated personal anecdotes." Michaels noted that when the child's discourse style was different from that of the teacher, the teacher tended to interrupt often with negative comments rather than assisting the student with the process. Michaels stated that "sharing time could either provide or deny access to key literacy-related experiences, depending, ironically on the degree to which teacher and child start out "sharing" a set of discourse conventions and interpretive strategies" (Michaels, 1981, p. 423).

Trying to determine the role of culture in discourse differences, Cazden (1988) asked a set of teachers to respond to Sharing Time stories of black and white students. In California and Boston, teachers had a difficult time understanding and appreciating episodic stories told by black children. In order to determine if cultural differences

between the black students' narrative themes and styles and the expectations of the white teachers were the reason for the negative response, Cazden further explored this issue by organizing a group of black and white informants. She found that:

> White adults were much more likely to find the episodic stories hard to follow, and they were much more likely to infer that the narrator was a low-achieving student. Black adults were more likely to evaluate positively both topic-centered and episodic stories, noticing differences but appreciating both. (Cazden, 1988, p. 17)

Similar findings were illuminated by McMillon and Edwards (2000) in their comparative study of the literacy experiences of Joshua, an African American boy, in his predominantly white preschool and African American Sunday School. Joshua's experiences during Sharing Time at school were often negative because his interactional style did not match the teacher's expectations. However, in his African American Sunday School, Joshua was greatly admired and considered a "superstar" by his African American Sunday School teacher. Cazden's candid response to cultural differences greatly challenges educators in the field when she states:

> ...this close look at some children's texts and teachers' responses will raise anew the question of what sharing time is for and make it more likely that, when children fail to meet a teacher's expectations, the cause will be sought in the complexities of the child's task, or cultural differences in our expectations, rather than in deficiencies in the children themselves. (Cazden, 1988, p. 25)

In this dissertation study, discourse patterns, the role of culture in teacher responses and ways in which classroom discourse matches or mismatches teacher expectations will be discussed.

Pedagogical Issues

From a sociocultural perspective, literacy learning is influenced by students' literacy experiences in and out of school, and literacy teaching is influenced by teachers'

literacy experiences in and out of school. Literacy teaching and learning is influenced by teacher and student beliefs, values, expectations and experiences. Decisions concerning various pedagogical issues may be based on teachers' experiences as students and/or what they believe about their students. Teachers have "folk theories" about students and their families, and these folk theories influence the teaching and learning process. In his work, Bruner (1996) describes folk theories as expectations, beliefs, and assumptions formed over time through personal and professional school experience. Their gradual formation gives them a durable quality. Teachers tend to develop theories about instruction that influence their daily decisions and are consistent with their folk theories/belief systems (Nespor, 1987). It is important for teachers to understand how their personal beliefs about teaching and learning (Allington, 1991; Carter, 1990; Calderhead, 1988; Gudmundsdottir, 1991) literacy (Thomas & Barksdale-Ladd, 1997) certain types of students (Anyon, 1981; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Slaughter-Defoe & Richards, 1995), and even the type of school in which they teach (Gilbert, 1995), can influence literacy teaching and learning in their classroom.

In their case study, Thomas & Barksdale-Ladd (1997) found that teacher beliefs are the most critical factor driving instruction. Their report entitled "Plant a radish, get a radish" is indicative of their findings, which substantiates that teachers' beliefs about literacy are often transferred to their students. They stated:

> In looking at the children's understanding of literacy in this study, we contend that they reflect well their teachers' beliefs and practices. The children's definitions of literacy processes and their resultant products mirrored somewhat their teachers' beliefs of reading, writing, and learning. The skills-based classroom produced students who viewed themselves as not comfortable to compose perhaps because they had not mastered the required skills. Whole language students pursued reading and writing as communication processes or a search for meaning.

> Whether whole language or traditional skills seeds were planted, children tended to respond and perform in accordance with their teachers' instructional practices (p. 58).

Also emphasizing the importance of teacher beliefs Kagan (1992) concluded, "the more one reads studies of teacher belief, the more strongly one suspects that this piebald of personal knowledge lies at the very heart of teaching" (p. 85). Not only is teacher belief critical, but according to Pajares (1992), it may be "the single most important construct in educational research". If teachers base classroom instruction on their beliefs, it is critical that researchers closely examine this process and its affect on student achievement. For example, what happens when teachers have beliefs that are bias toward the group of students that they are teaching? How are teacher expectations factored into this discussion?

In his assessment of the literature on teacher expectations, Brophy (1983) contends that teacher expectations influence student outcome, but perhaps not in the direct way that Risk (1970) suggests. In Risk's study, the kindergarten teacher divided the class into reading groups which mirrored the class system of society, and behaved differently toward each group, thus perpetuating "the self-fulfilling prophecy in ghetto education." Brophy's analysis of the literature on teacher expectations is more reserved. He does not believe that teachers blatantly decide that some students will receive preferential treatment, but interactions between teachers and students over a period of time along with several other factors assist teachers with individualistic evaluations of students. He states:

> ...a comprehensive conceptualization of self-fulfilling prophecy effects of teachers' expectations for student achievement in ordinary classroom settings requires attention not only to teacher behavior related directly to the communication of expectations to students but to teachers beliefs

> about appropriate curriculum, effective instruction, and student motivation, to the quality of the personal relationship between the teacher and the student, and to a variety of teacher and student individual difference variables (p.654).

Regardless of the factors involved in teachers' assessment of their students, in the United States it is a known fact that African American males are at risk (Slaughter-Defoe & Richards, 1995; Siddle-Walker, 1992; Kunjufu, 1988; Hopkins, 1997; McMillon & Edwards, 2000). The process by which this disenfranchisement occurs is critical in this study. Ogbu (1995) believes that schools reflect the caste-like system of the larger society, and that racism encountered over a period of time has caused African Americans and other involuntary minorities to develop oppositional stances toward school. According to Freire (1993), the oppressed group must develop ways to liberate themselves, but the oppressors can offer support. Based on the above discussion of the historical development of public schools and the African American Church, many African American students are receiving liberating instruction in their African American churches, but they are experiencing oppression in the school environment. The teachers of African American students must become proactive in their students' struggle for liberation by beginning to understand the influence that their personal beliefs, classroom instruction and expectations have on their students' literacy learning. Villegas (1988) addresses this awesome responsibility of teachers when she states:

> ...significant social change can be initiated only by those who are most adversely affected by the imbalance of power in society. But as teachers and teacher educators, we can support this process of social change by promoting the development of sociopolitical awareness on the part of our students as well as ourselves. After all, teaching is a political activity (p. 261).

In order to become politically active in the struggle to liberate African American students, their teachers must become cognizant of the explicit and implicit ways that schools disempower African Americans, especially African American males.

Teachers of African American students need to become culturally responsive teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Becoming culturally responsive does not mean that a teacher must be from the same culture as their students, but it means that the teacher tries to learn about each student as an individual. Additionally, becoming culturally responsive means that teachers approach their students from a sociocultural perspective, valuing their home, community and other out-of-school learning experiences. Gaining an understanding of students' cultures will assist teachers with developing instructional methods that map onto student learning styles (Hale, 1986; Shade, 1989). It is my contention that teachers of African American students can learn a tremendous amount about the culture, learning styles, and the struggle for liberation of African Americans through research conducted in the context of the African American church. The purpose of this study is to inform teachers of African American students concerning these issues.

Social Norms

Classroom rules are also influenced by teachers' cultural frames of reference, and conformity to the rules is influenced by students' cultural frames of reference. When these two cultures clash, cultural dissonance often occurs in the classroom (McMillon & Edwards, 2001). Rules of conduct are necessary in order for teachers to teach and students to learn, however, it has been found in classroom research that many of these rules are implicit (Cazden, 1988) and may be the source of misunderstandings concerning discipline (Delpit, 1995). Cazden (1988) refers to teachers' implicit expectations as the

hidden curriculum in the classroom. Based on their cultural frames of reference, teachers may have certain ways of talking, acting, and interacting that they expect to occur in their classroom. Anything outside of these expectations is considered undesirable to them, and they may respond accordingly. Varied styles of discourse have already been discussed in the section above, but this section focuses on the actions of students.

Communicative competence (Hymes, 1974) focuses upon academic ability, content knowledge – being able to give the right answer based on a student's knowledge base. Mehan (1979) expounded upon that concept by adding interactional competence to the literature discussion, which emphasizes the importance of students not only knowing the answers, but also being able to participate in classroom conversations appropriately. In other words, students must know the answer and know how to appropriately share their knowledge in the classroom. Turn taking and participatory structure were critical issues discussed in Mehan's study. In this study, I want to take communicative competence (academic knowledge) and interactional competence a step further to place more emphasis on "culture". Culture can be defined as a "social system that represents an accumulation of beliefs, attitudes, habits, values and practices that serve as a filter through which a group of people view and respond to the world in which they live" (Shade, Kelly, & Oberg, 1997, p. 12). Ideally the culture of the classroom should include a combination of the teacher's culture and the students' cultures. Unfortunately, the students' cultures are not always taken into consideration when establishing the classroom environment, which leaves students "at-risk" if they do not develop the ability to "read" and understand the culture of the classroom. The term *classroom cultural competence* is "the ability to read and understand the culture of the classroom (including

rules of conduct) and negotiate these cultural boundaries successfully". The term *negotiate* was specifically chosen because classroom cultural competence is not necessarily attained through passive, total submission to the teacher's culture, but requires a student to function successfully in class while retaining their own cultural identity.

The term classroom cultural competence suggests that classrooms have cultures and one may be competent or incompetent in understanding this culture. Teachers are agents of the classroom culture and they can choose to include their students' cultural contributions, or they can decide that their students' cultures are not welcome in their classroom. Students who share similar cultures with the teacher are at an advantage in terms of attaining classroom cultural competence because they may share similar values, beliefs and expectations concerning educational issues. Also, the parents who share similar cultures with the teacher will probably have an easier time communicating with the teacher. Thus, the hidden curriculum of a classroom is quite explicit for students and parents who know about and understand the teacher's culture. However, students who do not share similar cultures with their teachers must develop classroom cultural competence in order to be successful.

Literacy Network Systems

The term *literacy network system is* an original phrase combining literacy, fictive kinship systems, and social network systems. It involves investigating who participates in literacy teaching and learning in various environments. The relationship between the students, parents and members of the literacy network system in the African American church environment was the subject of a pilot study conducted two years ago (Edwards,

et al, in press). It was found that the literacy network system within the context of the church formed a close-knit group whose members shared similar beliefs and cultural capital was provided by the members to students that assisted them with negotiating cultural boundaries in their school environments. This dissertation study will compare the literacy network systems in the church and school for two African American first grade boys as a basis for a future quantitative study which will examine the affect of teacher-student relationships on literacy acquisition and development.

Summary of Relevant Literature

Sometimes it is easier and possibly more *politically correct* to ignore or intentionally refuse to include topics that may cause conflict or disagreement. As a part of the first major study of my educational research career, this literature review could be specifically organized around my conceptual framework. However, the nature of this study requires that *difficult to discuss* issues be addressed directly and succinctly. **I believe that there is an overarching theme of power, dominance and racism across the relevant literature and within this study.** Although I am emphasizing the need to include the African American Church in the conversation concerning the education of African American students, I understand that some people may not immediately embrace my ideas because the African American Church is an influential institution from a minority, non-dominant culture. The values and beliefs of its members are not considered "mainstream" in the United States. Regardless of the historical and current impact of the African American Church in all aspects of society, including political, economic, social, psychological, etc., its powerful voice is diminished by the fact that racism exists in the United States, and profoundly affects the thinking of the culture of

power - the policymakers and other decision makers, in our country. However, the mere existence of these significant injustices injects a serum of motivation, determination, and drive to actively promote the importance of including institutions that perpetuate cultural values in our society thereby affecting the cognitive structures utilized by many "non-dominant" cultures/ minority races in our society. I believe that most teachers love and sincerely desire to help *all* children. These teachers can choose to build or destroy the academic lives of students because they have the power to decide how and which "true" curriculum will be implemented in their classroom on a daily basis. If these heroes - the teachers of African American students - can understand the real value of acquiring knowledge concerning outside influences on in-school learning, policymakers and other members of the "culture of power" will have to take heed to increased numbers of African American students achieving academically.

By thoroughly examining relevant literature, in this literature review, I have specifically attempted to show evidence that research done in the context of the African American Church will uncover many productive literacy teaching and learning practices that will increase our understanding of the *frame of reference* from which many African American students are operating. The African American public school experience has been devastating for many, and continues to be overladen with remnants of racism - mirroring a society that diminishes the importance and benefits of truly embracing diversity. Despite these inadequacies, many African Americans have become successful, especially those who have received undaunting support from African American churches. Literacy teaching and learning continues to be a priority in the context of the African American church. There is much to be learned from research conducted in this setting.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

In order to find the maximum number of plausible sources for the incongruencies between the church and school environments for African American students, I utilized an ethnographic study approach. Goetz and LaCompte (1984) assert:

> Ethnographies are analytic descriptions or reconstructions of intact cultural scenes and groups. Ethnographies recreate for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people.

I wanted to examine how African American students acquire and develop literacy in a setting that is culturally congruent for them. An ethnographic study allowed me to closely examine the students and teachers to uncover the explicit and implicit ways that teaching and learning occurs in the natural environments. While studying the two students in their settings, I attempted to capture their experiences from a holistic perspective by constructing "descriptions of total phenomena within their various contexts and generate from these descriptions the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences that affect human behavior toward, and belief about, the phenomena" (Goetz & LaCompte, 1984). Additionally, the ethnographic method allowed me to utilize a number of research techniques to collect and analyze my data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Grand Tour Question

Why are some African American students successful in the African American Church environment, but considered "at-risk" in their classrooms at school?

Creswell (1994) refers to the main question in qualitative research as the "Grand-Tour Question". Focus questions help answer the Grand Tour question, and guiding questions are more detailed, in-depth questions that assist in answering the focus questions. Below are the Focus questions for this study, and the more detailed Guiding questions.

Focus Questions & Guiding Questions

1) How does literacy teaching and learning occur in each setting?
   What are the discourse patterns/communication styles utilized in each setting?
   Do the teacher and students utilize the same discourse patterns?
   Do the students seem to understand the teacher?
   Does the teacher seem to understand the students?
   What are the most prevalent pedagogical styles utilized by each teacher? (i.e.. scaffolding, repetition, response to mistakes, use of peer teaching, etc.)
   Do teacher include various methods that would address learning style differences among her students? Describe them.
   What are the social norms in each setting?
   Are these social norms made explicit to the students?
   Do parents understand the social norms in each classroom?
   Do parents agree with and/or support the social norms expectations in each setting?
   What types of assessment tools do each teacher utilize?
   Do students understand the assessment process?
   Do parents understand the assessment process?
   Do teachers utilize various means of assessment that address learning style differences?

2) What are the "norms of success" in each setting?
   Who establishes the criteria for "success"?
   How are these "norms" communicated to the students?
   Do teachers understand the criteria by which they are evaluating students?
   Can teachers communicate the standards "clearly" to students?...to parents?
   Do students understand the "standards" by which they are evaluated?
   Do parents understand the "standards" by which the students are evaluated?
   What are teachers', students', and parents' perception of the standards in each setting?
   What type of support do students receive to assist them in achieving "success" in each setting?
   How is the support that students receive "activated" in each setting?
   What are teachers', students', and parents' perception of the "support" given in each setting?

3) What types of opportunities to acquire cultural/social capital are students provided in each setting?
   Describe these cultural/social capital attainment experiences?
   Who provides them?
   How are they provided?
   Why are they provided?
   Do students understand the purpose of the experiences?
   Are goals made explicit?
   Are parents aware of the experiences? Do they understand them?

Are teachers involved in the experiences?
What are the teachers', students', and parents' perceptions of the experiences?

4) Do teachers purposefully attempt to help students make connections between their various learning environments?
If so, how?
If not, why not?

5) Who are the participants in the literacy network system in each setting for each child?

6) What are the plausible sources of incongruence between the church and school environments?

In order to answer the research, focus and guiding questions, it was necessary to identify students and teachers in two contexts – school and church, who could successfully participate in this study. This chapter provides a general description of the school context where the initial recruitment process began, and describes the process utilized to identify subjects and gain entry into their church environments. Specific information concerning the school, churches and subjects will be discussed in the data analysis chapters.

Contexts

After completing a request form detailing information concerning my research study and sharing my dissertation proposal, I was given access to three first grade classes (approximately 60 students), at a predominantly black school in a Midwestern state. The teachers are white, middle-class females and the principal is an African-American female with more than 20 years experience as an elementary school teacher. According to the principal, many of the students attended African American churches and were having difficulty in school.

Two African American male students were chosen to participate in the study because they were considered the most "at-risk" first grade students. They were students

in Mrs. Rudolph's classroom. She was considered the best first grade teacher at the school.

In addition to conducting research in Mrs. Rudolph's first grade classroom, I collected data in two African American Sunday School classes. One church was a Baptist church and the other was a non-denominational church. The school and church contexts will be further described in Chapters 4 and 5.

Subjects

In order to find my subjects, I initially planned to ask teachers to rank their students in four groups in 25 percentile rankings, from their best to their most at-risk students. The teachers were not to be given any criteria to utilize when establishing the students' ranks, but would be questioned concerning the criteria that they decided to use after the process was completed. This would have given me a sense of the teachers' perceptions of "success" in each classroom. The teachers' perceptions of success is critical when establishing which students are successful, and which are not. According to Risk (1970), some students can be successful in one classroom and not in another. In this study, it is important to understand what the teacher considers "successful" because she is the one who determines the level of "success" for the students in her class.

Although my initial intention was to only include teachers in the ranking of their students, during my introductory conversation with the principal and assistant principal, they shared the names of nine first grade students whom they felt were the most "at-risk". However, they also asked the teachers to rank their students and provide them with the names of students in the lowest 25th percentile, based on their (the teacher's) definition

of a "successful student". Not surprisingly, the teachers provided the same names that the principals provided during our first meeting.

Because I am studying a phenomenon where students are doing well in one setting, and not in the other, I wanted to find students who were at the extreme in both environments. I believed the plausible causes of this phenomenon would be more readily identified by studying these students. The principal assisted in locating students who attended Sunday School regularly and their parents were contacted immediately. From the initial list of nine students, six were identified as possible subjects. After speaking with the teacher and parents concerning the students experiences at church and school, two students were chosen to participate in the study. Their parents were asked to sign an agreement to participate in the study (See Appendix 1). This agreement included information about the study, and requested permission to contact the students' pastors and Sunday School teachers. Additionally, permission to retrieve student records, to evaluate and interview students, and interview parents, was requested.

After collecting this information, I called the churches to speak with the students' pastors and Sunday School teachers to verify which students were doing best in their Sunday School classes, and to request permission to collect data in their Sunday School classes. Ideally, I hoped to find two students who were in the same class at school and in the same Sunday School class. This design would have been the most simple, and would have required the least amount of data collection. However, I was unable to find this ideal combination. I found two students who were in the same class at school, but in two different Sunday School classes. There is an adequate amount of literature concerning the experiences of African American students in school, but very little literature which

focus upon learning experiences in the African American church, and even less on literacy experiences specifically in the context of Sunday School. Therefore, I chose students in the same first grade classroom at school and triangulated the data with data from the literature which speaks to literacy experiences of first graders. Collecting data from two African American Sunday School classes allowed me to compare the two Sunday School classes to look for similar patterns and trends. It is understood that studying only two classes may not allow me to generalize to a larger population, but it did afford me an opportunity to take a microscopic look at the intricacies around literacy teaching and learning in each setting.

Data Collection

After locating the two subjects in my study, and gaining approval from their parents to participate in the research study, I began collecting data. I utilized several methods of data collection including: classroom observations; videotaping entire Sunday School Class sessions; videotaping literacy activities during classroom sessions at school; retrieval of documents from the school and church setting that relate to student evaluation and referrals; videotape any extra-curricular activities in which students participate at church and school during the data collection period; video- and audiotaping interviews with school teachers, Sunday School teachers, parents, and students; informal interviews with other significant literacy role models; also, fieldnotes, daily analytic notes and memos, and a fieldwork journal. I videotaped all of the data collected because I not only planned to analyze the discourse, but wanted to focus upon actions, reactions, interactions, and other behaviors, such as eye gaze, gestures, and other movements that might be considered manifestations of the teacher-student and parent-teacher relationship

(Dr. Jeffery Schultz, personal communication, Data Analysis Session, Penn Ethnography Conference, March, 1998). Videotaping also provided an opportunity for me to share segments with others for their perspectives concerning the data. I closely examined the literacy practices in each setting, to identify pedagogical, discourse, and social similarities and differences. Additionally, I examined the literacy network systems in both settings to determine who talks to whom, and who influences whom around literacy issues. Because I wanted to compare and contrast the data from the school and church settings, I utilized the same data collection methods in both settings.

Classroom observations

While collecting classroom data I utilized Mehan's (1979) concept of "constitutive ethnography", focusing on the social organization of routine literacy events. I wanted to provide a description of the interaction during these events, as well as examine the discourse. Before beginning data collection, I visited the classrooms to allow the students to become accustomed to my presence. During these visits, I took observation notes, but I did not assist the students because I did not want them to ask for assistance once data collection began. I videotaped during these initial visits, to help the students become familiar with the camera, and hopefully lose interest in the idea of being taped. After the initial visits, I videotaped twenty hours of classroom sessions when the teacher was working on literacy oriented activities, such as reading comprehension or vocabulary skills. Videotaping these activities captured how literacy teaching and learning takes place in each setting. I focused upon teacher-student and student-student interactions. The camera was operated from a corner of the room, in a non-intrusive position.

Teacher Interviews

During teacher interview, I obtained the teachers' perspective of their pedagogical styles, the discourse/communication patterns utilized in the class, the social norms established in the class, the criteria for success in their classroom, and the student/teacher and parent/teacher relationships. (See Appendix 1 for Teacher Interview Protocol). Information was collected from the teachers during a formal ninety minute interview, and several informal interviews conducted while the classes were in session.

I also interviewed the Reading Resource teacher who provided useful information concerning tests and other evaluative measurements utilized for first graders at Paradise Elementary, and specifically shared her knowledge of the subjects' tests and evaluations.

Parent Interviews

In addition to interviewing school teachers and Sunday School teachers, I interviewed parents to gain their perspective of the students' educational experiences. Parent stories (Edwards, et al, 1999) were collected in order to gain a better understanding of the literacy experiences that each student had prior to attending school. This information is critical because it provided information that allowed me to consider how home literacy practices map on to (are similar to or different from) school and church literacy practices. Some of the questions were taken from the "Edward-Pleasants Parent Stories Questionnaire" (Edwards, et al, 1999). (See Appendix 2 for Parent Interview Protocol).

Parents were interviewed in their homes to insure their comfort. These formal interviews were ninety minutes in length. The questions were designed to get a clear indication of the parents' perspective of the student/teacher and parent/teacher

relationship in each setting, the value of education in each setting, the amount of support/reinforcement given to the literacy teaching and learning in each setting, and the understanding that the parents have concerning the curriculum in each setting. Literature points to the fact that many parents are not knowledgeable about what their children are doing in school, and do not understand how they can support the school's curriculum at home. I wanted to determine if this could possibly be another plausible cause of disconnection in school and connection in church.

Student Interviews

Because the students were mature, I had several opportunities to informally interview them to ask about their progress in school, to inquire concerning their perception of the school teacher and Sunday School teacher, to ask their opinion of the environments, and to ask how they believe others perceive them in each environment. These questions are important because Risk (1970) asserts that students tend to enact their teachers' "self-fulfilling prophesies". Therefore, what students perceive that their teachers believe about them, could become a reality. (See Appendix 3 for Student Interview Protocol). These interviews took place at various times and places, including: in class, in the hallway while students walked from class to the lunchroom or to music or gym class, during recess on the playground, in the principal's office after being sent out of class, and in the Reading Resource Room before and after testing.

Documentation of Failure in School

I examined the school records of the focal students, including report card grades, standardized test scores, parent-teacher conference student evaluation forms, any student referral forms for special services, and emergent literacy evaluations. This data provided

a more complete picture of how the child was perceived as successful on in-school based tasks. Also, I videotaped extra-curricular activities in which the students participated during the data collection period. These activities included an awards assembly, a school carnival, and a church youth program.

Documentation of Success in Church

Students were not formally evaluated by their Sunday School teachers, therefore the evaluations made concerning their church experiences are based on interviews and videotaped classroom sessions. I also videotaped any programs or church-related activities in which the students participated during the period of data collection.

Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes were taken during each observation session and were as concrete and descriptive as possible. The fieldnotes notebook was divided into 2 categories: description and analysis/inference. Analytic and inference oriented statements were categorized as such, next to the description of the observation. Spradley's (1980) checklist for making field records was utilized as a guide:

1. Space: the physical place or places.
2. Actor: the people involved.
3. Activity: a set of related acts people do.
4. Object: the physical things that are present.
5. Act: single actions that people do.
6. Event: a set of related activities that people carry out.
7. Time: the sequencing that takes place over time.
8. Goal: the things people are trying to accomplish.
9. Feeling: the emotions felt and expressed.

(Spradley, p. 78)

Analytic notes & memos, and fieldwork journal

While making fieldnotes, transcribing videotaped data, and reading documents, I made note of analytic ideas as they developed. These analytic notes were reviewed bi-

monthly, and used to write analytic memos in the form of short working papers which assessed my progress and discussed emergent ideas (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). This process of preliminary analysis helped alleviate the problem of becoming overwhelmed with the massive amount of data later on, by developing ideas concerning emerging themes and patterns to organize the data. Additionally, I kept a fieldwork journal which provided a record of all of my fieldwork, and my personal feelings and involvement. Personal feelings of comfort, anxiety, surprise, shock or repulsion was especially helpful during the actual data analysis phase.

Data Analysis

During data analysis, I specifically looked for patterns within and across settings, and especially focused on literacy practices, student/teacher interactions and behaviors. I employed three types of data analysis: discourse and narrative analysis, and sociograms and matrices. This section is organized to address analysis issues for each type of data collection method.

Discourse analysis

In order to answer my research questions, it was necessary to examine the words spoken in each classroom. Discourse patterns/communicative styles of teachers and students is one possible source of incongruence in classrooms (Gee, 1991; Delpit, 1995; Heath, 1983; O'Connor & Michaels, 1996; McMillon & Edwards, 2000). Discourse analysis examined the structure and type of language used (Cazden, 1988). For example, I determined if the teacher used the same types of language patterns that the students used, and considered if there were marked differences in the teacher talk register and the student talk register. I attempted to determine if students manifested their understanding

of the teacher talk register by utilizing certain terms when talking to other students, (i.e. during peer tutoring). Analyzing the structure and type of language used in the classroom assisted in determining if teacher-student communication was a possible source of incongruence.

After transcription, the data was coded in several different ways to assist with analysis. The IRE (initiation-reply-evaluation) lesson structure pattern utilized by Mehan (1979) in his constitutive ethnographic classroom study was helpful in examining the literacy lessons data and the turntaking process during classroom discussions. These participatory structures were examined to determine how classroom membership is attained, and how the *floor* is defined in each setting (Mehan, 1979; O'Connor & Michaels, 1996). In addition to coding the transcripts based on the IRE lesson structure pattern, I considered the following questions while analyzing the data: Have all students attained *membership status* within the class? Who are the *excluded* students? On what basis are the exclusions made? Does teacher comments seem to affect students' membership status? Does student comments seem to affect membership status? Do the teachers attempt in any way to *include* the *excluded* students? How? Do any students attempt to *include* the excluded? Are students required to raise their hands, or does a natural turntaking take place? Who decides who has the floor? Does everyone understand how to get *the floor*? Are there some students who are excluded from *the floor*? Why, or why not? How does the teacher respond to children with *different* communicative styles? Do they get opportunities to have *the floor* as frequently as the students who have communicative styles similar to the teacher's? I believe focusing on class membership status and participation structure increased my understanding of the

intricacies of implicit and explicit exclusionary and inclusionary actions, the role that teachers and students play, and upon what basis these decisions were made.

It was necessary to utilize several other ways of coding the data in order to gain a clear understanding of what was going on in the classroom. The categories included: CC=classroom control (statements relating to misbehavior), SC=teacher scaffolding (teacher using one of the scaffolding techniques), RV=revoice (teacher revoicing for various reasons in different ways), DI=direct instruction (teacher making a direct command), AF=affirmation (affirmation from teacher that the answer is correct), PR=preparation for learning activity, SRB=student rebuttal in response to directives, SQ=student initiated question, SA=student answer given in response to a question unrelated to the lesson structure pattern, and SRS=student responding to another student's question, request, statement, etc. Additional questions addressed during data analysis included: How do the teachers respond to mistakes? Do teachers utilize pedagogical styles such as revoicing, repetition, and scaffolding? (Tannen, 1989) I looked for specific examples concerning issues such as: Do students seem to feel good about themselves when teachers respond to their mistakes? Why, or why not? What type of voice inflection does the teacher use when responding to mistakes? Is it ridiculing? How do students respond? Analyzing teacher response to mistakes can help determine why some students may or may not be successful in a particular classroom setting. If a student feels threatened he/she may not take the intellectual risks that are necessary to develop literacy skills. For example, if a student is a poor reader, and the teacher uses a ridiculing tone of voice when helping them, the student may become embarrassed and refuse to read aloud again. Other students may also become ridiculing because the

teacher established a *ridiculing* classroom environment (McMillon & Edwards, 2000). Teachers establish the *tone* of their classrooms, and students may quickly embrace the idiosyncrasies of the teacher. These issues became vitally important during data analysis, and are discussed in the data analysis chapters.

Questions addressed in the pedagogical section of the analysis included: Do teachers utilize various methods of teaching literacy? What methods do teachers use? How do students respond? Are students interested? Are students engaged? Is peer teaching utilized? Are varied learning styles considered? What are some of the *unique* ways that the teacher tries to improve reading skills? If teachers were not engaging the students by utilizing various methods that would match different learning styles, it may be difficult for some students to learn. Teachers may focus on methods that worked for them when they were children, or methods that worked for *last years' class.* It is the teacher's responsibility to adjust their teaching style to their students every year, and it was important for me to assess the teachers' efforts in doing so.

Other important questions included: What types of *terms of endearment* do teachers use? (I.e. sweetie, honey, buddy, etc.). Are the *terms* used to encourage students? Are other *terms* used to ridicule students? What types of gestures do teachers make? Do they use their hands? Do they *touch* students? (I.e. Pat on the back for encouragement; a hug when they're hurting; extra smiles when they're gloomy, etc.) How do students respond to the *terms of endearment*? How do students respond to the gestures? How do teachers use their eyes? Do they look students in the eye? Do they get down, bend, or stoop in order to get on the students' eye level? Do the students look at the teacher? During lessons? During discipline? During encouragement?

The physical appearance of the classroom was also considered in this study. I specifically asked: Is the classroom decorated interestingly? Are students overwhelmed with the *stuff* on the walls? Do students know how to utilize the resources in the classroom? (I.e.. word wall, dictionaries, Bibles, pencil sharpeners, etc.)

Within the social norms frame several questions was answered: What are the rules in the classroom? Do students seem to understand the rules? Does the teacher enforce the rules? What exceptions are made? What are the discipline methods used in class? Are there any implicit rules? Do misbehavior effect academic opportunities in class? How? Does the teacher talk about rules in other environments in order to help the student understand? (I.e. utilizing the student's participation on sports teams to encourage *teamwork* for a classroom group project; emphasizing the importance of obeying rules when swimming, playing on the playground, etc.; or for the Sunday School teacher - the importance of good behavior at school; taking turns; making straight lines, etc.) Are any *cultural rules* emphasized? (I.e. The importance of helping others; encouragement to be the best despite the odds, etc.). What are the *cultural rules* manifested in the classroom? How are they taught?

One way to address the tension between creating culturally congruent classrooms, and the expectation for school to prepare minority students to compete within the *culture of power*, is to study how Sunday School teachers and parents of African American students talk about school. Therefore, I tried to answer the following questions: Do Sunday School teachers attempt to assist their students in negotiating the borders between their culturally congruent Sunday School and incongruent classrooms at school? Are

Sunday School students taught *how* to behave in school? Are the differences between the environments discussed with students?

As discussed above, the videotaped classroom data was transcribed and organized according to emerging patterns and themes discussed in the fieldnotes, analytical notes and memos, and the fieldwork journal. Sections of transcript were chosen for closer analysis and divided into IRE (initiation-response-evaluation) patterns (Mehan, 1979) and other coding categories to assist with analysis of classroom data. Timelines were utilized for close examination of patterns, and for comparison purposes.

Narrative Analysis

The purpose of the teacher, parent and student interviews was to get *their story* concerning the incongruencies between the church and school environments. Teachers were asked questions concerning their personal beliefs about these incongruencies, their criteria for success, their evaluation of the two students, their pedagogical beliefs, expectations, values, methods, and their opinion of their relationship with the student and parents. They were also asked if they attempted to assist students to negotiate cultural borders, and the methods that they utilized in trying to help students. Their ideas about literacy development and the sociocultural view of literacy were also explored during the interviews. These areas were all very important in trying to answer the focus and guiding questions of the study, and in triangulation of the data.

Parent interviews were analyzed carefully to determine if their educational histories, beliefs about education, and/or home literacy activities were a possible source of incongruence or congruence in the two environments. Their relationship with the teachers, and their beliefs concerning the importance of literacy development in both

settings were also discussed. Parents were asked to identify other significant literacy role models. This information assisted during the process of examining the literacy network systems of each student. More specifically, parents were asked to identify who influences their decisions concerning educational issues. Additionally, they were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the facilitators of literacy in the school and church settings based on their child's experiences.

Student interviews gave me an opportunity to get the students' perspective of the sources of incongruency. They allowed me to test my inferences concerning student understanding of classroom rules, expectations, exclusionary measures, and participatory structures. I made value-laden inferences in my fieldwork journal, and during the student interview I checked with the student to determine if my assessments were correct from their perspective. It was especially important to refrain from leading the students to answer the way that I wanted them to answer, thereby having inaccurate data, and incorrect analysis. I practiced my questions beforehand on two first-graders who were not included in the study before actually collecting and analyzing my student interview data. In addition to sharing their perspectives of the issues listed above, students also assisted with identifying members of the literacy network systems in each setting. The student's opinion of the effectiveness of each facilitator of literacy was critical, and was often shared without prompts. Students honestly and openly shared how they felt about the members of the literacy network systems in each setting. In my opinion, the student perspective of the literacy facilitators may be the most important because the student opinion seemed to be focused upon the type of relationship that they had with the literacy facilitator.

Narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993) was used to analyze interview data, which was in the form of short stories/narratives. I began with a rough draft of the entire interview that focused on the words and exceptional features that stood out, such as crying, laughing, or very long pauses. Then, I chose specific portions of the interviews for detailed analysis. Quotes and vignettes were especially useful in analyzing and organizing the interview data. After specific parts of the interviews were retranscribed, I wrote down quotes and vignettes on a poster board. This process allowed me to display the data (Wolcott, 1994), so that I could look for patterns and categories. Quotes and vignettes were reorganized on the large poster as themes emerged. This process was the initial stage to determine the specific data that would be used in the final write-up of the study.

Analysis of documentation

The purpose of including the documentation of student success in church, failure in school, and student evaluation was to discover why the students are doing poorly in their school class. Questions addressed included: Is the child actually capable of doing better work as indicated by test scores and other evaluative methods? Or is the child lacking in some area and in need of special assistance? If so, has assistance been requested? Is the child receiving special help? If so, what kind? How does the parent feel about the support? How does the child feel about the support? Are children degraded by the teacher and/or student peers concerning the additional assistance? All of these questions helped identify possible points of connection and disconnection between the teachers, students, and parents.

Social Network Analysis

Based on information from student documents and evaluations, the interviews and classroom observations, a series of *circles of influence* were produced which collectively illustrate the literacy network systems in each setting (Wasserman, 1994). These circles of influence visually display the relational ties within the context of each setting, with connecting or disconnecting lines indicating the types of relationships that exist within the literacy network systems as indicated by the data. This information will assist with conceptualizing how this micro-oriented, detailed study of literacy experiences will connect with a larger macro study of social network systems of the church and school environments. Some of the information gathered in this analysis will be used to design the next study (see Chapter 7 - Recommendations for further study).

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL DATA

Setting

Paradise Elementary School is located in a well-established inner-city neighborhood in a Midwestern city. Several African American community leaders including retired teachers, principals and politicians, live in the vicinity with their houses concentrated on two streets. The rest of the neighborhood includes several middle-class homes and many low income family homes. Paradise serves 485 students from pre-school to fifth grade. Approximately 92% of the students are African American with 86% receiving free or reduced lunch. Paradise has 22 teachers; four African Americans, one African America male; two are Hispanic, and the remaining 15 are White.

Several years ago, student enrollment dwindled down to 307 resulting from students moving out of the neighborhood, and parents deciding to utilize their "school of choice" option, which had gone into effect. However, since the current principal was hired two years ago the enrollment has steadily increased. Mrs. Chamberlain attributes the increase in student enrollment to the major school improvements that have been made since she became principal. Paradise Elementary currently has a computer lab, and provides music, physical education and art for all students. A full time reading resource teacher is on staff, offering Reading Recovery to students who are in need. It is also one of five schools in the school district which offers a foreign language. "All of these programs have helped increase enrollment here at Paradise," Mrs. Chamberlain stated, "but many parents also bring their children to this school because they know who I am and what I stand for." Mrs. H.Q. Chamberlain is a well known, African American woman, with 24 years experience as an elementary school teacher in urban schools. She

was recruited to become an assistant principal at one of the local middle schools before being promoted to principal of Paradise Elementary. She grew up in the community as a pastor's daughter and has taught music at the local community college. Mrs. Chamberlain has definitely made a difference at Paradise Elementary.

Mrs. Chamberlain welcomed me into Paradise Elementary School and told me that she has "the most wonderful teachers and students in the city." Her effervescent personality and beaming smile warms the hearts of her faculty, staff, and students on a daily basis. She can be found answering the phone, helping students open milk cartons in the cafeteria, giving a teacher flowers and words of encouragement, or hugging a student on the playground on any given day. Her professional philosophy is that she wants Paradise Elementary School to become "the place that the name implies - a paradise for the employees and students."

During the initial visit with Mrs. Chamberlain, she shared a list of nine first grade students whom she felt were the most "at-risk" first graders in the school, and introduced me to the teacher whom she considered "the best" first grade teacher. The teacher - Mrs. Rudolph, is a white, middle-class woman with 18 years experience teaching in urban schools. Her class included eighteen students - six girls and twelve boys. Mrs. Rudolph was asked to rank the students in her class, and provide us with a list of the "most at-risk" students. Not surprisingly, most of the names on their lists were identical.

After explaining the dissertation study to Mrs. Rudolph and receiving her consent to participate in the study (See Appendix 2), she and Mrs. Chamberlain asked each child on the list if they attended Sunday School. Six children were identified as possible subjects. I called each student's parents to explain the research project and to ask if their

child attended Sunday School regularly. Of the three students, two were chosen to participate in the study based on my discussion with their parents and Sunday School teachers concerning their success in the church environment.

Subjects

Tony is a friendly seven year old, African American first grader who lives with his mother and four siblings. Until the recent birth of his younger brother, he was the "baby" of the family. In many ways Tony's family life is similar to the stereotypical life that many people have come to expect for an African American student in an inner-city neighborhood. His mom, Ms. Donaldson, is a single parent mother and his father is incarcerated. He rarely hears from his father, however, his grandmother, aunt and uncle stays in touch with him. One could easily pass judgment upon the Donaldson family based on their family status, but they would be very incorrect in their assessment unless they personally spoke with Ms. Donaldson. She is a very articulate woman in her mid thirties who is employed full-time at a group home for troubled teens. She owns her home which is located in a well established neighborhood two blocks from Paradise Elementary School. Upon entering her house for the parent interview, I immediately noticed that her home was well furnished with items that would encourage learning. For example, an expensive set of Britannica Encyclopedias were neatly placed on a beautiful wooden bookshelf, with many other books in sight including several spiritually-based, self-help books. The big screen television set was on one side of the living-room and a few educational toys were on the floor. Ms. Donaldson mentioned that the family owned a computer, and her oldest son wanted to show me the similarities and differences between their video camera and the one that I was using to collect data.

Tony was obviously not experiencing an impoverished childhood based on an immediate assessment of his home. His mother explained that he had some difficulties after the baby was born because he had been the youngest in the family for so long. She said that she's trying to help him become comfortable with his new position of "next to the youngest".

Ms. Donaldson felt that Tony was an exceptionally bright child because he benefited from having older siblings. She required her children to read every day after school. Before he became a reader, Tony's older siblings were required to read to him. His mother also explained that she began reading to Tony when he was a very small infant, and was intrigued by his keen interest in books. To her surprise, however, Tony does not necessarily choose books that one would expect a first grader to read. For example, while at the doctor's office a few days before the interview, Tony picked up a *National Geographic* and started reading aloud to his mother. She was amazed at the words that he was reading and double-checked the article to make sure he was reading the words in the magazine, and not "making up" words. To her amazement, he had decoded every word correctly in the article.

Ms. Donaldson stated that Tony has always been an exceptional child. He walked and talked early, and carried on detailed conversations with adults as a very young child. According to Ms. Donaldson, Tony could recognize and say the letters of the alphabet at the age of one, and continued to advance at a fast pace until his kindergarten experience.

Several years ago, Ms. Donaldson was married to Tony's father, Tony Sr. They moved the family from their current locale to a larger metropolitan area to find better jobs. Her children excelled at first, while attending schools in the first school district in

which they lived. However, after a few months they moved into a predominantly white apartment complex in a different neighborhood. Her older children, ages 11, 9 and 7, were constantly harassed by white teenagers who called them "niggers", and warned them that they were not welcome in the neighborhood. The Donaldson family's toys were often destroyed and their family car was also vandalized. Ms. Donaldson tried to talk with the parents of some of the teenagers whom her children accused of harassment, only to be harassed herself. She stated:

> I had heard of racism, but I had never experienced it. I have several close white friends with whom I stay in touch, and I knew that I wasn't prejudice. We weren't doing anything to deserve the type of treatment that we received from the white people in that neighborhood. It was overwhelming! We had a very hard time!

Tony's older siblings were able to find some refuge in their classrooms at school because they had good teachers, but he was not so fortunate. She explained:

> Tony's kindergarten teacher was extremely prejudice. She would do little things in the classroom to hurt Tony, like intentionally ignore him. I complained to the principal who asked me for concrete evidence. It was difficult for me to prove that the teacher was not treating Tony equally until their Valentine's Day celebration. I stayed up all night cooking cupcakes so all four of the kids could have a special Valentine treat for their classmates. That was a lot of work, but I wanted them to have something nice. When Tony and I arrived in his class, he was excited and immediately began to pass out his Valentine cards and prepare his treat. The teacher told him that they would pass out the cards and treats a little later. When I arrived at the school to pick Tony up, he met me at the door, tears in his eyes with the cards and the cupcakes. I was so angry that I immediately went to talk with the principal. I knew that I had the evidence I needed to confront the teacher. When asked, the teacher claimed that she didn't know Tony had Valentine cards and treats.

It took a long time for Tony and his family to recuperate from the damages that occurred during that time in their lives. As a matter of fact, Ms. Donaldson stated that she is still trying to help her children rectify some of the affects of those traumatic experiences. She noticed that Tony's whole personality changed during his negative

kindergarten experience. At first he loved school, but after several weeks he did not like it any more. His conversation also changed. Ms. Donaldson noticed that he began to describe people based on their race, specifically detailing if they were "black" or "white".

After returning to his home town, Tony began first grade. His teacher, Ms. Rudolph described him as "an introvert who carried a lot of bottled up anger". He cried everyday when his mother dropped him off at school, insisting that his mother let him stay home with her. Mrs. Rudolph explained that Tony would not interact with her or his classmates for more than a month when school first began. Ms. Donaldson shared information about Tony's negative kindergarten experience with Mrs. Rudolph, who patiently waited for an opportunity to connect with him. Mrs. Rudolph explained:

> I remember one day after about a month of not talking to me or anyone else in the class, we were doing some type of activity and the students were having fun - laughing and enjoying themselves. Tony looked at us and I kindly invited him to join us, just as I had done everyday from the beginning of school. But this time he slowly got up and sat with the group. He didn't say much that day, but when he got ready to leave he gave me the biggest hug. It absolutely made my day. I knew then that he would be alright. You know that's why he received the "Hug Award" this year. No matter what happened between us during the day, he never left school without first giving me a hug. He's a very special child.

According to school records, Tony did not know all of his alphabets when he began first grade. However, during the parent interview with Ms. Donaldson, it was discovered that Tony has known his alphabets since he was only one year old. His mother felt that Tony did not do well during the initial testing because he was still suffering from the trauma he experienced during kindergarten. She also explained that she was having a hard time coping with life circumstances resulting from the relocation, and perhaps her feelings were affecting his interest in school. Whatever the reason, Tony's test scores showed that he only knew 18 of the 26 alphabets.

Not only did Tony do poorly on his test scores, but he remained on the retention list for two marking periods. Mrs. Rudolph expressed her concerns about Tony and her belief that he was not working up to his potential with Ms. Donaldson during a parent-teacher conference early in the school year. Mrs. Rudolph explained that she did not feel Tony should be on the retention list, and requested that his mother work with him more diligently at home. Ms. Donaldson assured Mrs. Rudolph that she would follow her instructions for the plan devised specifically to bring Tony up to par.

After the conference, Mrs. Rudolph immediately saw improvement in Tony's work. He got off the retention list, passed the students in his first reading group, and was placed in the next group where he soon passed the students, ultimately ending up in the top reading group with two other students. At the end of the first grade Tony was decoding at a Level 30, (which is a 5th grade reading level), according to the Reading Resource teacher. Mrs. Rudolph attributes Tony's success to his mother:

> I wish I had more mothers like Tony's mother. I told her what she needed to do to help her son, and she followed through. Tony often told me that he was required to read every night. I believe him because the proof can be seen in the way he progressed. I couldn't have done it without her. I just don't have the time during class to give individual students everything they need. I need more parental support.

Tony became successful academically because his mother and teacher approached his literacy learning as a team effort. However, within the social norms frame, Tony was not nearly as successful in his classroom at school. This chapter will expound upon his academic and social experiences in the school environment.

Travis is an interesting six year old, first grader who lives with his father, mother, and two older brothers. Travis has always had very advanced motor skills and is an avid basketball player. According to his mother, Mrs. Cunningham, who is a teacher

education student at the local university, learning has always come easy for Travis. He walked at ten months old and spoke in complete sentences at an early age. As young children, all of the Cunninghams were read to by their parents and grandparents. The importance of receiving a good education is often stressed in the Cunningham home. Mr. Cunningham, who was also a student and full time employee, decided that he would "put school on hold for a little while" until his wife finishes. He felt that having both parents working and in school was causing too much stress for the family. Mr. & Mrs. Cunningham participates wholeheartedly in their children's educational activities and he wanted to insure that their sons did not suffer in any way. Therefore, he voluntarily postponed his pursuit of a degree "to focus on the kids", while his wife focuses on finishing up her college program. Both parents believe that their attending school have had a positive impact on their sons' ideas about schooling. Travis likes the idea of his parents having to do homework. Mrs. Cunningham challenges her sons by competing with them for good grades. This competition seems to motivate the two oldest sons, but Travis is a "different type of child". He is strong-willed and decides when he will make a genuine or a half-hearted effort. He gets good grades in school and is the "top student in his class" according to his teacher Mrs. Rudolph, who feels that he does not have to give his best in order to get good grades. She feels that he is naturally talented in reading and math. He "zooms through the work and then has too much free time on his hands while waiting for other students to catch up".

All of the people interviewed in this study agreed that Travis is an exceptional child. Mr. Cunningham stated, "As a young child Travis always seemed to notice things that children don't usually pay attention to. You would think he's playing with the other

children, and a few days later he'd say something to let you know that he was fully aware of what was going on". During data collection, Travis displayed this unique ability. He was very relaxed during videotaping, and rarely looked directly at the camera, although he was aware that he was one of the subjects in the study. After taping, he would often ask his mother questions about the study. He was especially interested in knowing how his classroom experiences would be utilized to help other children like himself. Mrs. Cunningham made a special effort to thoroughly explain the study to Travis and make him feel comfortable about participating.

Having in-depth conversations is a routine practice in the Cunningham home. Mrs. Cunningham believes that parents should allow their children to ask questions about anything. She wants her sons to feel comfortable expressing their feelings and articulating their beliefs. Travis' contributions to these conversations often take the Cunninghams by surprise. Mrs. Cunningham stated:

> Travis will just be sitting around while his brothers are talking to me about something...acting like he's not even listening. Then all of a sudden he'll just chime in and say something that's he's too young to say. He's just so deep, sometimes we don't even know how to respond to him.

These "spurts of maturity" displayed by Travis makes it difficult for the Cunningham family because from day-to-day they are never quite sure if Travis is going to be "a six year old" or a "sixty-year-old". When he is not dazzling his family with his brilliance, Travis acts like most six year olds who are the youngest in the family. His brothers tend to cater to his needs because "he's their baby brother". "He always gets his way", stated Mrs. Cunningham. "He's so spoiled!" she continues, "He has everybody's number. He

knows just what to say and do to get us to do whatever he wants. He's a good child and we love him."

When their children were younger, Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham took them to the public library often. They would read to their sons, and let them explore on the library computers. Now that they have their own computer, their sons prefer to utilize the one at home. Although they encourage Travis to read, they admitted that he is very strong willed and it is difficult to get him to do something that he does not want to do. "Travis has to be interested in a book to read it. If he's not interested, you can forget it," explained Mrs. Cunningham.

Travis' educational experiences had been positive until he entered the first grade. For some reason he and Mrs. Rudolph were unable to get along for an extended period of time. Travis had been suspended eight times when the study began, and was suspended twice during the data collection period.

Mr. Cunningham was disappointed with the ineffective discipline methods being used at Paradise. He stated:

> I can't understand what they think a kid can learn if they're constantly sending him home. I think Mrs. Rudolph overreacts to Travis. Once she let him see that he could frustrate her, it was over. He will win every time in his mind, because she doesn't know how to deal with him. I've spanked him several times as a last resort, trying to get him to act right at school, but Mrs. Rudolph has let it go too far. He'll never listen to her now because she tries to force herself on him.

Mrs. Cunningham agreed with her husband:

> That's right. Travis has a very strong personality for a child and you have to let him think he's in control. He'll shut down every time when someone tries to "make" him do something that he doesn't want to do.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Rudolph was unable to develop effective strategies to convince Travis to change his behavior. She tried several ideas but to no avail. For example, Mrs. Rudolph implemented a positive behavior lunch program. If a student finished a day without any major behavior problems they would get a star. After a certain amount of stars were accumulated, she would take them to McDonalds for lunch. Several times Travis almost made it, but he would get into trouble with one or two stars to go. Mrs. Rudolph decided to give him one more chance. Mrs. Chamberlain, the principal, described what happened:

> It seemed that everybody in the whole school was pulling for Travis, trying to motivate him to win a trip to McDonalds. The office secretaries and I would encourage him everyday to "be good" so he could win his McDonalds lunch. Mr. Adams, the janitor, would also remind him to be a "mannerable young man" in class. The day finally came that would determine if he would go. Mrs. Rudolph ran into the office and announced, "He made it!" All of us started jumping and clapping...rejoicing! We were so happy for him!

Travis went to McDonalds and got into trouble again the next day. Although Travis was exceptionally successful academically and his parents were involved in school activities, he was incredibly unsuccessfully socially in his classroom at school. Possible sources of his behavior pattern will be explored in this Chapters 4 and 5.

Analysis of School Data

Mrs. Rudolph's class was very stimulating. When I entered the classroom I saw about fifteen cloud mobiles hanging from the ceiling. On one side of the room an entire wall was filled with colorful words in alphabetical order. The title, "Word Wall" was neatly centered on the large bulletin board. In one corner, an overhead projector and flip chart were neatly stored. On the other side of the room were several shelves of books on top of a colorful large rug. Other learning tools including a computer were organized in

various parts of the room. Next to the sink was a large orange sheet of paper on the wall, with a "Handwashing Rap" printed on it. The individual student desks were arranged in groups of twos or fours, with the exception of a three desks, which were about three feet away from the groups of desks. Two round tables with chairs were near the sink, which students used when they needed to work alone away from their groups.

During analysis of the school data, four important themes became illuminated within the framework previously set forth. These themes are discussed below.

Discourse patterns

Three patterns emerged within the *Discourse patterns* frame while analyzing data collected in the school context:

- The teacher provided cultural capital to her students through exposure to Standard English.
- The teacher understood her students' discourse patterns and scaffolded their language acquisition skills through revoicing methods.
- The subjects were able to negotiate cultural language patterns within the classroom setting.

In his work, Gee (1991) argues that white, middle-class students often benefit from sharing similar discourse patterns with their white, middle-class teachers. Minority students, on the other hand, must overcome difficulties associated with language barriers between them and many of their teachers. Mrs. Rudolph, the first grade teacher in this research study, felt that she had learned to communicate effectively with her students. After 12 years of teaching experience in urban schools, she considered herself an "expert" on African American language and culture. During her interview she shared:

> When my family and I are at home watching a movie and some African American star begins using slang and clichés unfamiliar to my family, they always ask me what the person is saying. It's really kind of

funny, but I can always answer them. After being around African American students for so long, I pretty much understand whatever they say. I guess I'm somewhat of an expert in a way. (smiles)

Most of the students in Mrs. Rudolph's class utilize Black vernacular English. Mrs. Rudolph understands Black vernacular English, but she utilizes Standard English in her classroom. By using Standard English I believe that Mrs. Rudolph is giving her students an opportunity to "hear" and "understand" the discourse that will help them enter into the "culture of power" (Delpit, 1995). In other words, Mrs. Rudolph is **providing cultural capital to her students through exposure to Standard English.**

Although Mrs. Rudolph uses Standard English in class, she does not degrade or devalue the discourse patterns that her students use. Her response to them is not ridiculing or demeaning in any way. Instead, she carefully, and almost unnoticeably scaffolds their language acquisition skills through revoicing methods (O'Connor & Michaels, 1996). For example, during a classroom discussion about antlers, Mrs. Rudolph asked the students:

Mrs. R.:	Boys and girls what are antlers? O.K. Lorisa.
Lorisa:	'Dey lit'le sticks up on his head.
Mrs. R.:	They look like sticks on the moose's head. Very good Lorisa. And what are they used for?
Mark:	'Dey grow big!
Mrs. R.:	Yes Mark. Some antlers are very large. But what are they used for?
Tony:	I know Mrs. Rudolph (waving his hand in the air). They're used for protection.
Mrs. R.:	That's right Tony. Antlers are used for protection.

As discussed above, most of the students in the class utilized Black vernacular English, however, Tony and Travis **were able to negotiate cultural language patterns within the classroom setting.** During observations, it became apparent that more capable students such as the two subjects, used words that displayed a much broader

vocabulary, as indicated by Tony's response in the above example. During formal instructional time, question & answer periods, or when talking directly to the teacher, Tony and Travis often used standard English, and frequently used words from the "teacher-talk register" (Cazden, 1988), indicating strong language skills and an advanced comprehension level. However, during play time or whenever addressing their peers, they would revert to Black vernacular language patterns.

While talking to the students seated near his desk, Travis speaks one way, but when asking the teacher a question he uses "teacher talk":

Travis:	I ain't go say nothin' else 'til 'um done with dis' stuff.
Miranda:	Mrs. Rudolph said we gotta get done.
Travis:	We got gym today. 'Um ready to be done.
Tiffany:	You almost done ain't chu (you)?
Travis:	Uh huh. Almost. I gotta question...
	Mrs. Rudolph, can I ask you something?
Mrs. R.:	Yes Travis...
Travis:	I wrote a two in the tens place and a three in the ones place which makes 23, right?
Mrs. R.:	That's right Travis. Are you finished?
Travis:	Yes I'm finished now. That was my last problem.
	(Looks at Miranda and Tiffany). 'Um done.
	I told yall 'um ready to be done and 'um done.
	Yall slow (jokingly). 'Um ready to go to gym.

Pedagogical issues

Two major patterns emerged under the *Pedagogical issues* category, which are highlighted and supported below.

The teacher facilitated a classroom-learning environment based on reciprocity, which helped her develop applicable teaching strategies in response to the varied learning styles of her students. During her twelve years of experience in an urban setting, the teacher realized the importance of learning from her students. She had developed very effective instructional methods, which were continuously adjusted

according to the needs of her students. A variety of approaches were utilized in the classroom which appealed to students with different learning styles, such as: lecture, overhead projectors, hands-on projects, peer tutoring, collaborative learning, field trips, exposure to different types of literature, and playing soft background music while students completed assignments. She provided creative opportunities to learn, such as word wall bingo and writing sentences on desks with shaving cream. Also, reading groups based on ability allowed more individualized attention.

Word Wall Bingo was a vocabulary word building game that all of the students seemed to enjoy. As described previously, an entire wall was devoted to the "Word Wall". The letters of the alphabet were displayed across the wall, and words that began with that letter were neatly written under the letter. The display was quite colorful and caught my attention immediately when I first visited the room. To play Word Wall Bingo each student was given a card and several chips. Some students were allowed to have more than one card if they had previously proven they could keep up with more than one card at time while playing the game. Tony and Travis were given three cards and did not have any problems checking all three cards for the words that Mrs. Rudolph called. She had each word on the Word Wall written on a piece of paper in her bingo box. She would shake the box and pull out a word. Students would have to look on their cards for the word and cover it with a chip. If they covered five words in a row, column or diagonally, they would say "bingo" and win a prize. This activity encouraged the students to learn the vocabulary words while having fun.

During another classroom observation, Mrs. Rudolph sprayed shaving cream on each students' desk and had them write sentences with the shaving cream. Each time

they completed a sentence, they had to raise their hand and wait until Mrs. Rudolph checked their sentences. It was a pleasure to watch students having so much fun! Mrs. Rudolph explained that she utilizes the shaving cream activity especially when the desks need cleaning because she stated, "the students learn and clean at the same time without even noticing."

In addition to using innovative instructional methods such as Word Wall Bingo and writing sentences with shaving cream, Mrs. Rudolph also implemented reading groups based on ability. Because of the well-structured literacy network system at Paradise Elementary, she received the support that she needed for implementation. A member of the Grandmother's Tutoring Group, the Reading Resource teacher, and sometimes a teacher's aide, was available to assist with focused reading activities. Mrs. Rudolph would request to be placed on their schedules at least once per week in order to have her students work in their reading groups. She believed that ability based reading groups allowed her to give much needed individual attention to various students. For example, the lower reading group could work on phonics word attack strategies while the highest reading group could be challenged to read books on their reading levels.

Mrs. Rudolph, like many teachers believed that the most successful students were the ones with parental support. **She had higher academic expectations for students with parental support and they thrived academically.** Mrs. Rudolph tried to connect with the students' parents in several ways including sending a weekly letter home every Friday encouraging parents to reinforce classroom lessons. She offered to meet with parents to recommend specific home literacy activities that could help improve their child's academic success. Mrs. Rudolph had high academic expectations for Tony and

Travis because their parents were very involved in their learning in and out of school. They responded by becoming the two top first grade readers.

As previously mentioned, Mrs. Donaldson worked with Tony on a daily basis at home to improve his reading skills. However, she explained that she was not as active in the school setting as she should have been. Initially she had every intention of participating in the PTA and other activities, but she was experiencing some personal difficulties that she allowed to get in the way.

Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham, on the other hand, were quite involved in school activities. Mrs. Cunningham was the PTA president, and they both volunteered to chaperone field trips for the class. Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham often stopped by the school just to check up on their children.

Mrs. Rudolph recognized and valued the importance of parental involvement. She welcomed parents wholeheartedly to visit the classroom, but very few responded. Mrs. Rudolph attributes Tony's and Travis' academic achievement to their parents whom she feels made every effort to insure that their children were successful.

Social norms

The old cliché: *"There is always room for improvement"* was my foremost thought when identifying the themes within the *Social norms* frame for this study. Mrs. Rudolph certainly lived up to her reputation as the "best" first grade teacher when focusing upon the *Discourse patterns* and *Pedagogical issues* categories - areas in which many white, middle-class teachers fail to excel when working with African American students. However, Mrs. Rudolph, whom I truly believe had the best of intentions for her

students, was utilizing several debilitating methods to establish social norms within her classroom. Two major patterns emerged under this category.

Mrs. Rudolph had low behavioral expectations for Tony and Travis and they acted accordingly. Although Tony and Travis were the two top first grade students academically, they were considered "at-risk" because they were often disciplined for not obeying classroom rules. They were suspended from school eight to twelve times during the school year for negative behavior, which left the teacher and parents quite frustrated. The parents' frustration eventually became ambivalence after hearing numerous negative reports without being given effective strategies concerning how to help improve the students' behavior.

During my first classroom observation, I noticed that Mrs. Rudolph utilized several different classroom control and disciplinary methods. To deter students from "shouting out" an answer during classroom discussion, she would hold a large card up, which was a picture of an African American hand with the fingers stretched out, similar to the way a hand looks when its raised to answer a question. When students would began to answer out of turn without being called upon, she would wave the card to remind them to raise their hands.

Depending on one's perspective, using the card was effective if it was supposed to remind students to raise their hands without Mrs. Rudolph saying "raise your hands" repeatedly. However, it did not totally stop students from "yelling out" answers. Interestingly, whenever Mrs. Rudolph decided that it was alright for a student to give an answer without being called upon, she had another card that displayed the face of an African American child with their mouth open. This card indicated to the students that

they could speak out without raising their hands. Turntaking and participatory structures will be further expounded upon in Chapter 6.

Another method of classroom control utilized by Mrs. Rudolph was writing the names of students with negative behavior on the chalkboard. After warning, and sometimes threatening a student by suggesting something that might be taken away such as recess, she would write their name on the board. The class was considered an "active" class by Mrs. Rudolph. She had several students who were constantly on the move, and frequently displayed negative behavior. Because my observations were conducted toward the end of the school year, it was difficult to gauge how student behavior progressed or deteriorated over time. Based on her interview, Mrs. Rudolph explained that certain students had been given ample warnings over the course of the school year, and by the time data collection began for this study, she had become frustrated with their continued misbehavior. Whatever the reason, it became immediately evident to me that certain students were disciplined excessively more than others. Their names seemed to remain on the board throughout my observations.

For example, Tony's name was on the board every time classroom observations were made. He was a very social student and often conversed with other students. The classroom was set up with individual desks pushed together to make small groups. Tony and two other students were not in groups. Their individual desks were placed on the periphery of the small groups. Tony often got into trouble for trying to get a friend's attention across the aisle, or for getting caught talking to another student when he should have been listening to the teacher. Unfortunately, it seemed that Tony was being disciplined excessively for doing things that may not have happened if he had been

placed in a group with other students. Students who were in groups were able to communicate with one another during times when they were not supposed to be talking. They would whisper or gesture and would not be disciplined.

Not only was Tony excluded from being a part of a small group like some of the other students, but he was often placed in "time out" which required him to sit on the floor on the other side of the room, further away from students. During one classroom observation, the students were completing a math assignment and Tony was in "time out". Mrs. Rudolph was walking around answering questions for students as they worked on the assignment. Tony held his hand up several times without a response from Mrs. Rudolph. He tried to get her attention by shaking his hand fiercely, but she still did not respond. Finally, two students who had been watching him got up out of their seats, went over to the "time out" section of the room, and started playing with Tony. For a while Tony would look up to see if Mrs. Rudolph was looking, but she seemed to be absorbed in the math activity. Finally, she told the two students to sit down in their seats or their name would be placed on the board. Tony asked her if she could check his paper, and she told him to raise his hand and wait his turn. He responded by saying that he had his hand raised for a long time. She cut him off with, "You have to wait for your turn." He dropped his head and started checking over his paper. When he raised his hand again, Mrs. Rudolph told him that it was time for gym and he would just have to complete the assignment later.

This missed opportunity could have been detrimental to Tony. He was being disciplined for his behavior and the discipline was not working. In my opinion, methods of exclusion go beyond social discipline and extends to academic exclusion as well.

Tony's experience above is a case in point. However, it was not the only time that I observed this type of action. Tony was the type of student who raised his hand often, but he was not called upon as much as some of the other "better behaved" students. The more behaved girls were given the most opportunities to answer questions. After watching Tony, it did not seem to bother him that he was rarely called upon because he continued to raise his hand, and whenever he was given a chance his answers were usually correct.

Travis' classroom behavior was different from Tony's. Tony seemed to get into trouble over little things continuously throughout the day, whereas Travis would get into trouble over things that escalated into a major stand-off between he and Mrs. Rudolph. Travis sat in a group with three girls who were mild mannered and highly regarded by the teacher. Mrs. Rudolph explained that she was unable to sit Travis next to anyone other than Miranda. She stated: "For some reason, I don't understand it, but Miranda really likes Travis, and he doesn't get along with anybody but Miranda." By being a part of a group Travis was able to quietly communicate with his group members all the time, unlike Tony. During observations Travis' name was placed on the board two times for misbehavior, however, he was suspended twice. As indicated above, the observations were made toward the end of the school year, therefore it is evident that Mrs. Rudolph had decided that she was not going to allow certain types of behavior any more. She was understandably quite frustrated with student behavior in her class. However, as discussed above, she seemed to respond to negative behavior in some students differently than others.

For example, once during observations, I noticed that Miranda, Travis' group member was "passing licks" (hitting). She tapped his shoulder several times, and he smiled at her. Finally he returned the "lick" (hit) smiling. Mrs. Rudolph rushed over to him, placed her hand on his shoulder and sternly said:

Mrs. R.:	You apologize to her right now this instant!
Travis:	She hit me first!
Mrs. R.:	Don't you lie on her. You apologize!
Travis:	I didn't do anything. (Speaking a little louder)
Mrs. R.:	Apologize now!
Travis:	No! I didn't do anything. (A little louder, shaking her hand off his shoulder).
Mrs. R:	Either apologize or go to the office.
Travis:	(Frowns angrily, twisting his body out the chair, and walks slowly to the door).

After this episode in class, Travis was eventually sent home because he became so upset. He continued to say that he did not do anything, but nobody believed him because of the low expectations that they had for his behavior. Miranda was never questioned concerning the incident, and she never voluntarily told that they were just playing.

Later during the day I asked Mrs. Rudolph if she thought Travis could have been telling the truth this time. She responded, "No way. Miranda is a perfect student. She never does anything wrong. I know that she did not hit Travis. He needs to learn to keep his hands to himself." Mrs. Rudolph had high behavioral expectations for Miranda, and Miranda "always" lived up to those expectations. On the other hand, she had low behavioral expectations for Travis and Tony, and they "always" seemed to live up to those expectations as well. According to Risk (1970), students tend to live up to the self-fulfilling prophecies of their teachers. Travis, Tony, and Miranda were not exceptions to this "rule".

Although Ms. Donaldson and the Cunninghams were very supportive of Mrs. Rudolph's academic curriculum, **they were not supportive of her disciplinary techniques and their ambivalence influenced their sons.**

Tony and Travis were very perceptive and understood that their parents were quite frustrated with the social norm issues occurring in the classroom. During classroom observations Tony and another student (Tony's cousin) had a disagreement, which escalated into a pushing match. This altercation occurred two days before the class' final field trip. I was planning to videotape during the fieldtrip to gain insight by studying the subjects in a more relaxed setting. When I asked the teacher for permission to make observations during the field trip she told me that she did not expect Tony and Travis to attend the field trip. Tony had not been allowed to go on any field trips all year because of his behavior, and Travis had been sent home from the last field trip. Although Travis' parents were chaperones, he refused to follow the rules of conduct on the field trip and his parents were asked to take him home. She expressed her low expectations of their behavior by telling me that she would be surprised if Tony and Travis were not suspended before the field trip. Tony and his cousin began arguing in class and were sent to the office. I followed them to the office to continue observations. The following conversation took place in the office lobby while waiting to see the principal:

Mrs. Mc: Do you realize that you may not be able to go on the field trip?
Marquis: I can't go noway. I don't care.
Mrs. Mc: Do you think that it was nice to get Tony in trouble and prevent him from going to the picnic, just because you can't go?
(Tony had been sitting there with a terribly angry expression on his face, as if he might burst at any moment. He immediately chimed in when he thought I was "scolding" Marquis).
Tony: That's ok Ms. McMillon. I-ain't wanna go no way. Mama told me that we go go on our own picnic if Mrs. Rudolph won't let me go. We gonna

	have barbecue and everything! Mrs. Rudolph just go have sack lunch. I want some barbecue and stuff.
Marquis:	Yea barbecue is way better than some old sack lunch. (Grins)
Mrs. Mc:	Tony, don't you think that you would enjoy hanging out with the kids
from	your class at the picnic.
Tony:	They don't like me no way. They think I'm too bad.
Mrs. Mc:	Are you bad Tony?
Tony:	Nope.
Mrs. Mc:	What will your mother say about you getting suspended again? Won't
you	get in trouble and maybe be put on punishment or something?
Tony:	Nope. Mama usta' ground me when I got kicked out. But now she just say, "oh well", and tell me to go play.
Mrs. Mc:	Why?
Tony:	Cuz she said that she tired of Mrs. Rudolph puttin' me out. She say they don't know what they doin' up here.
Mrs. Mc:	What do you play at home when you've been suspended?
Tony:	Nintendo, Play Station and Game Boy.
Mrs. Mc:	Your mom let's you play games when you're suspended?
Tony:	Yep! She just say, "Well I guess you got another vacation."
Mrs. Mc.:	Do you read or do other school work while you're kicked out?
Tony:	Mama read to me everyday....when I'm kicked out and when I ain't. Then I have to read to her. Then we done. Then I just go play.

Although she tried not to negatively influence her son's educational experiences, Ms. Donaldson's frustrations had turned into ambivalence, and her conversations with Tony were indicative of her feelings.

The expectations that Mrs. Rudolph had for her students seemed quite simple at first, such as raise your hand before joining the conversation, walk in a straight line in the hallway, pay attention during classroom lessons, etc. However, after careful analysis it became apparent that Mrs. Rudolph, Tony, Travis and their parents were operating from different cultural frames of reference concerning issues of student behavior and discipline. Mrs. Rudolph was implementing a *hidden curriculum* (Cazden, 1988) (implicit rules of conduct) that Tony, Travis and their parents did not agree with. These *invisible rules* were debilitating to both Tony and Travis because they were based on cultural values which they did not have in common with their white, middle-class

teacher. In their homes and other settings such their churches, they were taught to speak out, be assertive, energetic, and openly share their opinions. Mrs. Rudolph valued students who were passive and did not challenge her authority. Students who challenge their teacher's authority are often considered "behavior problems." Unfortunately, these issues were not resolved early in the school year, and the entire year was spent in a power struggle between the teacher and Tony and Travis. Because Mrs. Rudolph made such an impact upon Tony by helping him through his difficult time, he seemed to be more willing to give in and let her have control from time to time. Their student-teacher relationship seemed to influence Tony's actions in a positive way. But Travis never allowed her to control him, nor develop a wholesome teacher-student relationship with him. He fought all year and refused to let her reach him. During one of her interviews, her words provided support for this belief: "I could never reach Travis. I feel as if I've failed him. I didn't teach him anything all year."

Ms. Donaldson and the Cunninghams were very frustrated with Mrs. Rudolph's disciplinary techniques. They felt that it was ridiculous to send a first grader home for some of the reasons that the school sent their children home, and they were upset that the principal supported the teacher's decisions. Ms. Donaldson stated that she believed at one time Mrs. Rudolph was a good teacher and she still does some wonderful things academically, but she has gotten too old to handle the students in her class, and should retire. Mrs. Cunningham was a bit more sensitive because she was aware of personal problems that Mrs. Rudolph was experiencing with her family. She stated:

> I know that Mrs. Rudolph is a good teacher because she taught my oldest son. She was just going through a lot with her husband and daughter being sick. She was under a lot of pressure and it makes sense that it was hard for her to handle a class like the one she had. It was a odd mixture of

> kids in that class. Their personalities never really came together. They didn't mix well at all, and she couldn't help that. I'm sure if she hadn't had all the problems, things would have been better between her and Travis, but she said that she couldn't never really figure out how to get next to him...you know his interests and stuff. I told her that he liked dinosaurs, and I knew he was really bored in that class because he already knew all the stuff. But it's hard on a teacher to give students individual attention, so I just work with him here at home.

The Reading Resource teacher and Travis' parents wanted Travis to get into the "gifted" program in the school district, but Mrs. Rudolph refused to refer him because she said that students in the gifted program needed to be able to work independently and Travis' behavior would be a problem for the teacher. Travis' parents and the Reading Resource teacher were disappointed with Mrs. Rudolph because they felt that part of the reason for Travis' behavior was because he was bored. He would finish his assignments before everyone else and have time to get into trouble. Mrs. Rudolph's refusal to refer Travis could effect his future educational experiences.

Literacy Network System

The school provided a strong academic support system and attempted to provide a support system to assist with behavioral issues. The literacy network system consisted of several adults who were committed to assisting the subjects academically including: a Reading Resource Specialist, Grandmothers Tutoring Group, and the school librarian. The social worker also organized a support system for the subjects to assist the teacher with behavior problems to try to avoid suspension, which included: the principal, assistant principal, the custodian, the office secretaries, and a kindergarten teacher. Whenever the behavior of the subjects became overwhelming for the teacher, she would ask someone from the "support system" to assist her. Often, assistance required removing the subject from the classroom.

In the school setting the academic literacy network system was effectively working for both Travis and Tony, however, the social literacy network system (which was a different set of people) was not successfully helping them learn strategies to adjust their behavior and stop getting suspended. In other words, the social literacy network system had failed Travis and Tony.

Summary of analysis of school data

Tony and Travis were academically successful in school, but socially "at-risk". They displayed linguistic competence – the skill and ability to produce and understand well-formed sentences (Chomsky, 1965); communicative competence – the capacity to acquire and utilize language correctly in various situations (Hymes, 1974); and a level of interactional competence – "employing interactional skills and abilities in the display of academic knowledge (Mehan, 1979, p. 133); but they did not have *classroom cultural competence* – the ability to "read" and understand the culture of the classroom and act accordingly. These competencies will be further explored in Chapter 6. At this point it is important to note that the subjects' inability to successfully negotiate the cultural boundaries within the social norms frame was frustrating to everyone involved, including the teachers, administrators and parents. After being suspended eight to twelve times, Tony and Travis eventually became ambivalent and indifferent, reflecting their parents' feelings. Unfortunately, although Paradise Elementary successfully provided for them academically, their behavior placed them in the "at-risk" category at the end of the school year. During her interview, Mrs. Rudolph expressed the belief that Tony "would be alright" because he had "come a long way" and she had been able to "reach" him. However, she did not have such a positive prophecy for Travis. She expressed her

feelings through tears as she stated, "I feel that I've failed Travis...". She did not believe that she had successfully prepared him for the second grade, and was concerned that he might continue to be "at-risk" socially.

Tony and Travis are exceptions to the usual story of academic underachievement in African American boys, often resulting in being placed in Special Education classes or remedial programs (Irvine, 1990; Hopkins, 1997). However, their behavior caused them to be considered the two most "at-risk" students in the first grade at Paradise Elementary. Although a Literacy Network System was established and provided them successful support academically, it had failed them socially.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF SUNDAY SCHOOL DATA

Similar to their ancestors in the United States, Tony and Travis have experienced some difficulties in the public school setting, but are considered successful students with unlimited potential within the environment of their African American church.

Settings

When this study began Tony attended church with his aunt, who was also his Sunday School teacher. The church is located about 20 minutes from his school in a quiet, township neighborhood. Ephesians Baptist Church has approximately 75 members and is pastored by Rev. Coleman who grew up in the vicinity of Tony's school. The church and Sunday School is small, but growing. Unfortunately, Tony's Aunt Denise decided to change churches during data collection, and he was never observed in this setting. However, after he stopped going to church with his aunt, his father's cousin began to pick him up for church. An important value within the African American family is to make sure family members' children are being "raised" in church.

Tony immediately fell in love with his new church home. Mount Olivia Baptist Church was much larger than his first church, but the people treated him as if he had been around a long time. He seemed very comfortable in his new environment. When asked if he liked the new church he stated, "I like it here. It's a lot of fun stuff to do, and I learn a lot about God."

Tony's Sunday School class included six to eight students each week. The classroom walls were decorated with large posters of biblical characters who looked like African Americans. They utilized literature from the publishing company discussed in the literature review - Urban Ministries Inc., which provides a culturally based

Afrocentric approach to Bible lessons. His Sunday School teacher was a middle-class, African American woman with almost 30 years of Sunday School teaching experience.

Travis' Sunday School class was not a traditional type of class. Instead of meeting before church, his class met during Sunday morning worship service. Approximately 15 to 20 students attended class with Travis at the New Testament Christian Center. The pastor and wife team at New Testament emphasizes the importance of the family and teaches many cultural and biblical values. Their philosophy is to reach for the "spirit of excellence." This philosophy is pervasive in all of their activities, including their Sunday School class for children.

Travis' Sunday School teacher is an African American male who stated that Travis is one of his favorite students because he reminds him of himself. The Sunday School lessons at New Testament church were centered around a monthly theme. Teachers were expected to be well prepared to teach the lesson and provide a related activity for their students.

Analysis of Sunday School Data

Although Tony and Travis attended two different Sunday School classes, there were many similarities between the classes. Most importantly, both environments utilized a Black theological approach to biblical interpretation and emphasized the importance of strengthening relationships within their "community". These teachings provided the core foundation for the literacy network systems within each context. During analysis of the church data six important themes became apparent, and are expounded upon below.

Discourse patterns

Teachers and students utilized similar communicative styles. Teachers and students utilized African American communicative styles that included patterns such as: hand gestures, nodding, affirmative mumbles during discussions, emphasized voice inflection and Black vernacular English. Students frequently used words from the "teacher-talk register" (Cazden, 1988), which indicates strong language skills. Some "teacher-talk" words were quoted from a scripture or Bible lesson.

While teaching the story of Joseph, Mr. Willis provided a good example of the discourse patterns commonly utilized in African American Sunday School classes:

Mr. Willis: There was a famine in the land. Do you know what a famine is?
Students: No.
Mr. Willis: A famine is when there is no food. People had to come to Joseph for food because the king put him over everything. So when they needed food they came to Joseph...when they needed to eat. Everybody understand what 'um sayin'?
Students: Yea.
Mr. Willis: Good. 'Cause you know everybody gotta eat. You like to eat don't you?
Students: Yea.
Mr. Willis: Even though they had to bring money and what not, what I'm sayin' is Joseph still had to provide the food. He was the chief giver next to God. Yall understand what 'um sayin'?
Students: Yea.

The discourse in this setting was similar to the common call-response patterns utilized by many African American speakers, especially in the church setting (Proctor & Watley, 1984).

In Tony's Sunday School class students utilized "teacher talk" when participating in the opening prayer. For example, one of the students said:

> O.K. Everybody. Let's prepare fo' prayer.
> Bow yo' heads, fold yo' hands, and close yo' eyes.
> (With her eyes closed)
> Thank you God fo' everythang you done fo' us.

Fo' the clothes on our back, and the shoes on our feet.
Amen.

Mrs. Neal frequently reminds the students of the correct prayer posture. If the student leading the prayer does not give the proper instructions, she scaffolds their efforts by suggesting that they "prepare for prayer." Students display their understanding by utilizing her words when speaking to the other students.

Pedagogical issues

Teachers utilized various instructional methods that helped students develop various literacy skills, especially those that perpetuate the oral tradition of the African American church. Teachers made a special effort to accommodate the unique learning styles of many African American children. The use of memorization was especially emphasized in this setting. Students were expected to memorize Bible verses, Bible stories, and songs. Activities that helped students develop oral language skills were also stressed.

Literacy practices during Sunday School focused in two specific areas: pre-reading/reading skills and oral language development. While participating in these classes, students acquired and developed various skills that could be utilized in their classrooms at school. Pre-reading/reading skills included: print awareness, concepts of print, site reading, vocabulary building, comprehension and application. Oral development was emphasized while learning Bible stories and memorizing scriptures. Most of the literacy experiences reinforced religious and/or cultural values, and provided "authentic" learning experiences.

In the church setting, print awareness is developed when students have experiences with print in the Bible, songbooks, class literature, and weekly church

bulletins. Students understand the importance of print in the cultural community of the African American Church. They see many adult role models utilizing these tools, and they are taught from a very young age to "read" their Bibles, and bring them to church to use while in class and during worship service. In class, students receive take-home literature each week. Teachers have been taught to use the literature as an evangelistic tool to encourage students to attend classes, remind them to apply their lessons during their everyday lives, and as a way to keep parents informed concerning what their children are learning in class.

At Mount Olivia Baptist Church, The Lesson Sheet for preschoolers, kindergartners, and first graders usually have a beautiful picture on the sheet that is related to the lesson. Under the picture is a Bible scripture (called the "memory verse") which students are expected to memorize during class. The scripture is often short and students follow along with their fingers as the teacher reads it first. Concepts of print, such as directionality and spoken/written word correspondence are reinforced during this activity. Teachers often ask if a student knows any of the words in the Bible verse. The students have an opportunity to decode the words with scaffolding from the teacher. All students repeat the verse several times, as if reading the words. Each week students have an opportunity to learn sight words, which they are expected to "read" to their parents when they get home. Their vocabulary increases tremendously over a period of time, and they become very familiar with words that are related to various Bible stories. To reinforce this activity, Mrs. Neal places large "poster size" Lesson Sheets on the classroom wall. Students are able to see pictures and "read" words from previous Lesson Sheets. The posters assist Mrs. Neal with content continuity by helping students

remember past lessons and understand how lessons are interrelated within a specific unit. Additionally, "requiring students to memorize scripture passages from the Bible helped them to develop print awareness and concepts of book print" (McMillon & Edwards, 2000, p. 113). Students were aware that the memory verse was from the Bible, which contained many verses. They understood that letters were used to make the words in those verses (an important pre-reading skill). Mrs. Neal frequently included the scripture reference when teaching the memory verse, and often explained that the Bible is divided into books, chapters and verses. Concepts of book print is an important pre-reading skill that was being developed each time students referenced scriptures in the Bible; especially when they were encouraged to find the scriptures for themselves - an activity in which they participate often during mid-week Bible study classes.

At New Testament and Mount Olivia students receive an Activity Sheet to complete each week, which relate to the Bible lesson. Students are expected to utilize various literacy skills when completing the Activity Sheets, which are given after the Bible lesson is completed.

In addition to the previously mentioned literacy activities, the Sunday Schools in this study place great emphasis upon oral language development skills. In the tradition of the African American Church, students are expected to speak clearly and articulately with voice inflection and emotion. The oral tradition of the African American church often requires members to give extemporaneous prayers, testimonies, and speeches. Sunday School is utilized as a type of "training ground" to develop and refine oral language skills, and to prepare students to participate in the worship services with the adults.

Several of the literacy practices utilized in Sunday School enhance oral language skills. For example, in the African American Church the importance of memorization is emphasized. Bible stories are frequently retold and students memorize the stories after hearing them repeatedly. The Sunday School teachers in this study utilized story telling as a way to help students understand abstract concepts. For example, two difficult to understand concepts are Jesus dying on the cross to the save the world (John 3:16,17; and Jesus' return for His people (also called the "Rapture") (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). In order to scaffold student learning and comprehension, Mrs. Neal involved students in an ongoing project in which she required them to learn the "Story of Jesus dying of the cross", and the "Story of the Rapture". Approximately two to three times per month after the Activity Sheet is completed, students were asked to retell these two stories utilizing a poster board and heaven box as mnemonics to assist with details of the stories. The stories could also be told by following the beautiful posters on the walls, which Mrs. Neal intentionally placed in sequential order to reinforce student learning. Regular class members are expected to remember these stories and be prepared to share them with younger students and new students until they learn them also. Requiring students to memorize and retell stories, helps develop oral language as a bridge to reading (Searfoss & Readence, 1985), and it fosters the beginning of metacognitive strategies for reading comprehension (Mason, McCormick, & Bhavnagri, 1986). Students are able to ask questions that address specific issues about the story. Teachers provide clarification on these issues and help students think about ways to apply the story to personal circumstances. Story telling activities also build confidence by giving students opportunities to share "their knowledge" with others. During the story-telling activities

students utilize "storybook terms" which are a part of the "teacher-talk register" (Cazden, 1988).

In addition to teaching many literacy skills, the Sunday School **teachers made a special effort to create a nurturing, all-inclusive environment.** The Sunday School teachers "required" student participation, which was more likely in this environment because of the unique way that teachers responded to mistakes. They rarely told a student that their answer was "wrong," but utilized revoicing and scaffolding strategies to support students' efforts, which guided them to the correct answers. Students were comfortable in this environment and seemed to be more willing to take risks, which resulted in increased opportunities to practice literacy skills.

Travis is the type of student that knows the answer to most questions, but he rarely volunteers. Mr. Willis did not wait for him to volunteer in his Sunday School class. He would call on all the students at various times to insure that everyone participated in the discussion and as an evaluative method to check their comprehension of the Bible lesson. He did not stand in one place while teaching the lesson, but walked around requiring students to answer questions as he pointed to them or called them by name. A tremendous amount of energy flowed from him as he discussed the lesson with a great sense of sincerity, placing his hand on a student's shoulder, or patting the back of another. He gave each student individual attention during the Bible lesson and offered his assistance with their Activity Sheet.

It was interesting to observe Tony as he became a "member" of his new Sunday School class. Mrs. Neal welcomed him and made him feel comfortable by including him in the discussions and activities. Tony was one of two readers in the class, and Mrs.

Neal, immediately recognizing an opportunity to assist him with his transition from his old, familiar Sunday School where he was considered successful, asked him and his cousin to be the "readers" for the class. A big smile flashed upon Tony's face. He was proud to be considered one of the "more knowledgeable" students, and read fluently for the other younger students. He became even more comfortable, and began to raise his hand for every question, just as he probably did in his old Sunday School class. After raising his hand a few times, and realizing that other students were anxiously answering questions without being called upon, he understood that it was not necessary to raise his hand in Mrs. Neal's class.

Mrs. Neal does not require her students to raise their hands before answering questions in Sunday School. She feels that all students remain more motivated when they are allowed to enthusiastically respond during a class discussion. Interestingly, a *natural turn taking* seemed to take place. Students remained polite, but excited about the discussion. Everyone had an opportunity to get his or her point across. Tony joined in and shared his opinion as well.

Social norms

Teachers and other adult role models have high expectations of student behavior and utilized "every" opportunity to explicitly teach cultural values. Students are expected to behave appropriately at all times. The connection between cultural values and behavior is made explicit for students and they are rewarded frequently for positive actions.

During data collection there were numerous opportunities to observe how Mr. Willis and Mrs. Neal taught cultural values to their students.

At the end of class Mrs. Neal's students line up to wash their hands and receive a snack. She alleviates any problems concerning who is first or last in line. Students are required to line up according to the way that they came to class. For example, the first person to get to class will be the first person in line for refreshments. In this way, students are rewarded for being on time for class, a value that she emphasizes and reinforces each week.

In order to encourage students to bring their Bibles to class Mrs. Neal gives them stickers to put on their Bibles. The most valued artifact and important learning tool in the African American Church is the Holy Bible, which is considered "God's Word" - the roadmap for life. Students are taught that it is the most important book that they will ever read, and are admonished to read it frequently, and obey (apply) what they read.

The importance of prayer is also emphasized in class. Sunday School begins and ends with prayer similar to church worship service. Students are taught that praying is simply having a conversation with God. They are given many opportunities to practice extemporaneous prayers, and told that they need to "talk" to God every day.

During data collection one of the themes for Travis' Sunday School class was "Giving". Mr. Willis taught his students that "God loves a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7). He explained that giving not only consists of giving money and toys, but also includes giving compliments, and giving their teachers and other adults their undivided attention when they are talking to them. He helped the students understand that when they are kind to others, and when they pay attention in class, they are honoring God.

Mr. Willis also taught his students the importance of "always doing their best." He encouraged them to color their Activity Sheets carefully, staying inside the lines. He

stated: "You must always try to do your very best, even when you're coloring." Mr. Willis also spoke with his students' parents about the importance of the students taking pride in their work and doing their best at all times. He wanted them to reinforce these values at home during various activities. Mrs. Cunningham stated:

> Mr. Willis told me that he liked the way that Travis colors, but he wants him to work a little harder to stay right inside the lines. He said that Travis has to take pride in his work and learn to try harder. I told him that everything has always come easy for Travis, so we may have to work on him a little more.

Mrs. Neal and Mrs. Willis feel that it is important to teach values as opportunities present themselves. "You have to be able to think on your feet at all times because you may not get that opportunity again," explained Mrs. Neal, who has felt fortunate to experience teaching two generations of Sunday School students. She continues: "It's a challenge, but I love it!"

In the church environment, **teachers and parents share cultural beliefs concerning student behavior and wholeheartedly reinforce those values.** Sunday School teachers received support from parents concerning the social norms utilized in the classroom setting. Whenever a behavior problem occurred, students understood that their parents would support the teacher, and therefore usually altered unacceptable behavior immediately.

One Sunday while waiting for the Sunday School teacher, who had been detained, Mrs. Barber, the Director of Christian Education at New Testament, welcomed the students to Sunday School and gave the opening prayer. She asked several students to get extra chairs from the other side of the room because all of the seats were taken. Travis decided that he wanted to be upset about not having a seat. She kindly asked him to get a chair for himself, but he just stood there sulking, opting to challenge her

authority. Mrs. Barber is a high school teacher and understands how to handle strong-willed students. She told him that he had one minute to make a decision. He could either get a chair or go find his mother. Just as Mrs. Barber told him to go find Mrs. Cunningham because he had not gotten a chair, Mrs. Cunningham entered the classroom. Travis was shocked that she had been standing there listening to the conversation. Mrs. Cunningham immediately removed him from the class and had a stern discussion with him about his behavior and his responsibility to God and others in his class. He was told to apologize immediately and not to cause any more disruptions. Travis, being the "strong-willed" "man" that he is, walked slowly toward Mrs. Barber, who kept talking with the class to take pressure off Travis. When he finally reached her, she smiled at him, placed her hand on his shoulder and said:

Mrs. B.:	Yes Travis. Do you have something to say, honey?
Travis:	I'm sorry. (He said very softly)
Mrs. B.:	I know honey (hugging him with both arms). I know you didn't mean any harm.
Travis:	I'm sorry, Mrs. Barber (he said loudly).
Mrs. B.:	O.K. I accept your apology, and I love you. O.K.?
Travis:	I love you too Mrs. Barber. (Slight smile)
Mrs. B.:	Now get you a chair and sit right here for Mrs. Barber. Sometimes we just seem to be having a bad day. But we can make it better if we decide to, can't we? We can decide that we're going to have a good day, right? (Smiling)
Class:	Right!

Mrs. Cunningham continued to watch the interaction between Travis and Mrs. Barber, smiling approvingly when Mrs. Barber hugged him. After he sat down, she got his attention and waved good-bye. He waved back with a smile.

Instead of having a power struggle in the class between she and Travis, Mrs. Barber was able to have a parent address his behavior. Because they all shared the same beliefs about Sunday School, the importance of good behavior, and student responsibility,

the situation was addressed immediately and did not escalate. Mrs. Barber understood that Travis was not going to obey her unless he wanted to, therefore she gave him an opportunity to make his own decision and deal with the consequences of his decision. Even though he did not make the correct decision immediately, when he decided to become a "responsible student", she embraced him wholeheartedly and used the opportunity as a "teachable moment". She explained that things may not always work the way one may want them to, but a person can decide to respond positively and keep the situation under control. One can choose to have a "good day". Having a positive attitude was often emphasized at New Testament. In order to strive for excellence, one must be optimistic and refuse to succumb to pessimism.

Literacy network system

The literacy network system of the church provides academic and social support for students. The church provides a forum for students to practice and refine literacy skills. Adult role models also provide cultural capital through mentoring relationships. Supporting children and youth is considered a responsibility in the African American Church environment where the cultural value "helping others" is taught and reinforced.

The African American Church provides a forum for students to display their talents in a nurturing, supportive, all-inclusive environment (Edwards, Danridge, McMillon & Pleasants, in press). One of the most important aspects of the African American Church is their commitment to children. The value of children and emphasis on their development is illuminated in a traditional cliché often utilized in the church environment when discussing children's issues: "Our children are the *Church of*

Tomorrow". Church teachers and adult role models spend a tremendous amount of time training and preparing students to become leaders in the church community. Biblical training and explicit instruction of cultural values are an integral part of all church activities organized for students. As previously stated, Sunday School is considered *a training ground* for students to prepare them to participate in the adult worship services. In addition to these classes, students are given an "authentic" opportunity to display their talents and utilize their literacy skills every second Sunday morning during the regular worship service.

Traditionally, in many African American churches, the second Sunday of each month is set aside for children and youth to participate in every aspect of Sunday morning worship. During data collection, second Sunday service at Mount Olivia began with the Children's Choir walking in enthusiastically singing:

> Oh, it's a highway to heaven.
> None can walk up there,
> but the pure in heart.
> Oh, it's a highway to heaven.
> I am walking up the King's highway.

Members of the Children's Choir were dressed in black and white - starched white blouses and shirts with fancy black skirts and dress pants. The pastor and ministers lead the procession down the aisle with Bibles in hand, as they took their places on the dais. The Children's Choir (approximately 35 children), continuously singing, filled the choir stand and turned to face the audience. Their faces were beaming with excitement - it was *their time to shine.* Adults responded by returning smiles, nodding their heads in approval, swaying, clapping, and singing along with the choir.

Second Sunday service at New Testament Christian Center also included Children's Choir performances. However, New Testament also provides other opportunities for youth and children to display their talents. Youth and children present skits and sing solos at various times during Sunday morning service. Audience response was similar to the audience response described above. They smile, clap, stand, wave their hands and say "hallelujah", in response to young people using their talents "for the Lord."

Sunday School teachers and other adults in the church serve as role models for many African American students. They reinforce the cultural values discussed above and others that they feel might be useful to the students. It is considered a responsibility of members of the church community to assist young people in any way they can. Mr. Willis willingly serves as a role model for Travis. Travis displays a tremendous amount of respect for him in the way he pays attention and the way he responds to him when he is speaking. Mr. Willis lets Travis know that he expects great things from him, and Travis tries his best to meet those expectations.

Summary of analysis of Sunday School data

Although Tony and Travis were considered "at-risk" in their school environment, they excelled in the nurturing environment of their African American Sunday School. In the process of learning biblical and cultural values they develop many literacy skills. Teaching and learning in the church environment is based upon beliefs that are shared by teachers, students and parents. These shared beliefs are the basis for the close relationships that develop within the church "community". A critical part of the belief system within the context of the church is the requirement for members to manifest their

beliefs through their conduct. This belief is addressed in an old saying that many older African Americans express during their testimonies:

"If you got good religion, you oughta show some sign."

How one "acts" is emphasized continuously, and internalized by the young and old. Tony and Travis understood what was expected of them in this setting, and they acted accordingly.

CHAPTER SIX: COMPARISON OF SCHOOL & SUNDAY SCHOOL DATA

Plausible sources of incongruency

The sources of incongruence found within this study were not readily identifiable. They were not the expected emphasized areas of concern that many researchers discuss in the literature such as issues concerning dissimilar discourse/communicative patterns between classroom teachers and students, or the negligence of teachers basing instruction on students' learning styles; nor were they the lack of teachers trying to make connections by devaluing the importance of building relationships with their students. The conceptual framework included categories that literature points to as being pervasive in urban school studies. However, the findings in this study reach beyond several of the initially anticipated problems because the subjects chosen to participate reduced the possibility of finding problems in certain areas. Tony and Travis were the two top first grade students at Paradise Elementary School and Mrs. Rudolph was considered the best first grade teacher. The students had excellent communication and reading skills with exceptionally impressive vocabularies. Mrs. Rudolph utilized many innovation teaching techniques and challenged her students to reach their individual potential. With the combination of exceptionally intelligent students and an excellent teacher, it seemed that it would be difficult to locate any incongruencies. However, because the principal and teacher insisted that Tony and Travis were the most "at-risk" students in first grade, I was hopeful that this study could produce some helpful information concerning a unique situation.

Unfortunately, I have found that Tony's and Travis' stories are not as unique as one might suspect. Labov (1995) addresses the "social dimension of educational failure" in one of his studies. He states:

> Young children from the inner city do not start out with the grave handicap that they end up with. In the 1960s, efforts to explain reading failure concentrated on the concept of a cultural and verbal disadvantage that was the result of an impoverished home environment and a lack of motivation from the family. Yet, the overall picture is that young black children arrive at kindergarten full of enthusiasm for the educational adventure, with a strong motivation to succeed from their parent or parents. The pattern of reading and educational failure that follows is progressive and cumulative. Though it may be conditioned by early handicaps, it is largely the result of events and interactions that take place during the school year. (Labov, 1995, p. 43-44)

Hale-Benson (1986) agrees with Labov when she discusses the unfortunate way that many African American students are treated in school. During a conference (Urban Ministries, October, 1999, Chicago, Illinois), I heard Dr. Hale-Benson share personal frustrations stemming from experiences that she had with her son's teachers in a predominantly white private school. She felt that his teachers were operating from a white, dominant cultural perspective, which her African American son was rejecting. A member of the audience asked her why she allowed her son to attend a predominantly white private school. Several people in the audience wondered if Blacks are "looking for trouble" when they send their children to predominantly white schools. She explained that she chose her son's school based on its academic reputation. She further explained that many people believe that Black boys only have problems in urban schools. In her opinion, the problems reach far beyond the inner-city, encompassing the entire institution of schooling. Suburban, rural, inner-city, public and private schools neglect to accommodate Black boys successfully. Kunjufu (1984) believes that there is "a

conspiracy to destroy Black boys", and there is additional literature that mentions the negative schooling experiences of Black males, supporting the notion that public schools are often unaccomodating to Black boys' learning styles and behavioral patterns. It seems that some African American students are beginning school "ready to learn", but dislike and distrust develop over time toward school and school teachers. These feelings often result from interactions and reactions that occur within the classroom. Some students eventually become devastated by these occurrences and never bounce back, but continue down the path to educational failure. Many of these students are capable of achieving academically based on assessments outside of the classroom. They often display their ability in other learning environments, such as the African American Church, but they do not exhibit the same skills and behavior in the school setting. What are the sources of these incongruencies especially those experienced by Travis and Tony in this study?

The sources of incongruence in this study seem to stem from several underlying issues. These sources are concentrated within the social norms and literacy network systems categories, but they also go beyond the framework to encompass the study in its entirety. It is important to reiterate the author's sociocultural perspective at this point. The process of identifying the sources of incongruence between the public school and African American Sunday School environments for the subjects in this study was certainly influenced by the author's past experiences and cultural frame of reference. Therefore, each source of incongrence was identified based on triangulation of data and feedback from readers with varying cultural frames of reference. A special effort was made to consider alternative interpretations of the data.

Issues of power and dominance

The first source of incongruence is related to issues of power and dominance. The frame of reference from which Tony and Travis are operating is not merely different from, but in many ways in opposition to Mrs. Rudolph's cultural frame of reference (Ogbu, 1995). Although Mrs. Rudolph can successfully negotiate black discourse and understand unique learning styles, she may be operating within a white, oppressive teaching paradigm (Freire, 1993). Based on the data, her idea of a successful student is one who is passive and does not challenge authority. She expects students to obey her without question, and rewards those students with compliments, high expectations, and increased academic opportunities. On the other hand, students like Travis, who is strong-willed and frequently engage her in power struggles, cause her a sense of frustration. She expressed her feelings when she stated:

> Travis is a very manipulative child. You know how you can give some students an inch and they take a mile? Well, Travis takes ten miles. You just can't give in to him.

Travis does not fit within her definition of success although she realizes that he is academically talented, and she describes him as "borderline gifted".

Opposing frames of reference

During Mrs. Rudolph's formal interview and several times while talking informally, she expressed her concern that Tony's and Travis' parents needed to provide more support for her disciplinary methods by "setting limits" at home. Although they listened to Mrs. Rudolph's academic counsel, they refused to support her decisions concerning their sons' discipline. It seems that the parents were operating from an "opposing" cultural frame of reference (Ogbu, 1995). They all agreed that Mrs. Rudolph

had difficulty handling black boys. Although they admired and appreciated her academic instructional methods, their frustration with their sons' continuous suspensions had become ambivalence, and was almost at the point of creating an adversarial relationship between Mrs. Rudolph and themselves. During their interviews when they were asked questions related to issues of discipline and classroom management within the social norms frame, all of the parents specifically stated that "Mrs. Rudolph did not know what she was doing". Where could this "opposing" frame of reference originate?

While observing at New Testament Christian Center (Travis' church), I noticed how well behaved Travis was during the opening worship service and in his Sunday School class. At New Testament, the pastor often exhorts men to take their rightful place in their homes, at church, and in society. This message is repeated often and internalized by the church community. Based on his actions at school, church and home, it seems that Travis may be displaying what society labels as a male-chauvinistic attitude toward women in authority. At church, he has been told that men are the head and women should be protected and honored as the "weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7) During the interview, I specifically asked Travis' parents if they noticed that he responds better to men. They both laughed and said "yes". According to Mr. & Mrs. Cunningham, the only women that Travis really obeys are his grandmothers. He often tells his mother that his dad is the head of the house, and he's going to be the head of his house someday.

The issue of power and dominance in this study has two sides that often collide causing adversity. Mrs. Rudolph wants to exert power and control over Travis because she believes that teachers should have control of their students. Travis is refusing to submit to Mrs. Rudolph and become a "passive" student, because he believes that he is a

"man" and does not have to submit to her. Because Mrs. Rudolph did not properly address the source of this clash during their initial confrontations early in the year, she was not able to win him over. The power struggle between the two of them frustrated Mrs. Rudolph, but was more damaging to Travis. His behavior and suspension history caused him to have a bad reputation with students and teachers. He was unable to excel as much as he could have academically because he and the teacher never connected. Also, he was not seriously considered for the "gifted" program because he did not have a teacher recommendation. These incidences could have life implications for Travis.

An alternative explanation for the lack of bonding between Travis and Mrs. Rudolph could simply be that they experienced a personality clash between them. Some students can be successful in one class, but "at risk" in another (Slavin, 1989). In some cases, the relationship between a teacher and a student is strained for various reasons, and it is difficult for them to develop the type of relationship that many students respond to positively (Edwards, et al, in press). Another way to look at Travis' experiences is to consider that the struggle between he and Mrs. Rudolph was an issue of gender, and not race. Because most teachers are white, middle-class females, boys (white and especially black) often have a difficult time gaining classroom cultural competence, because their male-oriented behavior is not acceptable to their female teachers. In these cases, examples of white boys being disciplined more often than their female classmates can be found (McMillon & Edwards, 2000). When considering the alternative explanations of gender and/or personality conflicts, it is important to note how ideas about gender and personalities develop. Development of ideas concerning both of these issues is directly related to the teacher's cultural frame of reference. Teachers should be responsible for

the damage that results from allowing their cultural frame of reference to interfere with student learning and success. Whether the source of incongruence is power and control, gender-oriented or a personality conflict, the student's sense of identity is at stake. Students are aware of their teachers' and fellow classmates' feelings toward them. For example, Tony knew that his fellow classmates considered him "bad" and expressed it during the informal office interview discussed in Chapter 4. In a pilot study (McMillon & Edwards, 2000), a preschool student's classmates spoke to him in ridiculing ways, similar to the teacher's tone of voice when she spoke to him. Teachers influence the way students feel toward one another based on the classroom atmosphere that they create. Unfortunately, Mrs. Rudolph had created an adversarial atmosphere for Tony and Travis.

Differing definitions of success

Another source of incongruence found in this study is the different definitions of success within the school and church environments. In school, Tony and Travis were expected to raise their hands before speaking, stand in a straight line, participate in class discussions, and passively obey all of the classroom rules without questioning the teacher's authority. They were also expected to complete assignments, read at grade level, and understand certain math concepts and several other basic principles. However, success in school was only partially defined by their academic achievement. "A successful student follows classroom rules," according to Mrs. Rudolph during her interview. Based on her definition of success, Tony and Travis were "unsuccessful" students. They had not achieved classroom cultural competence.

In their church environments, however, Tony and Travis were considered successful students. Mrs. Neal, Tony's Sunday School teacher, stated: "A successful

student is one who participates in class, learns the Bible verses and what they mean, and then shares their knowledge with others." Mr. Willis, Travis' Sunday School teacher described a successful student as: "...one who keeps coming and keeps trying because if they keep showing up, eventually they will understand and internalize the Word (Bible)."

Teachers in the church environment seemed to place greater emphasis on insuring that students learn and understand the information taught in Sunday School, rather than focusing on lists of rules and consequences. They believe that student behavior will change as they mature and understand *what* they are being taught. On the other hand, teachers in the school environment tended to focus on student behavior and seemed to expect students to alter their behavior in response to verbal demands and threats. In church, students learn *why* and *how* they should change their behavior because of *who* they are (Christians), and *whom* they represent (Christ). This approach seemed to be much more effective and allowed students an opportunity to choose to act appropriately because they understood, valued, and agreed with the reasoning behind changing their actions.

Perhaps one of the reasons that Travis continues to "act out" at school is because he is not accepting of "what" is being taught. Based on his response to the question concerning which teacher he liked best, it could be concluded that he values what he is learning at church more than he values what he is learning at school. Travis stated that he likes his Sunday School teacher the best, - but did not relate this preference to his relationship with the teacher. Instead, he explained that he liked his Sunday School teacher because he taught him about "God and love and other stuff." Travis preferred his church teacher because of the content of their curriculum and recognized how this

teaching connected with his own values and beliefs and the values of his parents who took him to Sunday School every Sunday to learn more about "God and love and other stuff".

Travis' connection with the Sunday School lessons emphasizes the point made by Landes (1989) when discussing the affects of internalizing literature. Landes (1989) discusses the "revolutionary potential" of the Bible when believers identify with certain biblical stories and characters. African Americans have identified with the Israelites in the Bible, and especially the way that they were mistreated by many others, and held in captivity, but eventually liberated and given a "promised land". Many Blacks relate their slavery experience in the U.S. to the Israelites' slavery experience in Egypt. This internalizing process is the basis for Frank's (1998) "community" which provides social capital based on a shared belief system. It is also related to the Black theological approach to the Bible, in that it provides a shared frame of reference or mindset. Travis is successfully being taught values which he is internalizing and "choosing to" value in the church setting. However, his schooling experiences are different as indicated when he stated: "the kids get on my nerves" at school. When asked if the kids get on his nerves at church, he responded: "sometimes, but it's different". I asked, "how is it different?" He stated: "it just is." I contend that the difference is the focus upon "God" and "love" at church that Travis has wholeheartedly bought into requires him to display those attributes in his "community" - the church community. The content of the material shared in the church community requires immediate action on his part - which is a vital part of the internalization process and the foundation of the belief system (especially Black theology), which teaches that one's actions should manifest their beliefs.

At school, the content is less connected with many African American students' belief systems. Literacy development is not surrounded with value-laden issues, although sometimes values are discussed. Immediate changes in behavior are not emphasized in the same way at school. Schoolteachers expect students to improve in academic ways - which both Tony and Travis do well; but the material is not internalized through a process of immediate and continuous use based on a belief system, which may have resulted in improved behavior.

When considering the differing definitions of success in school and church, it is important to consider the differences between these institutions, such as the ones discussed earlier. The purposes of school and Sunday School are different. Attendance is different in the sense that school is mandatory and Sunday School is voluntary. Students are formally evaluated in school and are not usually evaluated in Sunday School, which may make some students uncomfortable. Testing and the negative affects of testing has been the subject of much research. The evaluative, competitive nature of schooling may seem less nurturing than the often informal, welcoming atmosphere of many Sunday Schools. Also the mere fact that most Sunday Schools have low teacher-student ratios improves the possibility of teachers spending more individualized time with students.

Another way of looking at the differences of success in each environment is that Sunday School teachers spend much less time with their students, and may be less judgmental because they are not with students long enough for the students to really "act out". Sunday School usually meets once per week for sixty to ninety minutes, whereas, school meets five days per week for approximately seven hours per day. Within this time

frame, schoolteachers are responsible for accomplishing all of their goals, which may include local, state, and national requirements. Their responsibilities are many and it is easy to see how difficult their job could become if they allow students to misbehave and deter other students from listening and learning. In Sunday School, teachers can focus on teaching content without exerting pressure by implementing evaluative measures, such as tests. They can utilize creative ways to help students internalize the information, resulting in a change of behavior. Additionally, Sunday School teachers may be more willing to try innovative teaching methods in their class because they are not held accountable for student learning in the same way that school teachers are.

Cultural capital vs. cultural interference

The idea of students internalizing biblical principals and choosing to change their own behavior brings us to the next possible source of incongruence. Although certain ideas and concepts taught in the African American Church are extremely valuable and provide students with coping strategies, learning skills, and even motivation to excel, some ideas can be considered cultural capital in the church environment, but cause cultural interference in the students' classrooms at school. The example concerning Travis' understanding of being a "man" (head of the house) is an excellent case in point.

Society often accuse African American men of not providing for their families and neglecting to take care of other important needs within the community. At New Testament Christian Center, African American men are encouraged to provide for their families and fulfill other responsibilities as well. There are many scriptural references that explain God's plan for the family. It is clear that men are considered to be the "head of the house," and are expected to provide for and protect their families. Although from

one perspective, this teaching seems exceptionally beneficial, Travis has taken this information and is using it in a way that is causing "cultural interference" at school. Because he believes that men are more powerful than women, and as a child he may be testing out his "manhood" in a sense, he is causing major problems in the classroom at school by contributing to the creation of an adversarial relationship with his white female teacher - who favors students who are passive and non-confrontational.

During data analysis, additional supporting evidence was found that related to the issue of cultural capital provided in one environment being considered cultural interference in another. The close relationship that Travis had with his Sunday School teacher (who happens to be an African American man) may also be a source of incongruence in his classroom at school. Many people believe that it is important to "reach" students before one can "teach" them. Fordham (1988) asserts that the absence of close relationships with teachers in the school setting could be a source of cultural dissonance for many African American students. This may be especially true for students who attend the African American church where relationship-building is a major part of the Black theological belief system (McMillon & Edwards, 2000; Edelman, 1999; Edwards, et al, in press). Travis' and Tony's teacher - Mrs. Rudolph, also believed that teachers needed to build relationships with their students. During her interview she shared without being asked, that she did not feel that she taught Travis anything all year. She went on to talk about not being able to connect with him. "I was uable to find a hook," she stated. A hook, according to Mrs. Rudolph, is an interest that a student has that can be used as a motivating tool in the classroom. For example, Mrs. Rudolph explained, "When I had Travis' brother in the 1st grade, I found a hook. I found out that

he loved science; so I would tell him if he's good I would let him work on science stuff, such as looking at scientific books and magazines. He loved getting the chance to work on science stuff, so he would behave himself. I was unable to find a hook for Travis this year." This is supportive evidence that she believes it is necessary for a teacher to "reach" a student, before he/she can "teach" them, and she tried to get to know her students well enough to identify special interests that could be used as motivating tools. Despite her persistent attempts, Mrs. Rudolph was unable to find a "hook" that would motivate Travis to behave in class.

Travis seemed to have a much more difficult time in first grade than Tony. After Mrs. Rudolph helped Tony through the tough transition of beginning a new school, and starting to recuperate from the damage caused by a prejudice kindergarten teacher, Tony began to flourish in class. Although he misbehaved often, Mrs. Rudolph felt that he made tremendous progress during the school year. She believed by the end of the year that he had learned how to deal with his "anger" much more effectively, and felt that he would have a successful second grade year. Although she was not familiar with his culturally congruent Sunday School environment, she had successfully provided a "gateway" to the culture of power for him. She had prepared him for the next level in school. "Tony has a bright future," according to Mrs. Rudolph. On the other hand, she did not have the same prophecy for Travis. She stated that she was concerned that he might connect with the wrong group in the neighborhood and get into trouble as he got older. She felt that he would have a progressively more difficult time in school unless he learned how to change his behavior. Mrs. Rudolph never seemed to consider how her actions and words may have influenced Travis' actions.

Culturally congruent classrooms vs. *gateways* to the culture of power

The tension between creating culturally congruent classrooms and classrooms which prepare students to enter the culture of power seems apparent in the way that Mrs. Rudolph speaks about Tony and Travis. Tony becomes successful in her classroom environment because he learns how to "submit" to her control. He learns how to negotiate within his classroom environment eventually displaying classroom cultural competence. Tony learns how to effectively communicate with Mrs. Rudolph and how to submit to her implicit rules of conduct - negotiating and communication skills required in order to enter the culture of power. Travis, on the other hand, had exceptional communication skills, but refused to utilize them to negotiate. At the young age of six, he had opted not to display classroom cultural competence. Mrs. Rudolph could have attempted to learn more about the cultural source that was causing the friction between she and Travis, however she was unable to properly address this problem, leaving Travis "at-risk".

One cannot assume that Travis' experiences would have improved tremendously if Mrs. Rudolph had been familiar with his out-of-school learning experiences, especially those in his Sunday School class. However, it is certain that with an understanding of the source of his cultural frame of reference, she would have been better equipped to creatively develop alternative approaches to building a relationship with Travis. It is not advocated in this study that teachers change their classroom environments to totally accommodate their students' culture. After all, schooling is a socialization process through which students are supposed to become prepared to successfully function in society. If this is the case, changing the classroom to one of cultural congruence would

mean that students would not be prepared to participate in the "culture of power". If social mobility is one of the main goals pursued by African Americans, it would be detrimental to change their classrooms at school to one of total cultural congruence, because schooling would fail to be the means to their desired end. Instead, as Delpit (1995) contends, classroom teachers must provide the necessary skills that will prepare African American students to function successfully within the culture of power. Classrooms must be "gateways" to the culture of power. Does this mean that students like Travis will be left "at risk"?

Students like Travis and Tony must not be left at risk in the process of attempting to provide gateways to the culture of power. Just because a student is difficult to reach and teach is not an excuse for teachers to give up on them. Mrs. Rudolph tried to help all of her students, just as many teachers do. However, it seems that she was not adequately trained to address the issues that needed to be addressed when dealing with Travis and Tony; and the Literacy Network System at school, which was established to provide assistance and support for classroom teachers, was unable to provide the support and professional help that she needed to assist Travis.

Literacy network systems

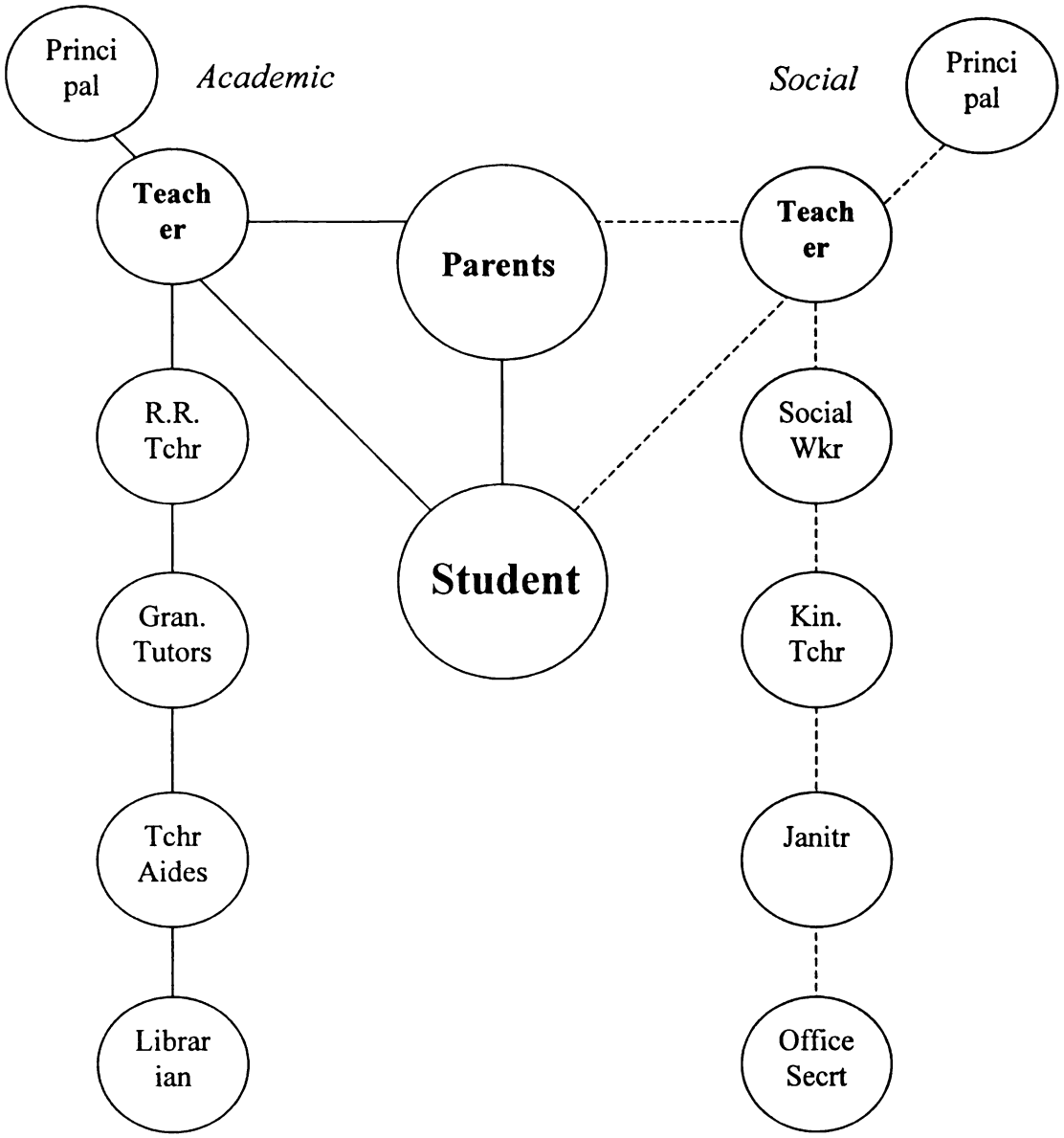
The final source of incongruence addresses the difference in purposes and responsibilities for the literacy network systems at school and at church.

The Literacy Network System at school consisted of different adults for academic and behavioral issues forming two distinct networks. The Literacy Network System at church consisted of adult role models who dealt with both literacy development and perpetuation of cultural values (which included behavioral issues).

As discussed in Chapter 4, the literacy network system at school consisted of an academic network which supported Travis and Tony academically, and a social network which was supposed to assist with them socially (See Figure One, p. 186). The academic network included the principal, the teacher - Mrs. Rudolph, the Reading Resource teacher, Grandmothers Tutoring Group, the teacher's aide, and the librarian. The academic network assisted with reading groups, academic evaluations, special projects, and other academic oriented activities. The academic network was very successful in assisting Tony and Travis. The connectedness between the participants on the academic side of the Literacy Network System is indicated by the solid lines connecting the circles of influence in Figure One.

The social network group included the principal, Mrs. Rudolph, the social worker, a kindergarten teacher, Mr. Adams (janitor), and sometimes the office secretaries. The social network group's responsibility was to assist Travis and Tony with their behavior problems, and try to prevent suspension. The disconnectedness between the participants in the social network is indicated by the broken lines leading to each participant in Figure One. There was a major breakdown between the members of the social side of the Literacy Network System at School. This breakdown may have been the result of the lack of improvement in the continuous pattern of misbehavior displayed especially by Travis. However, perhaps the reason for the lack of improvement was the disconnectedness between the members of the Literacy Network System. Perhaps the system would have worked better if the successful members of the academic side had become involved in the social side of the system similar to the system at church. It is impossible to know what the result may have been if these changes had been made.

Literacy Network System at School



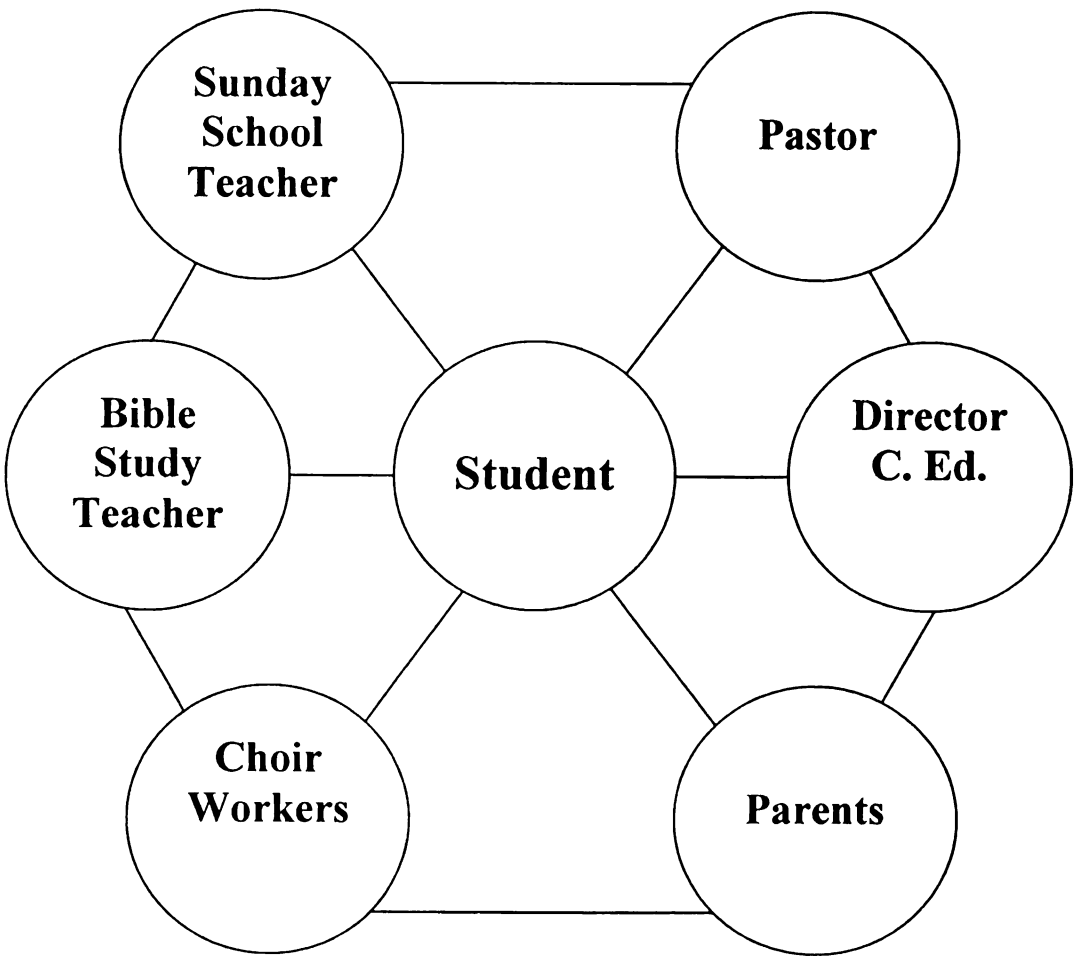
(Figure 1)

What we do know is that the Literacy Network System at School had failed Travis and left him at risk. Not only did it fail Travis, but it also failed Mrs. Rudolph – leaving her at risk as well.

The Literacy Network System at Church was quite different from the Literacy Network System at School. New Testament Christian Center and Mount Olivia Baptist Church provided Tony and Travis with a literacy network system that met both their academic and social needs (See Figure Two, p. 188). In fact, one of the strengths of the literacy network system in the church setting is the unique way that they combine biblical knowledge with behavioral expectations, providing a belief system that is internalized by the members of the "community." Sunday School teachers, pastors, Bible study teachers, Directors of Christian Education, Children's Choir Workers, parents, and other adult role models voluntarily participate in the literacy network system understanding that it is their responsibility to assist with, support, and scaffold the learning of the children and youth in their "community." They realize that the children and youth are future leaders of their "community"; and it is imperative that they prepare them to be committed, motivated, community members, and good decision-makers who have biblical and cultural knowledge, and use wisdom in their dealings with others. A visual display of the community that provides academic and social support for students at church is indicated by the circular shape of the Literacy Network System at Church. Members of the network "circle" their students with a bond that is sealed through relationships, and based on cultural values and biblical principles. The connectedness or "community" that bonds members of the Literacy Network System together is illustrated by the connecting lines between the members of the network in Figure Two.

Literacy Network System
At Church

Academic & Social



(Figure 2)

Differing provisions to display literacy skills outside of classroom

In addition to providing an effective literacy network system, the church also provided a forum for students to frequently display their literacy skills and receive positive reinforcement for good behavior and redirection for misbehavior. During data collection, the school did not provide any opportunities for students to display their literacy skills and receive adult encouragement outside of the classroom. An Awards Assembly recognized students who excelled in various areas, but students did not participate in the program. They went to the front of the gym to receive their certificate when their names were called, but they did not have an opportunity to display their talents or abilities. On the other hand, the church provided many opportunities for students to utilize their literacy skills in meaningful ways outside of the classroom. As discussed in Chapter 5, the church provided an authentic forum for students to utilize their literacy skills every Second Sunday and at special programs throughout the year. Students look forward to these opportunities to display their talents and receive compliments and encouragement from their peers and adult role models. Without opportunities to utilize their newly developed literacy skills, many students fail to understand how the lessons learned in their classrooms at school directly relate to their interests or their future. Sometimes they cannot understand the purpose of their schooling experiences. Furthermore, school does not provide many opportunities for students to utilize their skills and talents in meaningful ways, nor receive encouragement from adults and other peers outside of their classroom. When provisions are not made for students to utilize their school acquired knowledge and skills, they may have a difficult time finding meaning and importance in their classroom activities.

Summary

Students may begin school ready to learn and motivated to succeed, but an adversarial school environment may "create" at-riskness in them. In this study, Tony and Travis were successful in their African American Church environment, but considered at-risk at school. Several plausible sources of incongruence were identified:

- Issues of power and dominance
- Differing definitions of success
- Ideas and values that provide cultural capital in the church environment, but cultural interference in the school environment
- Tension between providing culturally congruent classrooms or "gateways" into the culture of power
- Difference in purposes and responsibilities for the literacy network systems
- Difference in providing opportunities to utilize literacy skills in meaningful ways outside of the classroom

In addition to identifying sources of incongruence, the purpose of this chapter is to consider possible points of connection. The following section will discuss possible points of connection - ways to approach the issues discussed above.

Possible Points of Connection

Ethnographic studies do not necessarily provide concise answers to specific questions, but they allow researchers to closely examine phenomena while occurring in a natural environment. While conducting this study, and especially during data analysis, it became evident that this study may raise more questions than it answers; therefore this section includes questions that need to be addressed when discussing possible points of connection in this study. When considering points of connection between the public school and African American Church environment, one must first understand the

significant role that the Church plays in the lives of many African American students. It may be difficult for readers from other cultures to envision how powerful the impact of the Church has been on the African American community. However, once the history of public schooling is juxtaposed with the history of the African American Church, it becomes apparent that the Church has provided on-going encouragement, support, and educational opportunities for the disenfranchized African American race, while schools have often been unwelcoming, non-supportive and sometimes adversarial environments for many African American students.

An important question that a discussion concerning the history of the Church and school raises is: How can teachers of African American students gain this knowledge concerning the historical perspective of school and church? If teachers were knowledgeable concerning these histories, they would be in a better position to challenge themselves to refuse to participate in the perpetuation of racism and white, dominant issues of power. However, without an understanding of the obstacles that have been blocking Blacks' paths to success, they may not understand their critical role as classroom teachers for African American students. With Black students' futures in the balance, several possible points of connection between the school and African American Church environments have been identified in this study that may assist teachers. They include:

- Teacher awareness through information disemination & exchange
- Increased parental involvement
- Improved teacher education & professional development programs
- Cooperation between school & church to provide increased opportunities to display literacy skills

Teacher awareness through information disemination & exchange

If teachers become aware of their students' cultural frames of reference, they will be better equipped to reach and teach them. It is unrealistic to think that all teachers will become ethnographers and actively research the backgrounds of their students. The burden cannot be left totally on teachers. Two ways to connect teachers to their students by increasing their awareness is through information disemination and information exchange.

Studies, such as this dissertation study need to be made available to classroom teachers to help them begin to think about the complexities and the awesome responsibilities of teaching. Keeping abreast of current research in the area of teaching and learning will assist teachers with the development of creative instructional and discipline methods. Additionally, based on the findings of this study, it would be helpful to their students if schoolteachers and Sunday School teachers exchange information. As a team, school and church teachers could work together, providing support for their students and sharing ideas about instructional methods and discipline techniques. Most importantly they could assist students with negotiating the cultural boundaries between the school and church environments. Students would become accountable to both teachers for their successes and failures in both environments.

A question that must be addressed when discussing dissemination of knowledge is: How can African American Sunday School teachers and other members of the Literacy Network Systems at Church become aware of the ways in which the "cultural capital" that they are providing, may be "cultural interference" at school? Is it possible for teachers and Sunday School teachers to develop ways to help African American

students learn how to negotiate the cultural boundaries between these two important learning environments? Because church and school often operate from different ideologies, it might be difficult for teachers in the two environments to honestly critique each other and provide information that may viewed as portraying one another in a negative light.

Realistically speaking, it will be quite difficult to convince white school teachers and black Sunday School teachers that having good intentions is not good enough; but that their students need them to continuously evaluate their teaching and consider the ways in which it might be debilitating – interfering with their literacy acquisition and development. Ideally, if teachers and Sunday School teachers could work together it would benefit their students tremendously. However, even if they are unable to combine forces, dissemination of information and serious self evaluation would be a big step forward from where we are today.

Increased parental involvement

In addition to teacher awareness, parents need to participate in trying to make connections between the school and church environments. In this study evidence shows that the parents' feelings concerning school and school teachers influenced student learning and response to discipline. Similarly, when parents supported instruction and discipline in the church setting, students tended to value and accept the teachings and standards. For years researchers have known that parental involvement plays a vital role in student achievement. The findings in this study provide additional evidence that parental involvement is critical. Evidence can also be found that parental support influences student behavior. Teachers can become frustrated when students experience

continuous problems. Particularly, the Literacy Network System at School was unable to provide the help needed for Travis to become a successful student. Conducting research in the school classroom and Sunday School classroom environments, provided insight into the possible benefits of soliciting assistance from the members of the Literacy Network System at Church for Travis. Unfortunately, they were not invited by his teacher, parents, or anyone else to participate in his school experiences. What may have happened if Mr. Willis or the pastors of New Testament Church had been included in the conversations concerning helping Travis at school? Perhaps the Director of Christian Education - Mrs. Barber, who was an experienced high school teacher could have made some recommendations to Mrs. Rudolph that would have been helpful. Because of privacy issues, schools may not be able to discuss students' problems with anyone other than parents and school officials, but the parents could have given permission to the school, or took it upon themselves to invite Travis' Sunday School teacher or pastors to participate in the school experiences. Teachers cannot improve literacy teaching and learning alone, they need assistance from committed parents and other members of the students' literacy network systems.

Improved teacher education & professional development programs

In addition to teacher and parent awareness and commitment, another point of connection may be found in teacher education and professional development programs. Based on the data, it seemed that some of the members of the Literacy Network System at School were not adequately prepared to work with students like Tony and Travis. Although Mrs. Rudolph was an excellent teacher, she had some difficulty with classroom management. Are teachers being adequately prepared in teacher education and

professional development programs to work with students like Tony and Travis? One of the initial statements in this study was that the literacy problem needs to be addressed in and out of school. If teachers and other members of the Literacy Network System are not being taught classroom management skills and how to connect with parents and students who are culturally different, the programs are not adequate.

Cooperation between school & church to provide increased opportunities to display literacy skills

With all of the requirements that teachers must meet in today's classrooms, it may be difficult for them to add anything to their already cluttered schedules. However, Sunday School teachers, pastors, and other members of the Literacy Network Systems at Church could voluntarily work with schoolteachers to organize opportunities for students to display their talents in meaningful ways. One simple way to provide these opportunities is at church during the services and programs that are already established. If church workers were familiar with the school's curriculum, activities and special presentations or performances could focus upon students' newly developed literacy skills. Another way to provide opportunities is by volunteering to organize programs at school during which students display various talents, skills, and abilities.

Summary

All of the above mentioned points of connection address the sources of incongruence in some way. A "team" effort, including school teachers, Sunday School teachers, parents, other members of the literacy network systems, and teacher educators is needed to reduce the affect of the sources of incongruence, and ultimately alleviate them.

Differing cultural frames of reference between teachers, students and parents can be the source of many classroom conflicts that lead to discipline and academic exclusion.

Students can become frustrated and react in ways that result in the development of adversarial relationships with their teachers. I believe that most teachers have good intentions and genuinely want to help their students achieve academically and socially. Unfortunately, they do not realize how their past experiences, values and beliefs create a cultural frame of reference from which they operate in class, which puts some students "at-risk". As the "establisher" of the classroom environment, the teacher can create a nurturing environment where students feel valued and comfortable enough to take risks, or they can create a classroom environment in which some students feel that they must "protect" themselves from the adversity that occurs within the classroom. Unfortunately, Mrs. Rudolph may have been operating from a white, oppressive teaching paradigm (Freirie, 1993) that caused Travis to resist her teaching and reject her "person". Even though he "liked" Mrs. Rudolph, according to his interview, there was something about the school environment that made him feel "uncomfortable." He manifested this feeling in his response: "Those kids get on my nerves." I contend that it was not the students that "got on his nerves" but the "adversarial environment" that had been established that made him feel uncomfortable, and made him feel that he needed to "protect" himself. Mrs. Rudolph's final words during her interview illuminate the fact that she had "successfully" established a negative classroom environment for Travis.

Mrs. Mc: I noticed during the Awards Assembly that all of the students in your class were crowded around you on the floor.

Mrs. Rudolph: You're right. They started out in a straight line, but by the end of the program I also noticed that they were all around me, touching me in some way.

Mrs. Mc: I was impressed that you were one of the only teachers who sat on the floor with their students. Most of the teachers sat in chairs which made it difficult for the students to see what was going on.

Mrs. Rudolph: Yes, I love my students. I always sat down with them. It just makes it easier on all of us. Sometimes the programs get kind of long.

Mrs. Mc: It was a very nice program. I was wondering why Travis seemed to be sitting all alone. He didn't seem to be a part of the group.

Mrs. Rudolph: (smiles) Yea. I noticed that too. But you know Travis tried his best to cause trouble at the program. I watched him go from one student to another trying to get them to engage him. I was so proud of all of them. Every one of them decided that they would not respond to his foolishness. I haven't been successful with Travis this year but....if I haven't done anything else...at least I've taught the students in my class how to ignore people like him.

"Ignoring" people like Travis is the less challenging approach and possibly what many teachers and other educators resolve to do after fighting endless classroom battles that may have resulted in feelings of failure and hopelessness. However, we cannot afford to "ignore" all of the African American students, nor all of the boys, nor all of the strong-willed students that force us to reach beyond our current understandings to find new points of connection, innovative approaches, and creative ways to reach them.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of this dissertation study was to identify plausible sources of the incongruencies occurring between the public school and African American Sunday School classes for two African American male, first grade students. I wanted to explore each source of incongruence and locate possible points of connection. With this information, schoolteachers and Sunday School teachers may be better equipped to develop ways to help African American students effectively negotiate the cultural boundaries between their home, school, and church environments.

This chapter will begin with general conclusions of the study followed by a discussion of implications. Recommendations for future studies and personal reflections will complete the chapter.

Conclusions

Historically African Americans have had to strive to become successful despite the existence of a white, oppressive teaching paradigm in the educational system of the United States. Based on this mindset, white teachers have exerted power and control over students similar to the way it was used in slavery when Blacks were required to be passive and submissive as a means of survival. The liberating message of Black Theology was developed by a group of people who refused to blindly accept what they were being told and taught. They challenged the biblical interpretations of white oppressors and questioned their motives. Without their assertiveness and commitment to unearth the "truth," the African American Church would have never been birthed. These African American heroes were radical and unwilling to consent to the status quo. The African American Church and community-at-large consider these characteristics

indicative of leadership skills and often encourage students to develop and refine these qualities.

Although the quality of life for African Americans have improved, racism still exists in society-at-large, and more specifically, in our educational system. The African American Church openly addresses these issues in church during classes, in sermons from the pulpit, and during programs. Church continues to be the place where African Americans assemble to discuss politics, health, education and other issues without having to worry about the way they talk, their economic status, and most importantly about the "hidden agendas" of information givers and seekers.

This study is not suggesting that all Whites are untrustworthy. Despite all the friction between Blacks and Whites, there have always been integrated groups of people who reached beyond their conflicts and came together for a united purpose. One of the greatest fighters against slavery was the Quakers, a white religious group. Many Whites died for the cause of the abolitionist movement and others put their lives and the lives of their families at risk. Similarly, I believe that there are many teachers, White and Black, who honestly attempt to effectively teach African American and other students on a daily basis.

In this study, I do not believe that Mrs. Rudolph intentionally tried to cause temporary or permanent harm to any of her students. I believe that she was sincere in her attempts to teach and reach every student and their parents. The question must be asked however: Are good intentions enough? What happens when caring is not enough?

Like many teachers, Mrs. Rudolph was challenged to address issues in her classroom for which she had not been adequately prepared. Her teacher training and

sociocultural experiences did not equip her to overcome the barriers to teaching that she experienced when attempting to work with Tony and Travis. She eventually became successful in her persistent attempts to help Tony, but she realized that she needed help with Travis. She tried to get assistance from her principal, the social worker, parents, janitor, and other teachers. She was at a loss. The entire network system became frustrated and deterioration occurred. Their failure to meet the needs of Tony and especially Travis resulted in almost total deterioration of the literacy network system. They began to blame each other for the breakdown. They tried various things, but nothing seemed to work. Frustration became ambivalence for some members of the network system, and hopelessness for others. It was much easier to dismiss Travis as being one of those students who could never be reached. Although they never gave up, without the reward of seeing at least minor behavioral changes, it was difficult to keep trying. The social worker attempted to organize a plan to prevent Travis from being suspended. After continuous failure, each participant in the network began questioning the plan, the process, and looking for shortcomings in other participants as well as in themselves.

As previously stated, the sources of incongruence were not readily identifiable. To locate the sources of incongruency it was necessary to design a study that provided a lens that looked beyond the usual problems, and approached data analysis from an in-depth, historical perspective. The specific sources of incongruence identified in this study were discussed in detail in Chapter 6. They included:

- Issues of power and dominance
- Differing definitions of success

- Ideas and values that provide cultural capital in the church environment, but cultural interference in the school environment
- Tension between providing culturally congruent classrooms or "gateways" into the culture of power
- Difference in purposes and responsibilities for the literacy network systems
- Difference in providing opportunities to utilize literacy skills in meaningful ways outside of the classroom

These sources of incongruence are not problems that can be approached solely from a micro perspective. Systemic changes are required in order to totally alleviate the incongruencies. However, simply making decisions that change policy is not enough. Teachers must be at the heart of this reform effort. Immediate changes must occur within the context of classrooms, and only teachers have the power to implement changes in their classrooms. Thus, teacher participation is a vital part of all of the possible points of connection discussed in this study which were:

- Teacher awareness through information disemination & exchange
- Increased parental involvement
- Improved teacher education & professional development programs
- Cooperation between school & church to provide increased opportunities to display literacy skills

Teacher participation is at the heart of each point of connection. Just as the human heart regulates the flow of blood that keeps a body living, teachers regulate the flow of teaching and learning that helps a student thrive in their classroom.

Implications

Students can be "at risk" in one environment and "successful" in another (McMillon & Edwards, 2000; Slavin, 1989). Although Tony and Travis were at risk in

their school environment, they were successful in their African American church environment. The plausible sources of incongruence illuminate several possible reasons for their experiences at church and at school. Church teachers need to become more aware of their students' experiences at school, and develop ways to asist them with negotiating between learning environments. The church needs to reach out beyond the four walls of their sanctuaries and make their presence known in the schools by assisting with the academic and social development of the students. Additionally, they must demand that their voice be heard in the conversation concerning the education of African American students. The church must reach out to help students like Travis and Tony.

In addition to illuminating ways that the African American church should increase their awareness about school, this study provides evidence that even the brightest, best teachers may have limitations that need to be addressed. Teachers have the awesome responsibility to adjust their instructional methods and disciplinary techniques each year to meet the needs of their students. Making such adjustments may be difficult, but it is imperative that teachers be flexible enough to meet their students' needs. In this study, the fact that teachers can unknowingly implement a hidden curriculum is illustrated. These implicit rules of conduct make it especially difficult for students who operate from a different cultural frame of reference to develop classroom cultural competence. Although students are academically successful, they may continue to be "at risk" unless they learn to read, understand and negotiate the culture of the classroom which includes developing communicative, interactional and classroom cultural competence. Being smart is not enough. A student must know how to act. A close investigation of these issues illuminates the fact that teachers need to receive more training in classroom

management, addresing various student behavioral patterns, and connecting with parents. Additionally, teachers need to have a keen understanding of themselves – the origin of their ideas about instruction, discipline and especially biases that they may have concerning various races, cultures, or genders. Being cognizant of their own biases will assist them with challenging themselves to value students' out-of-school literacy experiences, and making special efforts to connect with all of their students, not just the students most like themselves.

This study provides information concerning literacy experiences in the African American Church both past and present, that teachers can utilize to develop creative ways to connect with their students. It provides a clear perspective of the cultural frame of reference from which many African American students who attend church operate. Additionally, this study can inform teachers in the African American Church of the struggles that some of their students are experiencing at school, and serve as an invitation for them to join forces with their students' parents and schoolteachers to insure their students' success at church and at school. Gaining this knowledge may help teachers begin to understand why some of their students are resistant to their teaching and discipline. Classroom teachers and Sunday School teachers can utilize knowledge gained from this study to assist students with negotiating the cultural boundaries between their learning environments – a skill that must be possessed by African American students in order to become successful within the culture of power.

Recommendations for Future Studies

This dissertation study focused on identifying plausible sources of incongruence between literacy experiences in the public school and African American Sunday School

environments. The teacher in this study was a white, middle-class female - representative of approximately 90% of the United States' teaching population. I would like to conduct two more related studies in the near future.

When I initially proposed my dissertation study, it included a detailed study of the literacy network systems of the school and church environments. Instead, I chose to conduct a micro-focused ethnographic study to identify as many plausible sources of incongruence between the church and school environment as possible. I believed that one source of incongruence would be the literacy network systems in the two settings. There is much evidence in this study to support my belief, therefore one future study will be an analysis of the literacy network systems in a set of African American churches compared to literacy network systems in a set of urban schools. Studying the environments in these settings will provide a clearer picture of the importance of relationships. In particular, I want to answer the question: How does the student-teacher relationship affect literacy teaching and learning in each setting? I plan to conduct this study within the next two years.

I have received critical feedback from several sources who challenged me to conduct a study to learn the probability of African American students being successful in church and at-risk in school. They wanted to know specifically if attending the African American church increased or decreased the probability of a student being successful in school. This study would also attempt to identify specific ways that African American students' church experiences increased or decreased the probability of academic achievement. It will be especially helpful for churches to understand how their teaching affects their members' educational experiences at school. A study of this type would

require a mixed methodology design and must be done on a much larger scale. I plan to contact a large religious organization to request access to their member churches and support from their governing body to conduct this study. I have already begun to make contacts to conduct this study, which will take place within the next two to three years.

Final Comments

> *Children are who they are. They know what they know. They bring what they bring. Our job is not to wish that students knew more or knew differently. Our job is to turn each student's knowledge and diversity of knowledge we encounter into a curricular strength rather than an instructional inconvenience. We can do that only if we hold high expectations for all students, convey great respect for the knowledge and culture they bring to the classroom, and offer lots of support in helping them achieve those expectations.*
>
> ---P. David Pearson, *"Reclaiming the Center"*

The knowledge and values that students bring to the classroom is what we, as educators have to work with. We must find creative ways to utilize this information to improve the educational opportunities for our students. The educational system in the United States cannot right all the wrongs of our society, but it is imperative that we accept responsibility for operating within paradigms that perpetuate patterns of thought by which some students are debilitated. It is a monumental task to undertake - the breaking down of barriers within classrooms in order to improve the literacy learning opportunities for students who operate from non-dominant cultural frames of reference. However, just as the educational system works hard to help teachers and student teachers understand the importance of matching their instructional methods to their students' learning styles, we must provide information and the necessary support that teachers and student teachers need to develop creative ways to adjust their classroom management and disciplinary techniques so that they do not *create* at-riskness in their students. We must

not wait for policymakers and administrators to approve curricular changes that they expect teachers to implement. On the contrary, we must attack this problem inside the classroom, one teacher at a time, developing innovative ways to utilize information such as that provided in this study. Teachers cannot handle this monumental task alone; they need assistance from the *inside* and *outside* of schools. They need the support of their administrators and other members of the literacy network systems in their schools. They also need the support of students, parents, and members of the out-of-school literacy network systems in which students participate, such as the African American Church. Blacks and Whites have united around various worthwhile issues in the past. We must now come together to assist our children in gaining educational opportunities that will prepare them to enter the culture of power, equipping them to become viable competitors in our global economy. All United States citizens will benefit from this "Twenty-First Century Endeavor".

Personal Reflections

As I conclude this dissertation study, I have mixed emotions. I am excited that I am nearing the completion of another era in my life, about to embark upon a new era as an academician. However, I can't help but feel a little remorse that I wasn't able to help Tony and Travis as much as they helped me. Their parents shared some very personal information that will always be kept in confidence. Mrs. Rudolph opened her heart up to me and allowed me to critique her as a professional. My goal is to always keep them in my foremost thoughts...understanding that my motivation is to help students and teachers, never becoming a student or teacher basher. I am humbled by the fact that I feel well prepared to take on the challenge that educational research will bring. I am ready to go

forth into a world of challenges, disappointments, setbacks, and victories. I can do it. To God be the Glory for the things He has done!

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Appendix 1

PARENT CONSENT FORM A

You are being asked to participate in a research project that focuses upon the literacy experiences of students in Sunday School and public school. Communication patterns, teaching and learning styles, and acceptable patterns of behavior will be examined during classroom observations. Also, by interviewing teachers, parents and students, their perceptions of each environment will be better understood. The main purpose of the study is to attempt to understand why some African American students are successful in the African American Church environment, but are considered *at-risk* in their classrooms at school. Identifying sources of incongruencies occurring between the two learning environments and considering possible points of connection can heighten teacher awareness concerning these issues. This study may also help teachers develop ways to assist their students in becoming *border crossers* - effectively negotiating the cultural boundaries between their learning environments.

Data collection for the study will begin April 18, 2000 and end June 1, 2000. Classrooms will be observed and video-taped approximately 4 - 7 times during literacy experiences, such as reading, vocabulary, writing, etc. You are being asked to participate in a parent interview in order to discuss your beliefs concerning your child's educational experiences, their home literacy experiences, your previous educational experiences, and issues related to your relationship with your child's teachers. You are also being asked to consent to allow the researcher to retrieve information from your child's school records (such as grades and referrals for special services) that might be helpful in understanding your child's educational experiences. Additionally, the researcher needs consent to an interview with your child concerning their likes/dislikes about their learning environments, their feelings about their teachers and classmates, and their understanding of classroom rules. The video-taped interviews will take about an hour, and will be scheduled at your convenience.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose not to participate at all, refuse to participate in certain procedures or answer certain questions or may discontinue participating in the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Data gathered will be treated with strict confidence on the part of the investigator and you will remain anonymous in any report of research findings. Upon request and within these restrictions, results will be made available to you.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study you may call Gwendolyn M.T. McMillon at (517) 753-2718. Participants with questions about their role and rights as a subject of research may also contact David E. Wright, Ph.D., Chair, University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at (517) 355-2180.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study, and to allow my child to participate.

_____ _____

Signature of Parent Date

Appendix 2

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

You are being asked to participate in a research project that focuses upon the literacy experiences of students in Sunday School and public school. Communication patterns, teaching and learning styles, and acceptable patterns of behavior will be examined during classroom observations. Also, by interviewing teachers, parents and students, their perceptions of each environment will be better understood. The main purpose of the study is to attempt to understand why some African American students are successful in the African American Church environment, but are considered *at-risk* in their classrooms at school. Identifying sources of incongruencies occurring between the two learning environments and considering possible points of connection can heighten teacher awareness concerning these issues. This study may also help teachers develop ways to assist their students in becoming *border crossers* - effectively negotiating the cultural boundaries between their learning environments.

Data collection for the study will begin April 18, 2000 and end June 1, 2000. Classrooms will be observed and video-taped approximately 4 - 7 times during literacy experiences, such as reading, vocabulary, writing, etc. Also, you will be asked to participate in a teacher interview in order to discuss your beliefs concerning student *at-briskness*, issues related to literacy teaching, and classroom rules. The video-taped interview will take about an hour, and will be scheduled at your convenience.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose not to participate at all, refuse to participate in certain procedures or answer certain questions or may discontinue participating in the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Data gathered will be treated with strict confidence on the part of the investigator and you will remain anonymous in any report of research findings. Upon request and within these restrictions, results will be made available to you.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study you may call Gwendolyn M.T. McMillon at (517) 753-2718. Participants with questions about their role and rights as a subject of research may also contact David E. Wright, Ph.D., Chair, University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at (517) 355-2180.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Teacher Date

Appendix 3

Teacher Interview Protocol

1. What criteria did you utilize to rank your students during the subject selection process?

2. In your opinion, do you communicate well with your students?
   Are you utilizing the same language patterns that _____uses in your class?
   Do you find it difficult to understand what ____is saying?
   Do you think _____ understands what you are saying most of the time?
   What strategies are you utilizing to help ____with language problems?

3. Describe your favorite teacher.
   Do you utilize any of her/his techniques in your class?

4. How do you decide what and how to teach?
   Do you consider that students may have different learning styles when making these decisions?
   If so, how do you address the issue of learning styles?
   If not, why not?

5. What are the rules in your class?
   How do you communicate those rules to the students?
   Do you discuss the rules with the parents?
   Are there any implicit rules that you may not actually "talk" about?

6. Describe a successful student.

7. Describe your idea of an unsuccessful student.

8. How do you evaluate your students academically?
   How do you evaluate your students' behavior?

9. What types of discipline methods do you use?
   Are certain students disciplined much more than others?
   Why do you think those students are disciplined so often?
   Why do you think they misbehave more often than other students?

10. When students misbehave are they excluded from social and academic activities?
    Why, or why not?

11. How do you determine that a student needs help?
    Who can you ask to help your students?
    Is ____ receiving any extra help?
    How do you think ____feels about getting extra help from ____?
    How do the students in your class perceive _____?

How does _____'s parents feel about the extra support?

12. Do you explicitly address issues of cultural diversity in your class?
If so, how? If not, why not?

13. Do you discuss differences/similarities in your students' learning environments?

14. In your opinion, who are the people in this environment who assist ____with literacy skills acquisition and development?
Who helps ____ at home?
Are you aware of anyone else who may play a significant role in _____'s life?

15. Is _____ doing well in your class?
In your opinion, why, or why not?

16. Can you share some of the reasons why you think _____ may be doing well in one environment, but not in the other?

17. Describe a successful teacher, in your opinion.

18. Describe a successful parent, in your opinion.

Appendix 4

Parent interview protocol

1. Tell me about your child at age 1,2,3,4, etc.
   What interesting things did he/she do at these ages?
   What unique qualities stand out in your mind about your child during early childhood?

2. Tell me of your observations of your child's beginning learning efforts(i.e.. sitting-up, walking, talking, playing, etc.).
   Tell me about early milestones, like sitting-up, walking, talking.
   Were any of these delayed?

3. How did you structure your child's day as s/he was growing up?
   What routines were followed (conversations or talk time, television programs, bedtime, eating, exercise, etc.)?

4. What is a normal weekday routine for you and your child?
   What is a normal weekend like?

5. What do you and your child enjoy doing together?

6. What does your family enjoy doing together?

7. What is interesting to you about your child now?

8. All children have potential. Did you feel that ____ had some particular talent or "gift" early on?
   If so, what was it?
   What did your child do to make you think that se/she had this potential?
   Were there specific things you did as a parent to strengthen this talent?

9. What do you think your child might be when s/he grows up?
   Does your child know you think s/he will do this one day?
   Do you and your child talk about this talent?

10. Are there circumstances at home we should know about in school that may interfere with your child's learning at school?
    Please try to be as specific as possible in your response to this question.

11. Describe your past educational experiences.

12. Describe a successful student, in your opinion.

13. Describe a good teacher, in your opinion.

14. Describe a good parent, in your opinion.

15. Does your child read and write at home?

16. How is _____ doing in school?
    How is _____doing in Sunday School?

17. In your opinion, why is _____ doing well in Sunday School, but not in school?

18. If you had a kindergarten child, would you ask Ms. _____ to be his/her teacher in school next year? Why, or why not?

19. If you had a kindergarten child, would you ask Ms. _____ to be his/her Sunday School teacher next year? Why, or why not?

20. Do you know what is expected of your child academically and socially in school?

21. Do you know what is expected of your child academically and socially in church?

22. Who helps your child with school work?
    Who helps your child with church work?

23. Who do you talk to about your child's educational experiences?

Appendix 5

Student Interview Protocol

1. Do you like school?

2. Do you like church?

3. Who is your favorite teacher?

4. What do you like most about school?
   What do like least about school?
   What do like most about church?
   What do like least about church?

5. Do you understand your school work?
   When you don't, who helps you?

6. Do you understand your church lessons?
   Who helps you at church?

7. Do you feel special at school? Why, or why not?

8. Do you feel special at church? Why, or why not

9. What make you feel bad at school?
   What makes you feel bad at church?
   What makes you feel good at school?
   What makes you fell good at church?

10. What are the rules at school?
    What are the rules at church?

11. What happens when you make a mistake at school? at church?

12. Are you smarter at church or at school? Explain.

13. Do you like the students at church? at school?

14. Do the students like you at church? at school?

15. If you could change something, what would you change about school?
    If you could change something, what would you change about church?